

# OIL AND WATER

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Tetzaveh

### Oil and Water

**By Shlomo Katz**

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Today's Learning:  
Mishnah: Zevachim 6:3-4  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Sukkah 5  
Halachah: Mishnah Berurah 331:2-4

A significant part of this parashah is devoted to the selection of Aharon as the Kohen Gadol and the design of the priestly garments. A midrash says that when Hashem commanded Moshe to select Aharon, Moshe felt sad. Hashem told him, "I had a Torah and I gave it to you. If not for that Torah, I would destroy My world."

Why was Moshe sad? Was he jealous? If so, what consolation did Hashem offer him? R' Meshulam Roth z"l (1875-1962) explains that Moshe was not jealous. After all, Moshe was the humblest of all men, and he had previously insisted that Aharon, not he, lead Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. (See Rashi to Shmot 4:13.) Indeed, the Gemara (Zevachim 102a) says that it was that very act of speaking up for Aharon that caused Moshe to lose the chance to be Kohen Gadol. Why was Moshe penalized for that self-effacement?

R' Roth explains further: The Gemara (Ketubot 103b) teaches that the ideal leader is humble in his heart, but acts assertively. That's why Shaul was unfit to be king, as the prophet Shmuel rebuked him (Shmuel I 15:17): "Though you are small in your own eyes, you are the head of the tribes of Yisrael!" In contrast, King David said (Tehilim 22:7), "I am a worm, and not a man," but he knew how to behave as a king.

The Gemara (Ta'anit 11b) states that during the week of the mishkan's inauguration - the one week when Moshe was allowed to act as Kohen Gadol - he wore a white robe with no hem. R' Roth explains that this alludes to Moshe's humility, which had no limits and therefore precluded Moshe Rabbeinu from serving as Kohen Gadol. Moshe thus felt sad, thinking that his service of Hashem was lacking. Hashem assured Moshe that this was not true. Our parashah opens with the commandment to take olive oil for the Temple service, and it then continues with Aharon's appointment. Hashem taught Moshe: For the Temple service, I desire someone who is like oil. Just as oil rises to the top in a mixture, so must the Kohen Gadol be someone capable of rising above his humility. Not so the giver of the Torah. [The Torah is compared to water, which stays beneath the oil.] For the giver of the Torah, humility is the most crucial trait, and the Torah is more important than the Temple service. If not for that Torah, I would destroy My world. (Kol Mevasser)

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"Now you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for \*you\* pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually. In the Tent of Meeting, outside the Partition that is near the Luchot of Testimony, Aharon and his sons shall arrange it from evening until morning, before Hashem, an eternal decree for their generations, from Bnei Yisrael." (27:20-21)

The Gemara (Menachot 86b) comments: Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said, "'For you' and not for Me. I do not need the light." Rather, the menorah is a testimony that the Shechinah rests in the midst of Yisrael.

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; died 1951) explains: Our Sages have said that our service of G-d is a "Divine need." Of course this doesn't mean, G-d forbid, that G-d actually needs man's service. Rather, His Desire is that He become revealed as a result of man's deeds. [Since man's deeds determine whether G-d's Desire is fulfilled, we say that our service meets a Divine "need." But, even that so-called "need" exists only because G-d so desires.]

The continuous burning of the menorah is a testimonial that the Shechinah rests in the midst of Yisrael. Specifically in the context of that testimonial, G-d found it appropriate to say, "For you, and not for Me." I, in fact, do not need this service. (Mei Marom: Nimukei Ha'mikraot)

R' Meir ibn Gabbai z"l (late 15th century) elaborates on the idea that our service fulfills a Divine need: We read (Mishlei 27:8), "Like a bird wandering from its nest--so is a man who wanders from his place." Kabbalists say that the "bird" is the Shechinah and the "nest" is Yerushalayim. Because of our ancestors' and our own sins, the Shechinah has been exiled from Yerushalayim. Just as a traveler yearns to return home, so does the Shechinah. But, just as a prisoner ordinarily cannot free himself from prison, so G-d conducts Himself \*as if\* He is dependent on our deeds. Only we have the key to "release" the Shechinah from its imprisonment. That key, writes R' ibn Gabbai, is teshuvah. (Avodat Ha'kodesh: Introduction)

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"Now you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for you pure, chopped oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually." (27:20)

The Gemara teaches: "Pure, pressed oil is required for the menorah, but it is not required for the menachot / meal offerings. Thus, the first oil that comes from the olives is set aside for the menorah, and the second oil is to be used for the menachot."

