

JUST TO WHAT POINT SHOULD GENEROSITY EXTEND?

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

It is written, "And you, command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure, pounded olive oil for illumination, to light the lamp continually" (Exodus 27:20). Why is the expression "that they shall take for you" different than what we find earlier: "Let them take an offering for Me" (Exodus 25:2)? Were they taking oil for Moses? They were taking it for Hashem in order to light the Menorah!

The Sages have taught that there are three olive crops, and that each crop yields three kinds of oil. The first is when the olives are picked from the top of the tree. They are pounded and put into a basket, yielding the first kind of oil. They are then pounded with a beam, yielding the second kind of oil. They are then ground and pounded again, yielding the third kind of oil. The first is used for the Menorah, while the others are for meal-offerings (Menachot 86a). We need to understand why the first kind of oil is so special that only it can be used for the Menorah.

We also need to understand what we read further on in the parsha: "And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother" (Exodus 28:1). From the fact that it says, "bring near," it seems that Moses had to do so because Aaron did not want to serve! Could anyone think that Moses had to convince Aaron to serve Hashem? Was Aaron not happy to have been chosen to serve as High Priest, which would enable him to reach a lofty spiritual level?

The Creator dealt with the creation of man for an entire day, giving him a soul that is a Divine spark, as it is written: "The L-RD G-d formed man from the dust of the earth, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). The early commentators (see Ramban ad loc.) said that one who breathes into the nostrils of another gives him something from within himself. Our Sages have said, "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He brought three creatures into existence each day, but on the day before Shabbat He spent the entire day on man. At the first hour He had the concept of man, at the second hour He consulted the ministering angels, at the third hour He gathered the dust, at the fourth hour He began to knead it, at the fifth hour He shaped it, at the sixth hour He placed man on his feet, and at the seventh hour He breathed a soul into him" (Pesikta Rabbati 46).

Why did the creation of man differ so greatly from that of all the other creatures, which came into existence with but a single word from Hashem, whereas man was fashioned by His own hands? This goes without mentioning the fact that his creation lasted an entire day, and that Hashem breathed a living soul – a Divine spark – into him. Although other creatures also have a soul, Hashem did not breathe a Divine spark into them. In fact He wanted to prove to everyone that "I will see G-d from my flesh" (Job 19:26), so

that all the inhabitants of the world would reflect upon the fact that Hashem dealt with the creation of man for an entire day, whereas all the other creatures were created by a single word in a brief instant, and thereby learn to respect one another. Every person should take this to heart and show respect for others, for all men are the work of Hashem's hands, as it were. Since the Holy One, blessed be He, disregarded His own honor by personally descending to deal with the creation of man, giving him 248 limbs and 365 sinews, how much more should each person defer to others and show them respect! The Torah warns, "You shall love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). It does not just say, "You shall love your fellow," but "You shall love your fellow as yourself." In other words, just as a person loves himself and does not trust others for everything, so too must he not trust them to help his fellow, but must do this himself. As the Gemara states, "It is more of a mitzvah to do it personally rather than through an agent" (Kiddushin 41a), and the Mishnah states: "[He who says,] 'What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours' is a pious man" (Pirkei Avot 5:10). In other words, piety consists of giving one's own possessions to others. From the creation of the world, we learn that this is what the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, did in creating man, having given him a soul that is a Divine spark, a part of Himself, so to speak.

This is why the text states, "[T]hey shall take for you pure, pounded olive oil for illumination." When it comes to an offering for the Sanctuary, we read: "Let them take an offering for Me" – every man should offer his own possessions to others and give a great deal of tzedakah in order to emulate his Creator. As for the oil, "[T]hey shall take for you pure, pounded olive oil for illumination." A person normally rejoices in the first oil that comes from his olive tree, and Hashem commands him to give this first oil for lighting the lamps.

