

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 11 Adar 5786. Corresponding to February 28, 2026

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 339 Hz) (p. 519 S) (p. 320 Hi) (p. 464 AS)
TETZAVEH תצוה
Exodus 27:20

1. The bulk of this Sidrah is the description of the special garments that the Kohanim and the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) wore in the Mishkan, and later in the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple. Prior to this discussion the Torah will give us a couple of verses to tell us about the importance of the olive oil. The olive oil was required for several purposes in anointing matters, as well as the illumination of the Menorah and in the sacrifices themselves. The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 36) presents some interesting ideas about the significance of the olive oil when it comes to our religious viewpoint. The Midrash states that Bnei Yisrael is compared to the olive. Most liquids can be mixed together successfully, but oil does not mix with other liquids; it stays on its own. Similarly the nation of Israel does not mix well with the non-Jewish world. Another statement is that when someone attempts to mix liquids you might not know which liquid will settle at the bottom, and which will stay on top. Oil will stay at the top. This is an indication that when the Jewish people are observing the will of the Almighty then we will be like oil and be on top of the mixture. Lastly (for this column) the Midrash says you need to squeeze the olive to extract its oil. Similarly does the non-Jewish world throughout history beat and squeeze and persecute the Jewish people from place to place, and afterwards there is a need to repent.

2. One of my favorite Rashis exists here in the beginning of the parsha to explain the meaning of the word *Tamid*. Rashi states that actually there are two definitions of this word in Hebrew: constantly and consistently. If the fire had to exist on the Altar Tamid it meant that it had to exist constantly. When it was required to bring a Sacrifice Tamid each day twice a day, Tamid in this context would mean consistently. The same two terms can be applied to the Jewish person as he/she maintains his Jewishness throughout the day, every day. Some things must be performed constantly and other things only consistently. I pray consistently, and I am supposed to have my belief and awareness of God around me constantly. This is a good reminder to all of us, for we are never permitted to "take a vacation" from our Jewishness and Jewish identity. (RED)

3. When the Kohen Gadol wore all his garments, only then was he allowed to perform the ritual service in the Mishkan or Holy Temple. This included the stones which bore the names of all the tribes of Israel. This meant that for the Kohen Gadol to serve in the Temple he had to constantly have in mind that he was the representative of all the people of Israel. He was to think of them all the time and understand that the type of regal clothing that he was wearing was not for his own virtue or glory, but rather for the honor and glory of the people of Israel. He had to constantly remember the people and seek God's blessing for their benefit. Only when this was foremost in his mind could he be allowed and be successful in serving in the Temple. In essence, as our Sages eloquently state in the name of Hashem: "I am not giving you a position of authority; I am giving you a position of service!" Only then would the High Priest's voice be heard and accepted by the Almighty.

4. "Place the Urim and the Tumim in the Breastplate of Judgment" (28:30). We are not sure exactly what the Urim and Tumim were, but we realize that this was an exceptional addition to the clothing which enabled the Kohen Gadol to gain divine inspiration and be able to answer certain questions with divine guidance. The Ramban explained the operation of the Urim and Tumim according to the Talmud in Yoma 77. Hashem's name illuminated certain letters from the names on the Breastplate and the Kohen Gadol would arrange them to compose words. For example, when the Israelites asked, "Who shall go up for us against the Canaanite?" (Judges 1:1), the letters of the word "Yehudah" lit up, along with the letters Yud from the word Levi and Ayin from the word Shimon, the Lamed of Levi, and the Hey of Avraham, spelling out the word Yaaleh – Yehudah will go up. [Our Sages state that the names of the Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, were included on the Breastplate, together with the words Shivtei Yeshurun "the Tribe of Yeshurun," since the letters Chet, Tet, Tzaddi and Kuf do not appear in the names of the twelve tribes.] According to the Ramban, interpreting the letters that were lit up on the Urim and Tumim involved divine inspiration. This was a level very close to prophecy.

Following the Ramban's direction, the Vilna Gaon offered a remarkable interpretation of the argument between Chana and Eli, the Kohen Gadol at the time, when she came to pray to Hashem for children (I Shmuel 1). When Eli chided her for being intoxicated, she responded, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit." Eli saw a woman weeping silently so he asked the Urim and Tumim about her and the letters Shin, Chaf, Raish and Hey lit up. The proper arrangement of these letters would spell the word Keshairah, meaning acceptable, as in the word Kosher. Eli, though, combined the letters differently and derived Shikorah, which means intoxicated. So after this error Chana tactfully informed Eli that he did not have *Ruach HaKodesh*, divine inspiration, right then, for he should have known how to combine the letters properly.

5. We must remember that bringing sacrifices does not mean automatic spiritual elevation. That is because the act of bringing an offering can be quite mechanical without intellectual effort in serving Hashem. When we engage in a Seudat Mitzvah, a festive meal marking a religious occasion, we rise spiritually. The reason this is accomplished is because it is not just a banquet meal. Feeding ourselves in an elegant fashion is not a spiritual elevation. It is only when we make an effort to combine spirituality, for example in adding Zemiroh and Divrei Torah, can we elevate a delicious culinary opportunity to spiritual heights. The Jewish people can bring Temple offerings with proper intent. The result, according to the Torah, is that the Divine Presence will descend and be part of the sacrificial offering. It is not because of the act itself but because of the spiritual elevation that accompanies it. This is what the Akeidah, a late 15th century commentary by Rav Yitzchak Aramah, explained in greater detail.

