



# WHEN ILLUMINATION PROVIDES ELUCIDATION

## Weekly Torah Video Series: Parshas Tetzaveh

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

### Empowering All Systems of Existence

1. Mitzva: To kindle the Menorah every day.
2. The Menorah was in the covered sanctuary in the Holies outside of the curtain.
3. The Ark containing the Tablets and the Torah was located in the Holy of Holies– the location of the Divine presence.
4. Gemara: The illumination of the Menorah represents the Oral Law.
5. Should not the Menorah be alongside the Ark with the Written Law?
6. Midrash: Do not think that G-d needs your light.
7. The Jewish People ask G-d: “You are the light of the world: why do You need our light?”
8. “It is to elevate you in the eyes of the nations that I need your light.”
9. G-d, absolute in perfection, has no needs.
10. The world’s existence is bound to the performance of the Jew.
11. However, because G-d is absolute and wills existence, He can choose to supersede the system.
12. This is the meaning of “Your Light I don’t need.”

### Qualifying the Officiant Through His Appropriate Attire

1. A Kohen can officiate a service when wearing the priestly vestments.
2. Aaron and his sons were installed as Kohanim on the 8th day of the inauguration.
3. The first seven days Moshe officiated wearing a white tunic.
4. Why was Moshe’s service valid although it was without priestly vestments?
5. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: The High Priest’s vestments were to atone for the sins of the Jewish People.
6. Moshe’s service atoned for Aaron’s sin of the golden calf.
7. Shelah Hakadosh: The essence of every human being is his soul; the body is only the vestment of the soul.
8. Adam and Eve’s bodies, before eating the fruit, were untainted.
9. Afterwards, their bodies became putrified and no longer qualified as vestments.
10. The Kohen is only functional as an officiant if he wears an appropriate vestment.
11. Moshe’s physicality was so purified he radiated holiness; his body qualified as his vestment.
12. All he needed was a white tunic to cover his nakedness.
13. Ramchal: Adam before the sin and Moshe, were the only two humans whose souls dwelt within their bodies.

### The Entry Point to Greatness Availed by Life

1. The Menorah is only kindled with olive oil.
2. Gemara: The illumination of the Menorah brings the Divine assistance needed to come upon the truth of Torah.
3. Noach sent out the dove to see if the flood waters had receded.
4. The dove returned with an olive leaf in its mouth.
5. Midrash: “Better my sustenance should be bitter from the hand of G-d than sweet from the hand of man.”
6. Before it is processed, the olive is naturally bitter and caustic, corroding the cutting iron implement.
7. The Jewish People are compared to the dove.
8. Midrash: To comprehend and come upon the truth of the oral law, one must forgo many of life’s amenities.
9. Tanchuma: When suffering comes upon the Jewish People they submit & pray to G-d, unlike the nations who bolt & become defiant.
10. Through experiencing the bitter, one comes upon clarity.

## Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Parshas Tetzaveh



### G-d Heard the Desire of the Humble

The Torah states regarding the kindling of the Menorah, **“Now you shall command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination...”**

The Midrash states, “You (G-d) illuminate all creation; yet, You command us to kindle the lights of the Menorah. Reb Meir says, ‘G-d said, ‘The lights that Aaron kindles are more beloved to Me than the luminaries that I have set in the heavens.’ Why is this so?”

When all of the Princes were asked to bring gifts and offerings to participate in the inauguration of the Altar, the Tribe of Levy was excluded. As a result, Aaron was pained and distressed. He said, ‘All of the Princes were allowed to participate in the inauguration of the Altar, but I have no share in the offerings.’

G-d responded to him, ‘I swear on your life! Their participation was only one time; however, you will have your own special inauguration by kindling the lights of the Menorah.’ As the verse in Psalms states, ‘G-d heard the desire of the humble...’”

Aaron was pained and distressed because he was denied the right to participate in the sanctification of G-d’s Name. Because of his distress, he was granted the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah, which is considered the most special service in the Mishkan.

Because the kindling of the Menorah was precipitated by Aaron’s pain and distress that he was not able to sanctify G-d’s Name, it was more beloved to G-d than the luminaries in the heavens.

The Midrash cites the verse from Psalms, “G-d heard the desire of the humble...” to depict Aaron’s unique level of humility.

