

## Oil For The Light

**Exodus 27:20-27**

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According to a social media post by Black Hole on X a couple of weeks ago, "Astronomers and planetary scientists have found strong evidence that a significant fraction of the Earth's water predates the formation of the Sun. By comparing hydrogen isotope ratios, significantly deuterium to hydrogen in Earth's oceans, meteorites, and comets, with those measured in interstellar ice, researchers found a close match."

Now Genesis 1, verses 1 through 3.

**Genesis 1:1-3** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

It is interesting. The post from Black Hole did not mention God's Word concluding that what was spoken in those early verses of Genesis was true, and the evidence found by the astronomers and scientists proved that. No, instead, they drew the conclusion that this discovery means all planetary formations have the potential for life because of how prevalent and resilient the molecule of water is.

Today we are not going to go into water, however, but more God's command for light, and more narrowly what is used to produce light. Specifically, we are going to look into the fuel used to produce light: olive oil.

Did you know there is a command from God that His people provide light? It is recorded for us in Exodus 27, verses 20 through 21.

**Exodus 27:20-21** "And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause

the lamp to burn continually. In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel."

There are key points from this command that we can dive into today. First, olive oil was commanded and required by the people to bring. Not just any olive oil though, but pure olive oil was the requirement. The word used here for pure is *Strong's* number 2134, pronounced *zak*. In its 11 uses it either translates as pure or clean, meaning the oil was to be free of any contamination. For the light produced, this makes sense because most research points to the effectiveness of olive oil for providing a clean, steady, and clear light. This would have been necessary for the enclosed area where the priests performed their task in the Tabernacle. It would have been dark, and this could have been a source for light.

There are different interpretations for how this pure olive oil was produced. Some sources state this was from the first press of the olives. Adam Clarke's commentary notes this oil was produced from olives bruised in a mortar, with the mother drop being gathered as the purest form of the oil, purer than what would come from a press. Either way, the key here is that it would take a large amount of olives to produce this oil to keep the lamp burning.

Think of the number of olives that would need to be gathered to get this oil. Many online assumptions state it takes anywhere from two to three pounds of olives just to make one cup of olive oil! Would that total increase if the process for extracting pure oil was less productive in terms of quantity? Thus, we could conclude that this task would have been something that had to be performed daily as a continual effort by the children of Israel.

Next, we have the duration of light. It is hard to tell what the scripture means about the period of burning based on what appears to be a slight difference between verses 20 and 21, at least it was for me.

Verse 20 states that the lamps are to be kept burning continually, where verse 21 states the need for tending the lamp in the Lord's presence all night, from evening until morning. Which one is it? A good understanding of this

would be that the lamp did burn continually without going out. *Continually* follows the action of burning in these verses while the statement of "evening until morning" seems to relate more to the requirement for tending the lamps. The process of burning oil for light would have required some sort of tending, no doubt, with refilling or treating the wick. And the implication here is that the lamp would cease to burn if no one tended it at night.

Thus, the task had to fall on someone. And the priests were given the responsibility on behalf of the children of Israel, as the verse states. If we consider the light within the overarching symbolism of the Tabernacle as the presence of the Lord, then it would be safe to assume the children of Israel did not want the light to go out.

When we consider this oil from a symbolic point of view, what comes to mind? Most often, oil can be attributed to the Spirit of God. This seems correct within the aspect of anointing oil because we see this brought to light in scriptures such as I Samuel 16:13 where David was anointed with a flask of oil and the Spirit of God came heavily or powerfully upon him.

But oil and the Holy Spirit are not synonymous. David Guzik provides a really thorough look into oil in his three-part series titled "Do You Have Enough Oil?" Here is an excerpt from Part One, and this is regarding the link between oil and the Holy Spirit. "The closest examples are the few that link anointing and the Holy Spirit, and oil is used in anointing. For example, Luke 4:18. Even then, the linkage is not absolute because in most places in Scripture where the Holy Spirit is given, such as at baptism, it is through laying on of hands without any oil being used."

