

CAN SPAN GENERATIONS

by Rabbi Label Lam

And you should command the Children of Israel and they should take to you purely crushed olive oil to light and to go up for a continuous candle. (Shemos 27:20)

There is no expression of (Tzav) commandment except to encourage immediacy and for all generations... Rabbi Shimon says that the verse needs to give extra encouragement where there is financial loss. (Rashi Parshas Tzav)

Immediacy and for all generations: Even though the Temple was destroyed and the candles were nullified, still there are the prayer halls and study halls wherein they are lit, and so they are called "Miniature Sanctuaries". (Medrash HaGadol)

Why should the oil for the Menorah require a commandment more so than any other fixture in the Temple? Certainly, the oil could not be nearly as expensive many other vessels. Why is the extra encouragement of a Mitzvah needed here?

I have a theory! It could well be that this is an ancient problem that persists till today. What's that? Fund raisers across boundaries of space and time can testify that it is easier to raise money for a building than an operating budget. Why? When a building is standing the donor can tangibly revisit the monument of his generosity. Additionally, it's a fixed cost. It's a one time, albeit large sum, but a one time grant.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that the Menorah seems like a superfluous light and plus it requires constant replenishing. So it's hard for Yeshivas to find people willing to pay for lights and lunches. For some non-mystical reason, paying salaries lacks the glamour of a permanent archway. Joe Tannenbaum obm. may have been one of the all-time Jewish philanthropists. A "rags to riches" bridge builder from Toronto he donated staggering amounts of money to countless Jewish educational causes and mostly in the latter segment of his life. Driving through Jerusalem and many other cities populated with Jews it's hard not to find a building dedicated by and named after their benefactors Joe and Faye Tannenbaum. Rabbi Nota Schiller, dean of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem once asked Joe why he allowed his name to be boldly emblazoned on so many buildings. He certainly did not need it for his for his own honor and fame. Joe Tannenbaum is reputed to have said something to the effect that he wanted his children to know what was eventually most important to him.

I was present at the ground breaking ceremony for Ohr Somayach in Monsey. It was a pouring rainy

day. There were many Rabbis and local dignitaries huddled in a huge tent, and there was no shortage of speakers. Just as the speeches concluded and a shovel was presented to dig into the fresh earth, a limousine pulled up to the tent and Joe Tannenbaum strode out of the rain and up to the podium where he was presented with both the shovel and the microphone. He then gave what amounted to one of the shortest and most memorable speeches which can I recall in total. Grinning from ear to ear and beaming with an almost blinding joy, he proclaimed, "When they're going to ask me after 120 years what I did for Jewish education, I'm going to tell them, "Plenty!"

I guess it takes bridge-builders, forward thinkers, and the compulsion of a Mitzvah to raise the appreciation of how investing in operating costs, bolted in the present tense can span generations. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).