

"Speak to Aharon and say to him, 'When you kindle the lamps.'" (8:2)

Rashi questions the juxtaposition of the *parsha* that discusses the *Menorah* and Aharon's role in its preparation, upon that of the dedication of the *Mishkan* and the offerings of the *Nesiim*. He comments that Aharon was distressed by the fact that neither he nor any member of his tribe was represented in the dedication of the *Mishkan*. Aharon's love for Hashem, and everything connected to Him, was so intense that he wanted to participate in every endeavor that was related to sanctifying His Name. Hashem comforted Aharon by saying that his service of preparing and kindling the *Menorah* was more significant than the role of the *Nesiim*. The commentators suggest various explanations concerning the superior role of the *Menorah* vis-a-vis the dedication of the *Mishkan*.

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, offers a practical and perhaps timeless explanation. The function of the *Kohanim* -- and, for that matter, all of *Shevet Levi* -- is a dual one. They serve in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash* offering *korbanos* and performing the priestly service as the overall guardians of the Sanctuary. They are also the disseminators of our spiritual heritage. They are to teach *Torah* to the masses and render decisions in Jewish law. Hashem was addressing the specific function of *rebbe* and mentor to *Klal Yisrael*. Hashem was communicating a very important lesson to Aharon. Performing the priestly service is important; offering sacrifices is a meaningful and essential experience. Teaching the meaning of the *korbanos*, guiding the people in their spiritual development, educating a nation in *Toras Hashem*, however, is of significantly greater value to the future of *Klal Yisrael*.

The *Menorah* is the symbol of spiritual light. It represents that illumination reflected by the light of *Torah*. Aharon's function gave meaning to the endeavors of the *Nesiim*, since their sacrifices would now be the result of pure thought and perspective. Before an individual can express himself with outward acts of piety, the light of *Torah* must first glow within him.