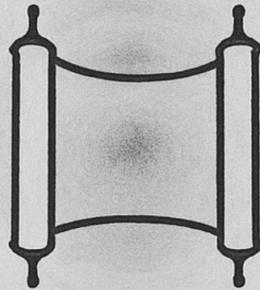


ד"חכ

The Maggid of Mezritch
Ohr Torah
Parshas Tetzaveh



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Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parshas Tetzaveh

Siman #102

And you shall command the children of Israel, and they shall take to you pure olive oil. In the manner [Alternate reading: It is stated in the Gemara] that Bezalel knew how to combine the letters with which the heavens and the earth were created.

The Mishkan was the life-force of all the worlds. This can be understood through the analogy of the soul, which is the life-force of [the entire] body. The soul itself has no form; rather, we refer to it by the name of the body—this is the life-force of the hand or the foot.

[And if so,] Bezalel, who made the Mishkan—which is the life-force of the worlds—needed to know how to bring life-force into the worlds and had to know the letters with which the worlds were created. Everything that exists in the worlds was present in the Mishkan.

And it is stated that the world was created with ten utterances. The Gemara questions: But there are only nine? And it answers: "Bereishit" is also an utterance.

The difficulty is: Why is it not written, "And He said"? However, this utterance is not fully comprehensible; only its lowest level is grasped, and this is the translation.

The translation of "speech" is "Aramaic Targum" (ארש"ת). And that speech [Alternate reading: that word] is the primordial substance of all the utterances, from which all [the nine] utterances emerged.

[Note: Chazal say the world was created with ten utterances. But when you count the pesukim, you only find nine times that it says “And God said.” The Gemara answers that “Bereishit” itself is also an utterance, even though it does not say “And He said.”

The question in your passage is:

If “Bereishit” is an utterance, why doesn’t it say “And He said”?

The answer given is very subtle.

It says:

ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך. על דרך [ג"א: איתא בגמרא] יודע היה בצלאל לצרף אותיות שנבראו בהם שמים וארץ.

המשכן היה חיות של כל העולמות. ויבן על דרך משל הנשמה היא חיות [כל] הגוף. והנשמה בעצמה אין לה תמונה, רק אנו מכנים אותה בשם הגוף—זאת חיות היד או הרגל.

ואם כן [בצלאל שעשה המשכן, שהוא חיות] העולמות, הצרף לדעת היא להכניס החיות בעולמות, והצרף לדעת האותיות שנבראו בהם העולמות. וכל מה שיש בעולמות היה במשכן.

איתא בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם, ופריך והלא ט' הוי"ו, ומשני בראשית נמי מאמר הוא.

וקשה, למה לא כתוב "ויאמר"? אבל המאמר הזה אינו מושג רק המדרגה התחתונה שלו מושג, וזהו התרגום.

דתרגום של דבור הוא ארש"ת. והדבר [ג"א: [והדבור] שהוא הוא היולי של כל המאמרים, שכל [התשעה] המאמרים ממונו באו.

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That first utterance is not fully graspable. Only its lowest level is grasped — and that lowest level is what we call “Targum,” translation.

Now what does that mean?

Here is the idea step by step.

1. There are levels of Divine speech.

The nine “And He said” statements are already defined expressions. They are structured, articulated creative commands.

But “Bereishit” represents the root of all of them. It is the original Divine impulse before it becomes articulated speech.

2. That root level cannot be fully understood.

When something is too high, too abstract, too essential, it cannot be directly expressed in normal language. It does not yet have the structure of “speech.”

So the text says:

Only its lowest level is grasped — and that graspable residue is called “Targum.”

3. What is Targum?

Targum is translation into Aramaic.

Aramaic in Kabbalistic thought represents a lower, more external, more revealed layer of speech.

So the teaching is saying:

The highest, primordial Divine utterance descends and becomes graspable only at its lowest outer edge — and that outer edge is what we experience as translated speech.

