

## "And they shall take for you pure olive oil... to cause a lamp to burn continually." (27:20)

In the *Talmud Shabbos 22b*, *Chazal* state that the *Ner Ma'aravi*, western lamp, which miraculously continued to burn, attested universally to Hashem's presence among *Bnei Yisrael*. This is enigmatic. The *menorah* was situated in the *Mishkan* and later in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*. These were places in which no *Yisrael* -- and surely no gentile -- was permitted to enter. If so, how did the western lamp serve as testimony to confirm Hashem's presence among *Klal Yisrael* to the world?

*Horav Yitzchak Hutner z.l.*, asserts that the *Ner Ma'aravi* inspired *Bnei Yisrael* to be cognizant that the *Shechinah* reposed among them. Even if they did not actually see the light burning, they were aware of its constant flame. This awareness catalyzed a heightened spiritual response from *Bnei Yisrael*. The knowledge and consciousness that the *Ner Ma'aravi* burned within the *Mishkan* was sufficient evidence of Hashem's presence. When *Bnei Yisrael's* behavior is spiritually correct, this feeling manifests itself throughout the world. One only has to see the spiritual elevation exhibited by *Bnei Yisrael* in order to recognize Hashem's presence.

*Horav Hutner* used this exposition to calm a number of well-meaning lay leaders who petitioned him to make changes in the *sidrei ha'yeshiva*, *yeshiva* schedule, in order to impress potential donors who would visit. *Horav Hutner* felt that this sort of "propaganda" was not only ethically improper, but it was also unnecessary. If the *yeshiva* was internally solid, if the *Torah* study within the walls of the *Bais Ha'midrash* was exemplary and uninterrupted, people on the outside would hear about it. The only way to truly impress others with one's spiritual or educational superiority is to actually earn that distinction.