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And you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for you clear oil...to light a lamp continually

In the beginning of Parashas Beha'alosecha, Rashi asks why the command concerning the Menorah is juxtaposed on the previous parsha (Naso) which details the korbanos, offerings, brought by the Nesiim for the Chanukas HaMishkan, inauguration of the Sanctuary. Rashi comments that Aharon HaKohen was chagrined that every shevet, tribe, was represented by its Nasi, Prince, while he and his tribe, Shevet Levi, were excluded. Hashem comforted him by saying that his and his tribe's participation in the Menorah service was greater than their sacrifices. This was not the only service performed by Aharon and his shevet. The Yom Kippur service was exclusively theirs and executed by the Kohen Gadol. Ramban explains that the kindling of the Menorah in this passage alludes to a later Menorah, the miracle of Chanukah, which would continue on long after the Temple service would cease to exist. It was through the faith and heroism of the Chashmonaim, Aharon HaKohen's priestly descendants, that this miracle achieved its fruition. They succeeded (of course, through Heavenly intervention) to drive out the Syrian-Greeks, and it was they who purified the Temple and found the jug of oil which miraculously burned for eight days. Our kindling of the Menorah on Chanukah is a tribute to Aharon HaKohen and his tribe – a service that has far outlasted the Temple service.

The Alshich HaKodesh offers an alternative exposition concerning the enduring significance of the lighting of the Menorah. He quotes the Midrash Tanchuma that the Mikdash Shel Maalah, Heavenly Bais Hamikdash, corresponds to the Mikdash Shel Mattah, Bais Hamikdash on earth. This means that a Heavenly Bais Hamikdash is directly above our earthly Temple.

Once the Bais Hamikdash was destroyed, Hashem swore that He would not visit the Heavenly Bais Hamikdash until its earthly counterpart was rebuilt. Nonetheless, while the actual korbanos, animal and meal sacrifices, ceased due to the lack of a Temple and Mizbayach, Altar, our tefillos, prayers, have taken the place of korbanos. There is, however, one aspect of the Bais Hamikdash that has endured: the Menorah. Its hashpaah, influence, which lasted on earth for 830 years of the Temple periods and 40 years of the Mishkan, did not come to an end with the destruction of the Temple. Its influence continues. So writes the Alshich. Thus, Vayaas kein Aharon, el mul pnei ha'Menorah he'e lah neurosehah, "Aharon did so, toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps" (Bamidbar 8:3).

The Alshich explains that this pasuk alludes to Aharon's lighting the Menorah towards the face of the Heavenly Menorah. Thus, it continues to endure until this very day. Why? Why is the Menorah considered to be unique in comparison to the other vessels of the Mishkan?

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, offers a powerful insight. Every vessel in the Mishkan was fashioned by the craftsmen – except for one: the Menorah. Our quintessential Rebbe and leader, Moshe Rabbeinu, had extreme difficulty in perceiving the correct image of the Menorah. After a number of attempts, Hashem instructed him to throw the ingot of gold into the fire, and a full scale Menorah emerged – as Hashem wanted. Consequently, it was Hashem Yisborach who fashioned the Menorah – not man. A creation of Hashem endures forever. The influence of the Menorah does not

cease.

Alternatively, the light of the Menorah represents the light of Torah. Torah ohr, Torah is light, the spiritual influence of the ohr ha'Torah She'Baal Peh, Oral Law, endures forever. The six lamps of the Menorah represent the six orders of the Mishnah, with the middle light corresponding to Torah She'B'K'sav, Written Law. The Menorah had four geviim, cups, alluding to the four ways interpreting the Torah: p'shat, remez, derash, sod; simple explanation, allusion, homiletic and secret/esoteric. The Torah is immutable and endures forever. Our People live on through their connection with Torah She'Baal Peh. The korbanos ceased to exist because the Temple was destroyed. The Menorah, however, whose light represents the light of the Torah, endures. This was Aharon's reward.