Many times the Torah mentions the name of Aaron before the name of Moshe and the name of Moshe before Aaron to indicate that they were the equivalent of one another.

Factually, Moshe was an individual who was on a spiritual level onto himself. As the Torah states, “He was the most humble man to walk the face of the earth....” The Torah states, “He is the most faithful in G-d’s household...”

When the Torah alludes to the fact that Aaron was the equivalent of Moshe, it is to say he was only a semblance of Moshe in his totality of person.

The Torah tells us that at the burning bush, when G-d told Moshe that he would be the redeemer, Moshe attempted to present himself as unqualified because he was concerned that he would offend his older brother Aaron, who until that time was G-d’s prophet and agent. G-d responded to Moshe by telling him that when his brother Aaron would know that his brother Moshe was to be the redeemer, he would go out and have “joy in his heart.”

Chazal tell us that because of Aaron’s capacity to rejoice in the good fortune of his younger brother Moshe, he merited to wear the breastplate on his heart as the High Priest.

If one does not an unusual level of humility, which is within the classification of Moshe’s humility, it is an impossibility for one to

experience the joy that Aaron had. Seemingly, this is the incident which indicated that Aaron had an unusual level of humility.

Thus, Aaron's pain and distress that his Tribe was not chosen to participate in the inauguration of the Mishkan was purely for the sake of G-d and only for His Glory. Therefore, G-d said that the kindling of Aaron is more beloved to Him than the luminaries of the heavens.

This is similar to the incident of Avraham's hosting of the three wayfarers on the third day after his circumcision. The Torah states, "Avraham was sitting in the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day..."

Chazal tell us that because G-d wanted Avraham to have a respite from engaging in hospitality to recuperate from his infirmity, He took the sun out of its sheath, thus causing it to be the hottest day since the beginning of existence.

Rather than taking this opportunity as a reprieve, to the contrary, Avraham was pained that he was denied the ability to host guests. He thus sat at the entrance of his tent awaiting individuals to host.

Avraham's hospitality was used as a vehicle to espouse monotheism. He was pained because he was denied the opportunity to engage in dialogue with pagans, thereby bringing them to monotheism, to recognize G-d as the Omnipotent One. Because he was distressed and pained that he was denied this opportunity, G-d sent him the most special guests, who were three angels in human form to host.

The Gemara in Tractate Bava Metizia tells us that every aspect of Avraham's hospitality that he provided to the angels was scrutinized by G-d and evaluated. It bore unlimited benefits for the future of the Jewish people.

As a result of the evaluation of all the aspects of Avraham's hospitality, the Jewish people merited many special gifts in the desert that allowed them to survive and advance their spirituality.

They merited the Clouds of Glory because Avraham offered the shade of his tree. They merited the Manna because Avraham offered bread. They merited the wellspring of Miriam because Avraham offered his water.

Although Avraham had participated in the mitzvah of hospitality unceasingly and selflessly until the age of ninety-nine, it did not bear this level of fruit. It was only because Avraham was pained that he was not able to perform the mitzvah of hospitality to convert pagans to monotheism that G-d provided him angels for him to fulfill the mitzvah of hospitality. It was not until that moment that his hospitality produced unlimited benefit.

Just as Avraham's pain for being denied a mitzvah opportunity to serve G-d was the catalyst that caused unlimited benefit to the Jewish people, similarly, Aaron's pain and distress for being denied the opportunity to sanctify G-d's Name caused him to merit the kindling of the Menorah.

## The Mishkan, Moshe's Edifice

The Torah in the Portion of Terumah enumerates the various materials that were needed for the building of the Mishkan, "**You shall take from them: gold, silver, copper...**"

The Midrash explains, "As it states, 'gold, silver, and copper...' Gold alludes to the Mishkan that was built by Moshe, because it was precious and beloved to G-d as gold. Silver alludes to the first Temple (that was built by King Solomon), as the verse tells us that the level of wealth that the Jewish people possessed at the time of King Solomon was so great that silver was no longer valued. (It was similar to stones.)

Since the word '*nechoshes* (copper)' alludes to something that is deficient (*nechushta*), copper corresponds to the second Temple because there were five things that were lacking in it: the Holy Ark, the *kapores* (cover for the Ark), the cherubs, the heavenly fire, and the Divine Presence."

