



## Parshat Tetzaveh: Pressed to Perfection

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Tetzaveh discusses the oil that was used to kindle the *menorah*. First the Torah refers to it as *shemen zayit zach*, pure olive oil, and then *katit lama'or*, pressed for lighting. Rashi explains that the oil had to be pressed rather than crushed. It had to be pure with no particles or sediment even if it could be filtered out later on. The *menorah* represents the wisdom of Torah. The pure olive oil symbolizes our Torah leaders who are meant to be above reproach. They cannot act in ways that arouse suspicion and then justify their actions, just as filtered oil was unfit for the *menorah*.

Torah learning must be like *shemen zayit zach*. Our motives should be pure, solely to achieve *deveikut baHashem*. In also must be *katit*, pressed. Succeeding in Torah requires hard work and exertion. Even if a person isn't blessed with extraordinary abilities, if he invests effort, Hashem will help him as it says, "*Yagati u'mazati ta'amin*." Rav Dessler teaches that if a person doesn't give his all to learn Torah, he will not grow. The spiritual path a person will acquire in life isn't handed to him. He must acquire it through effort and prayer.

The Netivot Shalom writes that Klal Yisrael

are compared to an olive tree. The olive is a unique fruit. The process of pressing it transforms it into a new greater product. The process brings out its inherent potential so that it can enlighten and illuminate. Similarly, there is a divine spark in every Jew's heart. Often, only suffering and tough challenges bring out the brilliance hidden within us. The light of the *menorah* contained sparks of the *ohr haganuz*. When a Jew would see its flames he would be inspired to tap into his inherent spiritual energy. The Torah and *Shabbat* also contain rays of this special light. A person's face looks different on *Shabbat*. It is a day when we can contemplate our mission, realizing that life is about growth and coming closer to Hashem.

In order to keep the balance of free choice there must be a powerful darkness opposite this light. This is Amalek. Rav Zilberberg explains that Amalek signifies anger. Bilam said, "*Reisheet goyim Amalek*." The first letters of this verse form the word *rega* (a second). Amalek symbolizes immediate uncontrollable anger as it says "*Ki rega b'apo chayim birtzono*." Anger only comes when a person fails to step back to look at the whole picture. He does not look to see the hand of Hashem. The light of a Jew lies hidden within the outer bitter olive in the inner purity of its oil. Erasing Amalek pushes aside the extraneous things in

life. We can do this by asking ourselves, "How can I be a better person? What can I learn? How can I extract the light from the darkness?"

Moshe's essence was daat, knowledge, which led him to clarity and *dveikut baHashem*. He in turn invested within us this ability to have a close relationship with the One above. When we study Torah and do *mitzvot* with passion we create a *nachat ruach* (divine pleasure) for Hashem. The illumination of the *menorah* is about our ability to give and Hashem's ability to respond.

Rav Roberts notes that if any oil oozes out of the olive on its own, it's unfit for the *menorah*. We have to work to ignite the spark of holiness inside of us. Rav Twersky writes that when a lobster grows, its shell becomes restrictive and so it sheds it and forms a new one. He does this until it reaches its potential. The key to growth is discomfort. Although in early adulthood our body stops growing, our spirit must continue to grow and that requires continuous inner work.

May we be merit to break out of the coldness of Amalek, to embrace the truth, and to celebrate the eternal holiday of Purim with true joy.

## Recognizing G-d's Greatness #10

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The *shemoneh esrei* is divided in three sections, *shevach* (praise), *bakasha* (requests), and *hoda'ah* (thanks). Three times a day we express admiration for everything Hashem does for us, link our needs to his beneficence, and give thanks for all the blessings that He showers upon us. Why did the sages arrange the order of *shemoneh esrei* in this particular way? Chazal call the

weekday prayer *bakashat rachamim*, asking for mercy. This indicates that supplications are the core of our prayer. However, we cannot approach Hashem and immediately begin asking for our needs. Instead, we start with praise. We express our belief in His omnipotence, that He is the source of everything, gives life to all, is above time, place, and limitations and is the essence of awesome

strength and loving kindness.