How does one give it? In the same spirit as, "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours." Therefore it is said, "[T]hey shall take for you" – they are to give you the first oil and they are to take the second oil for themselves. Hence with regards to the Hebrew slave we read, "It was taught: 'It is good for him with you' [Deuteronomy 15:16]. He must be equal to you in food and drink, so that you should not eat white bread while he eats black bread, nor should you drink old wine while he drinks new wine, nor should you sleep on a feather bed while he [sleeps] on straw. Thus it is said: Whoever buys a Hebrew slave is as if he bought himself a master" (Kiddushin 20a).

Hence we read further on, "And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother" (Exodus 28:1). Since the Torah states that the world can only endure through kindness and unity, here it says: "And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother" – that everyone should perceive the other as his own brother, being close to



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CHEVRAT PINTO

207 West 78th Street
New York - NY 10024
Tel: 1 212 721 0230
www.hevratpinto.org
hevratpinto@aol.com

Editor-in-Chief:
Hanania Soussan

him and helping him throughout life. In fact Moses also wanted to serve as High Priest, as our Sages said: “When G-d was about to appoint a High Priest, Moses believed that he would be made High Priest, but G-d said to him: ‘Go and appoint Me a High Priest.’ Moses replied, ‘Master of the universe, from which tribe shall I appoint him?’ The Divine reply was, ‘From the tribe of Levi.’ Moses was then exceedingly happy, saying: ‘So beloved is my tribe!’ G-d then said to him, ‘It shall be Aaron your brother’” (Shemot Rabba 37:1). Thus we read, “And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother.” Since G-d told him to bring Aaron “near to yourself” – that is, to conduct himself according to the middah of, “What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours” – he brought Aaron so close that it was as if he had said: “Dare to carry out your service!” Now the Children of Israel are called priests, as it is written: “You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). How can they all be priests? It is by unity; it is by not being envious of one another, just as Moses was not envious of Aaron. Although Moses wanted to serve as High Priest, he brought Aaron closer because Hashem ordered him to. Each person must conduct himself with other people in the same way. They must not be jealous

of others, for this is the only way that Jews will merit to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Therefore it is written, “You shall be for Me” – similar to, “And you, command,” “And you, bring near to yourself” (not, “The L-RD spoke to Moses, saying,” a formula that is often found in the Torah) – for this parsha was addressed to each of the Children of Israel. Thus we read, “And you, command,” “And you, bring near to yourself,” for all the Children of Israel were in harmony with one another, and everyone seemed like a brother in the eyes of others. When acting in this way, the entire Jewish people are considered to be High Priests before Hashem. The Midrash Aggadah (Bereshith 80) asks why the names of the tribes do not appear on the stones of the Breastplate. It is because all the Children of Israel were called priests on Sinai, as it is written: “You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Is it possible for all of them to bring offerings upon the altar? They shall all be priests by the fact that their names will be upon the heart of the High Priest. When the High Priest comes to bring the offerings, they will all be like a High Priest before Me, clothed in the garments of the priesthood.”

Mussar from the Parsha

The Garments of the Body and the Garments of the Soul

It is written, “The ephod’s belt, which is upon him, shall be of the same work” (Exodus 28:8).

This verse contains a lesson and an allusion for man. We know that just as a physical garment is needed for the body, a spiritual garment is needed for the soul. Just as the splendor of the body’s garments are related to the quality of the silk or wool from which they are made, as well as the skill of the craftsman who made them, likewise the splendor of the soul’s spiritual garments depends on the beauty and perfection of that soul in Torah, mitzvot, and prayers. However there is a difference between these kinds of garments: The first is that the spiritual garments of the soul depend on the person who makes them, for everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven. Physical garments, however, depend on Hashem, as Jacob said: “If G-d will be with me, will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and a garment to wear” (Genesis 28:20). The second difference is that if a person purchases silk or some other fabric in order to make a garment, but does not have enough to fashion a certain part (say, to cover the neck), he can take some fabric from someone else, either as a loan or a gift, to finish it. As for a spiritual garment, if a person is missing even the tiniest amount, he cannot obtain what he is missing from someone else. Instead he must put an effort into filling this lack by working on himself. Thus we understand the verse, “The ephod’s belt, which is upon him” to mean that a spiritual garment depends on him; it consists of the fear of Heaven. Now everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven, which is not the case for a physical garment, which does not depend on the person himself, but only on the Creator, since it is written: “Entrust your works to the L-RD.” The splendor of a spiritual garment therefore depends on a person’s deeds: If his deeds are good, his spiritual garment will be splendid and magnificent. There is still one thing that depends on a person, meaning that the perfection of a spiritual garment must come from the one who made it. If it is lacking even the smallest part, it is impossible for others – even Heaven – to provide it. It is the owner of the garment who must complete it himself, by means of his own efforts and through his own strength. – Ben Yehoyada

