



BRINGING THE MENORAH OUTSIDE

When Aharon HaKohen presided over the dedication of the Mishkan, he experienced profoundly conflicting emotions. On the one hand, he stood ambitious and proud at the prospect of embracing the open and manifest presence of G-d himself, within the limited and physical parameters of the Mishkan. An unprecedented notion — that G-d's transcendence would somehow be sensed and experienced by all those who entered the Mishkan of Hashem. Yet for some reason, at this most celebratory and regal moment, Aharon was relegated to a more administrative role, excluded from the procession of sacrifices that inaugurated this most auspicious occasion:

שכשראה אהרן חנוכת הנשיאים, חלשה דעתו, שלא היה עמהם בחנוכה, לא הוא ולא שבטו. אמר לו הקב"ה: חייך, שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות.

When Aharon saw the dedication of the princes, he became despondent that he was not included in the dedication, not him and not his tribe. The Holy One Blessed Be He said to him, "Don't worry, yours is greater than theirs because you light and prepare the candles."

Rashi, Bamidbar 8:2

Somehow, the privilege of igniting the flames of the Menorah are to compensate for this awkward moment of dissonance. The Rishonim struggle to comprehend: in what manner is the mitzvah of Menorah a replacement for the exciting experience that comes with initiating the Mishkan? This

question is answered by the Rambam (*Bias Mikdash* 9:7):

וכן הדלקת הנרות כשירה בזרים לפיכך אם הטיב הכהן את הנרות והוציאן לחוץ מותר לזר להדליקן.

The lighting of the candles is permissible by a non-Kohen. Therefore, if a Kohen prepares the candles and brings them outside, a non-Kohen may light them.

The Menorah may, in fact, be lit by a "zar" — a non-Kohen Jew. If, in fact, even a standard Jew may light the Menorah, then how is this sanctified activity something unique and precious that can restore the confidence of Aharon?

Upon granting license to the zar to light the Menorah, the Rambam also addresses the logistical quandary

of how a Jew can even reach the Menorah, when it is located in a section of the Mishkan that is prohibited to anyone who is not a Kohen. The Rambam tells us that the Kohen brings it outside. Even when the *zar* lights, the Kohen plays an integral role. It is the Kohen who brings the Menorah outside the Mikdash presenting it to the *zar*, who can then ignite its flame, and the Kohen who returns it to its proper place.

Aharon HaKohen looked at the other leaders, all contributing to the communal experience of inaugurating the Mishkan. His anxiety was rooted in a fear that with the construction of the Mishkan he was no longer going to be a “man of the people”; he would instead be relegated to the sanctity of G-d’s house. His entire focus of leading the nation from “within” — of being an *ohev shalom* and *rodef shalom* — lover of peace and pursuer of peace, would have been undermined by this new role.

G-d then comes to Aharon and tells him: “Yours is greater than theirs because you light and prepare the candles.”

Your role is not to administrate the Mishkan. Your role here is to uplift and inspire those who come to the Mishkan. Your role is to bring the light of Judaism outside the confining walls of the Sanctuary and empower others to ignite their spark. To be present in a Mikdash is to direct and concentrate the light of our faith outward.



Chanukah, more than any other holiday, is about our lighting a flame on the inside of our homes and projecting it outside. The very mitzvah of *pirsumei nissah* (publicizing

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the miracles), the regulation of *ad shetichleh regel min hashuk* (the mitzvah lasts until the traffic clears from the marketplace), entails a sense of connection — between the concentrated sanctity of the home, and shining that light outward.

This issue of *Torah To-Go* focuses on assimilation; those Jewish people who move daily throughout the “*shuk*,” unaware of the greatness of their heritage and identity. So much of our religious life is focused on cultivating and nurturing the spiritual standing and commitment of ourselves and our families. Chanukah is about recognizing the vast world of Jews beyond the orbit of our community. The majority of our people lack any sense of meaningful connection to the greatness of Torah. Our community is uniquely positioned to educate and inspire the broader Jewish world. Chanukah is about taking a moment to appreciate the Jews walking down the street and position the light of our menorahs in a manner that can inspire them: To take the Torah outside the Mikdash and bring it to the people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yaakov Glasser'.



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