YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA**

**PARASHAT BEHAALOTEKHA**

**SICHA OF HARAV BARUCH GIGI**

***Aharon* and the *Menora***

And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to Aharon and say to him: When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light towards the body of the *menora*. And Aharon did so; he lit its lamps over against the body of the menorah, as the Lord commanded Moshe. And this was the work of the menorah: it was of beaten [or solid] gold, from its shaft to its flowers, it was beaten work [or solid], according to the form that the Lord had shown Moshe, so he made the *menora*. (*Bamidbar* 8:1-4)

Rashi, citing the *midrash*, explains:

Why was this *parasha* concerning the *menora* placed immediately after the *parasha* concerning the princes [of the tribes, at the end of *Parashat Naso*]? Because when Aharon saw the inauguration [of the *Mishkan*] by the princes, he became despondent, for he was not part of them – neither he nor his tribe. The Holy One, blessed be He, told him: By your life, your [portion] is greater than theirs, for you light [the *menora*] and prepare its lamps.

Aharon’s reaction to the participation of the princes of all the other tribes in the inauguration of the *Mishkan* seems most surprising. How can the *Kohanim* have any reason for complaint or despondency? The *Kohanim* serve in the Sanctuary itself all the time; they are the ones who perform the sacrificial service! Aharon himself even enters the *Kodesh Ha-Kodashim*. What, then, is the source of his despondency?

Several different explanations have been offered, among them that of R. Amital *ztz”l*, who proposed that what Aharon envied was participation in the novelty and newness of the very first sacrificial service to take place in the *Mishkan*.[[1]](#footnote-1) But let us consider a different question: In what way was the lighting of the *menora* a consolation or compensation to Aharon? In what way is “his [portion] greater than theirs”? In what way is the lighting of the *menora* greater than offering sacrifices?

The Ramban explains:

I found this written in a *megillat setarim*… The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: Speak to Aharon and say to him: There is a different inauguration [*chanuka*] involving a lighting of lamps, and at that time, by means of your descendants, I will perform miracles and salvation for Israel. And the inauguration [*chanuka*] that is named after them, is the Chanuka of the Hasmoneans… The sacrifices are performed [only] so long as the Temple stands, but the lamps shall give light towards the body of the menorah forever.

It seems that Ramban is conveying an important principle. Who is like the *Kohanim*, whose entire essence is holiness – “They shall be holy unto their God”? Who is like Aharon, the *Kohen Gadol*, whose entire essence is holiness – “He is holy unto his God”? The *Kohanim* are a holy people. However, their holiness is reflected in one specific area, in one place – the Sanctuary.

The *menora* is meant to illuminate – not inside the Sanctuary, but rather outwards:

Is God then in need of its illumination? [Obviously not.] Rather, it is a testimony to all the world that the Divine Presence rests with Israel. (*Shabbat* 22b)

The fact that today Jews worldwide light a *menora* in their homes on Chanuka in commemoration of the miracles and deliverance that God performed for the Hasmoneans, who were *Kohanim*, transforms every Jewish home, in this sense, into a miniature Temple. It is in this sense that “Yours is greater than theirs.” The sacrifices brought by the princes of the tribes were limited in their place and time; they were brought in the *Mishkan*, at the time of its inauguration. Aharon’s lighting of the *menora*, as reinstated by the Hasmoneans, is continued by the entire Jewish people, for all generations. Every Jew, in his home, lights a *menora* that illuminates his home with the light of holiness. It is indeed “testimony to all the world that the Divine Presence rests with Israel.”

Each of us aspires to illuminate his life with the light of holiness and to build a life in which even our mundane, everyday actions reflect holiness. This aspiration requires an investment of considerable thought and effort. May we be worthy of fulfilling the promise that “yours is greater than theirs.”

Translated by Kaeren Fish

1. See *Alon Shevut Bogrim* 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)