

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXXVI: Beha'alot'cha (Num. 8:1–12:16)

Essay 1. Teachings from the Scriptural language of kindling the menorah

“You shall instruct the Israelites to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, *leha'alot* [להעלות] [for kindling and tending] lamps regularly.” – Ex. 27:20

“Command the Children of Israel to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, *leha'alot* [להעלות] [for kindling and tending] lamps regularly.” – Lev. 24:2

“*Beha'alot'cha* [בהעלותך] [in your kindling and tending] of the lamps, let the seven lamps give light at the front of the menorah” - Num. 8:2

פסוק "בהעלותך את הנרות", פירש רש"י על שם שהלחב עולה, כתיב בהדלקתן לשון עליה, שצריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה, ועוד דרשו מקאן שמעלה היתה וכו'.

There is a **verse**: “Speak to Aaron and say to him, ‘**In your kindling and tending of the lamps**, let the seven lamps give light at the front of the menorah” (Num. 8:2). Scripture here uses the word *beha'alot'cha*, which can be translated literally as, “in your making it ascend.” Related forms of the word are also used in other references to lighting the menorah, as shown above.

Rashi explains, “Because the flame ascends [oleh] [עולה], the kindling of [the lights] is written in the language of ‘ascending,’ ” i.e., *beha'alot'cha* [בהעלותך] has the same root of *ayin* and *lamed* as “ascends [oleh] [עולה].” This teaches, continues Rashi, “**that one must kindle them until the flame ascends of itself.**” That is, it is not enough for the priest to light part of the wick and to walk away, or to light part of the wick and then adjust the wick until the flame ascends. Rather, it is necessary to light the entire wick.¹ Thus, the translator has interpreted *beha'alot'cha* as “in your kindling and tending.” Rashi continues: “**Furthermore, [our Rabbis] derived from here** (from the expression *בהעלותך*) **that there was a step** in front of the lamp upon which the priest stood while preparing the lights,”² which is another reason for using a word related to the root for “ascends,” as the priest had to ascend the step in order to light the menorah.

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¹ Shabbat 21a: “Rami bar Hama . . . [said that the requirement is to light the lamp] so that the flame ascends of itself [when it is kindled], and not that it ascends by means of something else [e.g., adjusting the wick after it was lit].”

² Mishnah Tamid 3:9, “And there was a stone in front of the lamp and in it there were three steps upon which the priest would stand and prepare the lamps for kindling.” See also Sifrei Bamidbar 59.

קשה למה בפרשת תצוה גבי להעלות נר תמיד, לא כתב אלא שצריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה. ובפרשת אמר על פסוק "להעלות נר תמיד", לא פירש כלום. ולמה נוקא בכאן הביא דרשת רבותינו, וקודם לה הקדים הפירוש שצריך להדליק וכו', שפבר אמרו למעלה, אלא שפכאן הוסיף הטעם על שם שהלהב עולה וכו'.

It is difficult to understand why in parsha Tetzaveh for the kindling of the eternal lamp (Ex. 27:20), [Rashi] only wrote that it is necessary to kindle it until the flame ascends of itself, but he did not explain that the word *leha'alot* was related to the root for “ascending.”³ Also, he did not explain that there was a step in front of the menorah, on which the priest needed to ascend.

Also, in parsha Emor on the verse, “Command the Israelite people to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly” (Lev. 24:2), [Rashi] did not explain anything regarding the Torah’s use of the word *leha'alot*.

Why especially here at Num. 8:2 did [Rashi] bring the ruling of our masters that there was a step in front of the menorah, and before doing so he advanced the explanation that it was necessary to kindle the lamps of the menorah to the point that the entire wick was burning, for he already said this above, at Ex. 27:20. Only here, he added the reason that the language of kindling and tending is derived from the root “ascending,” because the flame rises upward.

ויש לומר דרש"י הרגיש למה נוקא בענגן הדלקת המנורה אמר הפתוב תמיד לשון העלאה מה שלא מצינו בכל התורה לשון העלאה בהדלקת האש. ומשום הכי הקדים רש"י לתרץ קושיא זו ב"ואתה תצוה" שהיא הפעם הראשונה שהוזכר ענגן המנורה בכתוב, ופירש שצריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת וכו' דזהו המשמעות של להעלות.

It can be said that Rashi struggled why, with relation to lighting the menorah, Scripture always spoke in the language of “raising up,” whereas we don’t find that language of “raising up” anywhere else in the Torah with regard to kindling a fire.⁴ Therefore, Rashi proposed to solve this question in his comments on “You shall instruct,” i.e., Ex. 27:20, which was the first time that the mitzvah of lighting the lamps of the menorah was mentioned in Scripture, and he interpreted that it is necessary for the priest to light the lamps of the menorah until the flame ascends of itself, for this is the meaning of the word *leha'alot*.

³ See also Ex. 30:8 in parsha Tetzaveh, “Uv’ha’alot [ויבהעלת] [and in kindling and tending] the lamps at dusk, Aaron shall burn it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.” Rashi comments similarly to what he wrote at Ex. 27:20.

⁴ Where the Torah elsewhere discusses kindling a fire, it uses the roots “בָּעַר” [*ba'ar*] (Ex. 35:3 and Num. 11:1), “יָקַד” (Lev. 6:2) [*yakad*], and “קָדַח” [*kadach*] (Deut. 32:22).

ובפרשת אמר לא פירש כלום משום דשם אין קושניא כלל שיהי פירש רש"י עצמו שם "צו את בני ישראל" זו פרשת מצות הגרות, ופרשת תצנה לא נאמרה אלא על סדר מלאכת המשכן וכו'. אם כן הוכרח לומר הכל לשון אהד משום דהיגו הך ד"תצנה" וליכא למידרש מיניה כלל.

