



## TERUMAH

IF YOU KNOW ALEF, TEACH ALEF

*Lessons from an Upside-Down Cup Shaped the Wrong Way*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Terumah*

The people of Israel are called upon to contribute thirteen materials—gold, silver, and copper; blue-, purple-, and red-dyed wool; flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices, and gems—out of which, G-d says to Moses, “They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I shall dwell amid them.”

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses was given detailed instructions on how to construct this dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily dismantled, transported, and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the sanctuary’s inner chamber, behind an artistically woven curtain, was the ark containing the Tablets of Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the ark’s cover stood two winged cherubim hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-branched *menorah* and the table upon which the “showbread” was arranged.

The sanctuary’s three walls were fitted together from forty-eight upright wooden boards, each of which was overlaid with gold and held up by a pair of silver foundation sockets. The roof was formed

of three layers of coverings: (a) tapestries of multicolored wool and linen, (b) a covering made of goat hair, and (c) a covering of ram and *tachash* skins. Across the front of the sanctuary was an embroidered screen held up by five posts.

Surrounding the sanctuary and the copper-plated altar that stood before it was an enclosure of linen hangings, supported by sixty wooden posts with silver hooks and trimmings, and reinforced by copper stakes.

# TEXT 1

Exodus 25:31–37

לא. ועשית מנרת זהב טהור, מקנשה  
תעשה המנורה ירכה וקנה, גביעיה  
כפתריה ופרחיה ממנה יהיו.

לב. ונשה קנים יצאים מצדיה,  
ושלשה קני מנרה מצדה האחד,  
ושלשה קני מנרה מצדה השני.

לג. ושלשה גבעים משקדים בקנה  
האחד כפתר ופרח, ושלשה גבעים  
משקדים בקנה האחד כפתר ופרח,  
כן לששת הקנים היצאים מן  
המנרה.

לד. ובמנרה ארבעה גבעים  
משקדים כפתריה ופרחיה.

31. And you shall make a *menorah* of pure gold.  
The *menorah* shall be made of hammered work;  
its base and its stem, its goblets, its knobs, and  
its flowers shall all be one piece with it.

32. And six branches coming out of its sides:  
three *menorah* branches from its one side and  
three *menorah* branches from its second side.

33. Three decorated goblets on one branch, a  
knob, and a flower; and three decorated goblets  
on one branch, a knob, and a flower: so for the  
six branches that come out of the *menorah*.

34. And on the stem of the *menorah* shall be  
four decorated goblets, its knobs, and its  
flowers.



# TEXT 1

*Exodus 25:31–37*

לה. וכפֹתֶר תַּחַת שְׁנֵי הַקָּנִים מִמֶּנָּה,  
וְכִפְתֹּר תַּחַת שְׁנֵי הַקָּנִים מִמֶּנָּה,  
וְכִפְתֹּר תַּחַת שְׁנֵי הַקָּנִים מִמֶּנָּה,  
לְשֵׁשֶׁת הַקָּנִים הַיֹּצְאִים מִן הַמְּנֹרָה.

לו. כִּפְתֹּרֵיהֶם וְקִנְתָּם מִמֶּנָּה יִהְיוּ,  
כִּלְהַּ מִקְּשָׁה אַחַת זָהָב טָהוֹר.

