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Titzaveh: One Small Spark

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V'Ata Titzaveh es Bnai Yisroel, V'Yikchu Elecha Shemen Zayis Zach Kasis La'Maor L'Haalos Ner Tamid

You shall command the Children of Israel and have them bring you clear olive oil, [made from olives that were] crushed for lighting, to keep the lamp burning constantly (Exodus 27:20-21)."

It has to be pure. Not just any oil can be used for the kindling of the Menorah. As Rashi explains, "it must be pure without dregs or sediment ... only from the first oil which emerges from the olive."

The deeper meaning seems obvious – we must strive for purity in our service of God. If we choose to kindle the fire of spirituality within ourselves, we must find the personalistic oil of purity. We must reach into ourselves and find that holiness which remains intact and untarnished, despite our many life mistakes and missteps. We each possess this oil, but like the Chanukah story, this oil of holiness is often buried beneath layers of rubble and impurity – but it's there. If I can summon the courage to search for it, I can burn bright.

There is a second lesson to be learned from this simple commandment. Rashi comments:

to keep the lamp burning constantly: *Heb. לְהַעֲלִיל, lit., to cause to rise. [The kohen] shall light it until the flame rises by itself (Shabbos 21a).*

The Kohen must ignite the wick, but all it needs is a spark, and after that, "the flame rises by itself." The creation of light does not require a burning torch or blazing fire; it just requires a spark. What is true for the Menorah is true to personal luminescence as well. Each of us is on a quest for holiness. We want to find God, and we want to find our true selves. We seek deeper connections to our people, we yearn to discover our strengths, and we want to know we have made a difference in even some small way. But we often become paralyzed when looking to make the first move toward the actualization of these aforementioned goals. What should I do? What should I take on? So many options and possibilities. How do I know what the right move is? Rashi comes to teach us – all I need is a spark. Just do something. Find something positive to propel your life forward. Find something meaningful to create extra holiness. Choose something you are going to start or improve, or choose one area of immense struggle and create a plan to tackle it. These are the sparks of life, and they can generate so much future light. All you need is one tiny spark to get the fire burning.

Purim is a day of sparks. We ignite a spark of Torah by reading the Megillah. We ignite a spark of compassion and kindness by giving Matanos L'Evyonim (gifts to the poor). We ignite the spark of reconciliation by giving Mishloach Manos (gifts of food to one another). These sparks light the way toward Pesach, the celebration of national and personal freedom from that which enslaves us.

It is a spark which provided light in the Bais HaMikdash, and it is a spark of positive, dynamic activity which can provide light in our lives. May we find the courage to ignite the spark and bask in the raging flame of accomplishment and growth.