

You shall make a Menorah of pure gold, hammered out shall the Menorah be made. (25:31)

Chazal (Midrash Tanchuma) teach that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had difficulty visualizing the completed *Menorah*. Hashem showed him a *Menorah* of fire. Moshe still had difficulty in making it. Hashem then instructed Moshe to hurl an ingot of gold into the fire – and a completed *Menorah* emerged. This *Midrash* is laden with commentary addressing Moshe's difficulty, in as much as we only find two other places in the Torah in which Moshe experienced difficulty understanding Hashem's command. Obviously, the idea of a *Menorah* fashioned of fire has a profound message.

I came across an inspiring story concerning *Chanukah* which I think might illuminate for us what about the *Menorah* presented Moshe with such difficulty. The *Meiri* writes: "Whoever is cautious with the candles, lighting them with love and inspiration, will be granted children *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars." The blessing for good children goes hand-in-hand with the performance of the *mitzvah derech chibuv v'hearah m'forsemes*, "with love, enthusiasm and joy." We will soon see that this blessing applies not only to *neiros Chanukah*, the *Chanukah* candles, but equally to *Shabbos* candles. *Horav Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*, adds, that in addition to granting children who will be scholars, *Chanukah* and *Shabbos* candle - lighting with love and inspiration has the potential to shine the light of *emunah*, faith, and *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, in one's children.

Now, for the story and the correlative lesson that is derived from it. A woman approached the *Baal Yesod HoAvodah, zl, Horav Avraham Weinberg* of Slonim, and pleaded for help concerning her daughter: "My daughter has gone off the *derech*, left the path of religious observance. She has recently run away. I do not know what to do. I am so distressed." The *Slonimer* asked her, "Do you have a garment that belongs to your daughter?"

"Yes, we do," she replied.

"I suggest that you should take this garment, cut it up in strips and make wicks from it. Use these wicks to kindle the *Shabbos* candles."

The woman did exactly as the *Rebbe* had instructed, and, in the middle of the *Shabbos* meal, their daughter returned home. She asserted that she had acted foolishly and now wanted to do *teshuvah*, repent. Mother and daughter embraced in immense love. The *Shabbos* candles had brought her around.

In his *Bais Avraham*, the *Slonimer* adds that this is implied in the *brachos*, blessings, *L'hadlik ner shel Shabbos*, *L'hadlik ner shel Chanukah*. The word *l'hadlik*, "to light," does not only mean to light the candles of either *Shabbos* or *Chanukah*; it also means to ignite the fire of *Yiddishkeit* in people's hearts.

Having said this, we now return to the *Menorah* which our quintessential leader and *Rebbe* had difficulty visualizing. Moshe's quandary was not about the *Menorah's* design. His perplexity concerned the *Menorah's* function as a vehicle for igniting the hearts and minds of the Jewish people. How does one inspire, how does one arouse, awaken a cold heart, a turned - off mind? Hashem replied, "With fire!" The *Rebbe* who inspires with passion, with a burning zeal for *Yiddishkeit*, ignites the heart and mind of even the most dispassionate, closed-minded Jew. One cannot kindle a candle without a match. Likewise, one cannot enkindle, stimulate a lost Jew, unless he himself is aflame with *emunah* in Hashem. Could this lesson not have been derived without throwing an entire ingot of gold into the fire? Hashem could have shown Moshe a flaming *Menorah*, and Moshe could have constructed the pieces and attached them. Hashem was teaching Moshe a fundamental lesson in outreach. The *rebbe/outreach* expert/imbuer of Torah must himself be centrally infused, synchronized, totally balanced throughout. He cannot be an individual who is "mostly" committed, dealing with his own spiritual challenges and exigencies. Fractional *emunah* begets disjointed commitment. Such a person will produce students whose devotion is equally fragmented.