

Our *Parashah* opens, "When you kindle [literally, 'raise'] the lamps, toward the face of the *Menorah* the seven lamps shall cast light." What does it mean to "raise" the lamps?

R' Yaakov Sakly z"l (Spain; 14<sup>th</sup> century) explains: *Midrash Tehilim* relates: Before *Hashem* gave the Torah to *Bnei Yisrael*, the angels argued (*Tehilim* 8:2), "*Hashem*, our Master, how mighty is Your Name throughout the earth, You Who places Your majesty on the Heavens." They said: Your Name is too mighty to place on the earth, *i.e.*, how will it bring You praise to give Your Torah to mankind on earth? Leave it in the Heavens! *Hashem* answered the angels, "You are incapable of observing the Torah: you do not procreate, you do not die, you have no *Yetzer Ha'ra*, etc." The angels then acknowledged (*Tehilim* 8:10), "*Hashem*, our Master, how mighty is Your Name throughout the earth."

R' Sakly notes: The angels do not use the word "Torah." Rather, they call it "Your Name," alluding to the idea that the letters of the Torah can be rearranged to spell Names of *Hashem*. "Torah" means "book of instruction," and it is only we, humans, who need instruction. Angels do not need instruction, so the word "Torah" is relevant only to us.

In what way, continues R' Sakly, is the Torah ("Your Name") "mighty throughout the earth"? He answers: All the Torah's stories and all the Torah's *Mitzvot* allude to hidden spiritual constructs. This is why many *Mitzvah* objects--*e.g.*, *Tefilin*, *Tzitzit*, and the *Menorah* referred to in our verse, to name a few--are subject to precise rules about how they are made. When we perform a *Mitzvah* here on earth, it activates something parallel in the spiritual worlds above. Thus, our *Mitzvot* on earth truly are "mighty." And, this is why lighting the *Menorah* is referred to as "raising" it. (*Torat Ha'minchah*)

## Shemittah

*Midrash Mechilta* considers--and ultimately rejects--the possibility that *Shabbat*--the Sabbath Day--need not be observed during the *Shemittah*--the Sabbath Year. Though the *Midrash* rejects this idea, the fact that it could even be entertained hints at significant connections between *Shabbat* and *Shemittah*. In this space, we are exploring those connections.

*Midrash Tanchuma* applies to those who observe *Shemittah* the verse (*Tehilim* 103:20), "Bless *Hashem*, His angels; the *Gibborei Ko'ach* / strong warriors who do His bidding, to obey the voice of His word." The sage Rabbi Yitzhak Nafcha says: The verse refers to those who observe *Shemittah*, who have the strength to declare their crops ownerless and watch others collect them. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Aryeh Leib Hakohen Shapira *shlita* (*Menahel Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: Certainly, the *Midrash* is not praising a person who restrains himself with clenched teeth from protesting when others collect produce from "his" field! Rather, the *Midrash* is referring to those whose silence reflects an inner tranquility, those who are not troubled at all by the restrictions of the *Shemittah* year.

R' Shapira continues: We find the same idea regarding *Shabbat*. Our Sages teach that a person should feel when *Shabbat* arrives as if his work is already completed. [R' Reuven Leuchter *shlita* explains: A person should not think on Friday afternoon, "I will have to wait until next week to sign the big contract; for now, I must observe *Shabbat*." Rather, a person should feel: "There is nothing in the world I would rather be doing right now than observing *Shabbat*."] This, writes R' Shapira, is what we mean when we describe *Shabbat* in the *Mincha Shemoneh Esrei* as: "A rest of truth and faith, a rest of peace and serenity and tranquility and security."

(*Chazon L'mo'ed: Ha'Shabbat Ve'shabbat Ha'aretz* p.17-19)

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**“And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth.” (12:3)**

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (Belarus; 1749-1821) writes: The essence of humility is not just having patience with others and being willing to overlook insults. A person must think in his heart that he is nothing compared to the lowliest of people. How so? Because even if a person thinks he is wise and G-d-fearing, maybe he has not yet accomplished anything in comparison to his own intellect and nature. In contrast, someone who seems lowly to us may already have actualized his full potential. [Such a person is more praiseworthy in G-d's eyes than an intelligent person who is not using his potential.]

