

Hammered out shall the Menorah be made. (25:31)

The *Menorah* consisted of a number of shapes and forms, all of which were hammered out from one large ingot of gold. Nothing was made separately and attached. The *Midrash* relates that Moshe *Rebbeinu* had great difficulty in creating the *Menorah*. He could not visualize the finished product. Hashem went as far as to show him a *Menorah* made of fire. Still, Moshe felt uncertain concerning making the *Menorah* in accordance with Hashem's plan. It was then that Hashem instructed Moshe to fling the ingot into a fire, such that a completed *Menorah* miraculously emerged. In other words, the *Menorah* came into being without human intervention – other than Moshe throwing the ingot into the fire. Veritably, it is this way with all of life's endeavors. We do not complete anything. We only initiate. We are *mishtadel*, endeavor. Hashem does the rest. As *Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl*, was wont to say, "Man does not make a living; man takes a living". Hashem provides everything. We only initiate His action by our act of *hishtadlus*.

Horav Aharon, zl, son of the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, related a thought concerning the future redemption which will occur in the merit of the Torah that he heard from his saintly father. We are well aware that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had no problem creating the vessels of the *Mishkan* as prescribed by Hashem until he came to the *Menorah*. He simply could not visualize or make the *Menorah*. In the end, it was necessary for Moshe to throw the ingot into the fire and Hashem (so to speak) made the *Menorah*. Why was the *Menorah* different from all the rest? What made it stand out as so difficult that Moshe, our quintessential leader and master of prophecy, just could not seem to grasp its production?

The *Chafetz Chaim* quotes the commentators (*Malbim* and others) who explain that each of the *Keilim*, *Mishkan's* vessels, alluded to elevated spiritual concepts, which were symbolized by the *Keilim*. For example, the *Aron HaKodesh*, Holy Ark, alluded to Heavenly wisdom, which is unfathomable to man without Divine Intervention, such as the power of *nevuah*, prophecy. The *Shulchan*, Table, together with its *Lechem HaPanim*, Showbread, represented the physical needs of the Jewish People with the bread symbolizing material sustenance. The *Mizbayach*, Altar, is the go-between, bridge, link that conjoins *Klal Yisrael* with their Heavenly Father. The *Menorah* is the eternal light, symbolizing the eternal nature of the Jewish People.

The *Zohar HaKadosh* writes that Hashem instructed the Heavenly Angels to make a Heavenly *Menorah* corresponding with the *Menorah* in the *Mishkan/ Bais HaMikdash*. When the *Kohen* lit the *Menorah* in the *Mishkan*, the Heavenly *Menorah* would likewise light up. It was this light that illuminated the lives of *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, says the *Chafetz Chaim*, when Hashem instructed Moshe to make the *Menorah* which would symbolize the light of *Am Yisrael*, the eternal light of our nation, Moshe stopped and gazed into the future. He saw the millions of Jews persecuted, slaughtered and annihilated in various countries throughout the world, and he wondered: There will be so much darkness in the lives of our nation, so much pain and suffering, that our People will despair of the Final Redemption. Moshe had extreme difficulty making a *Menorah* that would serve as a point of illumination when, in fact, we would be subject to such extreme darkness. How do you present light

when there is such incredible darkness?

Hashem replied, "Throw the ingot into the fire and a *Menorah* will emerge. It is not what people see that represents reality. During times of fire, when there is unparalleled destruction, in times of persecution and murder, when what appears to be darkness seems to reign, specifically from these circumstances, the eternal light of *Klal Yisrael* shall shine brightly forth. From the midst of despair will emerge overwhelming salvation.

The *Chafetz Chaim* concluded that our function during the ambiguous times of *Ikvesa d'Moshicha*, closing days when the heel of *Moshiach* is being felt, is to shine the light of Torah study on this world, so that we may hope for the Heavenly Illuminator to concur and shine down upon us.