A Pearl From the Rav:

From the Strong Came Sweetness

It is written in the Zohar, “Who do we have that is greater than Moses, who said: ‘And if not, please blot me out from Your book that You have

written’ [Exodus 32:32]? He said this for the sake of Israel, and although the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfilled his wish and forgave Israel, nevertheless he was not spared punishment, for it has already been noted that his name is not mentioned in Parsha Tetzaveh” (Zohar III:246a). Although Moses was punished, the verse, “From the strong came sweetness” (Judges 14:14) was fulfilled, as we find concerning the prophet Elijah, who swore that it would not rain until the Children of Israel circumcised their sons. He fled to Mount Horev upon learning that Jezebel wanted to kill him, and there the Holy One, blessed be He, asked him: “Why are you here, Elijah?” He replied, “I have acted with great zeal for the L-RD” (I Kings 19:9-10). Hashem said, “You are constantly indignant. Now you are again righteously angered by seeing My children neglecting the commandment of circumcision. By your life, no circumcision will occur unless you see it with your own eyes” (see Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer 28). From here the Sages decided to reserve a seat of honor for the angel of circumcision, who is called Elijah. Likewise with regards to Moses, Hashem said: “And you, command.” Previously the word of G-d was addressed to you alone, but now: “And you, command,” “And you, speak,” “And you, take for yourself.” Since you have devoted yourself to them, the people are united and are all equal before you. The term tetzaveh (command) evokes the word tzavta (together). Here the Children of Israel were together with Moses, and from then on their souls were connected to his. They also learned humility from him, which is why it is said: “They shall take for you” – they shall learn from him to be “pounded,” in humility.

Paying Attention to Everything We Say

It is written, “And you, command the Children of Israel” (Exodus 27:20).

The Ba’al HaTurim states that Moses’ name is not mentioned anywhere in the parsha because he said, “Please blot me out” (Exodus 32:32).

The serves as a great lesson to man, teaching him that he must never curse himself. If Moses, the faithful shepherd of Israel, could say, “Please blot me out” due to his devotion to the Jewish people – and it still effected him to the point that his name is not mentioned anywhere in the parsha – how much more should one who does not possess such lofty intentions pay attention to what he says, for the words of his mouth stem from anger and a lack of contemplation.

Such is the meaning of the verse, “And you, command the Children of Israel” – describe to them the effects of saying “blot me out,” and warn them against uttering curses against themselves.

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As Oil Floats

It is written, “Pure, pounded olive oil” (Exodus 27:20).

The Sages say, “Why is Israel likened to an olive-tree? To tell you that just as the olive produces its oil only after pounding, so Israel returns to the right way only after suffering” (Menachot 53b). The Children of Israel are also compared to oil: “All liquids mingle one with the other, but oil refuses to do so and keeps separate. Thus Israel does not mingle with the heathen” (Shemot Rabba 36:1). We can clearly see this, for although Jews are persecuted, hounded, and tormented by non-Jews, they nevertheless stay above them and do not assimilate. – Tzror HaMor

Principles of Education

It is written, “Pure, pounded olive oil for illumination, to light the lamp continually” (Exodus 27:20).

