

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*..." Let us hopefully be inspired by the following story. As a young man, Yaakov Yisroel confronted by many major challenges and obstacles. He was one of the many Orthodox Jews who were sadly coerced into joining the Russian army, which meant that Yaakov Yisroel had to spend time with soldiers who were violent and vicious men. The Russian soldiers' sinister attitudes toward him had filtered down from the commanding officer, who made no effort to hide his dislike for Yaakov Yisroel and his annoyance over all the problems this Jewish soldier had caused.

From the food that he refused to eat to the special days he made himself unavailable for work and duty, Yaakov Yisroel threw a monkey wrench into the scheduling, order, and the regulations, which are so fundamental to army life. Constant adjustments were required to accommodate this one Jewish soldier and his fanatical religious belief. But since the resilient Yaakov Yisroel combined his staunch, unfaltering convictions together with a sensible low profile, more often than not he was able to stay out of harm's way. The additional guard duty he accepted upon himself coupled with some extra sharing of responsibilities enabled him to obtain furloughs and to avoiding working on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim. But when a certain Officer Karlenkief watched this soldier rest while others were working, it made his blood boil. And finally he decided he would do something about it. He would make life miserable for the Jew. The next Saturday, Karlenkief made it his business to cross paths with the Jewish soldier. As was customary for his Shabbos duties, Yaakov Yisroel was keeping guard duty without violating any of the thirty-nine Shabbos prohibitions. Suddenly Karlenkief appeared. Without explaining why, he ordered Yaakov Yisroel to aim his gun at a target located fifty meters away. It was not a day designated for target practice and there was no valid reason for Karlenkief to have issued the order other than to disturb the Jewish soldier's day of rest. As the startled Yaakov Yisroel mulled over his options, the spiteful commanding officer added that he should continue shooting until he hits the bull's-eye in the middle of the target. This demanding feat was no easy task for a seasoned marksman, let alone a novice like Yaakov Yisroel.

The young Jewish soldier wanted to avoid the desecration of Shabbos at all cost. He remember what he had learned about the laws of Shabbos. Namely, one who does a prohibitive action on Shabbos in the usual way, the way in which that action would be performed during the week, that person has violated a Torah prohibition of keeping Shabbos. However, one who does a prohibitive action on Shabbos in a different way than the normal way, has only violated a less stringent Rabbinical prohibition. Should he shoot with his dominant right hand, and thereby violate the Torah? Or perhaps, should he shoot with his weak left hand and merely violate a Rabbinic prohibition. He decided to shoot with his left hand. This would mean that he was shooting with a shi'nui - a difference, and therefore creating less of a desecration of the Shabbos, as it would only be an *issur d'Rabbanan*.

But shooting with his left hand, he knew, would likely greatly lower his chances of ever hitting the mark. Thus he was left in a quandary — violate one Torah prohibition or several Rabbinical prohibitions? At first he attempted to defy the order. But Karlenkief promptly informed him that disobeying a command from a superior officer could result in a severe punishment, possibly even death! Left with no choice, Yaakov Yisroel prepared to shoot. He deliberated and then quickly resolved to fire his gun with his left hand. True, in all probability would not succeed and would be forced to shoot many times. However he determined that it is was his responsibility to do everything within his power to reduce the gravity of his sin. He knew that he most probably would be forced to discharge his firearm many times but he hoped and prayed that Hashem would have his bullet meet its mark. Yaakov Yisroel aimed his gun and prepared to shoot.

Karlenkief noticed that the Jew was not shooting with his stronger hand, instead he was using his weaker one! What a fool! He thought to himself. Doesn't he realize he'll be forced to shoot many times until he hits the mark?" But when the gun discharged, all present were shocked to discover that the bullet had indeed hit the center of the target! Yaakov Yisroel tried to hide his smile. He was certain that the Hand of Hashem had guided his hand to shoot the gun so that the bullet landed exactly where it needed to. The only one who was more surprised than Yaakov Yisroel was the menacing officer who had orchestrated the plot against him. Karlenkief stared at the Jewish soldier as it dawned on him that this was no religious fanatic, rather someone who was guarded and blessed by a Higher Being. From that moment on, Yaakov Yisroel was treated like a hero. Karlenkief watched out for his well-being and, ironically, became his greatest proponent. However, since he now would no longer work at all on Saturdays, the other officers felt that it would weaken the morale of the other soldiers to have an individual around who was not fulfilling his duty. Thus the only logical solution was to give him an honorable discharge from the army. The Jewish soldier eventually made his way to Eretz Yisroel, where he grew in Torah and mitzvos to become a leader of many — for Yaakov Yisroel was Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, the renowned Talmid Scholar the Steipler Gaon. All because of a gunshot — the shot heard 'round the world.' (Touched by a Story 3, p. 198, R' Y. Spiro)

The highest spiritual growth a Jew can obtain in this life is on Shabbos. Let us take advantage of the gift... **Good Shabbos Everyone.**