

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT TERUMA

“And You Shall Make a Menora of Pure Gold”

By Rav Gad Eldad

a. “And you shall make a menora of pure gold”¹

[Last week](#), we discussed discrepancies in the formulation of verses over the course of a textual unit with regard to the person or people being addressed, alluding to additional dimensions of understanding. In approaching this week’s *parasha*, we note a similar phenomenon.

At the beginning of the command concerning the construction of the *aron* (ark), we encounter the same sort of transition:

And **let them make** Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you [singular], the pattern of the Mishkan and the pattern of all its vessels, so shall you [plural] make it. And **they shall make** an ark of shittim wood... **And you [singular] shall overlay it** with pure gold... **And you [singular] shall make upon it** a rim of gold round about. **And you [singular] shall cast** four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners... And you shall make poles of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings... And you shall put into the Ark the Testimony which I shall give you. (*Shemot* 25:8-16)

A number of commentators note the shift from the third person plural at the beginning of the unit (“Let them make Me...”) to the first person singular for most of the rest of the unit (“you shall overlay... you shall make upon it... you shall cast...”).² On the level of *peshat*, we might explain this as Ibn Ezra does in his long commentary:

“They shall make [an ark]” – Since the [larger] unit began with “Let them make Me...,” this command is introduced accordingly with “They shall make an ark.”³ (Ibn Ezra, *Shemot* 25:8)

Attention should be paid to the fact that the command to build the *aron* concludes by specifying its function. This structure then repeats itself in relation to the other vessels of

¹ Based on my article, “*Mikumah Ve-Tokhnah shel Parshiyat Beha’alotekha et Ha-Nerot*,” *Megadim* 27.

² See Ramban, Rabbeinu Bechayei, Da’at Zekenim Mi-Ba’alei Ha-Tosafot, Ba’al Ha-Turim, Alshikh, and others.

³ It must be pointed out that according to the same logic, since the previous verse (25:9) concludes, “so shall you [plural] make it,” the beginning of the command concerning the ark should seemingly begin in the same way: “You [plural] shall make an ark of shittim wood...”

the *Mishkan*:

And you shall make a covering of pure gold... And you shall make two *keruvim* of gold, of a solid piece shall you make them, at the two ends of the covering. And you shall make one *keruv* on the one end, and the other *keruv* on the other end; of the covering shall you make [plural]⁴ the *keruvim* on the two ends of it... **And you shall place the covering above, upon the aron, and in the aron you shall put the Testimony which I shall give you...**

And you shall make a table of shittim wood... And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make for it a rim of gold round about. And you shall make for it a border of a handbreadth round about, and you shall make a golden crown for its border round about... And you shall make for it four rings of gold... And you shall make the poles of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and they shall be for carrying the table. And you shall make its dishes, and its spoons, and its jars, and its bowls, used for pouring; of pure gold shall you make them. **And you shall set upon the table showbread before Me always.** (*Shemot* 25:17-30)

The command concerning the *menora* is an exception:

And you shall make a *menora* of pure gold, of a solid piece shall the *menora* be made... And six branches shall come out of its sides... three cups made like almonds, with a bulb and a flower in one branch... so in the six branches that come out of the *menora*. And in the *menora* shall be four bowls made like almonds, with their bulbs and flowers... **And you shall make** its seven lamps, **and he shall light** its lamps that they may give light over against it. (*Shemot* 25:31-37)

The command is addressed throughout in the second person singular, to Moshe, including the conclusion, which describes the purpose of the vessel – up to and including the making of the lamps. The instruction to light the lamps, however, is formulated in the third person (“he shall light...”).⁵

In order to understand the reason for this, let us broaden our perspective.

b. “To cause the lamp to burn always”

After the conclusion of the commands concerning the various vessels, the *parasha* goes on to command the construction of the *Mishkan* itself. At the end of this set of commands, we are surprised to discover, at the beginning of

⁴ The use of the plural here is quite surprising; see *Ha’amek Davar* and *Da’at Mikra* ad loc.

⁵ Admittedly, in verse 39, we find one instance of the third person, following which the text reverts to the second person: “Of a talent of pure gold **shall he make** it, with all these vessels. **And see that you make** them after their pattern, which was **shown to you** in the mountain” (25:39).