This combination of recognizing Hashem's *chesed* and *gevurah* constitutes *shevach*, the first section of *shemoneh esrei*. We begin by affirming Hashem's endless mercy and might, which prepares us to pray with the right intentions and feeling.



## Adar: Achieving Alignment

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Chazal teach us that whatever exists in the physical world exists within us as well. Man's intellect corresponds to the sun. His emotions parallel the moon. Like the rational mind, the sun signifies clarity, stability, and strength. Like the emotional state of a person, the moon waxes and wanes. It glows only at night. This is similar to our feelings, which are not always expressed outwardly. In a leap year, when we add an extra month of Adar, to recalibrate the solar and lunar years, we are meant to focus inward.

The verse says, "*V'yadata hayom vahashevota el levavecha*. You shall know today and place it on your heart." The months of Adar are a time to work on making our knowledge part of our emotional makeup, so that our intellect and emotions will work hand in hand. The Kotzker Rebbe taught that the distance between the mind and heart is greater than heaven and earth. The ability to know something intellectually and to then translate it emotionally is one of our greatest challenges. This is why we need two Adars, the first Adar to align our intellect and emotions and the second Adar to act upon it.

The Baalei Mussar teach that one way to do this is to work on one's *middot*. As Rav Gedalya Shor points out, the inability to connect the mind and heart is due to *timtum halev* (blockage of the heart). If our intellectual knowledge is clear, we can overcome the desires of our heart. The amount of Torah available to us today is a thousand times more than our ancestors ever had. Nonethe-

less, it hasn't necessarily translated to our heart. The knowledge we have surrounds us, but it hasn't become a part of us. In previous generations knowing meant obligation. But today we float from one idea to the next. In his letter to his son, the Ramban adjures, "When you get up from studying, think about what you have learned and see what you can implement." After listening to an inspiring lecture or learning a piece of Torah, let us take one idea, focus on it, and make it a part of us. The more real it becomes, the more it obligates us.

Just as the solar and lunar year become aligned in a leap year, we have to work at balancing the physical and spiritual aspects of our life. The solar year represents the mundane, physical, world. It is stable, precisely calculated, and measured by the continuous motion of the earth. The lunar calendar is reminiscent of the spiritual world, ever changing and determined by man. The moon is smaller and reflects the sun, which symbolizes the prominence of the visible, external world in contrast to the more modest nature of the spiritual world. Adar is the month both closest and removed from Nissan. With the birth and death of Moshe a great spiritual light came down and then departed from the world during this period.

Purim is the ultimate meshing of the physical and spiritual worlds. *Purim katan* symbolizes the spiritual hidden world while *Purim gadol* signifies the larger, revealed physical world. Purim is about elevating the physical to the spiritual. In some years we need the *katan* of

pure spirituality to enable us to reorient ourselves so we don't get lost in the physicality. During a leap year, in the *mussaf* prayer of Rosh Chodesh we add the phrase *v'chaparat pasha* (let our sins be atoned). When the body rebels against the soul, the physical and spiritual clash. The leap year helps us mesh these two realms so that our sins are rectified.

The Siftei Chayim cites the Maharal that articulating one's thoughts into words brings them down from the spiritual to the physical realm. The more one speaks the more physical a person becomes. The duality of speech and silence is hinted at in the *megilah*. Mordechai is called "*Ish yehudi*" and "*ish yemini*." He was a descendant of Binyamin, the son of Rachel. Rachel knew when to be silent and when to speak and Mordechai inherited this ability. Mordechai knew that the Jews would eventually be saved. Yet he kept silent so that they would repent and pray. It then says that he cried out in prayer. Esther also had the power to be silent and to speak. She did not reveal her origins to Achashveirosh. Yet when Mordechai asked her to speak before the king she put her life on the line to save the Jews.

A deep and sensitive person can sit with something a while before speaking. When we are comfortable with the realm of inner silence we can then share from that spiritual world with others. In the first Adar we are silent. When the second Adar comes we can meld physicality and spirituality in perfect unison, read the *megilla* out loud and scream with joy.