

## 5781 – Exodus 27-30 – Tetzaveh (You shall command)

### *How to Avoid Becoming Grumpy in the Golden Years*<sup>1</sup>

*It almost felt like paradise on earth. In the dead of winter, we were spending a few glorious days surrounded by lush greenery and towering palm trees. A relative who owned a condo in Florida offered us a short getaway. It was a dream come true to escape the snow and luxuriate in the heat.*

*Of the thousands of people in this 55-plus community, some were snow-birds who worked in colder climates but were able to visit for a few weeks; others resided there year-round.*

*The premises were beautiful. We swam in one of the many pools dotting the grounds and took long walks along the scenic routes. The community center on the premises offered reading clubs, craft-making activities, game rooms, and movie nights.*

*What an ideal place to relax, where your only worry was whether to play tennis or paint ceramics. So, why were we meeting a disproportionate number of people who looked sad or grumpy? One woman wore a T-shirt with the words, "Living the dream!" But her face read, "Living a nightmare."*

This week's Torah portion begins with G-d commanding Moses about lighting the menorah.

And you shall command the children of Israel, **and they shall take pure olive oil, crushed for the light, to kindle the lamps continuously** ... Aaron and his sons shall set it up before the L-rd from **evening to morning**; an **everlasting** statute for their generations ...—EXODUS 27:20-21

The light of the candelabra is also a metaphor for the light every soul brings into our world. Every mitzvah we accomplish, every helpful act we do, every positive goal we achieve brings everlasting spiritual light into our environment.

To light the menorah, we need "crushed oil."

The Talmud teaches:

Just as the olive yields oil only when it is pounded, so are man's greatest potentials realized only under the pressure of adversity.—MENACHOT 53B

In order to bring light into our lives, we need some pressure and challenge. While none of us wants to be truly "crushed," when we have that "impossible" deadline, when we embark on a goal that seems "unreachable," when we push ourselves "beyond" our limits, we discover untapped reservoirs—and we discover our light.

Many of us dream of the day that we can retire and do nothing. But in reality, goals, pressures, and even some crushing responsibilities can help us discover our strength and creativity. When time hangs heavily on our shoulders, when our days revolve around finding ways to fill our moments, we feel useless, and our energy becomes focused on the negativity in our lives.

**Want to generate light? Create new spiritual goals.** No matter what stage of life, from "morning to night"—from our youth till even our very old age—continue aspiring to reach higher

Rest, vacation, and relaxing in the sun may be necessary breaks. But to generate light, pressure yourself to keep contributing

And that's something I'll need to keep in mind when my alarms rings next Monday morning.

#### 1. Exodus 27:20a

... and they shall take **pure olive oil, crushed** for the light ...

##### a. Menachot (Meal Offerings) 53b

R. Yohanan said: Why is Israel said to be like the olive? Because as the olive will not yield its oil **unless it is crushed, so Israel do not return to the right way unless they are crushed by affliction.**

##### b. Exodus Rabbah 36:1

"A leafy **olive** tree, fair with goodly fruit" (Jer. 11:16). Olives, while still on the tree, are marked for shriveling, after which they are knocked down and brought up to a roof, where they are left to dry; then they are placed in a grinding mill, where they are ground; their pulp is then tied up in a hempen bale, upon which heavy stones are placed. Only after all of that do olives yield their **oil**. So, too, Israel. The nations of the earth knock them down, drive them from place to place, imprison them, put chains around their necks, and post soldiers all around them. **Only then do Israel resolve on repentance, and the Holy One responds to them.**

##### c. Olives are a metaphor for the Jewish people. In the words of our sages, just as oil is extracted when the olive is compressed so does the Jew reveal his oil when he is oppressed. **Oil refers to the inner resolve of our *neshama* (soul) that emerges in times of challenge.**<sup>2</sup>

However, **oil alone cannot produce light, it requires a wick and a flame. The wick is the Jew and the flame is Torah.** Moses, as the source of Torah, is able to touch the flame to the oil and wick. This is why we, the wick, are instructed to bring our inner resolve, the oil, to Moses, the source of Torah.

<sup>1</sup> Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights, Bereishit/Shemot*, (Chabad.org), pp. 229-231.

