Class # 31– Parshat Ba'alotecha - The Power of the Non-Professional Jew

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

Rabbi Pinny Rosenthal

The story of Yohai Makbili:

After years of work the volunteers of the ‘Mishne Torah Project’ completed the work on the elucidated edition of Maimonides’ most famous books known as ‘The Mishne Torah’ or ‘HaYad HaHazaka’ after the 14 books it includes.

The initiator and main editor of the ‘Mishne Torah Project’ is Yohai Makbili, who works in high-tech for a living and has a masters in electrical engineering. “The project is essentially a volunteer project” he tells ‘Kipa’ and explains that the work is carried out in collaboration with other organizations as well as individuals.
In addition some yeshivas took part in the project for example “Yeshivat Or Vishua” “Yeshivat Torat HaChaim” and “Yeshivat Birkat Moshe” as well as researchers such as Yehiel Cara from the Academy of the Hebrew Language and prof. Zohar Amar from the Bar-Ilan University and more… ‘The Mishneh Torah Project’, add the creators and explain, “returned the book exactly to how Maimonides intended it to be for the general public”.

The books are now used by thousands of learners, as part of the daily Rambam in the religious stream of the public school system and different adults. “The ability to present the essence of the entire oral Torah and explain it in a concise manner, is something inspiring; the precision required, the simplicity in which the entire Jewish Torah is presented, the accessibility to everything (with indices), the clarity, the decision making, Maimonides as a unifying character that all streams in Judaism recognize his greatness are all important tools for shaping the Jewish identity. This is an important undertaking, national, fundamental and classic that has the power to touch each and every one of us”, say the Mishneh Torah Project.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtQVOtdF0qA&t=116s> at 3:51 - Yohai epiphany

1. How was Rambam taught to Yohai before?
2. How did he study it by himself?
3. What awareness did he arrive at?
4. Did he go to rabbinical school?

Parshat Ba’alotecha

*Lighting the Lamp*

8:1 God spoke to Moses, telling him to 8:2 speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you [light](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=8#C2887) the lamps, the seven lamps shall [illuminate the menorah](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=8#C2888).' 8:3 Aaron did that, lighting the lamps to illuminate the menorah, as God commanded Moses. 8:4 The menorah was made of a single piece of beaten gold. Everything from its base to its [blossom](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=4&CHAPTER=8#C2889) consisted of a single piece of beaten metal. The menorah was thus made exactly according to the vision that God showed Moses.

בהעלותך את הנרות, when you kindle the six lamps,

אל מול פני המנורה, facing the lamp on the center shaft; this means that the wick is to be inclined towards this center shaft so that the flames will point in this direction from the respective sides of the menorah. Then, and only then,

יאירו שבעת הנרות, all seven lamps will fulfill their function of illuminating and being the conduits of spiritual light descending on to the Jewish people. [obviously, the individual lamps would be able to provide physical light before being positioned in the manner described. Ed.]
The mussar, allegorical lesson conveyed by the lights of the menorah is us that only by the “right” side representing preoccupation with eternal values, life in the future, working together with the “left” side which represents the concerns with physical life on our planet, will we be able to attain our purpose on earth. Our sages in Chulin 92 phrased it thus: אלמלי עלייא לא מתקיימא אתכליא, “if not for the input from celestial regions, spiritual input, the creatures on earth would not be able to survive at all.” [I have not found this precise quote, but it means more literally that if there were no wise people who could tutor the uneducated, the world as we know it would collapse. Ed.] In order for this universe to function as G’d wanted it to, all social levels of the people have to make their respective contributions.
A major function of the combined activity by the “tutored and the uneducated” is to ensure that G’d’s name would be hailed, revered and enthusiastically acknowledged by every segment of mankind, all of His creatures. An example of such a thing happening is found in [Exodus 19,8](https://www.sefaria.org/Exodus.19.8) ויענו כל העם יחדו ויאמרו כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה, the emphasis here being on the word יחדו, i.e. all the people in unison would combine to carry out G’d’s will.

Rambam, Mishneh Torah , Laws of Teshuva, Ch.3:11

A person who separates himself from the community [may be placed in this category] even though he has not transgressed any sins. A person who separates himself from the congregation of Israel and does not fulfill mitzvot together with them, does not take part in their hardships, or join in their [communal] fasts, but rather goes on his own individual path as if he is from another nation and not [Israel], does not have a portion in the world to come.