

The title for this week's Scripture portion comes from the first verse:

***V'ata t'tsave et-B'nei Yisra'el v'yikchu eleicha shemen zayit zach katit lamaor  
l'ha'alot ner tamid.***

***And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of  
pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually.***

Exodus 27:20

The title for the parasha is about a "command" from Moses to the Children of Israel. This command was for the Children of Israel to bring pure pressed olive oil to supply the Menorah, the lampstand of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] and later the Temple. The Menorah was also called the "*Ner Tamid*" [Eternal Lamp] and it is remembered by a lamp in most synagogues today. The symbol for Israel is, and always has been the Menorah, the seven-branched Lamp from the *Mish'kan*. Titus' gate in Rome stands today as a tribute to the Roman Emperor's conquests. The arch tells the story in a way in which words are not needed; depicting the Menorah carried by Titus, which says it all, "Israel destroyed by Rome." The Temple and the Menorah itself were known in Yeshua's earthly time as the "Light of the World." Yeshua's own use of the phrase points to the Messianic implications of this sacred article from the *Mish'kan*.

*Then Yeshua spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

John 8:12

It was the duty of Israel as a *collective of individuals* to provide the pure crushed olive oil for the Menorah. The light was to burn every day, including the Sabbath. The story of Hanukkah and the Maccabees reminds us all of the centrality of the Menorah to Israel's spiritual identity.

The Menorah is rich with symbolism, but it was a real Lamp, and G-d expected His people to obey Him regarding this Lamp in real ways. For us, the Menorah, the Lamp, is at least temporarily gone, so this command from Exodus 27:20 will have to wait until the Temple is rebuilt when Messiah returns. What can we draw from this Scripture portion that applies more specifically to us in the meantime? Before we look at that, we must always remember that the one who thinks he knows all about what the *Mish'kan* reveals of our G-d, does not know anything at all. The mysteries therein are inexhaustible. We wait for Messiah Yeshua's return to explain all of this to us completely. With that aside, let's look at this command to provide the pure crushed oil.

Isn't it interesting that *the common people* were to supply the oil? It was **not** a condition of their relationship with G-d, it was simply expected on account of what G-d had already done for them. Yeshua draws heavily upon the light and oil pictures in His teaching. Not surprisingly because the pouring of olive oil itself is where we get the word Messiah from ("*Mashiach*")

means to be "anointed" and we see in Scripture that the anointing of kings, priests, and prophets with *shemen*, or pure, crushed, olive oil).

Yeshua taught His *talmidim* [disciples] to,

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

In so doing, Yeshua called His *talmidim*, "the Light of the World." Interestingly, He is the light; and He-Who-Lives-Among-Us commands us to shine forth *His* light. Of course, in this instance, Yeshua relates the light to the doing of righteous deeds. These deeds do not redeem us, but they do reflect Who our Master is. They are commanded in Matthew 5:16 - and symbolically, they are commanded in Exodus 27:20. We provide the oil, beloved. How is your "oil supply?" Is it the *pure, crushed* oil that He commands, or is it oil of your own choosing? Obedience to a voice other than His does not constitute the oil for which He has called. Are you obeying Him, and all of His commandments? If not, you are not living up to your potential of being an "oil provider" for the *Ner Tamid* of Messiah's Kingdom.

This oil for the Menorah points to something else as well. Something yet future. As far as "oil suppliers" go, there is no one in Scripture as perfectly suited for the task as those that Scripture calls, the "Sons of Fresh Oil" [*v'nei ha-yitshar*] in Zechariah 4:14. This is an amazing passage that presents a vision of the Menorah and two olive trees on either side, with pipes providing a continual flow of oil. When Zechariah asks what the vision means, the answer is puzzling in English, and seems more about the rebuilding of the Temple.

*So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." So he answered and said to me:... "For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel (to build the Temple again). **They are the eyes of HaShem, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.**"*

Zechariah 4:4-5, 10

What we cannot see in English is that how the construction of the Menorah relates to the eye, which this Zechariah 4 passage is drawing upon. In Exodus 25:33 we read some of G-d's instructions for making the Menorah.

*Three bowls shall be made like **almond** blossoms on one branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower, and three bowls made like **almond blossoms** on the other branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower - and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand.*

Exodus 25:33

The word for "almond" is *sh'kad*. The Menorah had seven branches, and on each branch there was a golden almond blossom. This word comes from the root *shakad*, which means "to watch." Knowing the shape of the almond nut is also the shape of the eye helps us picture this. The seven almond blossoms on the Menorah represent the "Eyes of HaShem which scan to and

fro throughout the earth." We see this again in Revelation 4:5, this time describing the seven lamps pictured in the Menorah as "the Seven Spirits of G-d,"

*And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of G-d.*

Revelation 4:5

Peter quotes Psalms 34:15 when he reminds us about the "Eyes of HaShem,"

*For He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of HaShem are on the righteous...*

1Peter 3:10-12a

The Seven Lamps of the Menorah picture the "Eyes of HaShem" and the "Seven Spirits of G-d." They are watching men and their ways. Those eyes of the Righteous Judge are watching the deeds of righteous men and women, and the evil deeds of the wicked. They are watching as His "righteous ones" (believers) are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Those "Eyes" are watching as we "witness" by our faithfully living out Yeshua's life and lifestyle. After all, actions speak louder than words. To "witness" of the hope that lies within is not so much verbal as it is lifestyle - a *biblical* lifestyle.