4. Then it says something even deeper:

That primordial “thing” or “speech” is the *hiyuli* — the raw, formless substrate — of all the other utterances.

“Hiyuli” means primordial matter or undifferentiated potential.

Meaning:

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Before there are nine distinct creative commands, there is one undifferentiated Divine source that contains them all in potential.

From that source, the nine articulated utterances emerge.

So in summary:

- There are nine revealed utterances
- There is one hidden root utterance
- That root is too essential to appear as “And He said”
- Only its lowest external layer is graspable
- That external layer is called Targum
- That root is the raw source from which all the others unfold

In more experiential terms:

There is speech.

There is thought.

And then there is something even deeper — the pre-verbal inner will or essence from which thought and speech emerge.

That deepest layer cannot be spoken directly. It can only be hinted at, or “translated” into something lower.

That is what this passage is describing.

Chazal say the world was created with ten utterances. But when you count the pesukim, you only find nine times that it says “And God said.” The Gemara answers that “Bereishit” itself is also an utterance, even though it does not say “And He said.” **END NOTE]**

And in the Mishkan, this too needed to be present. This was the Menorah, which Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, found difficult to comprehend, and it could not be made by human hands but only formed by itself.

Upon it [Alternate reading: Through it] was the testimony that the Divine Presence rests among Israel.

This is called "pure olive oil," for the radiance itself rests upon it, like light upon oil. And all the other utterances are called "olive," in which the oil is contained within.

Therefore, in this passage, it does not say, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe" or "And Hashem said [to Moshe]," for this is the meaning of "pure olive oil"—its speech is not comprehensible.

ובמשכן היתה גם כן צריד להיות זאת. וזאת היתה המנורה, שמשה רבינו עליו השלום נתקשה בה ולא היתה יכולה ליעשות על ידי אדם כי אם מאליה.

שעליה [נ"א: שעל ידה הוא] העדות שהשכינה ישורה בישראל.

וזהו נקרא שמן זית, שהבהירות בעצמה שורה עליה כמו האור על השמן. וכל שאר המאמרים נקראים "זית", שהשמן אגור בתוכו.

ולכך לא כתוב בפרשה זאת "וידבר ה' אל משה" או "ויאמר ה' אל משה", כי זה פרוש של "שמן זית", והדבור שלו אינו מושג. אפלו "ויאמר", לשון מחשבה, לא שייך.

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Even "And He said," which implies thought, does not apply here.

[NOTE Summary:

The Maggid teaches that the Mishkan was not merely a structure, but the very life-force of all the worlds. Just as the soul animates the body yet has no independent form of its own, so too the Divine vitality animates creation and takes on the “form” of the worlds it enlivens. Bezalel, who constructed the Mishkan, required profound knowledge of the combinations of the holy letters through which heaven and earth were created, because the Mishkan embodied the same creative energy that sustains reality. Everything that exists in the cosmos was present within it in spiritual form.

The world was created through ten utterances, as taught in the Mishnah (Avot 5:1). Yet the Gemara asks that only nine explicit “And He said” statements appear. It answers that “Bereishit” itself is also an utterance (Rosh Hashanah 32a). However, “Bereishit” is not written as “And He said,” because this first utterance is beyond full articulation. It is the primordial speech, the concealed root from which the other nine utterances unfold. Only its lowest expression can be grasped, and that level is reflected in translation, in Targum, which hints to a diminished yet accessible form of Divine speech.

This hidden utterance corresponds in the Mishkan to the Menorah. Moshe Rabbeinu struggled to comprehend it, and it could not be fashioned by ordinary craftsmanship but emerged as if formed by itself (Menachot 29a). The Menorah testifies that the Divine Presence rests among Israel. It represents the most subtle, inward Divine radiance, analogous to “pure olive oil.” Oil contains within it a hidden light; when kindled, that concealed essence becomes illumination. The other utterances are like olives themselves, containing oil within them. But the Menorah corresponds to the oil in its purity, the essence prior to articulation.

