

When you bring up/kindle the lamps. (8:2)

Rashi cites *Chazal* who derive from the word *b'haalosecha*, which is connected to *alah*, go up, that there was an elevation before the *Menorah* in the *Bais HaMikdash*. The *Kohen* would ascend those steps in order to kindle the lamps. I once heard a profound homiletic rendering of this *Chazal*. Not only was it incumbent upon the *Kohen* to cause the lights of the lamps to rise, but he also had to rise up one step, to elevate himself spiritually as he kindled the lights.

Many wonderful people illuminate society by kindling lights, but they do not necessarily elevate themselves in the process. Some build institutes without catalyzing their own personal spiritual ascendance. They kindle lights for others, while they remain unchanged/stagnant. Indeed, for some, the care they dedicate to the *Menorah* serves as compensation for the continuing guilt concerning their own dark practices.

Standing for a long *Shemoneh Esrai* does not mitigate unethical practices in the market place. *Kashrus* observance and *tzedakah*, generosity to a Torah institution, do not wash away the hurt we cause those who are in need of a comforting word, a warm smile. Torah scholarship does not permit one to take advantage of the weak – women and children whose lives are kept in limbo due to arrogance and personal agendas. It is crucial that we seek increased religious commitment, but seeking alone is not sufficient; one must elevate himself in the process. Otherwise, the effect will be short-lived and be less meaningful.