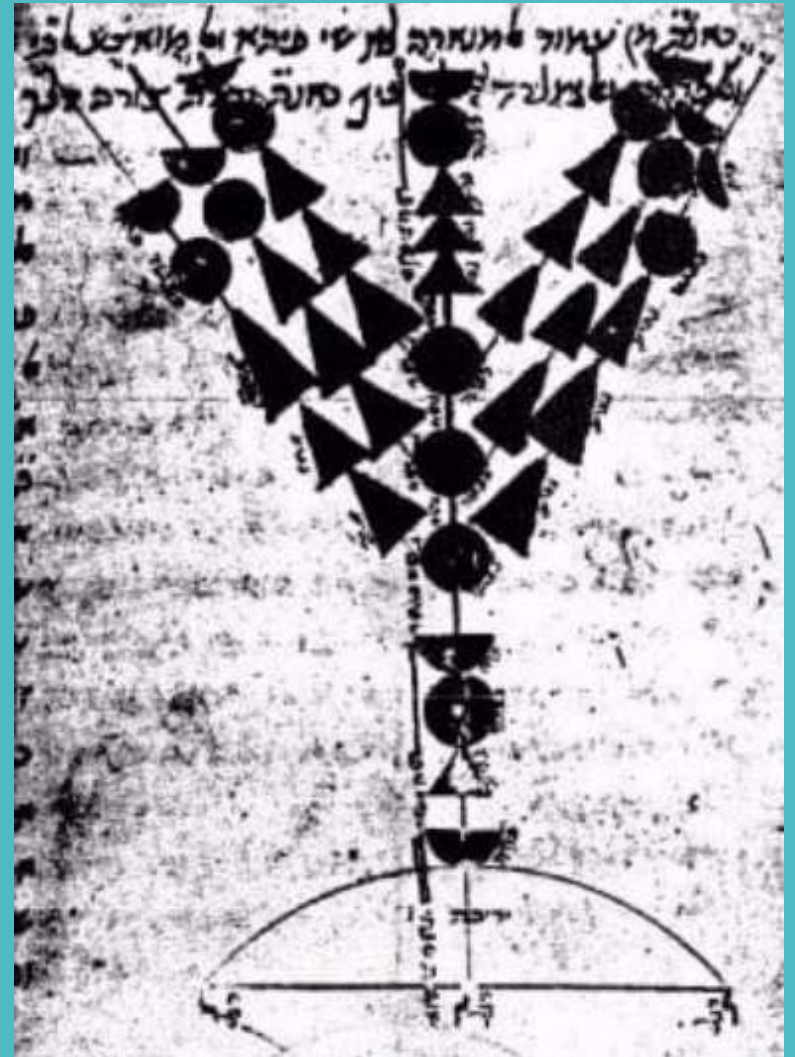
לז. וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת גִּרְתֵּיהָ שִׁבְעָה,  
וְהִעֲלָהָ אֶת גִּרְתֵּיהָ וְהָאִיר עַל עֵבֶר  
פָּנֶיהָ.

35. And a knob under the two branches from it, and a knob under the two branches from it, and a knob under the two branches from it; so for the six branches that come out of the *menorah*.

36. Their knobs and their branches shall all be one piece with it; all of it shall be one hammered mass of pure gold.

37. And you shall make its lamps seven, and he shall kindle its lamps so that they shed light toward its face.

In his commentary to tractate Menachot, Maimonides draws a picture of the Beit Hamikdash's *menorah*.



## QUESTION 1

Why are the goblets upside down in Maimonides' sketch of the *menorah*?

## TEXT 2

*Talmud, Menachot 28b*

וגביעין למה הן דומין?  
כמין כוסות אלכסנדריים.

What did the goblets of the *menorah* look like? They were like Alexandrian chalices.

## TEXT 3

*Maimonides, Mishneh  
Torah, The Laws of the  
Chosen Temple 3:9*

הַגְּבִיעִים דּוֹמִין לְכוֹסוֹת אֶלְכֹסְנֵדְרִיאָה,  
שְׂפִיהֶן רָחֵב וְשׁוֹלֵיהֶן קָצָר.

The goblets resembled Alexandrian chalices. They had wide mouths and narrow bases.



## TEXT 4

*Talmud, Sukkah 45b*

כָּל הַמְצוֹת כּוּלָן אֵין אָדָם יוֹצֵא בְהֵן אֱלָא  
דֶּרֶךְ גְּדִילָתוֹ, שְׁנֵאמַר: "עֵצֵי שֹׁטִים עוֹמְדִים"  
(שְׁמוֹת כו, טו).

One fulfills their obligation only when *mitzvot* are used in the manner of their growth, as the verse states, “Acacia wood, standing” (Exodus 26:15).

## STRENGTHENING QUESTION 1

The Mishkan follows the principle of using *mitzvot* in the manner of their growth.

So how could it be that the goblets were affixed to the *menorah* in a manner that is the opposite of their “growth,” i.e., their natural state?

## QUESTION 2

Why is there an emphasis placed on the Alexandrian chalice that's "narrow on bottom and wide on top," and what does it teach us?

# TEXT 5

*I Kings 6:4*

וַיַּעַשׂ לְבַיִת חַלּוּנֵי שֶׁקֶפִּים אַטּוּמִים.

He made *shekufim atumim*  
windows for the Temple.