The Rebbe of Alexander said that when a teacher or educator finds it necessary to lecture someone or bring him down to size, his aim must be “for illumination.” This verbal “pounding” must be “to light” the path for him to follow. “But not pounded for meal-offerings” (Rashi): It must not be to lower and humiliate him.

The holy Rabbi Aaron of Karlin used to say that there is but a hairsbreadth between bitterness and sadness. Bitterness is positive, but sadness is forbidden. In fact bitterness means that I have nothing; it is a positive thought that stems from humility. However sadness implies that all is lost, which is why we must be extremely careful that bitterness does not degenerate into sadness.

Without Any Impurities

It is written, “Pounded olive oil for illumination” (Exodus 27:20). Here Rashi states, “But not pounded for meal-offerings.”

Offerings atone for man, and a person who needs atonement is certainly not entirely pure. Hence the oil that is brought with offerings may contain some impurities. However the oil used in the Menorah alludes to the light of the Torah, which is Divine wisdom, and therefore it must be completely pure, without any trace of impurity. – Avnei Nezer

The Urim and Tumim

It is written, “You shall place the Urim and the Tumim” (Exodus 28:30).

Engraved on the stones of the Breastplate were the names of the tribes. When the High Priest would inquire of G-d, certain letters on these stones would light up, and from these letters the priest would derive the answer to his question. However in order to interpret the letters in the correct way and get the right answer, the priest needed the help of Ruach HaKodesh. Hence the Sages said, “Why were they called Urim and Tumim? Urim because they made their words enlightening. Tumim because they fulfill their words” (Yoma 73b). Without the Tumim, it was impossible to understand the significance of the letters that lit up, for they could be interpreted incorrectly to yield an answer that was not given by Heaven (Ramban). In light of the Ramban’s remarks, the Vilna Gaon gave a marvelous explanation for the discussion between Eli the priest and Hanna (I Samuel 1:13-15). When Eli saw Hanna lips moving but could not hear her speaking, he thought that she was a shikora (a drunk). Hanna therefore said to him, “No, my lord, I am a woman of aggrieved spirit.” The Sages have said that by the words, “No, my lord,” she was saying that he did not possess Ruach HaKodesh. Furthermore, concerning the words, “I am a woman of aggrieved spirit, Rashi states: “KeSarah [like Sarah].” When Eli saw this rare phenomenon, that a woman was standing there and moving her lips without saying anything, he consulted the Urim and Tumim, and the letters shin, kaf, resh, and hei lit up. Interpreting the letters as shikora, Eli thought that she was drunk. Hanna replied, “No, my lord” – Ruach HaKodesh does not rest upon you in this, for you did not arrange the letters in the right order. The right order is keSarah (“like Sarah”), for I am “a woman of aggrieved spirit” because I am barren like our mother Sarah, who regretted not having a son.

Reasons for the Mitzvot

Outward Appearances

In his Guide to the Perplexed, the Rambam explains why Hashem commanded that the priests be attired in beautiful garments of high quality, holy garments that bring glorify to them. He states, “For the multitude, an individual is not rendered great by his true form, but by the perfection of his limbs and the beauty of his clothes.” When he possesses a fine appearance and magnificent clothes, most people consider this to be a sign of his tremendous importance.

Let us imagine the High Priest in all his holiness, glory, and purity after having performed the innermost service in the Holy of Holies. Can he not be compared to a prince from above standing there to serve, with a crown of holiness upon his head? All of Hashem’s people gathered together, their eyes following him with reverential fear as they took in the brilliance of his sanctified service. At that point the Children of Israel received a small taste of the pleasures of eternal life, as thoughts of teshuvah began to flow in them like rivers from pure springs. In the mind of everyone, the High Priest was considered to be a symbol of purity and holiness, a man who connected the Children of Israel to their Father in Heaven. Although this greatest among the people served in the most sacred place in Eretz Israel, the Temple in Jerusalem, the Torah still took the views of simple-minded people into account, those who understood little, and whose concepts of the High Priest all came down to his garments.

