

5782 – Exodus 27-30 – Tetzaveh (You shall command)

^{27:20}"Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. ²¹In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.

1. 20. וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם—*And you shall command*. Many commentators have wondered **why this passage is interposed between the laws of building the Tabernacle and those of the priestly garments**. These two remaining verses of Chapter 27 deal with the lighting of the Menorah, **a topic which will not be developed until Leviticus**. In his commentary there (Leviticus 24:2), Rashi remarks that our passage here was incorporated into the account of the building of the Tabernacle in order to explain the purpose of the Menorah. The introductory words of this passage, then, should be understood as follows: *And [in the future] you shall command the Children of Israel [regarding the oil, etc.]*.¹

These two verses may also be seen as introducing Aaron and his children to their role in performing the Divine service and that is why they are included with *Sidrah Tetzaveh* rather than with *Sidrah Terumah*. Although the first step in their inauguration was to invest them with the priestly garments, the *Sidrah Tetzaveh* starts with the command to light the Menorah because of the special significance of this particular service (see Rashi to Numbers 8:2).

The Zohar calls attention to the peculiar emphasis on Moses in our text. The Divine command issued to Moses uses וְאָמַרְתָּ *and you*, as a separate word, instead of allowing it to be implied in the grammatical construction of the verb, תְּצַוֶּה, *you shall command*. A similar form is used further on with וְאָמַרְתָּ הַקָּרֵב אֵלַי, *and you shall bring near* (28:1), וְאָמַרְתָּ תִּדְבֵּר, *and you shall speak* (28:3), and וְאָמַרְתָּ קַח לִי, *and you shall take* (30:23). By addressing Moses personally, Hashem invested him with undivided authority over Aaron and his sons, and over the Israelites. According to the Midrash, this authority gave Moses quasi-royal powers (*Tanchuma*).

The special attention given to Moses in introducing the sacred service recalls the fact that **Hashem had originally intended him to be the Kohen Gadol as well as the teacher and leader of the people**. It

was only because of Moses' reluctance to accept his Divine mission at the outset of his career that Hashem declared Aaron, his brother, to be the Kohen while he, Moses, would remain a Levite (Rashi to 4:14). The Midrash describes Moses' disappointment when, after performing the priestly service during the Tabernacle's inaugural week he was told to invest Aaron with the office of Kohen Gadol (Leviticus 8:2, Shemos Rabbah, ch. 37), Moses was hoping that his earlier sin had been forgiven, and that he would now function as God's first servant. (In truth, there was another reason for Moses to be disqualified from the priestly service—the fact that he had killed an Egyptian during the exile in Egypt. A Kohen who kills another person loses his right to perform the Service.)

From the outset, the Torah instituted a **"separation of powers," distinguishing the authority of the priesthood from the authority of the judiciary**. If Aaron personifies the priesthood, then Moses reflects the legal system (Rashi to Deuteronomy 33:21). It is in this capacity that Moses had the responsibility of investing the Kohen Gadol. Later on, that task became the responsibility of the president of the *Sanhedrin*. **All this is implicit in the emphatic appeal which Hashem addresses to Moses: וְאָמַרְתָּ, and you Moses!** Three consecutive times this appeal echoes and re-echoes at the beginning of this Sidrah: וְאָמַרְתָּ, *and you shall command*; וְאָמַרְתָּ הַקָּרֵב אֵלַי, *and you shall bring near* (28:1); וְאָמַרְתָּ תִּדְבֵּר, *and you shall speak* (28:3). In so doing, Hashem stressed the importance of his responsibilities and of the confidence Hashem had in him. Thus, Moses was comforted after his bitter disappointment. His mission to teach the Torah to the people and to enforce it brought him immense satisfaction. Our Sages attribute to him the words of the Psalm: *Had the Torah not been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction* (Psalms 119:92).

a. Hebrews 9:24-25

²⁴For **Messiah did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands** that was ... a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. ²⁵Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

Moses came to realize that כְּתֹרֶת תּוֹרָה, *the crown of the Torah*, is even more precious than כְּתֹרֶת כֹּהֲנֻת, *the crown of priesthood* ... **The crown**

