

# Parasha Meditation Tetzaveh

**Shemot 27:20-30:10**

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

## The Candles of Eternity

### Introduction:

#### The Candles of Eternity

*Parashat Tetzaveh* opens with the instruction for lighting the eternal candelabrum:

וְאָתָה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת כֹּף כְּתִית לְמָאוֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד: (ספר שמות פרק כז:כ)

“You shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure olive oil beaten for lighting, to raise up the candle to burn eternally.”<sup>1</sup> Malbim explains the unusual language: “וְאָתָה תְּצַוֶּה”/ *v’ata tetzaveh* – “You shall command” to imply something which must be done quickly, immediately and for all generations to come. Even when the Temple was destroyed and the candles were abolished, behold we continue to light them in the synagogues which are called a small sanctuary (מקדש מעט) /*mikdash me’at*).<sup>2</sup>

#### Women’s Mitzvah

The word תְּצַוֶּה/*tetzaveh* has the exact same numerical value (גמטריה/*gematria*) as the words נָשִׁים צִוָּה / *nashim tzivah* – “He commanded the women.” Therefore, the Torah verse obligating the kindling of the eternal light in the sanctuary alludes to women’s responsibility to light the Shabbat candles in the home.<sup>3</sup> Although the mitzvah to light the Shabbat candles is from the Rabbis and not explicitly stated in the Torah, through this allusion the Torah empowers women with the ability of igniting the holiness of the Temple into our homes. The mitzvah of lighting the Shabbat candles pertains to women more than to men.<sup>4</sup> Even if the husband also wants to light Shabbat candles, the wife takes precedence.<sup>5</sup> The importance of the Shabbat candles is highlighted by the halachic fact that if one cannot afford both shabbat candles and wine for Kidush, Shabbat candles take precedence.<sup>6</sup>

#### An Allusion to the Three Temples

“...that they bring you pure olive oil beaten for lighting.”<sup>7</sup> The numerical value of the word “beaten” in Hebrew כְּתִית /*katit* is 830. This equals the accumulative years of the two first temples. The first temple stood for 410 years, the second temple for 420 years, together this adds up to 830. Scripture thus alludes to the fact that the menorah will be lit in the temples which will stand for כְּתִית

<sup>1</sup> *Shemot* 27:20.

<sup>2</sup> *Midrash Hagadol, Vayikra* 6:3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ba’al HaTurim, Shemot* 27:20.

<sup>4</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 263:3.

<sup>5</sup> *Mishna Brura, Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Shemot* 27:20.



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(011-972-2) 995-4945

info@berotbatayin.org

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years.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the two first temples will light for a limited period as it states *לְמֵאוֹר /katit l'meor* – “beaten for lighting,” the third temple will remain forever, as the verse continues: *לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר /l'ha'a lot ner tamid* – “to raise up the candle to burn eternally” – Its light will never be extinguished.<sup>9</sup>

### Igniting Ourselves

The glorious Temple built by King Solomon had special windows from which the light would emanate to the world as it states, “For the house he made windows wide without, and narrow within.”<sup>10</sup> Whereas, the windows of regular palaces are wide within and narrow without, in order to cause light to enter into them, the windows of the temple were opposite in order to bring forth a great light inside out.<sup>11</sup> G\*d created everything including the light. Therefore, He does not need anyone to light for Him. Likewise, the Talmud learns from our Torah verse that we are obligated to light the candles for our own sake, rather than for G\*d's sake, as it states, “...that they bring **you** pure olive oil...” Hashem commands “אֵלֶיךָ /*elecha* – ‘for you’ but not ‘for me,’ for I do not need the light.”<sup>12</sup> By lighting the candelabrum we ignite and illuminate ourselves with Hashem's eternal light.

### The Candles of *Shalom Bayit* – Peace in the Home

The teaching from last week's parasha: “Make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell within them”<sup>13</sup> – meaning within each of us, is specifically fulfilled through the lighting of the menorah, by which we cause the *Shechina* to dwell in our midst. The Shabbat candles that a woman lights likewise cause the *Shechina* to enter into our homes. This explains the importance of the mitzvah of lighting the Shabbat candles which precedes even the lighting of the Chanukah candles for the sake of *Shalom Bayit* – peace in the home.<sup>14</sup> We can now understand why the Shabbat candles bring peace in the home even today when we have electric light and don't need these candles for physical light. Lighting the Shabbat candles causes the Divine indwelling Presence to dwell in the home between husband and wife, by igniting the *yud* of the *ישׂא/ish* – man and the *heh* of the *אִשָּׁה/isha* – woman. These two letters comprise one of Hashem's holy names through which peace in the home shines forth.

