



# The Parasha with Rabbi Dweck

*Highlights for*

## Parashat Tetsaveh: Are You Afraid of the Light?

### SUMMARY

Parashat Tetzaveh opens with the instructions for the *Menorah*, the golden candelabra that was to be lit always in the sanctuary. While the service of the *Mishkan* involves physical sacrifices and garments, the *Hakhamim* note that the light is not an offering to God like the *korbanot*, but rather represents His presence and relationship with Israel. True enlightenment requires accessing the ‘Primal Light’ of creation that reveals reality in its fullest context, a feat achieved in part by relinquishing selfish bias and celebrating the greatness of others.

### The Primal Information

The first light of creation (Genesis 1:3) was not the electromagnetic waves we interact with today, but a primal carrier of information. The *Hakhamim* explain (Hagiga 12a) that through this light, one could see ‘from one end of the world to the other’.

This suggests that reality was directly experienced in its fullest context, where every detail was seen embedded in the entire matrix of creation. God concealed this light because He foresaw that future generations would approach the world with selfish biases, exploiting the truths that such light would reveal (ibid.).

### The Logic of Modesty

In the *Torah*, modesty is not born of shame; it is a mechanism of protection. It is the recognition that complete exposure and vulnerability should be reserved for those who will cherish and respect it, rather than those who would cheapen or exploit it.

God concealed His light (*Or HaGanuz*) to save it for the *Tzaddikim* (righteous). The *Tzaddik* is someone who works rigorously to relinquish selfish bias, looking humbly for what is truly

in the world rather than what they want it to be.

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*“Peace [is] the acceptance, the cultivation of a whole harmony of differences that complement each other.”*

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### Aharon: The Unbiased Heart

Aharon HaKohen is the focal point of this *Parasha* because he possessed a heart free of jealousy. When his younger brother, Moshe, was elevated to leadership, Aharon felt only absolute joy.

Because Aharon could celebrate the success of others without feeling eclipsed, he was fit to wear the names of the tribes of Israel upon his heart. He did not merely ‘tolerate’ the diversity of the people; he celebrated their unique talents and rooted for their achievements.

### Synergy and Shekhinah

The relationship between God and Israel is intended to be synergistic, resulting in a unique

presence called the *Shekhinah*. This presence is sensitive; it disappears if there are elements of manipulation or selfishness.

Aharon was uniquely tasked with lighting the

*Menorah* because he saw the world through the light of the *Shekhinah*. His service represented a relationship built not on transaction, but on the mutual celebration of each other's elevation.

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## Questions for the Table

1. **Celebration vs. Tolerance:** Aharon celebrated the achievements of others. How can we shift our mindset from merely 'tolerating' others to actively rooting for their success?
2. **Full Context:** If we could see people in their 'fullest context'—including their upbringing and intentions—how would it change the way we judge their actions?
3. **Protecting the Light:** If modesty is about protecting what is valuable, how can we better respect the vulnerability and 'inner light' of ourselves, friends, and family?

**About Rabbi Joseph Dweck:** Rabbi Dweck has held rabbinic leadership roles in the US and the UK. He is the Rosh Bet Midrash of TheHabura.com and the Rabbi Levy Chair of Jewish Wisdom at the London School of Jewish Studies. For more check out The Office of Rabbi Dweck ([rabbijosephdweck.com](http://rabbijosephdweck.com)).

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