¹ Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Shemos*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd., pp. 392-415.

of Torah is accessible to all Jews, no matter what their origins (Deuteronomy 33:4), whereas Aaron's distinction is passed on solely to his own offspring.

b. Yoma 72b

R. Johanan said: There were three crowns: that of the altar, that of the ark, and that of the table. The one of the altar Aaron deserved and he received it. The one of the ark, David deserved and received. The one of the table is still lying and whosoever wants to take it, may come and take it.⁽¹⁴⁾

(14) Aaron, the first high priest, obtained the crown of priesthood, symbolized by the altar; David, the crown of kingdom; but **there is no hereditary crown of learning, it must be acquired by each individual**. The aspirants, however, are not many, hence it is still lying unclaimed.

c. Peah 1:1

MISHNAH 1. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE THINGS FOR WHICH NO DEFINITE QUANTITY IS PRESCRIBED⁽¹⁾ THE CORNERS [OF THE FIELD],⁽²⁾ FIRST-FRUIT⁽³⁾, [THE OFFERINGS BROUGHT] ON APPEARING [BEFORE THE LORD AT THE THREE PILGRIM FESTIVALS].⁽⁴⁾ THE PRACTICE OF LOVINGKINDNESS,⁽⁵⁾ AND THE STUDY OF THE TORAH.⁽⁶⁾ THE FOLLOWING ARE THE THINGS FOR WHICH A MAN ENJOYS THE FRUITS IN THIS WORLD WHILE THE PRINCIPAL REMAINS FOR HIM IN THE WORLD TO COME: THE HONOURING OF FATHER AND MOTHER,⁽⁷⁾ THE PRACTICE OF CHARITY, AND THE MAKING OF PEACE BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS FRIEND; BUT **THE STUDY OF THE TORAH IS EQUAL TO THEM ALL**.

- (1) In the Torah; but see the next Mishnah where Rabbinic tradition fixes the minimum at one-sixtieth.
- (2) Lev. XIX, and XXIII, 22 enjoin the owner to leave unreaped the former for the poor and the stranger to gather.
- (3) Bikkurim; v. Ex. XXIII, 19; Deut. XXVI, 1-11. These were presented to the priests in the Temple.
- (4) Re'ayon; v. Ex. XXIII, 17; Deut. XVI, 16. Biblically, every man according to the gift of his hand (Deut. XVI, 17), but Rabbinic halachah prescribes a ma'ah (a silver coin) as the minimum value of the burnt-offering and two silver coins that of the festival offering, v. Hag. 1a. According to Bertinoro, Re'ayon denoted appearing in the Temple, i.e., there is no limit as to the number of times the Israelite may enter the Temple during the three festivals.
- (5) *Gemilluth hasadim*, a term implying more than mere charity and denoting personal service to all men of all classes.
- (6) Josh. 1, 8.
- (7) Fifth Commandment; Ex. XX, 12, Deut. V, 16.

d. Avot 2:8

MISHNAH 8. RABBAH JOHANAN B. ZAKKAI RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM HILLEL AND SHAMMAI. HE USED TO SAY: IF THOU HAST LEARNT MUCH TORAH, DO NOT CLAIM CREDIT UNTO THYSELF, BECAUSE **FOR SUCH [PURPOSE] WAST THOU CREATED**.⁶¹

(61) **The idea that man, and especially an Israelite, is created for the purpose of giving himself to the study of the Word of God and obedience thereto, is deeply rooted in Biblical and Rabbinic literature**, cf. Micah VI, 8: It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: only to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. Cf. Deut. X, 12. L.: If you have acquired more than the average knowledge of the Torah, do not attribute it to your own superior abilities, for it is God who has endowed you with special talents in that direction.

e. Maimonides, Talmud Torah 3:1²

The crown of Torah, behold, it lies and is available for every Israelite. As the verse says: 'Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob' (Deu 33:4). **All who wish may come and take it up**.

f. Luke 9:23-25 (Mat 10:38; Mar 8:34; Luk 14:27)

²³Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be **my disciple** must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

1) **"Take up your cross and follow Me"** means being willing to die in order to follow (Yeshua). This is called "dying to self." It's a call to absolute surrender.