<sup>2</sup> [www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/365292/jewish/The-Jew-and-the-Olive.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/365292/jewish/The-Jew-and-the-Olive.htm)

d. Romans 11:24

<sup>24</sup>After all, if you were cut out of **an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree**, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

- a. Are the “cultivated” olive branches the only branches that produce olives with which to make oil? In other words, are the Jewish people the only people who can be used of God to bring light into the world?
- b. If “No,” then it begs the question—Aren’t the “wild” branches expected to produce olives with which to make oil too?
  - 1) And if so, don’t these olives have to be “crushed” as well?
  - 2) And if so, don’t they require the “nourishing sap from the same olive root”? (Rom 11:17).
  - 3) What are the implications of both the “cultivated” branches and the “wild” branches **being nourished by the same sap**?
  - 4) If the tree is Israel—the “sap” would be the Torah.

c. Luke 10:25-28

<sup>25</sup>On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**"

<sup>26</sup>"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup>He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " <sup>28</sup>"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. **"Do this and you will live."**

d. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana<sup>3</sup> 21:4; Yalkut Shimoni,<sup>4</sup> Isa., #499

R. Aha said, **Israel is likened to an olive tree**: "A leafy olive tree fair with goodly fruit" (Jer. 11:16). And the Holy One is likened to a lamp: "The lamp of the Lord is the spirit of man" (Prov. 20:27). **What use is made of olive oil? It is put into a lamp**, and then **the two together give light as though they were one**. Hence the Holy One will say to Israel: My children, since My **light** is your **light** and your **light** is My **light**, let us go together—you and I—and give **light** to Zion: "Arise, give **light**, for thy **light** has come" (Isa. 60:1).

R. Hoshaia said: **Jerusalem is destined to become a torch for the nations of the world, who will walk by its light**, as is said, **"Nations shall walk at thy light"** (Isa. 60:3).

<sup>3</sup> *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* is a collection of Aggadic midrash. It is very old, and must be classed together with Genesis Rabbah and Lamentations Rabbah, but from a higher stage of midrashic development

2. Exodus 27:20b

... to kindle the lamps *continuously* ...

a. Leviticus Rabbah XXXI:4

4. Another comment on the text, COMMAND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL THAT THEY BRING ... OIL. Bar Kappara began his exposition with the text, **For Thou dost light my lamp (Ps. XVIII, 29). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to man: 'Your lamp is in My hand and shall My lamp be in your hand?'** That 'your lamp is in My hand'—is proved by the text, The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord (Prov. XX, 27). Shall 'My lamp be in your hand,' as it says, To CAUSE A LAMP TO BURN CONTINUALLY ... BEFORE THE LORD (XXIV, 20)? The only inference must be that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'If you light My lamp I shall light yours.'—This explains, COMMAND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL THAT THEY BRING ... OIL.

1) Psalms 18:28

**You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.**

2) Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>14</sup>"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

3) Matthew 6:22-23

<sup>22</sup>"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are ~~healthy~~ (good), your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup>But if your eyes are ~~un-~~ ~~healthy~~ (bad), your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

CJB—"The eye is the lamp of the body.' So if you have a **'good eye'** (that is, **if you are generous**) **your whole body will be full of light** ...

b. Leviticus Rabbah XXXI:11

R. Hanin said: By reason of the merit of causing A LAMP TO BURN CONTINUALLY (XXIV, 2) **you will be worthy to welcome the lamp of the King Messiah. What is his reason? Because it says, There will I make a horn<sup>(1)</sup> to shoot up unto David, there have I ordered a lamp for Mine anointed (Ps. CXXXII, 17), and it says, I rejoiced<sup>(2)</sup> when they said unto me: Let us go unto the house of the Lord (Ps. CXXII, 1).**<sup>(3)</sup>

(1) Viz. (*namely*), the Messiah; metaphor.

<sup>4</sup> *Yalkut Shemoni*—usually referred to as "the Yalkut" of Simeon of Frankfurt—the best known and most comprehensive midrashic anthology, covering the whole Bible. Compiled in the 13<sup>th</sup> century

(2) Joy and light are synonymous.

(3) I.e., **in the Messianic era when the divine light shall shine again.**

1) John 8:12

When Yeshua spoke again to the people, he said, "**I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

d. Leviticus Rabbah 31:8; Numbers Rabbah 15:7

Another comment: **A mortal lights a lamp from another lamp that is already kindled.** Can he possibly light a lamp out of darkness? Yet of God it is said, "And darkness was on the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2), followed immediately by, "And God said: 'Let there be light'" (Gen. 1:3). **If out of darkness I brought forth light, do I require your light? I only told you to kindle lamps in order to elevate you—"continually to elevate through the lamp"**<sup>(860)</sup> (Exod. 27:20).