Chazal tell us that the Mishkan that was built by Moshe and its vessels were never captured by the enemy, but rather they were hidden away. Its innate holiness was unique because it was overseen by Moshe and was infused with an advanced level of holiness through Moshe, thus, establishing its holy dimension forever. In contrast, The First and Second Temple were destroyed and their vessels were taken into captivity by the enemy.

The Torah states regarding the building of the Mishkan and its vessels, "**(G-d said to Moshe), you shall command...You shall make vestments... You shall make the Ephod...etc.**" Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh points out that G-d commanded Moshe himself to perform every aspect of the building of the Mishkan and the making of the vessels.

However, we see that although this may be the case, Moshe delegated the actual building to the many artisans who were endowed with special wisdom and craftsmanship by G-d.

In fact, the Mishkan and its vessels were entirely built by the Jewish people and not by Moshe himself. The only aspect of the Mishkan that Moshe participated in was the raising of the beams, which established it in its completed state.

If the Jewish people were the ones who actually built the Mishkan, why did G-d command Moshe himself to do so? And why did Moshe appoint the Jewish people in his stead, if G-d told him to do so?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains, "Every aspect of the building of the Mishkan was a mitzvah that was given by G-d to Moshe. The entire mitzvah of the building of the Mishkan was incumbent on Moshe himself. However, G-d instructed him to delegate his personal responsibility to the Jewish people who were qualified to carry out the needed tasks as his agents.

Based on the principle that 'one's agent is the equivalent of himself,' every aspect of the building of the Mishkan can be ascribed to Moshe himself." G-d wanted the building of the Mishkan to be within the context of agency so that Moshe should be the beneficiary of the building of the entire Mishkan.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, in the Portion of Shelach, explains the incident of the spies. How was it possible that initially they were considered to be righteous and subsequently they were considered to be evil?

He explains this within the context of agency. The Gemara draws from many sources in the Torah, that if one appoints an agent to represent him in any context, the agent is the equivalent of the one who had commissioned him. The agent is only effective and can function in his capacity because of his linkage to the one whom he represents.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that we see this principle in connection to the Princes of the tribes who represented the people of each of their tribes. The people in the tribes lacked faith and trust in G-d, as was evident since they requested scouts to spy out the land that was promised to them by G-d.

Although the spies were initially devoutly righteous and men of special spiritual acclaim, because they were the agents of the Jewish people who lacked faith, they were affected by them negatively. The clarity that they initially had before becoming the agents of their respective Tribes

was no longer the same. This linkage caused them to see what they had witnessed in a corrupted context rather than in a positive context.

Just as the power of agency can have negative consequences, as in the incident of the spies, so too can it have positive consequences. Since the Jewish people were appointed to be the agents of Moshe, regarding the building of the Mishkan, due to their linkage to Moshe, they were infused with a unique level of Divine Assistance.

Therefore when the Midrash tells us that gold alludes to the Mishkan of Moshe, which was the most beloved to G-d, it was not because Moshe only oversaw the Mishkan but rather because through the mechanism of agency, Moshe infused every aspect of the Mishkan with a special dimension of holiness.

## Reward and Punishment Can Be Misleading

The Torah states regarding the location of the Menorah, **“In the Tent of the Meeting, outside the Curtain that is near the Testimonial (Ark).”** The Menorah was located on the outer side of the Curtain, which separates between the Holy and the Holy of Holies.

The Midrash states, “The Menorah should be kindled outside of the Curtain, so that you should not be subject to your inclination to think, ‘I (G-d) need your light.’”

The proper location of the Menorah should have been on the inside of the Curtain in the Holy of Holies alongside the Ark (location of Divine Presence); however, it was placed on the outside of the Curtain to teach us that G-d does not need our light.”

G-d is not in need of anything because He is perfect in the most absolute sense. G-d created existence, and it only continues because He wills it to be every moment. What would be the consideration that G-d would need our light?

One of the thirteen tenets of Jewish belief is that there is a system of reward and punishment. This system functions based on the adherence of the Jewish people to the dictates of the Torah.

