
פרשת בהעלותך

פרק ח פסוק ד

וְזֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּנְרָה מִקֶּשֶׁה זָהָב עַד־יִרְכָה עַד־פְּרֻחָהּ מִקֶּשֶׁה הִוא כַּמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כִּן עָשָׂה אֶת־הַמִּנְרָה:

רש"י

וְזֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּנְרָה: שֶׁהִרְאָהּוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּאֶצְבַּע לְפִי שְׁנַתְקֶשֶׁה בָּהּ, לְכֹד נֶאֱמַר "וְזֶה"¹.

מושג

כיון שנתקשה, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה, טול כבר זהב והשליכהו לאש והוציאהו, והיא נעשית מעצמה.

Translation:

Once Moshe found it difficult (to fashion the Menorah) Hashem told Moshe, take a Kikar of gold and throw it into the fire and take it out, and it will be fashioned by itself.

Explanation:

Moshe was not able to understand what exactly the Menorah was to look like. Hashem showed Moshe a Menorah of fire, which provided a visual of the Menorah. However, due to the Menorah being fashioned from only one Kikar of gold, Moshe was unable to hammer the gold to the exact thickness that would allow it to use only the one Kikar and at the same time be able to stand to its two meter height. After much toil, Moshe threw the Kikar of gold into the fire and Hashem brought forth the Menorah. Once Hashem sees that we put forth the effort He does the rest.

Looking in the Pasuk:

There are multiple inferences from which our Musag is taken. The first is from the fact that it does not say משה כן עשה משה. The second is from the Pasuk in Shmos which says תיעשה את המנורה, inferring that the Menorah was made by itself. Rashi's commentary is based on the Gemoroh which infers from the word וזה and also the words כמראה אשר הראה that Hashem was showing Moshe something.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Hashem showed Moshe what the Menorah should look like. Moshe attempted to hammer out the Kikar of gold to fashion the Menorah, but was unable to complete the task. He threw the gold into a fire and the Menorah fashioned itself.

Understand: That what Hashem expects from us is our utmost effort. The results are in Hashem's hands.

Think: Careful reading of text, including textual inference and choice of words, reveals hidden meaning.

1 See note #1

NOTES

1. The word זה seems to connote something that is being pointed to. (One of the most often quoted examples is taken from אז ישיר, where on the words זה קלי ואנוהו Chazal explain מה שראה שפחה על הים. לא ראה יחזקאל וכי. Therefore, when Hashem said to Moshe וזה המנורה, it infers that Hashem was showing Moshe something. Later we will quote Rashi's source which mentions two other times that Hashem used the word זה when speaking to Moshe and each refer a time when Moshe had difficulty understanding something (the New Moon, or the forbidden insects) and Hashem showed them to Moshe. In all three instances the Torah uses the word זה². The מהרש"א comments that the word זה should only be understood thus if it opens the topic. However, if a topic is being discussed in the Torah and in middle of the discussion the word זה is used, in such instances the word is simply referring to what was mentioned above and should not be understood as Hashem providing a visual aid.

2. There is an obvious contradiction between Rashi's commentary, which is based on the Gemoroh (מסכת מנחות כט.), and our Musag, which is based on the Midrash Tanchumah (פרשת בהעלותך סימן ג). The Gemoroh reads:

תניא, רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר: ארון של אש ושלחן של אש ומנורה של אש ירדו מן השמים, וראה משה ועשה כמותם, שנאמר: (שמות כ"ה) וראה ועשה כתבניתם אשר אתה מראה בהר... תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: שלשה דברים היו קשין לו למשה, עד שהראה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא באצבעו, ואלו הן: מנורה, וראש חדש, ושרצים. מנורה, דכתיב: וזה מעשה המנורה

According to the Gemoroh, Hashem simply showed Moshe a picture of the Menorah, and Moshe fashioned the Menorah by himself. However, according to the Midrash, Hashem fashioned the Menorah, Moshe simply threw in a Kikar of gold.

Both opinions can be supported by the text of the Torah. The Gemoroh infers its explanation from the word וזה in our Pasuk, as explained in footnote 1, and also from the words אשר אתה מראה בהר. The Midrash infers its explanation from the word תיעשה³ written in Sefer Shmos⁴, as well as from the fact that in our Pasuk it does not say עשה את המנורה, but rather עשה את המנורה, which can be taken to mean that Hashem made the Menorah, not Moshe. However, how can both be true?

We could answer that the two דברי חז"ל are disagreeing as to how the Menorah was fashioned, with Rashi preferring the inference of the Gemoroh over that of the Midrash. However, this is not possible, for Rashi in (כה:לא) agrees with the inference of the Midrash!:

תיעשה המנורה. מאליה, לפי שהיה משה מתקשה בה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא, השלך את הכפר לאור והיא נעשית מאליה, לכה לא נכתב תיעשה

Therefore even if we could entertain the possibility that the two דברי חז"ל argue, we would still wonder: Why does Rashi contradict himself?

One possibility is that Moshe struggled with two issues. The first was that he could not understand what the Menorah was supposed to look like. Perhaps he could not picture what the כפתור or פרח were. Additionally, he struggled with actually making the Menorah out of one block of gold. Therefore, even after Hashem showed him a visual of the Menorah, he still could not fashion the gold to match the picture. Therefore, Hashem had to fashion the Menorah for him⁵.

