

Beha'alosecha - Rabbi Lerner - June 3, 2012

The Light of the Menorah

8:2: ...When you kindle the lamps, towards the face of the Menorah (*El Mul Penai Hamenorah*) shall the seven lamps cast light. **Rashi**: they should face towards the center candle, the one arising from the stem; the candles are arranged with the wicks facing inward towards the center one. There are three on the east, three on the west, all facing the center lamp. Why do you do this? In order to make sure people don't have the false impression that we need the light to see what we were doing in the Mishkan. Hashem wants to reject that possibility - if we wanted the light for our needs, to cast off light for illumination, then we would have had the wicks facing in different directions. But the pasuk says all seven should face the center - it should say six - the seventh one is the center? This explanation of Rashi is also seen in the Gemorrah Menachos - but, there Rashi says it was six facing in towards the center.

Chizkuni: *El Mul Penai Hamenorah* means facing the Paroches (the curtain) that separates the heichal from the Kodosh Hakadashim. This makes better sense since the pasuk says seven candles facing a particular direction. And this would also lend support for those who say that the alignment of the menorah is north-south rather than east-west (where it would be perpendicular to the Paroches) - one enters the Haichal from the east, going westward. The other possibility of *El Mul Penai Hamenorah*, if the alignment was east-west, would mean the wicks are facing the Shulchan (which was north, the Menorah on the south side).

Rashbam: because it says seven wicks, *El Mul Penai Hamenorah* must mean facing the Shulchan, to light up the table with the lechem hapanim. We want to particularly cast light onto the Shulchan, to illuminate it.

Oznayim LaTorah: according to the **Netziv**, the Rashbam's peshat was the better one, with the light facing the Shulchan. There is another pasuk in Shemos 25:37 that says *Vehay'ir Al Eyver Panehah* - it should give light towards its face. What defines the face of the Menorah, what constitutes the back - it is symmetric? We decided that the face of the Menorah is defined by how we face it and light it. It was very tall, and they would have a small stool to stand on to light it - that will be the front of the Menorah, and it is placed on the side facing the Shulchan. Why is this so? Is the Shulchan a person who needs light to function? The Menorah symbolizes the brilliance of Torah, the light of Torah; the Shulchan is about physical needs. The Menorah is about Ruchniyos, olam habah; the Shulchan Gashmiyus, olam hazeh. The Menorah particularly lights up the Shulchan to tell us that the physical world should be lit up and illuminated by the light coming from the spiritual world; what we do should be guided by the light of Torah.

When we go back to parshas Naso, we see how this concept is linked to Birkas Kohanim, 6:23-27. When the pasuk 6:23 says 'this is how you are to bless Bnai Yisrael,' it means you should not deviate from these specific words, this specific formula. For davening and benching, the words were formulated by the Rabbanim; but the Gemorrah in Sota says that if the Kohanim deviate in even one word from this formula, they are violating a lav de'oraysah - you cannot change or add even one word. Why? This bracha tells us that it is not us blessing the people; the Kohanim are davening that Hashem should bless the people. The Kohanim have the power to invoke God to bless us, not to do so directly; they are just a conduit for the bracha.

What is the meaning of these brachos? The first bracha says Hashem should bless us and guard us - this means that Hashem can bless us with much, but then has to help us preserve the wealth - He will not only bless us with wealth, but help us keep it; otherwise the bracha is not

worth much. Another interpretation of the **Daas Zekanim**: He will bless us with wealth and guard us from it going to our heads, preventing us from becoming arrogant; that we will remain frum Jews. The second bracha says Hashem should illuminate our faces - this is similar to the candles giving off light off the face of the Menorah. What does this mean? **Rashi**: Hashem should show us His smiling face and give us chayn. **Ibn Ezra**: we should have success in our davening, that Hashem should be receptive to our tefillos. This second bracha is about Ruchniyus, not like the first which is about Gashmiyus. If we have any crisis, Hashem will show us chayn, He will respond and grant our request. The word Chayn means response, as we see with the word used for Yaacov and Iyov - that Hashem is responsive to our tefillos. That is what the Kohanim are davening for; we need Hashem to help us with all issues, not just physical needs covered in the first bracha.

Abarbanel: Birkas Kohanim are three categories that are linked. The first bracha is about Gashmiyus, the physical world; that we will be blessed with children, long life, and a parnassah; and He will watch to make sure we keep all of it. Why was this bracha given now? While some say it was on the eighth day of Miluim, when the Mishkan was finally set up on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, that Aharon blessed the people with this formula for the first time. But the Abarbanel says it was used now at this point, when not only the Mishkan was set up, but also the organized structure of the marching camp - this bracha was necessary to prevent the nations of the world from cursing us out of jealousy. With our camp being set up perfectly with the Mishkan in the center and all of us arrayed around it, we were a target of the nations. The second bracha means to give us the light of Torah, the light of God's wisdom - this is all about Ruchniyus, not Gashmiyus. We want the light to shine on us, to give us the Chayn of Hashem, which means wisdom, as in the bracha of *Atah Chonein Daas* in Shemonah Esrei - it is the wisdom to master the Torah. The third bracha of lifting His face to us and giving us peace means to give the complete success of peace - there should be peace within the Jewish people, no machlokes, as well as the ability to succeed in both the physical and spiritual world. This bracha is to unite both the physical and spiritual worlds into one. The first bracha has three words, the second five words, the third has seven words - if you remove Hashem's name from all three, then it is 2, 4, and 6 - the first and second add up to the third, the bracha of shlemus, wholeness, completeness. One cannot survive just in the world of Gashmiyus or Ruchniyus - you have to synthesize the two together. That is the ultimate achievement, and that is what the Kohanim are blessing us with, that we should be the model of what God wanted us to be about - our job is to show that this world can be both a physical and spiritual one.

When we then look back at the Menorah and Shulchan, it can mean that the light of the Menorah faces the Shulchan, that we want these two things to come together; that the spiritual and physical should be united together as one. The light of the spiritual enlightens us as to what the physical world is all about - there must be kedusha at our table.

Rashi: why link the end of parshas Naso with the Menorah? Why this particular Smechus Haparshiot? Because when Aharon saw all of the princes bringing their offerings to the Mishkan, he felt terrible because the tribe of Levi was not involved in the dedication process at all. Hashem tells him not to feel bad, as his portion is greater than the rest of the nation - the Kohanim are in charge of lighting the Menorah, the Leviyim all of the support of the Mishkan. **Ramban**: the **Midrash Tanchumah** says the Kohanim will be able to do this forever, thus they have a greater portion than the other tribes. But that is not true, since the Bais Hamikdash will not always be there. It can mean the Menorah of Chanukah to be lit again by the Chashmonaim, descendants of Aharon; but that also will not always be there. It really means the role of the

Kohanim in teaching Torah and lighting up the world in a different way - they will answer all questions of Torah; they are the teachers when not doing the avodah in the Bais Hamikdash. The Kohanim and Leviyim will light up the world with their teaching.

Rav Nissan Alpert: this is the essence of lighting the Menorah - it is teaching the Torah to all. Hashem is happy when we put it all together with the first and second brachos adding up to the third. **Rav Simon**: there is a phrase *Kafta Vapherach* to describe a good explanation to a Torah question - it means a perfect fit, a perfect explanation - this phrase derives from the portions of the menorah - the Kaftor and Perach - a knob and a flower. When we give a bracha to a bar mitzvah boy we say he should bring light to the world, just as is the job of the Menorah. That is the job of the leviyim and teachers - they should light up the fog and enlighten the world.