

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's portion *Beha'aloscha* Hashem commands Aharon through Moshe to light the large Menorah in the tabernacle. In commanding Aharon, Hashem uses the interesting word "*Beha'aloscha*." Rashi explains that the word "*Beha'aloscha*" contains the root meaning "to go up," (as in "*an aliyah to the Torah*.") Thus the Torah chose the term "*Beha'aloscha*," to indicate that when applying fire to light the Menorah, one should make sure that the flame on the Menorah goes up -- "*aliyah*," and burns on its own, before removing the source flame from the Menorah. If lighting a candle with a match, for example, one would leave the match burning on the candlewick until the flame of the candle burns high.

When we look deeper into the symbolic meaning of the verse, we begin to see a beautiful, spiritually uplifting meaning of "*Beha'aloscha*..." We read in Proverbs that "*The soul of Man is the lamp of Hashem*." (Mishlei 20:27) We see that the soul is compared to a lamp. Similarly, the Talmud tells us that the soul of a man is called a candle. (Shabbos 30b) We can now begin to delve into a deeper mystical level of understanding of the verse "*Beha'aloscha Es Ha-Neros*..." -- "*when kindling the lamp*..."

Every Jew has a soul which is a spark of Hashem From On High. Hashem is the Origin of the Holy Fire, which is the Source of Life. Hashem keeps the pilot light of the soul alit as long as we are alive, however, we as individuals are responsible for making sure that the Holy Flame of the soul burns high. Let us now re-read the verse based on our new-found understanding... "*when kindling the soul, you shall make sure that the flame of the soul burns high*..."

Practically speaking, Hillel tells us in Pirke Avos "*Do not believe in yourself until the day you die*." (Avos 2:5) The meaning of this teaching is the following: One should never be satisfied with his level of spirituality; one should always seek to grow in Torah and mitzvahs. One must actively pursue spirituality, seeking out more Torah learning, more meaningful prayer and more refined observance of Kashrus and Shabbos, for example. The following amazing true story will inspire us to seek more meaning and spirituality in life.

In Brooklyn, New York, Chush is a school that caters to learning-disabled children. At a Chush fundraising dinner, the father of a Chush child delivered an unforgettable speech. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he cried out, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything G-d does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. He cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is G-d's perfection?"

The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father's anguish and stilled by the piercing query. "I believe," the father answered, "that when G-d brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in the way people react to this child."

He then related the following story about his son Shaya: One afternoon Shaya and his father walked past a park where some boys they knew were playing baseball. Shaya asked, "Do you think they will let me play?"

Shaya's father knew his son was not at all athletic and that most boys would not want him on their team. But Shaya's father understood that if his son were chosen to play it would give him a sense of belonging.

Shaya's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for reassurance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We are losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him up at bat in the ninth inning."

Shaya's father was ecstatic as his son smiled broadly. Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs, but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again. Now there were two outs and the bases were loaded. With the potential winning run on base, Shaya was scheduled to be up at bat. Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game?

Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat. Everyone knew it was all but impossible to win because Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. As Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps forward to lob the ball in softly so Shaya could at least make contact. When the first pitch came in, Shaya swung clumsily and missed.

One of the other boys approached Shaya and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher, waiting for the next pitch. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya.

As the pitch came in, they swung the bat together, and hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first basemen. Shaya would have been out, ending the game.

Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it in a high arc to the right field, far beyond reach of the first basemen. Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first! Run to first!" Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide-eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman, and tag out Shaya, who was still running. But the right fielder understood the pitcher's intentions, and threw the ball high and far over the third basemen's head.

Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second!" Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base and shouted, "Run to third!" As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya run home!" Shaya ran home, stepped on plate and all eighteen boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a 'grand slam' and won the game for his team.

"That day," said the father softly with tears rolling down his face, "those eighteen boys reached their level of G-d's perfection." **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

In memory of Shusha Malka bas R' Avrohom ob'm

To sponsor a drasha: M. Wolfberg 19 Koritz Way, #212 Spring Valley, New York 10977 (845) 362-3234

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