



# ALSHICH

## INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר שמות  
פרשת תצוה

SERIES 2: ISSUE 20

### THE MENORAH'S LIGHT ELEVATES THE SOUL IN THE WORLD TO COME

#### Chapter 27

**20)** *And you, you should command Bnei Yisrael that they should bring you pure olive oil, hand-crushed in a mortar for the illumination (למאור) to kindle (lit., to raise up) a lamp continually.*

כ) וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ  
כְּתִיב לְמַאֲוֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד.

#### Consider the following questions:

1. Why does the parashah begin with the words וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה, “*And you, you should command*”? It should have just said צַו, which means “*Command*.”
2. Why does it say לְמַאֲוֹר, for **the** illumination? It should have said לְמֹאֲוֹר (with a *shva* under the *lamed*), meaning *for illumination*, or even better, לְהַאֲוִיר, *to illuminate*.
3. Why does the verse use the word לְהַעֲלֹת, which literally means “*to raise up*,” rather than the more usual word לְהַדְלִיק, *to kindle*?
4. Why does it use the singular word for *lamp* (נֵר) rather than the plural (נְרוֹת)? After all, there were seven lamps in the Menorah.
5. Verse 20 is addressed to the entire Jewish people. Why, then, does it conclude, “*to kindle (lit., to raise up) a lamp*,” which is a mitzvah only for the Kohanim?

At this point, Moshe had seen the awesome project that lay ahead of the people: to build a Mishkan where Hashem's Presence would dwell. He had seen that the people had been commanded to bring all the materials for the Mishkan. He had seen how Betzalel, Oholiav, and all their assistants who had been filled with the spirit of wisdom had been commanded to build the *Aron*, the Menorah, and all the other sacred vessels, as well as the Mishkan and its covering. He had also seen how Aharon and his sons had been appointed as Kohanim to serve before Hashem. He could not help but wonder, “Why is it that Hashem has not given me any part to play in this great project?”

In order to comfort him, God told him, “*And you, you should command...*” The seemingly superfluous “*And you (וְאַתָּה)*” comes to emphasize Moshe's central role in the making of the Mishkan. Furthermore, וְאַתָּה has a cantillation note (*gershayim*) which involves raising the voice to a higher pitch, as a sign of emphasis. Hashem's message to Moshe was, “**And you**, Moshe, do not be concerned. Your part in the Mishkan is

greater than all of theirs. Only through you will the people attain their perfection. Moreover, it is only because you will *command Bnei Yisrael* in **all** the mitzvos, and because they will *bring you pure olive oil* for the Menorah, that they will be worthy to *kindle a lamp continually* to illuminate for them (i.e., their souls) in the World to Come,” as will be explained. Without you, they cannot achieve any of this.

However, that is not all. The spiritual light that you bring through your role in the *Mishkan* is greater than the light they bring through their contributing the materials to build it. Through your actions you are bringing the people to the eternal light of the World to Come. This is much greater than their contribution of preparing a place in the lower world for the *Shechinah* to dwell.” **[This answers Question 1.]**

In the mention of the oil and the lamp, the verse means to hint at the same question that our Sages asked in the *Midrash Tanchuma (Tetzaveh 7)*, along with the answer: They asked why we were commanded to light the Menorah, given that Hashem does not need our light. And they answered: To give light to Israel in the World to Come. Thus the verse says, “... *they should bring you pure olive oil, hand-crushed in a mortar for the illumination (לְמִאֹר)*.” The vowel under the *lamed* of לְמִאֹר is a *pasach*, which signifies that we are not talking about an unspecified illumination but rather “**the** Illumination” – meaning Hashem, Who is the source of all light and illumination. **[This answers Question 2.]** And why, indeed, should Israel light the Menorah? The verse concludes with the answer: in order to *kindle a lamp continually (נֵר תִּמְיֵד)*. What exactly does that mean?

We asked above (Question 4) why it says *lamp* rather than “lamps,” given that the Menorah contained seven lamps. The answer is that the word “lamp” (נֵר) refers here to the soul, as it says, *The lamp (נֵר) of Hashem is the soul of man (Mishlei 20:27)*. Accordingly, to *kindle a lamp continually* means to raise up and elevate the souls of the Jewish people continuously in *Olam Haba*. The souls of the Jewish people are referred to as one single soul (נֵר) because they are united as one in their source in the higher world of unity. This is similar to the Torah’s description of Yaakov’s family going down to Egypt (*Bereishis 46:27*): *The entire soul (כָּל הַנַּפְשׁ) – in the singular – that came with Yaakov to Egypt ... was sixty-six*. This also explains why it says here *לְהַעֲלֶתָּהּ* (lit., to raise up) the lamp rather than *לְהַדְלִיקָהּ* (to kindle) it: the Torah here is describing the elevation of the soul and not the lighting of a lamp – which indeed is a mitzvah reserved only for the Kohanim. **[This answers Questions 3, 4 and 5.]**

### THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508 - 1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKodosh” (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich’s true greatness.

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