

Shavua Tov

Weekly  Parsha

A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Tetzaveh*

תצוה

“You shall command”

You, [Moses], must command the Israelites to bring you clear illuminating oil, made from hand crushed olives, to keep the lamp constantly burning.

Ve'atah **tetzaveh et-beney Yisra'el veyikchu eleycha shemen zayit zach katit lama'or leha'alot ner tamid.**

Scripture for study:

Shemot (Exodus) 27:20 – 30:10

The story of man begins in the Torah with two very revealing and powerful descriptions. The first is the revelation that man was created in the image of Elohim.

“And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of Elohim created he him; male and female created he them. And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:26-28)

In this first description of man we witness that man was created to be in the image and likeness of Elohim. Since Elohim is Spirit¹ and not flesh, we must understand that to be in the image of Elohim does not refer to how we look physically; it is a description of how we are to interact with the rest of creation and how we are to create. It is in the manner in which we exercise our dominion over the earth and its creatures that we embody the sovereignty and dominion of Elohim over all the earth. It is in the power of procreation, the ability to bring forth life into the world, that we embody the image of Elohim in our world. Thus in this first description we learn that man was created to be the bearer of the image of Elohim in the world.

The second description of man is a little more curious than the first and requires some careful thought.

*“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”
(Genesis 2:25)*

The significance of this description is not that Adam and Eve were created naked, but that they were naked and not ashamed in any way of their created state. To better understand what is being communicated here, let us look further into the story to provide ourselves with a contrast. Within the Garden of Eden we know that there were two unique trees, the Tree of Life and the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It was the presence of these two trees that provided Adam and Eve with the opportunity to demonstrate their love and devotion for the Creator. The Creator had expressly forbidden Adam from eating the fruit of the tree with mixed seed, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

“And out of the ground made YHWH ELOHIM to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:9)

*“And YHWH ELOHIM commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”
(Genesis 2:16-17)*

From the very beginning of the creation narrative we witness that YHWH ELOHIM is an Elohim of division and distinction.² The Creator is clearly an Elohim of order. Everything in the garden brings forth after its kind.³ It should not surprise us then that the only tree that was forbidden to Adam and Eve was a tree of mixed seed and mixed fruit – good AND evil.

We should also understand at this point in the narrative that Adam and Eve received all their knowledge through direct revelation from the Creator. Everything they knew was good. In fact, as YHWH declared, it was very good.⁴ Up to this time in the story of creation there was no mixture in the garden or in man (with the exception of the forbidden tree). Both man and garden were pure and pristine, and likewise the image of Elohim as embodied in Adam and Eve. Thus we realize that Adam and Eve could indeed be naked and unashamed, for they were pure and the perfect image of Elohim. Since there was, in essence, no difference between themselves and the Creator, there was no need for Adam and Eve to feel shame in His presence. Since their view of each other was formed by the Spirit of the Holy One, there was no need for them to feel shame in each other’s company. Everything in the garden was pure, in order, and according to its kind; but this changed with the fall. The serpent promised Eve that if she ate of the forbidden fruit her eyes would be opened; and so they were.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For Elohim doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as elohim, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and

they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of YHWH ELOHIM walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHWH ELOHIM amongst the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:4-8)

Let us take careful note that one of the first changes to occur after the fall is the description of Adam and Eve. After eating of the forbidden fruit they realized their nakedness and sought to cover it. Adam and Eve felt the need to hide themselves from their Creator. When YHWH confronts them, Adam responds to the Creator,

“I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10)

The Holy One’s further inquiry of Adam reveals much.

“And he (Elohim) said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Genesis 3:11)

Clearly something had changed in Adam and Eve that revealed their fallen state to the Creator. The answer is found in the Holy One’s question, “Who told you that you were naked?” Clearly this question reveals that Adam and Eve had received information or knowledge from some source other than the Creator. Adam and Eve were not blind before they ate of the forbidden fruit; they clearly knew that they were naked. What revealed their fallen state? After eating of the mixed fruit of good and evil Adam and Eve made a judgment about the state of being naked. Armed with the stolen knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve decided for themselves that the state of nakedness was not good, but evil. In other words, Adam and Eve felt a need to cover up their created state as though it were something shameful.