Parashat Tetzaveh, a repetition of the command to light the lamps of the *menora*:

And you shall command *Bnei Yisrael* that they bring you pure oil of olives beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the Tent of Meeting outside the veil, which is before the Testimony, Aharon and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord; it shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of *Bnei Yisrael*. (*Shemot* 27:20-21)

This “reminder” seems out of place not only in relation to the preceding units, which described the construction of the *Mishkan*, but also in relation to the following units, which relate to the *Kohanim*:

And take to yourself Aharon your brother, and his sons with him, from among *Bnei Yisrael*, that he may minister to Me as *Kohanim*: Aharon, Nadav, and Avihu, Elazar and Itamar, the sons of Aharon. And you shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother, for honor and for beauty. And you shall speak to all who are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aharon’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as a *Kohen*. (*Shemot* 28:1-3)

Another point worthy of note in the formulation of the command concerning the *menora* is that it is not Aharon who is required to bring oil, but rather *Bnei Yisrael*. The Torah then goes on to specify the use that will be made of the oil by Aharon. This manner of presentation seems to be deliberate and significant, since we find that it is repeated:

And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: Command *Bnei Yisrael* that they bring to you pure oil of olives beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aharon order it from evening until morning before the Lord continually; it shall be a statute forever for your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure *menora*, before the Lord continually. (*Vayikra* 24:1-4)

This raises the additional question of why this unit is repeated in *Sefer Vayikra*, since all of this was given over already in *Sefer Shemot*.

c. **“As the Lord commanded Moshe”**

To make sense of all of this, let us consider who it was that inaugurated the vessels of the *Mishkan*. Seemingly, the answer is set forth explicitly in *Sefer Shemot*:

And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the *Mishkan* was set up. And Moshe set up the *Mishkan*, and fastened its sockets, and set up its boards... And he spread the tent over the *Mishkan*... as the Lord had commanded Moshe. And he took and placed the Testimony into the *aron*... and he brought the *aron* into the *Mishkan*... as the Lord had commanded Moshe. And he placed the table in the Tent of Meeting... And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moshe. And he placed the

menora in the Tent of Meeting, across from the table... And he lit the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moshe. And he put the golden altar in the Tent of Meeting before the veil, and he burned sweet incense upon it as the Lord had commanded Moshe... And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the *Mishkan* of the Tent of Meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meal offering, as the Lord had commanded Moshe. And he set the laver between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water there, for washing. And Moshe and Aharon and his sons washed their hands and their feet there, when they went into the Tent of Meeting, and when they came near to the altar, they washed, as the Lord had commanded Moshe... So Moshe finished the work. (*Shemot* 40:17-33)

A simple reading of the text leads us to conclude that Moshe put up the *Mishkan* on his own and inaugurated its vessels. However, beyond the practical implausibility, the formulation of the verses does not seem to support this understanding. If Moshe had indeed done everything himself, the concluding verse in each section should have read, “... as the Lord had commanded *him*.” Instead, the text specifies his name each time. This may suggest that Moshe supervised the work, but did not actually carry it all out personally.

This being the case, our question as to who it was who inaugurated the *Mishkan* is still left unanswered. We will try to answer this question by reviewing units from elsewhere in the text.

1. Inauguration of the altar for burnt offerings

The description of the service performed during the seven days of inauguration suggests that Moshe inaugurated the altar:

And thus shall you do to Aharon and to his sons, according to all which I have commanded you; seven days shall you consecrate them. And you [singular] shall offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement, and you shall cleanse the altar, when you have made atonement for it, and you shall anoint it, to sanctify it. Seven days shall you make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it, and it shall be an altar most holy; whatever touches the altar shall be holy. (*Shemot* 29:35-37)

2. Table for the showbread

We quoted above the command concerning the table, which concludes with the words:

... And you [singular] shall place upon the table showbread before Me always. (*Shemot* 25:23)

Here, too, the command appears to refer to the seven days of inauguration, when Moshe performed the service. Support for this understanding is to be found in the parallel unit:

And you [singular] **shall take** fine flour, and bake of it twelve cakes... And you shall set them in two rows... And you shall put pure frankincense upon each row... Every Shabbat **he shall set it in order before the Lord**

continually, an everlasting covenant from *Bnei Yisrael*. And it shall be Aharon's, and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place, for it is most holy **to him** of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual due. (*Vayikra* 24:5-9)

The latter part of this unit refers to Aharon in the third person, while the command itself is addressed to Moshe. Attention should be paid to the fact that the shift occurs where the text starts to address the routine use of the table for future generations. The formulation shifts to the third person, referring to the future *Kohen* who will order the bread upon the table.