(860) MT: "Cause a lamp to burn continually."

1) 2Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness" (Gen 1:3), made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah.

e. "Because no sunlight fell into the Sanctuary, there had always to be one light ... The lamp of the Sanctuary is represented in the Synagogue by the perpetual lamp burning before the Ark (the *Ner Tamid*). The Rabbis interpret this lamp as a symbol of Israel, whose mission it was to become a 'light of the nations' (Isa XLII, 7)."<sup>5</sup>

3. ***Want to generate light? Create new spiritual goals. No matter what stage of life, from "morning to night"-from our youth till even our very old age-continue aspiring to reach higher.***

a. Ta'anit (Fast-Days) 7b

R. Nahman b. Isaac<sup>6</sup> said: Why are the words of the Torah likened to a tree, as it is said, It is a tree of life to them that grasp it? This is to teach you. **just as a small tree may set on fire a bigger tree so too it is with scholars, the younger sharpen the minds of the older.** This will be in agreement with what R. Hanina said: I have learnt much from my teachers, and from my colleagues more than from my teachers, **but from my disciples more than from them all.**

b. 2Timothy 1:6

<sup>6</sup>For this reason I remind you to **fan into flame the gift of God,** which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

c. 2Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>**so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

d. Avot 1:16

*Rabban Gamliel<sup>7</sup> used to say: Appoint a teacher for yourself ...*

1) Even if he is equal or inferior to you intellectually, appoint him as your teacher, **because studying with another person is much more efficacious than studying alone.** The exchange of ideas yields greater clarity (*Rambam*<sup>8</sup>). *R' Yonah*<sup>9</sup> states additionally that one remembers that which is learned from a teacher better than what he learns by independent study. Therefore **even a study partner is justifiably called a teacher, since his participation in the learning process increases its success.**

2) Matthew 13:47-52

<sup>47</sup>"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup>When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup>This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup>and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all these things?" Yeshua asked. "Yes," they replied. <sup>52</sup>He said to them, "Therefore **every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.**"

a) In Matthew 13:52 the words of (Yeshua) concerning parables describe the process: "And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and

5 Dr. J. H. Hertz, C. H., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, (Soncino Press), p. 339.

6 Rav Nahman b. Yitzhak was an *Amora* (*Interpreter, Expounder*—one who contributed to the Gemara) of the 4th-generation (c. 320–350 CE)—active in Babylonia.

7 Gamaliel the Elder, or Rabban Gamaliel I, was a leading authority in the Sanhedrin in the early first century CE. He was the son of Simeon ben Hillel and grandson of the great Jewish teacher Hillel the Elder. Gamaliel is thought to have died in 52 CE

8 Moses ben Maimon, commonly known as Maimonides and also referred to by the acronym Rambam, was a medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher who became one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages.

9 Rabbi Yonah was an *Amora* (*Expounder*) of the 4th-generation (320–350 CE) active in *Eretz Yisrael*.

what is old.” When viewed in the context of the Second Temple period, the Gospel parables are imbued with old and new. According to a saying attributed to Hillel,<sup>53</sup> anyone who does not add to one’s learning through new and innovative creativity should be killed (Avot 1:13). One adds to the old as one captures the essence of Torah and passes the message on to subsequent generations. The parables embrace the old world of Jewish learning by making new old of the earlier traditions. **The new, however, is not a rejection of the old but rather a renewal and reapplication that blends together a powerful combination of ancient themes and fresh ideas.**<sup>10</sup>

**Such a process makes the message of the Torah relevant. This dynamic breathes fresh life into the old message, which actualizes Torah in experience.** It does not replace or cancel Torah but renews its essence through revalidation and reinterpretation. The primary objective of Jewish learning is to realize the purpose of Torah in the fear of God. Each generation must embrace the old and the new ...

e. 2Peter 1:5-7

<sup>5</sup>... make every effort to **add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup>and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup>and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

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<sup>10</sup> Brad H. Young, *The Parables, Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*, (Hen-dricksen Publishers), pp. 29-30.