Here we may ask what changed so that Adam and Eve would suddenly feel ashamed in each other’s presence and be fearful of communicating with their Creator. The answer is again found in the mixed seed of the forbidden fruit. Prior to the fall Adam and Eve received their knowledge and understanding exclusively through revelation in communion with their Creator, whose image they manifested in their flesh. After eating of the forbidden fruit their eyes were opened, and they gained knowledge from their own senses. From this point on, Adam and Eve and their descendants lived with a mixture of revelation knowledge and sensual knowledge. With eyes opened, man gained his own unique knowledge and understanding by which he interprets and judges all divine revelation. It is this additional sensual knowledge that changed man’s image and set him apart from the image of Elohim. It is this realization of a difference between man and woman and between mankind and its Creator that causes man to feel a sense of shame and fear. As man has become progressively disconnected from his created state and calling, he has become accustomed to living by his senses and less and less by divine revelation. Thus when we encounter one who hears from YHWH ELOHIM we speak of him as being a unique individual – a *tzadik*.⁵ Such are Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets, who heard and lived by the voice of the Holy One.

Man now lives predominately by sensual knowledge. Carnal man lives predominately in his lower animal nature. While the animals do indeed reveal many mysteries of the Creator, it is man that was created to bear the image of the Creator. When man is living as an animal the image of the Creator is lost, desecrated, and distorted. This mixture of divine revelation and man's interpretation based upon his own gleaned sensual knowledge and reasoning is where the world's religions and idolatry spring from.

We should note that man's response to the realization of a difference between himself and his Creator was to cover his nakedness. We should also note that YHWH likewise responded to man's nakedness by creating garments and coverings. Where once the radiance and glory of the image of Elohim was man's covering, now that Adam was no longer in the image of Elohim his nakedness was quite apparent. Out of compassion for fallen man the Holy One created new coverings for the man and his wife.

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did YHWH ELOHIM make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21)

The purpose of these clothes was not only to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, but also to make a distinction between them and the animals. The presence of clothing marks Adam and Eve as distinct from the rest of creation. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes,

"Viewed in objective terms too, the origins of clothing have a place of great importance in the moral education of mankind; consequently, clothing has acquired great moral significance in its own right. Clothing was first given to man by the Father of mankind when He sent His children out from paradise into the training school of toil and renunciation, with all its attendant dangers that man might stray and thus descend to the level of the beast. Clothing per se is a conspicuous feature that characterizes a creature as a human being."⁶

That YHWH made these garments from the skin of animals was to remind Adam and Eve that it was living in their animal nature that had caused their descent into a state of exile. These garments declared that man had exchanged the glory of Elohim with the glory of animals. These skins also reminded Adam and Eve that they, as the image of Elohim, were to have dominion over the animals and not to live like them. Where did the need for these reminders, distinctions, and clothes come from? It came from the mixture of human reason and sensual knowledge with divine revelation. It is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that caused man to fail in his created purpose to be the image and manifest presence of Elohim in the world.

When YHWH asked Israel to accept the yoke of Torah it was for the purpose of restoring His manifest presence and image in the world. Through heeding the voice of the Holy One and keeping His covenant Israel would become the embodiment of the attributes of YHWH to the world. In this they would become YHWH's priestly people.

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6)

Here we must realize that we are to be the Holy One’s priests to the world. As we learn in our Torah portion today, Aaron and his sons were to be priests to the children of Israel. As we are to manifest the Creator to the world, so too Aaron and his sons, the *cohanim*,⁷ were to be the manifestation of Elohim to the children of Israel.

“And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.” (Exodus 28:1)

Understanding the priesthood is essential for us if we are to understand the purpose of our being in the covenant. One of the many functions and purposes of the *cohanim* was to light the menorah which illuminated the Tabernacle and cast its revealing light upon the table containing the bread of presence. We may say that the purpose of the *cohanim* was to illuminate the children of Israel, the living tabernacle of YHWH ELOHIM, so that His presence might be seen upon them. To this end YHWH commanded the children of Israel to bring oil for the menorah.

“And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before YHWH: it shall be a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.” (Exodus 27:20-21)

It should strike us immediately that these verses seem out of place here, and would have seemed more appropriate in last week’s portion describing the furniture of the Tabernacle⁸ or at the end of this week’s portion where the lighting of the menorah is mentioned.⁹ Therefore we must ask why this passage was placed here, right before the appointment of Aaron and his sons as *cohanim*. We may ask what significance these verses have upon our understanding of the priesthood. We should note that the children of Israel are to bring pure olive oil to Moses for Aaron to light the menorah. There are numerous lessons to be gleaned from these verses. First we should note that for the oil to be useful for illuminating the menorah, the Tabernacle, and the bread of presence, it had to be pure. In other words, it could contain no other elements. The oil could not be a mixture. To be pure, the oil could contain no sediment or pieces of the flesh of the olive. In other words, pure oil is oil without any flesh mixed in. Oil is often a symbol of the Spirit of the Holy One in the Scriptures. When the Spirit of the Holy One is clearly functioning in, with, or through someone, it is often ritually acknowledged with the anointing of the person by pouring oil over them. Thus these opening verses instruct us that if the oil/spirit we bring is to be useful for illuminating the presence of YHWH in the world, it must be pure; that is, it cannot be mixed with our sensual knowledge, carnal understanding, human reasoning, or any part of our flesh. If we are to illuminate and manifest the image of Elohim in the world, then we must heed His voice and keep His covenant without diminishing anything from it or adding anything to it.