3. Incense altar

The distinction we have drawn between the parts of the unit focusing on the table for the showbread can be applied to help us analyze the unit concerning the incense altar:

And you [singular] **shall make** an altar for the burning of incense; of shittim wood shall you make it... And you shall put it before the veil that is by the Ark of the Testimony, before the covering that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. **And Aharon shall burnt upon it** sweet incense every morning; when he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aharon lights the lamps at evening, he shall burn incense upon it, **a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations...** And Aharon shall sprinkle upon the horns of it once in a year the blood of the sin offering of atonements; once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations, it is most holy to the Lord. (*Shemot* 30:1-10)

Here, too, the text shifts from the initial command to Moshe, to a description of the routine service in the *Mishkan* (and later in the Temple) conducted by Aharon. It is therefore difficult to discern who it was who inaugurated the incense altar. Since the text provides no explicit indication otherwise, it would seem that Moshe filled this role just as he performed the other functions of the *Mishkan* during the inauguration.

4. Menorah

We noted above the shift at the end of the commandment concerning the building of the *menora*:

And you shall **make** its seven lamps, **and he shall light** its lamps that they may give light over against it. (*Shemot* 25:37)

Rashbam (ad loc.) comments:

"And he shall light" – the *Kohen* shall light the seven lamps upon the seven branches...

All of the above would seem to point to the conclusion that while Moshe inaugurated the *Mishkan* and all its other vessels, the lighting of the *menora* was performed, from the outset, by Aharon and his sons alone.

d. **"The seven lamps shall give light towards the body of the *menora*"**

Support for the idea that the lighting of the lamps was performed by Aharon and his sons is to be found in another unit dealing with this subject:

And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to Aharon, and say to him, When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light towards the body of the *menora*. And Aharon did so: he lit its lamps over against the body of the *menora*, as the Lord had commanded Moshe. And this was the work of the *menora*: it was of a solid piece, from its shaft, to its flowers, it was of a solid piece, according to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moshe, so he made the *menora*." (*Bamidbar* 8:1-4)

The instruction at the beginning of this unit is rather surprising. God commands Moshe to explain to Aharon how to light the *menora*. Nowhere do we find Moshe instructing his brother as to how to offer the incense, or how to place the showbread on the table. The key to this puzzle may lie in our conclusions above. Aharon needs no instruction from Moshe with regard to the other aspects of the *Mishkan* service. During the seven days of inauguration, Moshe performed the service, with Aharon at his side, learning as he went along. With regard to the *menora*, in contrast, the command suggests that even the inauguration was performed by the *Kohen*. For this reason, Moshe had to instruct him, since he would be the first to perform this service.⁶

This also offers a basis for understanding the context of this unit, at the end of the sacrifices brought by the princes of the tribes to inaugurate the altar. The location of the unit alludes to the idea that while the text notes that the altar was inaugurated by Moshe, the *menora* was inaugurated by Aharon.

This may explain the connection between this unit and the consecration of the *kohanim*, which follows. The first action that Aharon performed in the *Mishkan* was the lighting of the *menora*. Thus, after the text notes Aharon's consecration and his commencement of the *Mishkan* service, it goes directly on to describe the inauguration of the other ministers in the service of the *Mishkan* – the *Levi'im*.⁷

⁶ See *Meshekh Chokhma* on the beginning of *parashat Beha'alotekha* (8:2): "Rashi, citing the *midrash*, teaches that Aharon was distressed that the altar was inaugurated [only] by the [gifts of the other] princes of the tribes. God said to him, 'Your [portion] is greater than theirs.' This refers to the inauguration of the *menora*, where, for the first lighting, Aharon was commanded to prepare the lamps and to light. But for the future it is written (*Shemot* 27:21), 'Aharon shall order it' – just the ordering and setting up, but not the lighting. Likewise we find further on (*Bamidbar* 8:3), 'And Aharon did so... as the Lord had commanded Moshe' – that the first time he was commanded, he lit himself. The intention here could not have been for future generations, for it could not be known that he did 'As the Lord commanded' until his dying day, continuing to light the *menora* his whole life. This is clear" (*Meshekh Chokhma* 8:2).

However, see also his commentary on *Vayikra* 24:5, where he offers the same argument concerning the incense altar, while we view this interpretation as being relevant to the *menora* alone.

⁷ See Chizkuni: "'Speak to Aharon' – this commandment follows after the inauguration by the princes of the tribes because we find that the twelve princes offered sacrifices to inaugurate the altar, but the tribe of Levi did not offer. This suggests that they were despondent and said, 'Why have we been excluded from offering sacrifices to God for the inauguration of the altar?' Once the inauguration of the altar was over,

This also explains the seemingly peculiar location of the command concerning the lighting at the beginning of *Parashat Tetzaveh*, just prior to the consecration of the *Kohanim*: “And you shall command *Bnei Yisrael* that they bring you pure oil of olives...” (*Shemot* 27:20-21). In light of our discussion we might argue that lighting the lamps is the highlight of their consecration, since they alone are prepared for this service. The description of the lighting – the most prominent expression of their selection as *Kohanim* – therefore precedes the command to consecrate them.

