

As we approach this Shabbat, *Shabbat B'Haalotkha*, we immediately realize that the opening of this week's Torah portion draws our attention to one of the central symbols of Jewish life, the *Menorah*.

“When you mount the lamps (*nerot*), let the seven lamps give light at the front of the lampstand (*menorah*).” (Numbers 8:2)

From the vast diversity of *midrashim* and exegetical texts that we have around the *menorah*, I would like to concentrate on the ones that focus our attention on God's need of our light.

Also cited in the *Etz Hayim Hummash*, we might be familiar with the line where God is quoted as the One saying: “As I shined a light on Israel, making them conspicuous among the nations, let them shine a light on Me.” (Numbers R. 15:5)

This idea of God needing our light contradicts the more traditional, Aristotelian, philosophy which defines God as the ‘unmoved Mover.’ In traditional Judaism God has no needs; God is the provider Whose needs are met (since God has no needs).

The above quoted Midrash is here to enlighten us about an unbelievable possibility – ‘let them shine a light on Me,’ says God. What a beautiful feeling! God is elated for whatever light we might shine on God!

Based on the concept of *b'haalotkha*, being elevated, we can add another layer to this notion of mutuality brought to our attention by the *Midrash*. This is grounded in the world of physics, and certainly has an impact on our spiritual lives and our sense of community.

In order to lift, to elevate objects, we need to use some external force. Otherwise, lifting objects would become an impossible task. What steps do we need to elevate ourselves?

First, we need to be standing on firm ground. We cannot lift anything unless we have a firm base under our feet. Another option is to have something to hold on to; for example, with rock climbing. Once we identify that firm holding spot, we can then lift ourselves and others onto the next level.

When this concept is extended to a group, we do end up with a beautiful definition of community. A real community is the one which not only allows but encourages its members to elevate themselves; and for this, solid ground is needed. Furthermore, a true community is the one that inspires its members to elevate each other.

Let's take the opening verses to this week's Torah portion as the paradigm of the community that we continue to build here at TBI; one where we add light to each other, and one where we all strive to elevate ourselves and in doing so, we help others elevate with us.

Shabbat Shalom!

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