"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which YHWH ELOHIM of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of YHWH your Elohim which I command you." (Deuteronomy 4:1-2)

"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Deuteronomy 12:32)

As *cohanim*, whether to the children of Israel or to the world, we are to live according to the Torah, the self-revelation of YHWH ELOHIM, without mixture. The Torah commands us that we are to encourage the children of Israel and the world to ascend to the upper realms and distinguish ourselves from the animals. The Torah commands:

"And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always." (Exodus 27:20)

The word translated as "burn" is the Hebrew word *alah* (Ayin, Lamed, Hey), which means "to ascend." Thus we are commanded to cause the light to ascend always. Here we may remember the words of Yeshua the Messiah:

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

So it is that we, as the chosen priestly people of YHWH, are to bring pure lives and spirits, desiring to ascend to the superior spiritual calling of being the true image of the living and true Elohim. However, not only are we to ascend to the upper realms; it must be the desire of our heart to raise all mankind up to this higher realm. It is our calling to encourage all mankind to ascend from the animal realm and return to being the image of Elohim in the world. As pure oil we must also be willing to be poured out and consumed for the sake of illuminating the presence of YHWH ELOHIM in the world.

We should also note that the olive releases its pure oil by being beaten, pressed, or crushed. The Hebrew word is *katat* (Kaf, Tav, Tav), and means to "beat fine," "crush" or "pulverize." It is used in the Torah exclusively of the process of making oil from olives. We may understand this analogy to be teaching us that we must go through refining before we are able or fit to offer the pure oil of the spirit that YHWH the Creator has bestowed upon us. We witness similar imagery elsewhere in the Scriptures.

"But YHWH hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day." (Deuteronomy 4:20)

“Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” (Isaiah 48:10)

“And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried.” (Zechariah 13:9)

“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto YHWH an offering in righteousness.” (Malachi 3:2-3)

Even Yeshua taught that the Spirit of the Holy One would be poured out upon his *talmidim* only after his trial, affliction, and death.¹⁰

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” (John 16:7)

To become the image of Elohim in the world requires that we give ourselves wholly to this endeavor. We cannot come in and out of the covenant at will. To become the image of Elohim, we must be willing to die to ourselves that we may take on the image and attributes of the Holy One. We must be ready to perish as an olive so that the potential light (oil) in us may be released. We must be ready to give up the identity we have built for ourselves with our sensual knowledge and human reason and live solely as the image of the Holy One in the world.

One of the primary callings upon the *cohanim* is to teach the distinction between divine revelation knowledge and sensual knowledge.

“And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which YHWH hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.” (Leviticus 10:10-11)

As *cohanim* we are called to make a distinction between that which originated in the imagination or heart of man and that which originated in the will and heart of the Holy One. As *cohanim* we must teach the distinction between that which belongs to the lower realm and that which belongs to the upper realm.

It should not surprise us that along with this calling to the priesthood there is also a command to create and wear special priestly garments. A large part of our Torah portion focuses upon the creation of these special garments to be worn only in the service of the Tabernacle. As stated earlier, we must understand that there is a moral nature to clothing; primarily to separate us from the animals. Thus the *bigday zahav*¹¹ of the *Cohen Gadol*¹² and the *bigday lavan*¹³ of the *cohanim* are intended to elevate the wearers by bringing upon them honor and glory.

“And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.” (Exodus 28:2)

There are several other lessons to be learned from these sacred garments. As we have already seen in the analogy of the olive above, there is an affirming message in the commandments concerning the holy vestments. We should recognize the importance of these garments by the fact that the *cohanim* cannot enter into the Tabernacle or perform their priestly service without them; presuming to do so would mean death.

“And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him.” (Exodus 28:43)

Because man has exchanged his created glory (the image of Elohim) for the inferior glory of the animal realm, man cannot come to minister before YHWH or even bear His image in his inferior spiritual state. The apostle Shaul eloquently puts forth this very reality.