2) Colossians 3:5-11

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: **sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry**. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since **you have taken off your old self with its practices** ¹⁰**and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator**. ¹¹Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Messiah is all, and is in all.

3) Proverbs 3:13-15

¹³Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, ¹⁴for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. ¹⁵**She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.**

In view of the above, it is appropriate that the name of Moses is not mentioned anywhere in *Sidrah Tetzaveh*, even though it appears in every other *sidrah* since his birth. Deprived of the privilege of priesthood, he now moves for the moment into the background as his brother Aaron comes to the fore. The reason for this is that *Tetzavah* is concerned almost entirely with the laws of the priesthood. Nevertheless, Moses is well rewarded. In the last *sidrah* of the *Exodus* we find the phrase בְּאֶשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה, *as Hashem commanded Moses*, re-

peated eighteen times (*Baal HaTurim*,³ end of *Pekudei [Accounts]*) ... But why omit Moses' name from *Sidrah Tetzaveh* rather than another *sidrah*? Vilna Gaon explains that **the Sabbath on which this *sidrah* is read in the synagogue ordinarily falls during the week of the severnth of Adar, the anniversary of Moses' death.**

2. לְמַאֲוֹר—*Pressed ... for illumination*. Quoting the Talmud (*Menachot [Meal Offerings]* 86a), Rashi comments that the purest and highest quality olive oil was reserved for the Menorah, but the oil for the meal-offerings could be made of oil of lesser quality. The *Midrash Tan-chuma* observes that usually the better oil is used for preparing food, while oil of secondary quality is used for lighting a lamp. **But in the Tabernacle the best quality oil was reserved for the Menorah.** Within Judaism, matters of the spirit, as symbolized by the sacred light, take precedence.

a. Matthew 13:44-46

⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went **and sold all he had** and bought that field.

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away **and sold everything he had** and bought it.

3. לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד—*To kindle the lamp continually*. Most commentators explain this command symbolically. *The Torah is compared to fire and the human soul to light*. Whoever lights the Menorah brings the flame of the law into men's hearts and ignites them. R' Hirsch notes that the unusual form לְהַעֲלֹת, to kindle [literally, *to cause the flame to go up*] is utilized here instead of the simpler expression לְהַדְלִיק, *to light*. This implies that the Kohen should keep the small flame with which he is lighting the wick, near the wick until the flame goes up from the wick by itself. The lesson derived from here is, that **the goal of the teacher of Torah is to make his students independent, and himself superfluous**. Eventually, they should be able to do without his assistance.

a. Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹So Messisiah himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²**to equip his people for works of service (i.e., mitzvot)**, so that the body of Messiah may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith ... **and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Messiah.

b. Hebrews 5:11-14

¹¹We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. ¹²In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴But **solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.**

c. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana⁴ 21:4; Yalkut Shimoni⁵ 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).

3 Jacob ben Asher (c. 1269-c. 1343) was an influential Medieval rabbinic authority. He is often referred to as the Ba'al ha-Turim ("Master of the Columns"), after his main work in halakha (Jewish law), the *Arba'ah Turim* ("Four Columns").

4 *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

5 *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 13th century

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).**

4. 21. חֶקֶת עוֹלָם לְדוֹרָתָם—*An eternal decree for their generations.* The Midrash observes that although we no longer possess our Temple, we still have our synagogues and houses of study. By keeping their eternal lights constantly lit, we are preparing for the future light of the messianic kingdom, of which the prophet said: *And the nations shall walk at your light, and kings at the brightness of your rising* (Isaiah 60:3) [Midrash HaGadol and Tanchuma]. That is the significance of the נֵר תָּמִיד, *everlasting light*, in the synagogue. It is a vestige of the נֵר מְעֻרְבִי, *western light*, of the Temple, a symbol of the eternal flame of faith and of spirit, forever inextinguishable in the sanctuaries of Israel.

5. מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל—*From the Children of Israel.* To fill the entire house with light—this was man's first contribution to the Divine dwelling on earth, just as the creation of light was the first act in the creation of the universe (Gen 1:3). Bechinas Olam⁶ (quoted by Malbim⁷) describes the bond uniting man, represented by the lamp, with **the Divine light of the Torah**. The Torah is the flame which spreads from the heavenly spark of Hashem. Man with his two elements, body and soul, is a lamp which absorbs the light of the Torah. Man's body is the wick and his soul is the pure olive oil which fuels the flame. When the lamp and the flame unite, they produce a light which fills the whole house the world.

a. John 1:1-14

¹**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴**In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.** ⁵**The light shines in the darkness,** and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹**The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world ...**

¹⁴**The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1) **Is there a “connection” between the Torah being thought of as “the Diving Light” and the Messiah being the “light of all mankind”?**

b. Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴**You are the light of the world.** A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither 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. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds (i.e., *mitzvot*) and glorify your Father in heaven.

1) Jeremiah 31:33

³³**This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law (Torah) in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people.

2) **Is there a “connection” between the Torah being written “on the hearts” of God’s people and Yeshua’s declaration that we “are the light of the world”?**

^{28:2}Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron to give him dignity and honor.

1. 2. וַעֲשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ—*You shall make vestments of sanctity.* Rambam explains that the Kohanim were given very beautiful and holy garments so that people would be inclined to honor and revere the Temple, which the Kohanim served. For the same reason, a Kohen with a physical defect was not allowed to take part in the Temple service. This was in recognition of human nature which causes people to judge others by their appearance (Guide to the Perplexed 3:45).

However, it is evident from the very detailed descriptions of the holy garments that other reasons exist for the priestly garments. Indeed, **the Sages of the Talmud hold that like the sacrifices, the holy vestments themselves served as an atonement.** In fact, each article of clothing

6 A long poem about the vicissitudes of this world and the corresponding need to avoid the pleasures of this world and to rather cling to the wisdom found in study of the Torah and philosophy, composed by Yedayah HaPenini, c.1300-c.1340 CE.

7 Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser (1809–1879), better known as the Malbim was a rabbi, master of Hebrew grammar, and Bible commentator.

was designated to atone for a particular sin (Arachin 16a;Tosafos; Maharsa), Certainly **everything in God's house was a proclamation of mercy and forgiveness. Every human being, together with all the sacred utensils and objects contained within the Tabernacle, contributed either directly or indirectly to that supreme goal.**

The power of purification emanating from the Kohen Gadol was much greater than other sacred objects. He was like Hashem's angel (Malachi 2:7) and the holy vestments contributed to this holiness. Whoever came in close contact with the Tabernacle and the Kohen Gadol felt himself becoming better, purer, and more spiritual. The sacred garments played an important role in this development.

Expanding upon this concept, some commentators explain the laws regarding the priestly garments from the universal perspective of the Tabernacle and its objects as a miniature model of the universe (see the commentary to 26:1). From this point of view, **the Kohen Gadol represents the ideal human being, Adam, within that universe, who is called upon to facilitate the union of the Creator and His creatures.** The holy vestments are the counterparts of the כְּתֹנֶת עוֹר, *garments of skin* (Genesis 3:21) that God made for Adam in Paradise. **The Midrashic view of Adam's garments is that they were made of light** [similarity of עוֹר, *skin*, and אֹר, *light*] (see the commentary to Genesis 3:21).

Human clothing, aside from the physical protection it affords, protects the soul from succumbing to sin. At the same time it serves as a vestige of man's state before sin, when he was completely bathed in Divine light. In a similar fashion, the priestly garments perform a dual function within the miniature world of the Sanctuary. They confer their sacred character upon the man personifying the ideal of purity and holiness, bringing out the greatness in him, as King David says: You have made him (man) but a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor (Psalms 8:6). At the same time, the priestly garments serve to banish sin from the Sanctuary of God.