For this reason, in this section it does not state “And Hashem spoke” or even “And Hashem said.” The level being described transcends structured speech and even formed thought. It is the pristine source of Divine expression, too refined to be captured in explicit language. The command concerning pure olive oil thus points to the most inward dimension of Divine vitality, the root of all worlds and the essence of the Mishkan’s light.

Practical Takeaway:

The Maggid’s teaching invites a person to recognize that beneath all structured understanding and articulated prayer lies a deeper root of connection. Words, concepts, and defined spiritual experiences are like the nine revealed utterances. But there is a more inward level of Divine vitality, prior even to formulation, that animates everything. In one’s own service of Hashem, this is the place of silent attachment and essential awareness, the inner “oil” from which all illumination flows. When a person refines himself to access that purity, his inner light becomes a dwelling place for the Divine Presence, just as the Menorah testified in the Mishkan.

Chassidic Story:

It is related that when the Maggid would speak, his words often flowed with depth that his disciples struggled to fully grasp. Once, after an especially lofty teaching, a student approached him and confessed that he

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understood very little. The Maggid responded that there are teachings meant to be comprehended clearly, and others meant to awaken the soul beyond comprehension. He compared it to lighting a lamp: one may not see the oil itself, but without it there is no flame. The student later reflected that even without full intellectual grasp, something within him had been kindled. He felt a subtle, steady warmth in his heart, as if an inner Menorah had been lit.

In this way, the Maggid embodied his own teaching. Not all Divine speech is meant to be analyzed. Some of it is "pure olive oil," nourishing a flame that shines beyond words.

END NOTE]

Siman #103

Or it can be said: Behold, regarding the Terumah offering, it is written, "Speak to the children of Israel," whereas here it is written, "You shall command the children of Israel."

It is possible to say that regarding Terumah, it says "Speak" (דבר), which is a term of guidance, meaning to guide them in how they should take My offering, as it is written, "Magnify Hashem with me."

But here, it is a term of command, from the root meaning "connection and unity," meaning that you shall connect them to yourself completely.

And once they are connected to you, they will surely merit and attain the supernal wisdom, which is called "oil" (שמן), and they will comprehend the secrets of the Torah, which were given through the twenty-two letters.

And this is [the meaning of] "את בני ישראל" (the children of Israel), meaning all the letters from Aleph to Tav.

And since there are small letters and large letters, it alludes again to the two forms of Torah letters in the word "זית" (olive).

For the letter Zayin (ז) is in the shape of a Yud-Vav (י"ו), and together with the Yud (י) from "זית," it forms the letters Yud-Vav-Yud (י"ו"י), which is the shape of the letter Aleph (א) in wisdom, as is known.

Additionally, in the word "זית" (olive), all the letters from Aleph to Tav are alluded to.

או יאמר, הנה בתרומה כתיב "דבר אל בני ישראל", וכאן כתיב "תצוה את בני ישראל".

אפשר לומר כי שם גבי תרומה אמר "דבר", שהוא לשון הנהגה, כלומר הנהג אותם איך יקחו את "תרומתי, כמו שנאמר "גדלו לה' אתי

וכאן הוא לשון צווי, מלשון צוותא וחיבור, שתתברם אליך מכל וכל.

ואז בהתחברם אליך בודאי יזכו וישיגו לחכמה עילאה שהוא נקרא "שמן", ויבינו רזי דאורייתא. שנתנו על פי כ"ב אותיות.

וזהו "את בני ישראל", כלומר כל האותיות מא' עד ת'.

ובהיות שיש אותיות זעירות ואותיות רבובות, רמז עוד "פעם ב' אותיות התורה במלת "זית".

כי אות ז' הוא צורת י"ו, ועם אות י' מניח הוא אותיות י"ו"י, צורת א' שבתחמה, כידוע.

