

The Daily Portion

- Sivan Rahav Meir

How to Kindle a Lamp

- How to Kindle a Soul

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This week's Torah portion of B'ha-alo-t'cha begins with Aharon HaKohen lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan. There is underlying meaning to Rashi's commentary that each lamp is lit 'until the flame rises on its own'. Seven days of the week, just before nightfall, the flame of the Menorah's western lamp – which never went out – touched each wick of the Menorah until that wick burned on its own.

What we learn from the lighting of the Menorah is not merely a technical understanding of when and how it was done. On a deeper level, Aharon HaKohen is instructing us how to ignite a fire of enthusiasm in those under our care. This method of lighting up other souls applies to parents, teachers, managers, military officers, and every one of us. Initially, our hovering presence may be enough for children and others to do what we expect, if only on account of our proximity and their dependence on us.

But it is impossible to hold our children's hands forever. There

comes a time when we must let go. We cannot do everything for them and must find the right moment to step back and allow them to shine with their own light. There are no clear rules here since some children will need more nurturing patience than others. Each generation of teachers may require new tools to prepare students to find their own illuminating paths through life. But being smothered with attention is never healthy. Rashi's words teach that the responsibility placed upon us is to ignite the fire "until the flame rises on its own" so that the souls we kindle and inspire go on to inspire others as well. AMEIN.

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