### Eternal Witness

The word *לְהַעֲלֹת /leha'a lot* – to raise up is missing a *vav* to hint to the fact that the *vav* (6) candles are extinguished and rekindled, while only the middle candle lights perpetually.<sup>15</sup> This is also why it states, “to raise up the candle” in singular rather than “candles” in plural. Hashem intended that within each part of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) there would be a testimony that His Divine presence dwells among Israel. In the Holy of Holies the Ark gave faithful testimony that the Divine presence rested there. The Tablets contained within it could be read from both sides, with the *mem* and

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Toldot Yitzchak, Shemot 27:20.*

<sup>10</sup> *1 Kings 6:4.*

<sup>11</sup> *Vayikra Rabah 31:7.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ba'al HaTurim* quoting *Babylonian Talmud, Menachot 86b.*

<sup>13</sup> *Shemot 25:8.*

<sup>14</sup> *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 263:3.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ba'al Haturim, Shemot 27:20.*

"ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך" אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אליך ולא לי לא לאורה אני צריך (תלמוד בבלי מסכת מנחות דף פ"ב)



*samech* miraculously not falling out. In the Tent of Meeting Hashem's light shone from the eternal middle candle. Everyone would look at it, and see the name of Hashem, dwelling within them.<sup>16</sup> This candle is similar to the Ark, since they both witness G-d's presence. Two witnesses are required as it states "according to the testimony of two..."<sup>17</sup>

### Spiritual Recharge

The candle, which symbolizes the words of Torah, is considered a guide to life, safeguarding us from stumbling. Whoever performs a mitzvah sustains his soul, and is considered as if he lit a candle before G-d as it states: *נֵר הַשֵּׁם נִשְׁמַת אָדָם/ner Hashem nishmat adam* – A candle of G-d is the soul of man.<sup>18</sup> The benefit of the candle is that it purifies the soul.<sup>19</sup> Candles differ from other goods in this world, which becomes reduced when shared with others. From one candle you can kindle thousands of candles without diminishing the light of the original candle. In the same way, when we fulfill a mitzvah even if it seemingly comprises expense and effort, we do not get depleted but rather recharged with renewed spiritual energy.

### Meditation:

Sit comfortable in your chair and close your eyes.

1. Take several deep breaths and imagine you are an unlit candle. Get in touch with the yearning to become lit.
2. Allow your mind travel back to search for mitzvot (Torah commandments) you performed. It could be visiting the sick, dancing vigorously at a wedding, rejoicing with the bride, keeping the dietary laws scrupulously, giving *tzedaka* (charity) etc.
3. Focus in on one of the mitzvot that you especially performed with your entire heart.
4. Visualize how this mitzvah acts like a spark that ignites your wick, and imagine how you begin to glow with a bright orange light. Your flame grows stronger and your whole body becomes enlightened. Feel yourself radiating this warm light, as you slowly inhale and exhale.
5. Inhale as you visualize the word *נֵר/ner* – candle, exhale as you visualize the word *תָּמִיד/tamid* – eternal. G-d's candle burns perpetually within your soul. Keep repeating the breathing, visualizing the word *נֵר/ner* on the in-breath, and the word *תָּמִיד/tamid* on the outbreath for eight times.<sup>20</sup>
6. Your light is like the brightness of wisdom driving away the darkness of ignorance. You are the bright radiant light. Feel yourself pulsating, expanding, your light shining forth further and further until it illuminates your entire house. Allow your inner flame to reach out even further until it fills your whole neighborhood. Your neighborhood is illuminated by your glowing light.

<sup>16</sup> *Kli Yakar*, *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> *Devarim* 17:6, *Babylonian Talmud, Sota* 31:2.

<sup>18</sup> *Mishlei* 20:27.

<sup>19</sup> *Shemot Rabah* 36:3.

<sup>20</sup> Number eight symbolizes eternity, see *Maharal, Ner Mitzvah*, p. 23.

Imagine your candle traveling even further out to your entire country and still further to encompass the whole universe.

7. You fill the entire world with your light, illuminating every space to break through any darkness and blockage within yourself and the world. Continue glowing with this orange light in all directions, eradicating darkness from within and without.

**Notes:**

Why is the commandment to light the menorah placed before all the vessels of the *Mishkan*? The kindling of the candelabrum is the only Temple service described in the book of *Shemot*. Besides this service, only the vessels of the *Mishkan* and their places are delineated here. The mitzvah to light the menorah precedes the rest of the worship of the *Mishkan* described in the book of *Vayikra*, because kindling the candles is the purpose of the entire Temple worship. Igniting the candelabrum symbolizes the elevation of the **soul** towards the **Divine** light by keeping the **mitzvot** of the **Torah**.<sup>21</sup> The **soul** of humanity is compared to light<sup>22</sup> the **Torah** is compared to light: “For a candle is a Mitzvah and the Torah is light.”<sup>23</sup> **Israel** will become the light of the world: “Nations will walk in your light.”<sup>24</sup> **G\*d** is the light of the individual: “G\*d is my light and my salvation,”<sup>25</sup> and He is the light of Israel: “Arise shine for your light is come.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Nechama Leibowitz on *Shemot* 27:20.

<sup>22</sup> See *Mishlei* 20:27 quoted above before footnote 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 6:23 כי נר מצוה ותורה אור /ki ner mitzvah v'Torah ohr.

<sup>24</sup> *Yeshha'yahu* 60:3 יהלכו גוים לאורך /vehalchu goyim le'orech.

<sup>25</sup> *Tehillim* 27:1 יהי אורי וישעי /Hashem ori v'yishi.

<sup>26</sup> *Yeshha'yahu* 60:1 כי בא אורך /kumi ori ki va orech.

# About Us



## **Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum**

*Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.*

*For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.*

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

*Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.*

*If you are interested in:*

*Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact [info@berotbatayin.org](mailto:info@berotbatayin.org) or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at [director@berotbatayin.org](mailto:director@berotbatayin.org)*

*or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>*

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