6. The Tzitz was a gold Head Plate placed on the High Priest's forehead. It was engraved with the words "Kodesh L'Hashem" – Holy to God. The question that appears among our commentators is: why does this ornament have the Kodesh L'Hashem on it and not the Menorah or any other utensil of the Mishkan or vestment of the Kohen? The Rambam explained this piece of "jewelry" to be similar to what people, women especially, would have in those days as ornaments. The Rambam explained in his commentary on Mishneh that the

women would tie a head plate on their forehead from ear to ear, and place an embroidered piece of cloth underneath it in order to make sure the jewelry would not hurt them or damage the skin. In order to uniquely identify the ornament used by the Kohen Gadol something had to be added in order to make sure it did not look like a piece of jewelry that people wore. Hence only this head plate was adorned with the statement of the words Holy to Hashem.

7. Under normal conditions when the Kohen Gadol died the position went to his proper heir, his son. That was true in the succession of kings within the Davidic line, and consequently the question arose as to other positions of religious authority. Would they come under the same category of the position being inherited by an heir? In most cases we would apply this same reasoning to the rabbinical position in a community. A case once came to the Chofetz Chaim in Poland. In one city the rabbi passed away and a difference of opinion ensued among the people. Some wanted to automatically appoint the rabbi's son, and others felt he was not worthy and the people should have the ability to choose somebody else. The Chofetz Chaim came up with an interesting idea. He felt that when a king or High Priest passed away, it did transfer automatically to the son. But in the Laws of Kings by the Rambam it states that the Kohen that was appointed specifically for wartime did not have that capacity in his position to transmit his authoritative position to his son. The Chofetz Chaim concluded that in modern rabbinics the rabbi's position is likened to a wartime Kohen. He wages battle on behalf of tradition and is always at work trying to raise the level of observance among the people of his community. Hence he is more likened to a wartime Kohen than the High Priest or king. In this case the Chofetz Chaim decided that the position of modern day rabbinics was to not automatically transmit to the rabbi's heir and son. [RED's note: This halachah is more controversial than designated here in this paragraph.]

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT TETZAVEH 5786

I. From the Text

1. In the first five verses of this sidrah Moshe is given three tasks to perform. What are they? (27:20. 28:1. 28:3)
2. How many articles of clothing did the Kohen Gadol – the High Priest – wear? And how many did the regular Kohen wear?
3. What color was the Robe of the Ephod? And what was it made out of? (28:31)
4. What did Moshe do to Aharon and sons in order to inaugurate them as Kohanim? (28:41)
5. What was written on the gold Head-plate (Tzitz)? (28:37)

II. From Rashi

6. The Torah commanded Moshe to kindle the "lamp" – Tamid. How does Rashi define Tamid? (27:20)
7. What was written on the Urim V'Tumim? And where was it placed? (28:30)
8. What was the punishment for the Kohen Gadol if he entered the Holy Temple without one of his vestments? (28:35)
9. What kind of satisfaction did Hashem receive when He smelled the fragrance of a sacrifice? (29:18)
10. Where was the Incense Altar positioned in the Sanctuary? (30:6)

III. From the Rabbis

11. No olive trees were in the desert. Where did they get the olive oil for the Mishkan/Tabernacle? (Ramban)

12. Why are the Kohen's pants not itemized along with the other vestments in 28:4? (It is mentioned separately in verse 42) (Rashbam)

13. During the end of the First Temple Period, the King of Judah feared that Eretz Yisrael would be conquered. He hid the Urim V'Tumim and the Holy Ark. Which king did this?

IV. From the Haftorah - Ezekiel

14. The haftorah deals with the period of the exile of the Jewish people to Babylonia. What was God's promise to the people during that time?

V. Relationships

- a) Lemech – Noach (2 answers)
- b) Naamah – Shem
- c) Chur – Miriam
- d) Shlomo – Rechav'am
- e) Rachav – Noon

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT TETZAVEH 5786

1. a) The preparation of the oil. b) The designation of the Kohanim. c) The selection of wise, talented people who would make the clothing for the Kohanim and construct the Mishkan/Tabernacle.
2. The Kohen Gadol wore 8 vestments; the ordinary Kohen wore 4.
3. Turquoise wool.
4. He dressed them in their vestments and anointed them with oil.
5. Kodesh L'Hashem.
6. Consistently, as in every night. The other definition for Tamid is constantly. (The Ramban favors "constantly" because it could refer to the western lamp of the Menorah which had to be lit all the time.)
7. It was a piece of parchment with the Holy Name of Hashem written on it. (According to Ramban, there was more than one name on it.) It was placed within the Breastplate (the Choshen).
8. Death by the Hand of Heaven.
9. It was the satisfaction of seeing the fulfillment of His command.
10. Outside the Holy of Holies – directly opposite the Holy Ark that was inside the Holy of Holies.
11. They brought olive oil with them from Egypt. Moshe would inspect the oil and decide which could be used.
12. Because the pants are worn for modesty rather than as a visible garment of honor.
13. King Yoshiyahu.
14. That Hashem would be with them in Exile and return them to Eretz Yisrael.

Relationships:

- a) There are two men named Lemech. One was Noach's father and one was his father-in-law
- b) Mother Naamah
- c) Mother Miriam
- d) Father Shlomo
- e) Father-in-law Noon

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