Furthermore, if we were to investigate the anointing oil recipe that we find in Exodus 30:22-33, you would see some different metrics or requirements for that oil to the oil for the light of the Tabernacle.

Let us go to this section in Exodus. If you will turn with me a couple of pages to Exodus 30, we are going to read verses 22 through 24.

**Exodus 30:22-24** Moreover, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:  
"Also take for yourself quality spices—five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred

and fifty shekels), two hundred fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil."

First, there does not seem to be a requirement for the quality of the oil within these verses. The mention is only for a hin of olive oil, with the focus being more on the quality of the spices. Next, it does not really state where this olive oil comes from either, but for the oil for the Tabernacle lamp it was commanded as the responsibility of the children of Israel to bring. So considering these aspects, we could see that there is potentially a different symbolism for anointing oil and the oil for the light.

So thinking back to this oil for the light and what it would have taken to keep this production going by Israel, we should consider the environment these Israelites were traveling in the wilderness during this time. It appears the requirement became known in the earlier part of their journey. So where did the olives come from? There is no mention of gathering olives in the wilderness. It seems that the blessing of the olive trees was more suited to the inheritance of the Promised Land from scriptures like Deuteronomy 6:10-11.

Maybe the olives were brought out of Egypt. Maybe the wilderness was suitable for olive trees. You know, Lacey asked me a good question when I probed her on this topic. She said, "Where did all the other materials for the Tabernacle come from?" Not every material has an exact source of where it came from, but the Israelites had what they needed to follow the commands.

Our pastor gave a good answer to this question just last week of where they could have come from. He stated that trade routes were all throughout the wilderness. I never thought of that before. When you add this idea of trade to the wilderness journey, it makes you wonder. Why did they complain so much for what they did not have?

Really though, the point is not where did the olives come from, but rather that God provided them. He gave a command that demanded what seemed like a tremendous effort on the part of the Israelites. They were in an area that seemed to be where olives did not seem to be prevalent, yet He expected His command to be followed continually, as the verse stated. Thus He

provided a way for what would otherwise seem impossible. Either the Israelites had to store the olives that they brought out of Egypt to last for over 30+ years, or they had to harvest in the wilderness what they could find, or they had to prepare to trade for what they needed to hold up their end of the command. This command required action.

So, one way to look at this oil is within our actions, what we do with what our Lord provides. He gives us His Spirit, His Word, His judgments, and His mercy. He provides us with spiritual gifts and with challenges to face and so much more. He provides abundantly for us in this wilderness journey that we are on. What are we doing with this abundance? Oil in this command is the action we do that no one sees. Our study, how we talk with our Father and Christ, what we bring into our minds, how we overcome, how we repent.

Note the requirement for the quality of the oil again. It had to be pure, not contaminated. These are the actions that we take within our personal relationship with Christ.

So bringing the oil was the commanded responsibility, but the light was the goal or the result. Having the light burn continually was the goal. This would be our actions which are seen or the character developed from our actions within the relationship—the oil, the pure oil that we bring. Specifically, it is godly character.

The number of times we are referred to as light cannot be understated in the realm of this command to the Israelites in Exodus. The command still holds true to us today. The other place in Scripture where this command is mentioned is in Leviticus 24:1-4, and it reads, "It shall be a statute forever in your generations." A statute forever. The statute was on a national level during the time of the Israelites. Today, it would seem this command is more on a personal level for you and I.

And John wrote about the source of the light in John 1. So let us turn there. We are going to read verses 4 through 5.

**John 1:4-5** In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The Him is Jesus here. Later in verse 9, he states, "That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world." So this result, this light that we can exhibit is the reflection of the true Light just like the light of the Tabernacle being a resemblance of the presence of God within it. The light we express should be a reflection of the presence of our Lord within us.

Just like the Israelites, we are in an environment that is not conducive to meeting the commands within this relationship with Christ and our Father. Our Lord still expects us to do so, and He provides abundantly what we need to meet the requirements.

But again, what are we going to do with what God supplies? From the beginning, God commanded, "Let there be light." How is our flame?