Back to Zechariah 4. When Zechariah asks specifically about the two olive trees, he receives the answer,

*So he said, "These are the two anointed ones [literally, "sons who provide oil"], who stand beside HaShem of the whole earth."*

Zechariah 4:14

These two supply "oil" in ways that are quite unique. Revelation 11:4 tells us who these two are,

*And I will give power to **my two witnesses**, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are **the two olive trees** and the two lampstands **standing before the G-d of the earth.***

Revelation 11:3-4

The "oil" these two supply to the Eternal Light is the "oil" of miraculous deeds and cataclysmic acts. It humbles us when we consider our own deeds as supplying "oil" to the Eternal Lamp, when we read of these two great witnesses to the Power and Majesty on High.

The ancient sages saw the oil and the Menorah as Messianic symbols as well. In ancient times they made this concept a part of the daily prayers. In the short version of the *Amidah* (called *Havienu*), there is a tying together of the Lamp, the building of the Temple in the Messianic Age, and Messiah Himself.

*And let the righteous rejoice  
In the building of Your city,  
And the establishment of the Temple,*

*And in the exalting of the horn of David Your servant,  
And **the preparation of a Lamp**  
**for the Son of Jesse, Your Messiah**  
Before we call, You answer;  
Blessed are You, HaShem, Who hears prayer.*

G-d spoke to Moses and told him to command the people to bring oil from crushed olives. By being crushed, the oil would be pure, not by being filtered, but because it had **always** been pure. We can never provide such oil metaphorically. Our own idea of "good deeds" will never be pure. That is why He provided deeds **for** us - and commanded us to walk in those deeds.

*For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua **for good works**, which  
G-d prepared beforehand **that we should walk in them**.*

Ephesians 2:10

### **Haftarat Tetzaveh - 'You shall command' (Ezekiel 43:10-27)**

This week's Torah portion focuses upon the Aaronic Priesthood that was to serve in the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. Remember, the *Mish'kan* was to be a portal where G-d could dwell among His people. It was an opening in time and space where the Infinite and Almighty G-d could dwell among His finite people. The Levites, and specifically, those Levites from the line of Aaron, were to be the intermediaries in the *Mish'kan*. In that regard, those priests lived up to the name of their Tribe: Levi. "Levi," means "joined to." Levi **joined** HaShem and His people.

Interestingly, the second word of this week's Torah portion (*tetzaveh*, command) is seen by some of the Sages as derivative of *tzavsa*, which means "connect." How fitting, the *Mish'kan* and the Priests were all about "connecting" HaShem to His people. It is that place of connection that our haftarah is drawn from. Specifically, the altar in the *Mish'kan*, and the appropriate purification of the altar. The haftarah begins in Ezekiel 43:10 and is dealing about a future, yet-to-be-built, Third Temple. Here is how the passages starts:

*Son of man, describe the Temple to the house of Israel, that they may be  
ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they are  
ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the  
Temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all  
its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write it down in their sight, so that  
they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances, and perform them. This is  
the law of the Temple: The whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most  
holy. Behold, this is the law of the Temple.*

Ezekiel 43:10-12

Want to know the first "rule" of approaching the Almighty? Follow His "rules." Remember, the whole area surrounding the mountaintop is most holy. Do you want to "connect" with Him, then you must approach the Holy One, Blessed is He, in a state of holiness. The very place where His Name is placed (i.e. the Temple in Jerusalem), must be holy. It must remain holy. Even the altar must be cleansed, and maintained in a state of holiness. This is the job of the Levites. It is about **joining**, it is about **connecting**.

Proof that most people do not understand the offerings of the *Mish'kan* and later the Temple is their lack of comprehension of the verses that follow. The altar itself is in need of atonement...

*And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says HaShem G-d: 'These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it. You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,' says HaShem G-d. You shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim around it; **thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it.** Then you shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and burn it in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary. On the second day you shall offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull. When you have finished cleansing it, you shall offer a young bull without blemish, and a ram from the flock without blemish. When you offer them before HaShem, the priests shall throw salt on them, and they will offer them up as a **burnt offering** to HaShem. Every day for seven days you shall prepare a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish. **Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate it.** When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; **and I will accept you,**' says HaShem G-d."*

Ezekiel 43:18-27

These verses are detailing a similar protocol to that found in this week's Torah portion. The Priests must dedicate the altar and purify it with an atonement. It is something that had to continue as well - to be culminated in an annual purification on Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement]. Mistakenly, most casual readers of the TaNaKh think that the offerings are all about removing personal sin. **They are not.** Their main focus is upon worshipping the Almighty. Additionally, some offerings were to keep the worshipper from being killed outright while in the presence of the Holy One... and some offerings, like these listed here, were to preserve the *Mish'kan* and the Temple - to keep it functional.

This haftarah is about a time yet future, where once again there is an operable Temple. Don't be dismayed by that, beloved. Don't try and explain it away in metaphoric ways. Don't try and explain it through some vacant theology. Accept it. **Study it.** Discover what HaShem wants to reveal in it. It is about **connecting**. It is about joining. Ponder that as you read this week's Torah and haftarah portions.

### **Prayer Focus for Tetzaveh - 'Havdalah' - [Separation]**

The blessing for saying farewell to the Sabbath is called "*Havdalah*." "*Havdalah*" means "Separation." *Havdalah* is the service and the prayer that separates the weekly Sabbath from the first day of the week. It takes place after sunset on the Sabbath. It is the service we read about in Acts 20, which takes place on Saturday night in our reckoning:

*Now on the **first day of the week** [i.e. after sunset Saturday], when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day [literally "in the morning air"], spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. **There***

*were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.*

Acts 20:7-9

Beloved, we are separated, made holy, in order to be connected to HaShem.

*Blessed are You, HaShem our G-d, King of the Universe,  
Who separates between holy and profane  
Between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations,  
Between the Seventh day and the six days of labor.  
Blessed are You, HaShem,  
Who separates between holy and profane.*

-- ArtScroll translation