The Gemara recounts that King Ptolemy assembled 72 elders and commanded them to translate the Torah into Greek so he could understand it (Megillah 9a). The Holy One, blessed be He, prompted each of them to change the verse, “Moses took his wife and his sons, and he set them upon a donkey” (Exodus 4:20) to read: “Moses took his wife and his sons, and he set them upon a carrier of men,” meaning a camel. This was so Ptolemy could not say, “Your teacher Moses had neither a horse nor a camel.” This teaches us just how well the Sages understood the way in which most people perceive lofty concepts. If they had explicitly translated this as, “he set them upon a donkey,” it would have resulted in a loss of glory for Moses and his Torah. This is because for Ptolemy and those like him, the greatness of an individual is measured with regards to his wealth and outward appearance. Hence for such people, a man who made his family ride on a donkey could not have been a leader. We must clearly see and distinguish between what is perceived by someone who is truly intelligent, and what is perceived by a simple person whose mind is guided by his imagination, being unable to appreciate or understand something according to its true value. Such a person only perceives superficial, outward elements, and according to these things he decides whether to demonstrate respect for something or not.

– Ma’ayanei Chaim

Eishet Chayil

Like One of the Matriarchs

The son of the Shelah wrote about his mother by stating, “I have to mention the memory of my mother, who was a strong and pious Rebbetzin. Everyone who knew her can testify that she ceded nothing to the conduct of the holy Matriarchs. She literally ate mundane food in holiness, and she strived to help my father, who spent all the money that she had brought from her father so he could study Torah. Not only was she not resentful at all, on the contrary, she herself added to this time and time again. Therefore look and see if you can find a single woman who is as good as this, one who pays no attention to the life of this world, and whose every action is aimed at the World to Come.”

The son of the Shelah ended by stressing, “Thank G-d, it was because of her that my father was blessed by Hashem, meriting all the honor and greatness that was his.” – Nashim Tzadkaniot

On the Ladder All Night Long

It is written, “To light the lamp continually” (Exodus 27:20). Rashi states, “Continually. Doing something each and every night.”

Arvit had just ended, and the faithful left the Beit Midrash and returned home. However the young Meir Simcha, ten years old at the time, was not in a hurry to leave. In fact he approached a ladder located in the corner of the Beit Midrash, and he moved it next to the library. The boy then climbed up to one of the upper-level bookshelves and reached for a book. As he was standing on one of the top steps of the ladder, he opened the book and began to leaf through it, avidly drinking in the profound teachings that it contained.

The Shamash arrived at the Beit Midrash at sunrise, and imagine his shock when he saw the boy on the ladder, all alone in the deserted Beit Midrash! “Meir Simcha,” he called out. “Get down!”

The child tore his eyes away from the book he was holding, asking the Shamash: “Has Arvit already finished?”

He had been so immersed in his learning during the night that he lost all track of time. In fact he didn’t even realize that he had been standing on the ladder for many hours, and that the congregation with which he had prayed Arvit had long returned home, slept, and gotten up. Years later, this child who demonstrated such a great love for Torah became Rabbi Meir Simcha, the author of *Ohr Somayach*, the Rav of Dvinsk. – Ma’asei Avoteinu

Your Eyes Shall Behold Your Teacher

Rabbi Meir Yehuda Leibush – The Malbim

During his lifetime, the gaon Rabbi Meir Leibush Zatzal already earned the crown of renown, being respected and admired by all the great Torah figures of his generation. Of him it was said, “Wherever people listen to the words of the head of the orators, the Malbim, open your ears!” He turned many away from sin, for Hashem placed His Divine spirit in his mouth, which spoke pearls of wisdom that were capable of bringing close those who were far from their Father in Heaven. Thus the Name of Heaven was beloved on account of him.