R' Yitzchak Karo z"l (1458-approx. 1520) observes: Usually, one uses his best oil for cooking, and his inferior oil for lighting. Here, we give the best entirely to G-d (in the menorah), and use the second-best for ourselves (in the menachot, which are partially consumed by man).

R' Karo also notes: The word "chopped" ("kaf-tav-yud-tav") alludes to the first two Temples, the first of which stood for 410 ("tav-yud") years, and the second for 420 ("tav-kaf") years. Both of these Temples were "chopped," i.e., destroyed. The third Temple, however, will stand forever - "to kindle the lamp continually." (Toldot Yitzchak)

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"You shall take the inauguration ram and cook its flesh in a holy place. Aharon and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram . . ." (29:31-32)

In our verse, Moshe Rabbeinu is told to cook the flesh of the sacrificial ram and give it to Aharon and his sons to eat at the dedication of the mishkan. Yet, when the actual dedication took place, Moshe commanded Aharon and his sons to cook the flesh of the ram, as we read (Vayikra 8:31), "Moshe said to Aharon and to his sons, 'Cook the flesh at the entrance of the Ohel Mo'ed, and there you shall eat it.'" Why?

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (see below) explains: The command to build and dedicate the mishkan was given to Moshe \*before\* the sin of the Golden Calf, while the actual construction and dedication of the mishkan took place \*after\* the sin of the Golden Calf. Before the Golden Calf, when Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Sinai, the yetzer hara was removed from them, as we read (Tehilim 82:6) "I [Hashem] said, 'You are angelic; sons of the Most High you are all.'" But, when they made the Golden Calf, the yetzer hara returned to them, as we read (ibid., verse 7) "But, like men you shall die, and like one of the princes you shall fall."

When the command in our verse was given, \*before\* the sin of the Golden Calf, Bnei Yisrael had no yetzer hara and no materialistic inclinations. In that environment, a physical act such as cooking would have been as much of a Divine service as was offering a sacrifice, and it would not have been demeaning for Moshe Rabbeinu, the leading Torah scholar of that (or any generation) to cook the ram. However, when it came time to implement the commandment, the yetzer hara had returned. Then, cooking was a materialistic act, and it was not proper for a great Torah scholar to be someone else's cook. (Tiferet Zion)

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## Memories of Yerushalayim

R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; "Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim"), writes in his memoir, B'tuv Yerushalayim, about his father R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917), author of a Torah commentary and a commentary on Midrash Rabbah, both entitled "Tiferet Zion."

He had great respect and reverence for anything that had even a tinge of holiness, especially Torah works. He would circulate through the bet midrash to put away sefarim that were scattered on the tables. He used to rebuke those who were disrespectful to sefarim, and he would recite to them what is written in the work Reishit Chochmah, i.e., that one can tell from a person's level of respect for sefarim whether he has yirat Shamayim/ fear of Heaven. When he saw someone leaning on a sefer, he would say with a smile, "That work already has the support of sages greater than you." . . .

He used to act in a very respectful manner toward mitzvah objects (even after they were not needed for a mitzvah)--for example, the lulav and s'chach left over from Sukkot and the aravah left over after banging it on the ground. With all of these, he was careful not to treat them in a demeaning manner.

Even this, however, did not approach the indescribable level of respect and love that he had for Torah scholars. My father would stand up even for a young married student if he had a hint of scholarship in him. When he would meet cheder children, he would inquire regarding their welfare and bless them.

When he met a working-class man who had taken a yeshiva student as a son-in-law, he would praise the son-in-law effusively even if he did not know him well. He would say, "You are fortunate to have merited such a son-in-law!" The father-in-law would inevitably relate this to his wife, which would cause them both to honor their son-in-law. When the son-in-law heard that R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler had praised him in front of his father-in-law, he (the son-in-law) would go to my father (R' Yadler) to thank him. My father would use that opportunity to demand of the young man, "Make sure that everything I said turns out to have been truthful!"

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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