In parasha Emor, Lev. 21:1–24:23, i.e., referring to the discussion of lighting the menorah at Lev. 24:2, [Rashi] did not explain anything regarding the Torah's use of the word *leha'alot*, for there was no question there. As Rashi himself explained at that point:

“Command the Children of Israel [to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting]”: This is the section [containing] the commandment concerning [kindling] the lamps, whilst [regarding] the section “You shall instruct” [Ex. 27:20], [the menorah] is only mentioned there for the sake of giving an orderly account of the work of the Tabernacle, to explain the purpose of the menorah, for that’s the meaning of [the words], “and you will at some future time command the Children of Israel” about this.

- Rashi on Lev. 24:2

If so, it’s necessary for Scripture to say everything using the same language, whether we are considering Lev. 24:2, where the priests are actually commanded concerning the law, or the earlier verse Ex. 27:20, informing of the need to make the commandment to the priests in the future. **Because of that, we find the same language written here of the word *leha'alot*, in this [text] of [the verse] “You shall instruct,” i.e., Ex. 27:20, and there is nothing extra to be derived from [Ex. 27:20] at all, beyond what is explained when the commandment is actually given, at Lev. 24:2.**

אמנם בכאן חזר והרגיש מתחלה, למה כתב "בהעלותך" שיהיה לו לכתוב "בהעלות" בלא כ"ף. ועוד הואיל שכתב אף בכאן "בהעלותך" אין עוד מקום לדרוש מלשון זה של העלאה שצריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה וכו'. דאי הכי הנה לו לכתוב אינה פעם לשון הדלקה דאז הנה מצינו לדיוקי לשון להעלות שכן דרך הכתובים שמשנים הלשון פעם אחת כדי לרמוז לנו אינה חידוש או לימוד. אכל מדחזינון שכל הפעמים מזכיר לשון העלאה הנה לנו סלקא דעתא לומר שאף לשון העלאה שייך אצל האש כמו לשון הדלקה. והיגו על שם שהלהב עולה, מאין עוד הכרח שיהיה צריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה?

However, here in Num. 8:2, [Rashi] reconsiders why [the verse] writes *beha'alot'cha* [בהעלתך] [“in your ascent”], when it could have written “*beha'alot*” [בהעלת] [“in the ascent”] without the letter *kaf*, as in the other verses. Furthermore, since even here [Scripture] wrote “in your ascent,” there’s no room to expound from this language of “ascending” than that already discussed, that the priest needs to light the wick until all of it is burning and the flame is rising on its own. For if so, if G-d had wanted to teach us something extra, [Scripture] could have written, at some time, using the language of *hadlaka* [הדלקה] [“lighting”] such that we would have been able from the precision of the change from the language of *hadlaka* to the language of *leha'alot* [“to cause to ascend”] to learn that the priest needs to light until the flame

rises on its own—for it is the way of Scripture to change the language once in order to hint to us of some novelty or teaching.⁵ But from what we see, that every time [Scripture] mentions the mitzvah of kindling the lamps of the menorah, it uses the language of “ascending,” it may enter your mind to say that even the language of “ascending” is associated with the kindling of a fire, as the language *hadlaka* would be, and that it is not a strange term for which we should derive a novelty or teaching. Perhaps it is because the flame rises upward that the language of “ascending” is used, and it is not meant as a change to teach us anything. From where else do we know that it is necessary to learn from the language of “ascending” that the verse used, that [the priest] will be required to light [the lamps] until the flames rise on their own?

ולכן פתב "בהעלתה" לומר שהכהן מחוייב לעשות שהלהב תעלה, דהיינו שצריך להדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה.

Therefore, [Scripture] writes “*beha’alot’cha*,” with an added *kaf*, designating the second person, “you,” to say that it’s not enough to simply light part of the wick and walk away. Rather, the priest is obligated to act such that the flame rises, which is that he needs to light the entire wick until the flame will ascend of itself.

ועוד מדייק הכ"ף של "בהעלתה" למדו רבותינו שמעלה היתה וכו' דהיינו כשמעלה אתה להדליק.

Also, from the precision of the *kaf* of *beha’alot’cha*, our rabbis learned there were [three] step[s] in front of the lamp upon which the priest stood while preparing the lights. That is, the word *beha’alot’cha* [בהעלתה] [“in your making it ascend”], is interpreted as *be’alot’cha* [בעלתה] [“in your ascent”], which is that you shall ascend the step in order to light the lamps of the menorah.

Thus, the Torah discussed kindling the menorah in parshat Tetzaveh (at verse Ex. 27:20), in parshat Emor (at verse Lev. 24:2), and in parshat Beha’alot’cha (at verse Num. 8:2). In Tetzaveh, Rashi explained the priest’s obligation to act such that the flame ascends on its own, i.e., by his lighting the entire wick. Rashi does so in Tetzaveh because that is the first occurrence of the language *leha’alot* with regard to kindling the menorah.

Rashi does not repeat this in Emor, because he had already covered it in Tetzaveh.

In Beha’alot’cha, Rashi explains the significance of the *kaf*, as directing a command to a priest, that he should go up himself, i.e., upon step(s). But he didn’t want readers to think that the change in the language was only with regard to the step(s), so he repeated that the priest needed to act such that the flame ascends on its own.

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⁵ The word “*hadlaka*” is of Aramaic origin, and does not appear in the Five Books of Moses. However, as noted in the previous footnote, the Torah elsewhere discusses kindling a fire using words for “burning,” and not based on the *leha’alot* or the root עלה [ascending].