The verse states in the Portion of Bechukosai, “If you will follow My Statutes...the rains will come in their time...” If the Jewish people are dedicated and adhere to the Torah, bounty and blessing will come upon existence; however, if they will not adhere and conform to G-d’s word, He will withhold His blessing, and there will be unlimited suffering and punishment.

We see from this, that G-d’s interaction with existence is based on the mitzvah performance of the Jewish people. It is because of this system of reward and punishment that one may think that in essence the Jewish people dictate how G-d will interact with existence.

This understanding is incorrect because G-d has the ability and power to act and respond to the behavior of the Jewish people as He chooses. For example, if based on reward and punishment one deserves to be punished because he transgressed, G-d may choose to demonstrate His Mercy and not mete out punishment.

It is only that He established a system of reward and punishment to give the Jew the opportunity to advance and perfect his spirituality within set guidelines. However, whenever G-d chooses to supersede the system, He has that ability because G-d is not limited or bound in any context.

One’s inclination may cause one to believe that if the Menorah was placed within the Holy of Holies inside of the Curtain, the Jew has the ability to dictate G-d’s interaction with existence. It is because of this

misunderstanding that the Torah dictates that the Menorah be placed on the outside of the Curtain to clearly demonstrate that G-d does not need our light.

The significance of the light of the Menorah is purely for the sake of the Jewish people. As the Midrash states, “The value of the lighting is to give you merit, so that you can be illuminated at the end of time when darkness will come upon the nations of the world. As it states, ‘Darkness will cover the earth and the fog will cover the nations, and upon you G-d will radiate and His Glory will be seen by you....’”

Thus, the lighting of the Menorah is for the sake of acknowledging G-d’s Presence and Greatness, thus demonstrating our reverence for Him. Therefore, within the context of measure for measure, as we revere G-d through the lighting of the Menorah to acknowledge His Presence, G-d will illuminate the Jewish people by allowing His radiance to come upon them and glorify them among the nations of the world. The lighting, to acknowledge G-d’s Presence, is demonstrated by the lighting of the continuous light in the synagogue (*ner tamid*).

## Aaron’s Sons Qualifications as Kohanim

The Torah states that G-d commanded Moshe to install Aaron and his sons to be the Kohanim (Priests). **“(G-d said to Moshe), Bring Near to yourself Aaron your brother, and (v’es) his sons with him (eeto) from among the Children of Israel – Aaron, Nadav, and Avihu, Elazar, and Issamar, the sons of Aaron to minister to Me.”**

The word “es (and)” in the Hebrew language does not have a meaning by itself; however, it connotes that something is an adjunct to another. For example, there is a Positive Commandment, “You shall revere G-d. (Es Hashem Elokecha Tirah).”

The Gemara cites the opinion of Rebbe Akiva who explains that the word “es” is coming to include the Torah sage. One must revere the Torah Sage as one would revere G-d Himself.

Thus, in the verse referring to Aaron and his sons being installed as Kohanim, the Torah uses the term “v’es” to communicate that the sons of Aaron only assumed the classification of Kohanim because they were an adjunct to him as his sons.

There are two ways that the Torah could express the term “with him.” The expression, “eemo (with him)” or the expression “eeto (with him)” are both expressions that mean “with him.” In which context is each of these words used?

If it is to express that two people are of equivalent standing, then the word “eemo” is used. However, in the context in which one individual is secondary to the other, the term “eeto” is used.

When the Torah refers to Aaron and his sons being installed to be Kohanim, it uses the term “eeto (with him)” regarding Aaron’s sons to indicate that they were worthy to be Kohanim only because they were Aaron’s sons. Thus, they were secondary to him.

Baal HaTurim points out that in the verse cited above, the name “**Aaron**” is mentioned three times. It is to allude to the three Kohanim that remained after the death of Nadav and Avihu. After they were struck down by G-d, only Aaron, Elazar, and Issamar remained as Kohanim.

Why should the sons of Aaron be alluded to through the mention of their father’s name? It is because the only reason Aaron’s sons were qualified to be Kohanim were because they were his sons. They were not worthy in their own right, but rather it was only because they were the sons of

Aaron. They are thus alluded to through Aaron's name being mentioned multiple times.