“For the wrath of Elohim is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of Elohim is manifest in them; for Elohim hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divine nature; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew Elohim, they glorified him not as Elohim, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible Elohim into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” (Romans 1:18-23)

Because we have exchanged the covering of the radiance of the glory of the image of Elohim for the shame of the image of a fallen Adam, we cannot come uncovered before YHWH. To come in the image of fallen man is like ministering in fig-leaves, a pathetic excuse for clothing.

We should also realize that we are not free to alter these holy garments. YHWH has given very explicit instructions concerning the appearance and creation of these vestments. We are not free to impose upon them unique decorations, ornaments, or personal do-dads to make them uniquely ours. In fact to do so would be to completely miss the point of the garments. These priestly garments do not belong to the *cohanim*; they belong to the office of *cohen*. All of the supplies and labor to make these garments come from the children of Israel. These garments are not personal property, but public. It is not by accident that the names of the twelve tribes appear collectively upon the shoulders of the *Cohen Gadol* when he dons his vestments. We should also note that the names of the individual tribes appear over the heart of the *Cohen Gadol* as he puts on the breastplate. Thus the one who wears these garments must recognize that he is not there for himself, but for the whole nation of Israel. The Holy One commanded that the *Cohen Gadol* wear the names of the tribes upon his shoulders to remind him that the one who

carries the honor of this anointing also carries the burden of all the children of Israel. The Holy One commanded that the *Cohen Gadol* wear the names of the twelve tribes over his heart that he be reminded that his service on behalf of the children of Israel must be from no other motive but the heart. When the *cohanim* don these sacred garments they must realize that they are no longer an individual *cohen*, but a member of the body of YHWH. Every time the *cohanim* and *Cohen Gadol* put on the sacred vestments, they become Israel manifesting the image of YHWH. Thus these sacred garments cover their nakedness, remove their individually chosen identities, and bring upon them the honor and glory of the Holy One.

We may also see in these vestments a wonderful shadow picture of the Messiah, the great *Cohen Gadol*. We see pictures of the Messiah in the very colors of the golden garments of the *Cohen Gadol*. The blue speaks of him being sent from heaven. The purple speaks of the royal line of David through whom the Messiah would descend. The scarlet speaks of the atoning blood that he offered upon the original Ark of the Covenant. The gold speaks of his purity. The names upon the shoulders speak of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy of the government being upon his shoulders.¹⁴ The fact that the *Cohen Gadol* was also commanded to wear a crown and the *Urim* and *Thummim* speaks of Messiah as Prophet, Priest and King.

In every way these sacred garments proclaim the Messiah; therefore we should realize that we cannot truly be the image of Elohim until we have cast off our rags and put on the priestly garments of Messiah.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6)

"So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:10-14)

"Keep yourselves in the love of Elohim, looking for the mercy of our Master Yeshua Messiah unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude 1:21-23)

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:53)

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah." (Galatians 3:27)

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And

that ye put on the new man, which after Elohim is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” (Colossians 3:8-10)

While the *Cohen Gadol* wears these sacred vestments as he ministers to YHWH and to Israel, we must recognize that our tabernacle is the world, and that the vestments we are to wear are not a shadow picture for our benefit – we are to put on the very attributes of Messiah who kept the Torah perfectly. Like Aaron and his sons, we too must be ready to bear the burden of the world upon our shoulders and upon our hearts. Like Aaron and his sons, we must be ready to lose our personal identity and put on the identity of Messiah, the perfect image of Elohim. The Torah is our garment, but until we put it on, it is lifeless. By putting on the Torah we become the living Torah in the world. Let us be careful to understand what is being asked of us. As we have stated earlier, we cannot enter in and out of the covenant at will, nor can we pick up and lay down the cross at random. We cannot light the oil in the lamp and then put it back in the olive. A wife cannot be a faithful wife when it pleases her. The covenant that we have entered into requires a great deal of us. We are asked to lose our lives and identities so that the world may see the image of Elohim and His Messiah. This is our calling – to be the priestly people of YHWH.

SHAVUA TOV !

¹ John 4:24

² Genesis 1:4, 6,14,18

³ Genesis 1:11,12,21,24,25

⁴ Genesis 1:31

⁵ *Tzadik* is Hebrew word for a “righteous one.”

⁶ The Pentateuch, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Judaica Press, Pg. 324

⁷ *Cohanim* is the Hebrew word for “priests.”

⁸ Exodus 25:31-40

⁹ Exodus 30:7-8

¹⁰ *Talmidim* is the Hebrew word for “disciples.”

¹¹ Golden garments

¹² High Priest

¹³ White garments

¹⁴ Isaiah 9:6