

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 28

Behaalosecha, Sicha 1

The Context:

Parshas Behaaloscha begins with a commandment to Aharon concerning the lighting of the Menorah: "When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light toward the face of the menorah." The Torah then digresses to discuss the construction of the Menorah itself. "This was the form of the menorah: hammered work of gold, from its base to its flower it was hammered work... (Bamidbar 8:2-4)

Why does the Torah depart from discussing the lighting of the Menorah to its construction?

The Background:

The Torah dedicates parts of three chapters to detailing the work and function of the Menorah.

In Shemos: "And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. The menorah shall be made of hammered work; its base and its stem, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall [all] be [one piece] with it." (Shemos, 25:31)

In Vayikra: Command the children of Israel, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for lighting, to kindle the lamps continually... Upon the pure menorah, he shall set up the lamps, before G-d, continually. (Vayikra, 24:2-4)

And in Bamidbar, cited above.

In his commentary, Ramban explains that all three passages refer to the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah, yet each passage provides additional detail in that commandment. Shemos provides the general instruction to light the lamps. Vayikra adds that the lamps must be placed on a Menorah, ("Upon the pure menorah, he shall set up the lamps"), to exclude situations where a Menorah is not available. Bamidbar adds that the lamps must be oriented towards the central shaft of the Menorah "(When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light toward the face of the menorah").

From Rashi's comments, however, it emerges that each passage has a different focus. Shemos discusses the Menorah's construction in the context of the rest of the Mishkan and its vessels. Vayikra transmits the command of lighting the lamps. And Bamidbar is a general discussion of the Menorah itself — not in the context of the rest of the vessels, and not in relation to the lighting of its lamps specifically.

What is the substance of Bamidbar's discussion of the Menorah in general?

Seemingly, the Torah is commanding Aharon on the orientation of the candles, "When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall cast their light toward the face of the menorah." Rashi himself takes this as an instruction of how to arrange the wicks: "that is their wicks facing towards the center one, and likewise, the three western ones, the tops of their wicks facing toward the center one." How is this related to the object of the Menorah itself?

Shemos clarified that the Menorah was to be hammered from one block of gold. Yet the Menorah was ornamented with so many details and branches that it would be difficult to perceive how the entire object was indeed fashioned from one piece of material. The central shaft extends directly from the base, being the clearest illustration of the Menorah's unified construction. By orienting the lamps toward the central shaft, the Kohen illuminates the Menorah's construction, highlighting how it is made entirely from one block of gold.

Rashi also explains that this passage was placed next to the inauguration offerings of the tribal leaders to assuage Aharon that his lighting was "greater than theirs." Meaning, in this passage Aharon is being commanded to inaugurate the Menorah through his lighting. The inauguration of a vessel is the final step in its construction, transforming it from a material object to a sacred vessel. This stage is therefore detailed in this

parshah which is dedicated, according to Rashi, to the Menorah itself.

The Deeper Dimension:

The lamps of the Menorah allude to the souls of the Jewish people — they all are of one essence originally (one block of gold), yet they become differentiated into different forms of illumination as they become embodied in this world. Yet even as the individual soul is illuminated, they must be cognizant of their commonality, that they all are created to serve their Creator. This is alluded to in Rashi's commentary — that when the candles are lit, they reveal the unified construction of the Menorah itself.

According to Ramban, however, this passage discusses additional details of the lighting of the Menorah, not the construction of the Menorah. Ramban's commentary is more attuned to the mystical interpretation as opposed to Rashi's straightforward commentary. In the mystical realm, attention is focused on the purpose of Divine service, which is to make a home for G-d in this world. Thus, the individual service of the soul is most important, which is why this passage discusses the lighting of the individual lamps. The unified construction of the Menorah is important only in relation to its illumination, that is when the individual Jew is engaged in their Divine service of illumination, they should feel their inherent unity with other Jews. But the main focus is their unique contribution of light.