## TEXT 6A

*Midrash, Tanchuma,  
Tetzaveh 6*

אַתָּה מוֹצֵא כָּל מִי שֶׁמְבַקֵּשׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ חַלּוֹנוֹת, עוֹשֶׂה  
אוֹתָן רְחֹבוֹת מִבְּפְנֵימִים וְצָרוֹת מִבְּחוּץ. לָמָּה? שֶׁיְהִי  
שׁוֹאֲבוֹת הָאֹר. אֲבָל חַלּוֹנוֹת שֶׁבְּמִקְדָּשׁ לֹא הָיוּ כֵּן,  
אֲלָא רְחֹבוֹת מִבְּחוּץ וְצָרוֹת מִבְּפְנֵימִים.


When somebody makes windows, they make them wide on the inside and narrow on the outside. Why? So that they should draw the light in. But the windows in the Beit Hamikdash were not like this; rather, they were wide on the outside and narrow on the inside.

## TEXT 6B

*Midrash, Tanchuma,  
ibid.*

לְמָה? שֶׁיְהֵא הָאֹר יוֹצֵא מִן בֵּית  
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וּמְאִיר לְעוֹלָם.

Why? So that light should spread outward from the Holy Temple and illuminate the world.



Like the goblets of the *menorah*, the Beit Hamikdash's windows were fashioned unconventionally. The reason for this was because the windows in the Beit Hamikdash were there to spread the light of the *menorah*—a representation of G-d's presence.