There are, however, two problems with this answer. The first is that the Gemoroh quoted above says explicitly that after Hashem showed Moshe the Menorah of fire, Moshe made the Menorah: ומנורה של אש ירדו מן השמים, וראה משה ועשה כמותם. Also difficult to understand is why, after seeing exactly what the Menorah was supposed to look like, did Moshe have such difficulty?

The Midrash states:

2 החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים (שמות יב:ב) - וזה לכם הטמא בשרץ (ויקרא יא:כט)

3 תיעשה infers that the Menorah was made by itself. תיעשה would mean that Moshe made it. We will quote the Midrash in its entirety soon.

4 ונעשית מגרת וקב טהור מקשה תיעשה המנורה ורכה וקנה גביעיה כפתריה ופרחיה ממנה יהיו (שמות כה:לא)

5 See the מהרש"א who provides a similar explanation. According to this explanation the words וראה משה ועשה כמותם would be understood as Moshe saw and *tried* to make like them.

מקשה זהב: מהו מקשה כלומר "מה קשה" היא לעשות? שהרבה יגע משה עד שלא עשה המנורה שכן הוא אומר מקשה תיעשה המנורה (שמות כה) כיון שנתקשה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה טול זהב והשליכהו לאש והוציאהו והיא נעשית מעצמה וכפתריה ופרחיה גביעיה וקניה ממנה אתה היה מכה בפטיש ומעצמה נעשית, לכך הוא אומר מקשה תיעשה המנורה יו"ד מלא ולא כתיב תעשה כלומר מעצמה תיעשה, מה עשה משה נטל את הככר והשליכו לאור ואמר משה רבש"ע הרי הככר נשלך בתוך האש כשם שאתה רוצה תעשה לפניך, מיד יצאת המנורה עשויה כתקונה, לכך כתיב כמראה אשר הראה ה' וגו' כן עשה משה אין אומר כאן אלא כן עשה סתם מי עשה? הקדוש ברוך הוא

I have underlined two parts of the Midrash which are key to understanding what happened. The first שהרבה יגע משה, that Moshe toiled greatly until he could not make the Menorah, is hard to understand. What great toil was there? The next underlined words, אתה היה מכה בפטיש, provide the answer; he was busy hammering out the gold. Why was this such an impossible task?

The answer is found in the design of the Menorah. Scholars have a hard time understanding the physics behind the design. The problem is in the amount of gold used for the Menorah, one Kikar. The problem is that one Kikar of gold simply cannot fashion a Menorah that is almost two meters tall! To illustrate: A Kikar of gold is between 35 and 50 Kilograms of gold. The Menorah fashioned by the Machon Hamikdash, which was made to the specifications of the Torah, is only plated in gold. The plating is approximately one centimeter thick and yet used 45 Kilograms of 24K gold⁶! How could Moshe stretch one Kikar of gold to fashion the Menorah?

We now understand why the Menorah's gold had to be מקשה, hammered, since it had to be extremely thin. We also understand why Moshe toiled (שהרבה יגע משה) with the hammering (אתה) (היה מכה בפטיש), trying with much effort to stretch one Kikar of gold to the specifications of the Torah. And, even when he succeeded in finally hammering the gold sufficiently thin to make the Menorah, it could not stand without breaking, since the thin gold could not support the required height! So, even after Hashem showed Moshe what the Menorah was supposed to look like and Moshe fashioned the Menorah to match the picture⁷, the difficulty of hammering (מקשה) to the precise thickness which would allow the Menorah to stand was beyond Moshe's ability. Moshe was left with no option but to tell Hashem: הרי הככר נשלך בתוך האש כשם שאתה רוצה תעשה לפניך.

We have thus explained that both the Gemoroh and Midrash are true. Moshe was shown what the Menorah looked like (וזה) and succeeded in fashioning the Menorah, but still could not successfully have it stand until Hashem fashioned it (תיעשה) Himself.

One could ask, if the fashioning of the Menorah was practically impossible, why did Hashem command Moshe to try? Perhaps the answer is found in the message of the Menorah itself. Hashem does not need our light, (מנחות פו:), והלא כל ארבעים שנה שהלכו ישראל במדבר לא הלכו אלא לאורו (מנחות פו:), we simply put in our effort and Hashem does the rest.

I once heard a beautiful thought that supports this concept. Hashem tells Avrohom:

הַבְּטִינָא הַשְּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֵר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ פֶּה יִהְיֶה וְרַעְיָה (בראשית טו:)

Hashem instructs Avrohom to try and count the stars. He then asks him, "Can you count them", and concludes by saying "Thus will be your offspring." Hashem is instructing Avrohom to go out and try to do the impossible. Avrohom begins to count even though no man can count the stars. To which Hashem says, you began to count even though the stars cannot be counted! This will be the legacy of your children. They will do as you did, they will follow the commands of Hashem even though the mission seems impossible.

In truth all we do is in the hands of Hashem. Every success is not our own doing but Hashem's. Our mission is to toil, אדם לעמל יולד; Hashem does the rest⁸.

3. Questions for further thought:

- Read the Midrash carefully. Whose initiative was it to throw the gold into the fire, Hashem's or Moshe's?
- In what other instance was gold thrown into a fire and what resulted? Is there a connection?

6 Since you asked: Approximate cost is 3 million dollars.

7 Which explains why the Gemoroh says כמותם ועשה כמותם.

8 As the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (פרק ב משנה טז) teaches: לא עָלִיד הַמְּלָאכָה לְגִמּוּר, וְלֹא אֹתָהּ בֶן חוּרִין לְבַטֵּל מִמֶּנָּה