In the introduction to the book *Artzot HaChaim*, a description is given of just how the words of our teacher had a tremendous effect on high and produced fruits below, being able to influence those who were furthest from Hashem to do teshuvah, for his holy words emanated from the very depths of his heart. In it the following story is told: “I heard from the gaon and tzaddik, the man of truth, Rabbi Mordechai Chaim Slonim Zatzal, that after the printing of *Artzot HaShalom* by our teacher the Malbim, he went to rest by the hot springs of Marienbad. While there, he sensed that someone was following him. When the man approached the Malbim to ask him for his name, he was afraid because he didn’t have the necessary documents, and the man could have been a detective. However since the truth always guided his steps, he did not lie about anything. When he mentioned his name, the other individual also mentioned his. Hearing this name, the Malbim quivered, for the man was not known for being the kind of person you would want to meet. The man told him that after having read and studied his book *Artzot HaShalom*, which is filled with faith in the words of the Torah and the words of the Sages, a spirit of purity entered his heart and he wanted to repent of his sins. Our teacher the Malbim said to him, ‘I wrote *Artzot HaShalom* solely to contradict something that you wrote, something that twisted the words of the Sages and ridiculed our teachers. I put things back in their place, and therefore if you really want to do complete teshuvah, you have to fix the area in which you sinned. You must spread my book, which was just recently published and has not yet been distributed to the general public. In this way the Name of Heaven will be sanctified.’ The man thanked the Malbim and accepted his words with love. He promised to do what he had said, and he actually distributed his book.”

The Need for Discretion

It is written, “Tell the house of Israel about the Temple, and let them be ashamed of their iniquities” (Ezekiel 43:10).

The principle here is that as long as forces of impurity have a hold upon the world, everything must be done with discretion, lest they take hold of it. The less hold they have, the more something can become public. This is why the Tent of Meeting was then given, covered as it was with material that was layered one on top of the other, while Hashem was speaking to them discreetly and with the greatest of secrecy, with barriers upon barriers and coverings upon coverings. However in the Temple, when the forces of impurity had been conquered, revelation no longer occurred, which is why the Parochet (partition) was revealed and shown to the festival pilgrims, which was not the case in the Second Temple, for because of our numerous sins the forces of impurity had regained their strength. We then returned to discreet means, for there is nothing that annuls the forces of impurity more than discretion. Hence we are recommended to be discreet in the washroom, for it is a place of great impurity, and it is why Moses was given the incense, which annuls the forces of impurity and the Angel of Death himself, in the greatest of secrecy. In fact no one was to be within the entire Tent at that point.

In the future, if we merit it, the Kelipah will be uprooted and the spirit of impurity will disappear from the earth. There will no longer be a need for discretion or partitions, nor for coverings. Although the walls of Jerusalem constitute a boundary for eating sacrifices with the least degree of sanctity, they too will no longer be needed, for we will be able to eat them everywhere. There will no longer be a need to protect oneself or to hide. However if the Geula occurs by means of the second way, meaning if we have not deserved it, there will still be a little Kelipot and forces of impurity remaining, and therefore there will still be a need for boundaries in the Temple and Jerusalem. This is what Ezekiel is recounting here, and it is in this regard that Hashem told him to describe the Temple to the Children of Israel. In this way, they would be ashamed that they still need a partition and a barrier around a barrier, since it will mean that the tikkun is still not complete.

– Ya’arot Devash, Part I, Derush 9

Guard Your Tongue

Remembering What Happened to Miriam

The Torah gives us some good advice on how to avoid Lashon Harah and its punishment: “Remember what the L-RD your G-d did to Miriam on the way, as you came out of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 24:9). We are to recall in our hearts and with our words the severity of the punishment that Miriam received.

Although Miriam was righteous and a prophetess; although the well arose by her merit; although she spoke only of her brother, whom she dearly loved; although she risked her life to save him in the river; although she did not say anything harmful; although she did speak about him in public, but only in private with Aaron her brother, who was holy, and with the intention of rectifying the world; and although Moses himself was not upset by her words, nevertheless all her good deeds could not save her from being punished with leprosy. – Zachor LeMiriam