The Torah tells us that after Aaron's two sons were struck down by G-d, Moshe told Aaron that after his participation in the sin of the golden calf, all four of his sons were meant to die. However, because Moshe supplicated G-d to annul the decree, G-d only allowed that half of the decree should be annulled. Thus, only two of Aaron's sons were taken by G-d and not all four.

Why should any of Aaron's sons be liable for their father's spiritual failing? Chazal tell us that Aaron's two sons Nadav and Avihu were killed by G-d as a result of bringing a strange fire before G-d. However, if they would have had sufficient clarity, they would not have made this mistake.

If Aaron had not participated in the golden calf, in the merit of their father, Nadav and Avihu would have been endowed with clarity. However, because Aaron deserved to be punished, they were denied that clarity, thus causing them to make a mistake which caused their death.

Had Moshe not been successful in annulling half of the decree, all four of Aaron's sons would have been denied clarity, and they would have failed in a manner that would have caused them to be liable for death. To emphasize the cause of their death, the punishment manifested itself in the context of their failing as Kohanim rather than another context.

We see from this that the merit of Aaron greatly affected his sons as is alluded to by the verse using the term "eeto" to indicate that the sons of Aaron were secondary to him and had special value only because of their father.

### **Torah, the Mechanism for Spiritualization**

The Torah states, **"(G-d said to Moshe) Now you shall command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pressed/crushed olive oil for illumination (Menorah)..."**

It seems from the words **"...that they shall take for you (Moshe)..."** that the Jewish people were to take, for the sake of Moshe, the first droplet of pure olive oil for the illumination of the Menorah. Why were they commanded to do this for the sake of Moshe?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh cites the Zohar that states that the Jewish people were redeemed from the first three of their four exiles in the merit of the Patriarchs. In the merit of Avraham our Patriarch, they were redeemed from the Babylonian exile. In the merit of Yitzchak our Patriarch, they were redeemed from the Persian exile. In the merit of Yaakov our Patriarch, they were redeemed from the Greek exile.

The redemption of the Jewish people from the fourth and current exile, the Edomite exile (Roman), will come about only in the merit of Moshe. However, Moshe, being the personification of Torah, will not allow his merit to be utilized to bring about redemption until the Jewish people are quantitatively and qualitatively engaged in Torah study.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the **"pure, pressed olive oil"** of the Menorah symbolizes the manner in which one must engage in Torah study in order to be worthy of Moshe's merit. Just as only the purest droplet of oil qualifies to kindle the Menorah, so too must one study Torah with a pure intent. The Torah must be studied for its own sake (*I'shmah*).

Just as the olive was crushed in order to extract the pure oil for illumination, so too must one be willing to sacrifice and deprive himself from the material for the sake of Torah study. It is only when the Jewish people will engage in Torah in this manner, will Moshe allow his merit to be used to bring about redemption.

We pray every day in the blessing for the Davidic Reign (*es tzemach David avdecha*) in the Amidah (Silent Prayer) that G-d should bring the Moshiach, speedily in our day. The Gemara tells us that when Moshiach will come, G-dliness in existence will become so evident that one's level of free choice will effectively become almost non-existent. The primary focus of humanity will be to address and advance their spirituality.

Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance that one's deservingness of reward is based on one's ability to choose between right and wrong. However, if one is no longer in conflict because he is compelled to do good because of its obviousness, then one is no longer deserving of reward.

If the coming of Moshiach will bring an end to the setting of free choice, which is the ultimate objective of Creation, then why do we pray for his coming?

We pray for the coming of Moshiach because when G-d's Presence is not experienced and felt, it becomes a setting for a desecration of His Name. We are willing to forego and deny ourselves, for His sake, the purpose of our own existence, which is spiritual advancement.

Why would Moshe, who had dedicated his life selflessly to G-d's Glory, deny the Jewish people their final redemption to bring about the greatest glorification of G-d?

Moshe understood that without proper Torah study, one would not have the capacity to internalize and appreciate the ultimate revelation of G-d's Presence. The only way one would be qualified and be sufficiently developed to understand its value, one must engage in Torah study in a qualitative and selfless manner. Only then will His revelation be understood.

Not appreciating G-d's Presence, when it is the most obvious, would be the ultimate desecration. Therefore, Moshe chooses to withhold his merit from the Jewish people to prevent a greater desecration of G-d's Name.

