

And this is how the Menorah was made... according to the image that Hashem had shown Moshe, so did he make the Menorah. (8:4)

Rashi explains the meaning behind the word, *V'zeh*, and this, which seems to imply that Hashem in some way demonstrated to Moshe *Rabbeinu* how the *Menorah* should appear. Apparently, this is exactly what happened. Moshe had difficulty grasping the image of the *Menorah*. Hashem presented a visual rendition of the *Menorah*, pointing to it, as if to say *V'zeh*, “And this” (is how I want the *Menorah* to look). **Horav Nissan Alpert, zl**, compares this to two amateurs who were given the tools and materials to build a house. One neophyte had the common sense to realize that trial and error is not the way to build a structure – especially when time and materials are at a premium. The other one was not as rational.

The one who was impatient began building immediately. When he cut a beam too long, he shortened it, often too much, necessitating using another beam. Regrettably, he did not take into consideration that he had a limited amount of wood. This same process was executed with the masonry, electric and plumbing. The trial and error process worked out for him, in the sense that he now knew what was involved in erecting a house. The problem was that now he was out of material and time. Since he had performed every procedure a number of times until he got it right, he had expended valuable time, with little result. Even if he would have had the time, he had, unfortunately, depleted his cache of materials.

The astute fellow understood that to undertake building a house with no experience was foolhardy. He, therefore, sought out artisans and craftsmen and apprenticed himself to them, so that he could learn how to do it right the first time. Do we live our lives much differently than the first fellow who believed in the motto, “learn as you go”? Some check out various lifestyles, approaches to religious observance, one value system after another, until they realize that there is only one way to live, one appropriate manner of observance (allowing for modification according to one’s *mesorah*, but all in strict adherence to *Halachah*). Others look for a standard of living that is consistent with their comfort zone, not realizing that we must acquiesce to what Hashem asks of us – not what makes us comfortable. The problem is that, just like the fellow who thought he knew it all ran out of time and material, we, too, also run out, but, for us, it is life itself which is sadly too short. When we will be called to task for our lack of achievement, our excuses will be dismally insufficient.

We are blessed with a gift from Hashem that enables us to forgo the tragedy that engulfs the “trial and error” process. He gave us the Torah, in which it is all spelled out. We have no need to experiment; thus, we need no excuses. Hashem has infused the Torah with His wisdom. By studying it and following its illuminating way of life, we ultimately achieve a comfort zone on this world and great reward in the next world. Those who go through life searching for the truth would not know what it is – even if they walk right into it. There is only one truth, and it can be found in

only one place: the Torah.

In *Sefer Mishlei* 6:3, Shlomo *Hamelech* compares a *mitzvah* to a lamp, and Torah to light, *Ki ner mitzvah v'Torah ohr*, “For a *mitzvah* is a lamp, and the Torah is light.” David *Hamelech* preceded him, when he wrote in *Sefer Tehillim*, 119:105, *Ner l'Ragli devarecha v'or l'nesivasi*, “Your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light for my path.” The **Metzudas David** comments: “Just as the candle saves one during the darkness of night from obstacles and from stumbling with one’s feet, so do Your words save me from stumbling and transgression.”

We now understand why Moshe and the Jewish people wanted to see a clear image of the *Menorah*, for it represents the integrated totality of our system for life: the Torah. When one meticulously follows a blueprint, he is ensured success. The Torah is our blueprint for life, the architectural drawings that the builder is required to follow, in order to ensure that his structure will endure.

Those who truly seek the truth need not experiment.