'עוד במלת "זית" מרומז כל האותיות מא' עד ת'.

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For "זית" has the numerical value (gematria) of 417 (ת"ז), which consists of the letters Tav (ת) and an additional one (א), hinting at the letter Aleph (א).

Thus, it contains the letters from Aleph to Tav.

Furthermore, it alludes a third time to the 22 letters, and together with the five final letters (מנצפ"ך), they total 27 letters, which corresponds to "זך" (pure).

And this third instance is an allusion to the letters within thought, for even in thought, there are letters, as explained above.

However, the thought must be refined, without dregs or mixtures of foreign thoughts, and then it will surely become "crushed for the supernal light."

Our sages, of blessed memory, also said that the final letters זך were declared by the prophets. The Gemara questions this, asking: But is a prophet allowed to introduce something new? And it answers: They had been forgotten and were then reestablished.

And behold, our sages also said that all the prophets prophesied using the term "כה" (thus), but Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, was superior to them in that he prophesied with "זה הדבר" (this is the matter).

The reason for this is that our sages stated: "There is nothing in the Writings and Prophets that is not already alluded to in the Torah."

If so, all the words of the prophets and the Writings were already previously hinted at in the Torah, and the prophet merely reveals what was already alluded to.

But Moshe Rabbeinu's prophecy was entirely new, something that had never been heard before. Therefore, it says "זה הדבר" (this is the matter), meaning: See, this is something new.

If so, it is proven that certainly even the double letters, which are זך, were also given to Moshe, only that they were later forgotten.

This is hinted at in the phrase "ויקחו אליך שמן" (and they shall take to you oil), meaning the Torah, which is called "שמן" (oil), to indicate that all the 27 letters belong to you.

פי "זית" הוא גימטריא ת"ז, הוא אותיות תיו, ואחת
'יותר, הוא רמז לאות א

למציא שהוא אותיות מא' עד ת

ועוד רמז פעם שלישית כ"ב אותיות, ועם ה' אותיות
"מנצפ"ך הם ר"ז אותיות, וזהו "זך"

וזה הפעם השלישי הוא רמז לאותיות שבתוך
המחשבה, פי גם במחשבה יש אותיות, כמבואר
לעיל

רק שיהיה המחשבה זכה, בלי שמרים ותערובת
מחשבה זרה, אז בודאי יהיה להם "פתית למאור"
העליון

גם אמרו רז"ל "מנצפ"ך צופים אמרו", ופריך
"והאין נביא רשאי לחדש דבר?", ומשני "שפחום
"ותזרום ויסדום"

והנה אמרו רז"ל "כל הנביאים נתנבאו ב'פה', יתר
עליהם משה רבינו עליו השלום שנתנבא ב'זה"
הדבר

והטעם לזה, מפני שאמרו רז"ל "לית מלתא
בכתובים ובנביאים דלא רמזין באורייתא"

אם כן, כל דברי הנביאים והכתובים כבר נאמר זה
מקודם ברמז בתורה, והנביא הוא אומר הרמז
בהתגלות

אבל נבואת משה רבינו עליו השלום היתה חדשה
שלא נשמעה מעולם. לכן נאמר "זה הדבר", ר"ל
ראיה, זה חדש

אם כן, לפי זה, מפי שבודאי גם האותיות הכפולות,
שהם "מנצפ"ך", גם כן נאמרו למשה, אלא
אשכחום

ולזה הרמז אמר "ויקחו אליך שמן", שהיא התורה
הנראת "שמן", שיתקנסו אליה כל ה"זך" אותיות

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And not that the prophets innovated something new.

וְלֹא שֶׁהַצּוֹפִים חִדְּשׁוּ הַדְּבָר.

This is the meaning of "אליך שמן זית זך" (to you pure olive oil).

"וְזֶהוּ" אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זֵית זָךְ.

