

The Menorah as a Symbol of the Soul Within Man (Part 2)

"And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst." (Shemot 25:8)

Human Actions, Torah, and the Illumination of the Soul

The human being, by housing the soul within the body, has six aspects, as our Sages taught (*Chagigah* 16a): "Three [aspects] resemble ministering angels and three resemble animals. [Man] has understanding, walks upright, and speaks in the Sacred Tongue like the angels; [on the other hand,] he eats and drinks, reproduces, and excretes like the animals."

This is what the verse alludes to: "Six branches issued from its sides" from the central Menorah, which represents the soul, whose axis is the study of Torah and the fulfillment of *mitzvot*. These six actions are divided into two groups:

Three branches of the *Menorah* on one side, the right, corresponding to the angel-like aspects.

Three branches of the *Menorah* on the other side, the left, corresponding to the animal-like aspects.

"Three cups shaped like almonds on one branch, a knob and a flower [...] so for the six branches": This again alludes to those who occupy themselves only with Torah, those with Torah and *mitzvot*, and those with only *mitzvot*. The three cups indicate that one who studies Torah must divide their time into *Mikra* (Scripture), *Mishnah*, and *Talmud* (*Kiddushin* 30a), and they also allude to the levels of interpretation: *pshat* (פשוט: simple sense), *remez* (רמז: allusion), and *drash* (דרש: homiletic), which are accessible to all.

"And on the Menorah itself, four cups": This corresponds to the central and main axis of the *Menorah* – the soul itself – which can reach even the fourth level, *sod* (סוד: secret), thus forming the acronym PaRDeS (פרד"ס).

"A knob under two branches...": Actions are paired with one another. Opposite eating and drinking is understanding; opposite reproduction is walking upright; and opposite excretion is speaking

in the Sacred Tongue. Even when certain actions lower the human being, the Torah elevates and balances them.

Therefore, the branches were joined by the knobs: to teach that in all these six actions, there must be Torah and *mitzvot*. In eating, guarding the *mitzvot* and speaking words of Torah; in thought, reflecting on Torah; in reproduction, acting with holiness; in walking, not going without Torah or *mitzvot*; even in the washroom, avoiding the forbidden and, when permitted, using the Sacred Tongue (Hebrew).

There were five knobs on the central body of the *Menorah*, alluding to the five levels of the soul: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah*, and *yechidah*. And there were three flowers, corresponding to the three pillars on which the world stands: judgment, truth, and peace (*Avot* 1:18), and also to Torah, Divine service, and acts of kindness.

"Their knobs and their branches shall be out of it":

That is, both human actions and the study and fulfillment of *mitzvot* must be performed *leshem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven), for the good of the soul.

"All of it, a single piece of pure gold":

The perfection of the soul requires effort and constancy until it becomes completely pure gold. That is why the *Menorah* was made of a single block, for the righteous have a single heart directed toward their Father in Heaven.

"You shall make its lamps, seven [...] and they shall give light toward its front": The soul must be illuminated with Torah and *mitzvot* performed with joy and a good heart. The seven lamps allude to the seventy years of human life: throughout them, the soul must shine and not be contaminated with transgressions, which are performed in darkness.

"And its tongs and its snuff dishes shall be of pure gold": Even when a person is occupied with material affairs and bodily needs, their acts must be "pure gold" – with honesty and faithfulness, without profaning the Name of Hashem.

"And see and make according to the model shown to you on the mountain": This alludes to what our Sages said (*Shabbat* 152b): "Return it with purity just as it was given to you." That is, we must strive so that, even after living in this world, our soul remains as pure as the day it was entrusted to us.

(*Zera Shimshon*, Parashat Terumah, Art. 12)



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Translated and written by Rabbi Moshe Spira - yomospira@gmail.com

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USA - Rabbi Menachem Binyomin Paskesz 347-496-5657 mbpaskesz@gmail.com
Zera Shimshon c/o Rabbi B Paskesz 1645 48th Street, Brooklyn NY 11204

Eretz Yisroel - Rabbi Yisroel Silberberg
052-716-6450 zera277@gmail.com



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