And yet the command seems to embody additional significance.

e. **“And you shall command *Bnei Yisrael*...”**

The essence of the command introducing *Parashat Tetzaveh* is that *Bnei Yisrael* should bring oil to the *Mishkan*. Aharon as the lighter of the lamps is mentioned only as part of the description of the purpose of the oil:

And you shall command *Bnei Yisrael* that they bring you pure oil of olives beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the Tent of Meeting outside the veil, which is before the Testimony, Aharon and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord; it shall be a statute forever for their generations on behalf of *Bnei Yisrael*.” (*Shemot* 27:20-21)

This fact may shed light on the seemingly strange location of this unit, prior to Aharon’s consecration. The text indicates that Aharon performs the lighting of the lamps in the *Mishkan* as the representative of the nation, fulfilling the purpose of the oil that they have brought, rather than as a “*Kohen* of God.” Obviously, in the verses that follow, Aharon is indeed consecrated for service in the *Mishkan*, but his role as representative of the people, using their oil for the lighting, is in no way diminished.

This points to a possible understanding of the repetition of this command in *Sefer Vayikra*, with almost identical wording:

And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying: Command *Bnei Yisrael* that they bring to you pure oil of olives beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aharon order it from evening until morning before the Lord continually; it shall be a statute forever for your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure menorah before the Lord continually. (*Vayikra* 24:1-4)

The Ramban tries to justify the repetition by focusing on various discrepancies in the details. However, the remarkable similarity between the two units directs us to seek its significance not in the units themselves, but rather in their context. Chizkuni explains the reason for the repetition as follows:

God told Aharon and his sons, ‘All of the tribes performed one inauguration, and **you will perform a [separate] inauguration of your own.**’ Therefore it says, ‘Speak to Aharon: When you prepare the lamps...’, and afterwards, ‘Take the *Levi'im*...’”

... Because this *sefer* [*Vayikra*], which is the *Torat Kohanim*, sets forth all the vessels of the *Mishkan* and the sacrifices and the consecration of the *Kohanim* and the impure bodily emissions that prohibit one from coming to the Temple and eating of sanctified food. The text therefore explains the order of the *menora* and the table, which are mutually dependent. (Chizkuni, *Vayikra* 24:2)

In other words, the repetition of the matter of lighting the lamps complements the aspect we noted in *Parashat Tetzaveh*. It is specifically the unique character of this service, and the status of the *Kohen* as representative of the nation, that create the need to specify this service again as part of the framework of the sacrifices in *Sefer Vayikra*. The repetition itself indicates that the action of lighting takes place on two different levels simultaneously.

Ultimately, the *Kohen* who lights the *menora*, despite his consecration as a servant of God in the *Mishkan* and his performance of the sacrificial service, still serves simultaneously as an emissary of *Bnei Yisrael* in fulfilling the purpose of their offering of oil.

f. **“Your [portion] is greater than theirs”**

Of course, we must still seek to explain why it is specifically the lighting of the lamps that it set aside in this manner, as a symbol of the *Kohen*’s dual status.

We propose an explanation based on the Ramban at the beginning of *Parashat Beha’alotekha*. The Ramban cites the *midrash* (*Tanchuma, Bamidbar* 5) that teaches that Aharon became despondent because he had not brought a sacrifice like the princes of all the other tribes, and God consoled him by awarding him the lighting of the lamps, assuring him, “Yours is greater than theirs”:

It is not clear to me why God comforted him specifically by mentioning the lighting of the lamps, rather than comforting him by mentioning the incense that he would offer every morning and evening... or with all the sacrifices... or the Yom Kippur service... Furthermore, what is the meaning of this despondency? Did he not offer much more than all the princes, for he offered a great many sacrifices throughout the days of inauguration? ... The purpose of this *midrash* is to hint to the inauguration of the *menora* that took place in the Second Temple, by descendants of Aharon – the Hasmonean *Kohen Gadol* and his sons. (Ramban, *Bamidbar* 8:2)

According to this explanation, God’s “consolation” of Aharon with the lighting hints to the future, when the *Kohanim* would inaugurate the *menora* in the Temple, in a manner that would cause this lighting to be commemorated in every Jewish home. In the future, it would be specifically through the lighting of the lamps that the dual status of the *Kohanim* would be revealed, as part of the nation, on one hand, and as the cadre of servants dedicated to Divine service, on the other.

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