[NOTE Summary:

The Maggid teaches that there is a profound difference between the command concerning Terumah and the command concerning the oil for the Menorah. Regarding Terumah, the Torah says "Speak to the children of Israel." Speech is guidance. It is instruction from above, directing a person how to serve. It is similar to the verse "Magnify Hashem with me," meaning: guide them how to elevate themselves in giving.

But here it says, "You shall command the children of Israel." The word תצוה shares a root with צוותה, meaning connection and bonding. This is not merely instruction. It is attachment. Moshe is commanded to bind Israel to himself completely. Through this connection, they become linked to the root of supernal wisdom.

Once connected to Moshe, who embodies da'at and Torah, they will merit the "oil," which represents wisdom. Oil always floats above all liquids. It symbolizes chochmah, the hidden light of understanding. Through this connection, Israel can comprehend the secrets of the Torah that were formed through the twenty-two holy letters.

The phrase "את בני ישראל" hints to this. The word "את" includes Aleph to Tav, meaning all the letters. Torah is the structure of creation through letters, and Israel is bound to that totality.

The Maggid then deepens the symbolism through the word "זית" (olive). The letter ז is shaped like ו"י (Yud-Vav). Together with the י of זית, this forms יו"י, the hidden structure of the letter Aleph, which represents wisdom. Thus even within the olive is concealed the form of Aleph, the beginning of all letters.

He adds that זית has the gematria 417 (תי"ז), alluding again to Tav and Aleph, the span from first to last letter. It contains within it the full range of Aleph to Tav. Furthermore, there is a third allusion to the letters: the twenty-two regular letters together with the five final letters מנצפ"ך total twenty-seven, corresponding to זך (pure). Purity here means refinement. Just as oil must be crushed and clarified to burn brightly, so too thought must be purified of foreign mixtures. Even thought itself contains letters, and those letters must be refined to become a vessel for supernal light.

The sages teach that the final letters מנצפ"ך were declared by the prophets. The Gemara asks how a prophet can introduce something new. It answers that they were forgotten and later restored. This connects to the distinction between prophetic language. All prophets prophesied with "כה" (thus), meaning they revealed what was already alluded to in Torah. But Moshe said "זֶה הַדְּבָר" (this is the matter), indicating direct, original revelation.

Since nothing in Prophets or Writings is absent from Torah, even the final letters must have originally been given through Moshe. They were not innovations, but rediscoveries. This is the meaning of "ויקהו אליך שמן." The Torah, symbolized by oil, with all twenty-seven letters, belongs to Moshe's root. Nothing was added later; it was always contained within the original light.

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Thus “אליך שמן זית זך” means: through attachment to Moshe, Israel receives the full structure of Torah letters, refined and pure, capable of illuminating the Menorah of the soul.

Practical Takeaway:

There is a difference between being told what to do and being connected to a source. Instruction alone does not guarantee transformation. Real spiritual growth comes from attachment to a living source of Torah, to authentic wisdom. When a person binds himself to truth, his mind becomes refined. His thoughts become clear of distraction and mixture. Only then can the inner “oil” of wisdom ignite within him. The Torah’s light shines when the letters in one’s thought are purified.

Chassidic Story:

It is told that when the Maggid would teach, his students often asked for explanations of difficult concepts. Sometimes he would respond with deep instruction. But at other times he would simply look at them in silence. Later, one of the students explained that in those silent moments, he felt more illuminated than through many words. He understood that the Maggid was not merely speaking to them; he was attaching them to a higher source. From that attachment, understanding flowed naturally.

Years afterward, that same student said that what remained with him was not the complexity of the arguments, but the clarity of thought he gained from being bound to his teacher. His inner confusion had been “crushed,” like olives pressed for oil, and from that pressure came a steady, pure flame.

So too, the Maggid teaches: “You shall command” means to bind. From that binding comes oil. From oil comes light. And from light comes the revelation that was always present within the letters from Aleph to Tav.

END NOTE]