R' Chaim continues: This is what R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) means in his comment on the verse (*Shmot* 4:13), “Please, *Hashem*, send in the hand of whomever You will send.” Moshe meant, writes *Ramban*: “Anyone You will send as Your agent to take *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt would be a better choice than I [Moshe], for I am a lowlier than any of them.” Indeed?! R' Yosef Shimon Presser *shlita* (Kiryat Sefer, Israel) explains: Considering Moshe's holy soul and high level of prophecy, he did not face the same challenges of *Emunah* / faith that others face. Therefore, Moshe reasoned, “They are all more worthy than I.” (*Kuntreis Bet Halevi: Ma'amar Ha'ga'avah Ve' ha'anavah* p.57)

*A related thought:*

R' Shmuel Halevi Kellin z"l (1724-1806; Bohemia; author of an important commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*) writes: We read (*Mishlei* 29:23), “A man's pride will bring him low, but a lowly spirit will support his honor.” This verse is teaching that there are two types of “humility.” One is true humility, which is achieved when a person recognizes man's inherent lowliness, understands that man is susceptible to all types of ills from which he cannot save himself, and knows that even one's wealth can disappear overnight. Most of all, true humility comes from remembering the bundles of one's own sins that a person carries like a yoke on his shoulders.

Then there is humility that is actually an act put on by a haughty person. Since this person knows that haughtiness is a despised trait, he pretends to be humble so that he will, at least, be praised for his humility.

R' Kellin continues: How can we distinguish between true humility and fraudulent humility? The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 13b) teaches: “If one runs away from honor, honor will pursue him.” If one's humility is merely an act, honor will flee from him, as the above verse from *Mishlei* says, “A man's pride will bring him low”--it will bring him disappointment. On the other hand, if his humility is genuine, honor will pursue him, as the verse says, “But a lowly spirit will support his honor.” (*Derashot Machatzit Ha'shekel* p.80)

**“When the cloud lingered upon the Tabernacle many days, *Bnei Yisrael* would safeguard the charge of *Hashem* and would not journey.” (9:19)**

Couldn't the verse have said, “When the cloud lingered upon the Tabernacle many days, *Bnei Yisrael* would not journey”? What is added by the phrase, “[They] would safeguard the charge of *Hashem*”?

R' Aryeh Leib Zunz-Charif z"l (Poland; 1765-1833) answers: Perhaps the verse is teaching that even though *Bnei Yisrael* had a strong desire to reach *Eretz Yisrael*, when they saw that it was not *Hashem*'s will that they travel, they willingly safeguarded His charge and did not journey.

(*Melo Ha'omer*)



**“The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and *Bnei Yisrael* also wept once more, and said, ‘Who will feed us meat?’” (11:4-5)**

Why, all of a sudden, did the nation crave meat? R' Shaul z"l of Amsterdam (1717-1790) explains:

During the 40 years in the desert, *Bnei Yisrael* were forbidden to eat any meat except the meat of *Shelamim* sacrifices. Such sacrifices had to be brought in the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle, and could only be offered when the nation was encamped and the *Mishkan* was re-assembled.

The meat of a *Shelamim* sacrifice may be eaten for two days after the sacrifice is offered. At this point, however, *Bnei Yisrael* had been traveling for three days straight. Accordingly, they had run out of meat to eat.

(*Binyan Ariel: Chadrei Torah*)



**“We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic.” (11:5)**

R' Shlomo Moshe Amar *shlita* (former *Sefardi* Chief Rabbi of Israel, now *Sefardi* Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) asks: Surely *Bnei Yisrael* understood that the Egyptians had not made these foods available to their Jewish slaves out of the goodness of their hearts. If *Bnei Yisrael* had these foods in Egypt, it could only be understood as evidence of *Hashem*'s kindness! And, *Hashem* was now providing all of *Bnei Yisrael*'s needs in a most miraculous fashion! What then was there to complain about?

R' Amar answers: We see here that it is human nature to complain, whether it makes sense or not. The way to defeat this tendency is through *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem*, which enables a person to have no worries or complaints. (*Be'chasdecha Vatachti* p.88 n.4)