

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's portion *Beha'aloscha* Hashem commands Aharon through Moshe to light the large Menorah in the *Mishkan* - tabernacle. When commanding Aharon, the Torah uses the unusual 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 Mishle (Proverbs) that "The soul of Man is the candle of Hashem." (20:27) 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, you shall make sure that the flame burns high..."

Every Jew has a soul which is a spark of Hashem From On High. Hashem is the Origin of the soul, 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..." The following amazing true story will inspire us to serve Hashem with hislahavos - with a burning desire in our souls.

Steven Miller (not his real name) grew up in a secular Jewish home in Massachusetts. When it became time to select a high school for Steven, Steve's parents decided to send their boy to a Catholic high school. For the irreligious Millers, it made little difference if the school were Jewish, Catholic or any other religion. The Millers merely wanted their Steve to receive a good solid private school education, even if the classes were taught by Catholic priests.

Steve progressed through high school with much success. He was a popular student with several non-Jewish friends. Steve knew in the back of his mind that he was Jewish, but because of his lack of Jewish upbringing, Steve did not have much of a Jewish identity.

Near the end of high school his teacher the priest gave Steve and his classmates an assignment to write a biography about a famous person in history. Steve went to the library and began to look among the books about famous people in history. There were so many famous people... whom would Steve chose? Suddenly, a certain book caught his eye. "MAIMONIDES" Steve opened up the book and read a little about Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, also known by the acronym: RAMBAM, or Maimonides. Young Steve was amazed at what he read. He decided that he would write about the life and times of the Rambam, one of the most influential thinkers in the history of the world. Steve completed his paper on the Rambam and submitted it to the priest for grading.

Soon after, Steve received his paper back from the Catholic priest. The priest told Steve that he wanted to have a word with Steve after class. Steve cautiously approached the priest. The priest then asked Steve why he had chosen to write on the Rambam. "Well," Steve began. "I am Jewish." The priest was shocked. "You are Jewish... what are you doing in a Catholic school?" Steve was speechless. He began to think to himself: If I am Jewish, what **am** I doing in a Catholic school? This question simmered in his brain until his high school graduation.

As a graduation present, his parents offered him a trip to anywhere in the world. Steve told his parents that he wanted to go to Israel. "Israel?!?" Asked his parents with surprise. They had expected him to want a ticket to Hawaii or Europe. Nevertheless, his parents promptly arranged for Steve to fly to Israel for a vacation.

Before leaving for Israel, Steve went back to his high school to say goodbye to some of his teachers. Steve went to the priest who had assigned the paper on a famous person in history. Steve told the priest that he was headed to Israel. The priest wished Steve well and then took out a piece of paper and wrote down a phone number on it. The priest gave the number to Steve, telling him "When you get to Jerusalem, give these people a call." Steve took the phone number and thanked the priest.

A little while later, Steve found himself in Eretz Yisroel. He enjoyed the country very much. Steve felt a spiritual connection with the land. Soon after arriving in Eretz Yisroel, Steve went to Jerusalem. Remembering what his teacher the priest had told him, Steve called the phone number on the paper. Steve dialed the number, which reached a yeshiva. Steve had only the vaguest idea of what a yeshiva was. Nevertheless, Steve accepted a warm offer on the other end of the phone line to come to visit the yeshiva. Steve sat in on some classes, absorbing the lectures on Jewish heritage. Steve stayed longer at the yeshiva, learning more and more about the religion of his fathers. Little by little, Steve became more observant; Shabbos, tefillin and kosher eating became a part of his life. Eventually, Steve became a fully observant Jew.

Soon however, it was time for Steve to return to the United States. Back in New England, Steve sought out his former teacher the priest, to tell him about his trip to Israel and his growth in Judaism. Steve was very curious to hear how and why the priest had sent him to the yeshiva. The priest began to tell his story: As a young priest in-training, Steve's teacher had traveled around the world visiting the sites of the world's religions. During his travels, the young priest visited Eretz Yisroel.

One day while walking down the street in Jerusalem, the young priest was approached by a rabbi. The young priest was wearing shorts and a t-shirt at the time. The rabbi asked the young priest in-training if he was interested in learning more about his heritage. The rabbi obviously did not realize that he was inviting a non-Jew to learn in yeshiva. The young priest quickly accepted the offer and soon after he found himself learning at the yeshiva.

The young Catholic priest was fascinated by the deepness of the Jewish tradition. He stayed at the yeshiva for a few months; he did not have the heart to tell the staff that he was actually not Jewish. Feeling guilty for fooling the yeshiva, the young priest promised to himself that one day he would give back to the yeshiva. Years later, the priest had his opportunity when his student Steve told him that he was going on a vacation to Israel.

For Steve, the spiritual light was kindled in a most unusual twist of circumstances. Let us be inspired by this story to always strive to kindle our souls to serve Hashem with more enthusiasm. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

"Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands." Avos 5:21

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