# TEXT 7

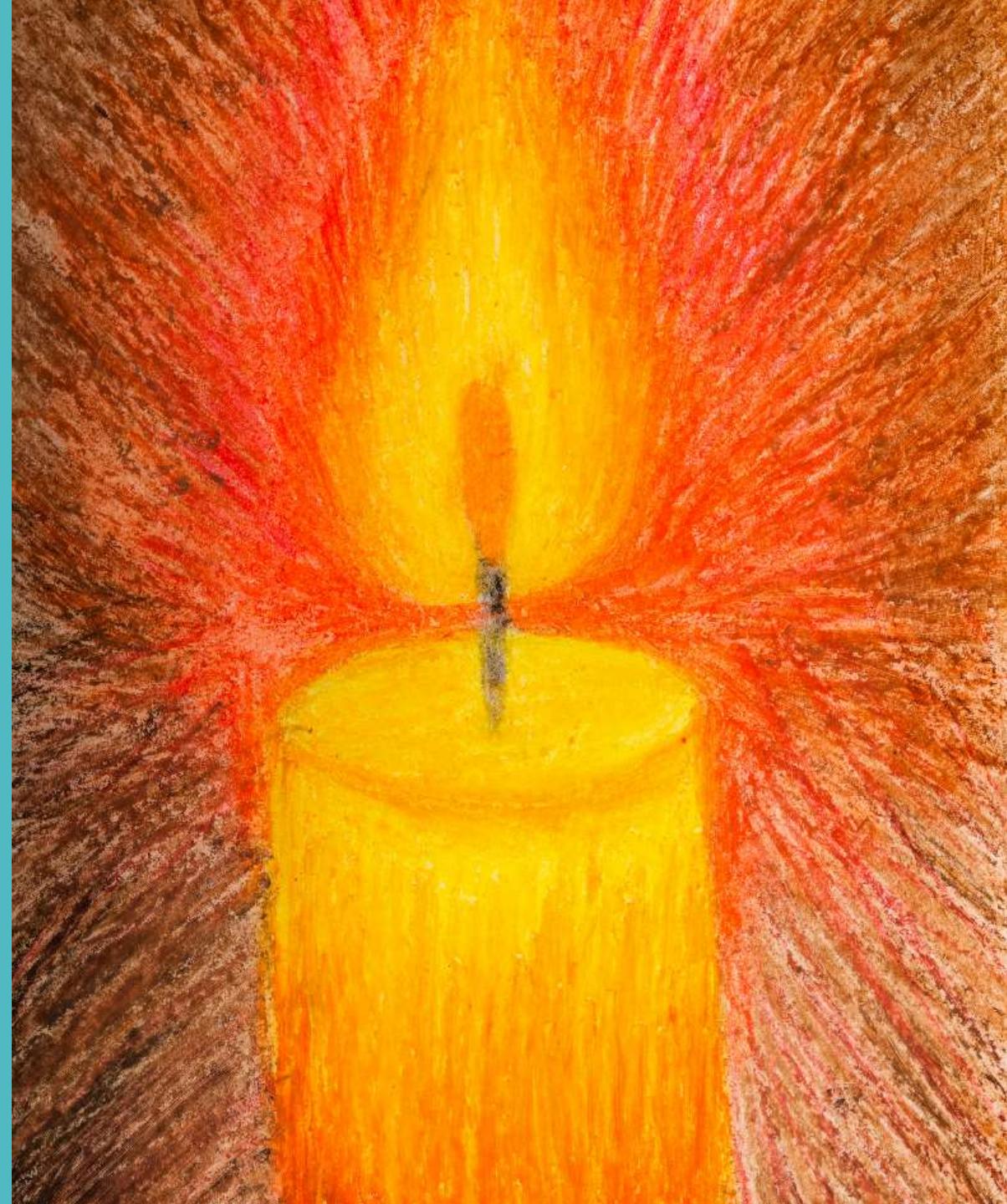
*Talmud, Shabbat 22b*

וְכִי לְאוֹרָה הוּא צָרִיךְ? וְהֲלֹא כָּל אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה שֶׁהָלְכוּ  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבָּר לֹא הָלְכוּ אֶלָּא לְאוֹרוֹ! אֶלָּא עֵדוּת  
הִיא לְבָאֵי עוֹלָם שֶׁהַשְּׂכִינָה שׁוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.

Does G-d require its light? Didn't the Children of Israel travel for forty years in the desert exclusively by His light? Rather, its light is a testimony to the world that the Divine Presence rests among Israel.



The *menorah's*  
entire purpose  
was to shine its  
light outward  
unto the world.





When a cup is in its natural state of serving others, it is positioned upside down.

## TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, pp. 166–167*

ווען די גביעים זיינען צייטווייליג  
צוליב דעם "קיבול" . . . איז זייער  
מצב פיהן למעלה ושוליהן למטה  
(וואס דעמאלט האלטן זיי אויף אין  
זיך משקה).

וויבאלד אבער אז די גביעים  
שבמנורה איז לרמז אויפן ענין פון  
"משקה ומרוה" — איז, אדרבה:  
דער מצב זייערער להיפך פיו למטה  
ושוליו למעלה. (מען קערט איבער  
דעם כוס כדי די משקה זאל זיך  
אויסגיסן פון אים) . . .

When the cup's purpose is for holding liquid, . . . then its "natural state" is for the base to be on the bottom and the opening to be upright on top. . . .

But the cups on the *menorah* symbolized the idea of irrigating and illuminating the world. So their "natural state" was the opposite way—with the opening on bottom and the base on top: we turn the glass upside down so that we can pour from it. . . .



# TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, pp. 166–167*

דער אור המנורה דארף  
באלייכטן די "באי עולם" וועלכע  
זיינען למטה (ברוחניות) פון דעם  
מקדש . . . דעריבער, איז מצב  
הגביעים שבמנורה פיהם למטה  
ושוליהם למעלה.

The *menorah*'s light was intended to illuminate the world, which was on a spiritually "lower" level than the Temple. As such, the natural state of its cups was to be upside down—pouring out light.

## ANSWER 1

The *menorah*'s light was intended to illuminate the world, which was on a spiritually “lower” level than the Temple. As such, the natural state of its cups was to be upside down—pouring out light.

# TEXT 9

*Proverbs 20:27*

נֵר ה' נִשְׁמַת אָדָם.

A person's soul is  
G-d's lamp.

# TEXT 10

*Rabbi Yitzchak Shreim,  
Musar Chachamim  
Hashalem, Parshat  
Terumah*

ידוע כי הנשמה נהנית מהדלקת הנרות והיא מתהלכת בעידוני ההוד והשמחה, ומתפשטת ומתרחבת מתוך הנאת האורה, מפני שהיא חתיכת אור . . . ומן הטעם הזה נמשכת אחר האור שהוא מינה, אף על פי שהאור הזה הוא אור גופני והנשמה היא אור רוחני זך ופשוט. ועל כן המשילה שלמה המלך עליו השלום לנר, הוא שאמר: "נר ה' נשמת אדם".

It is known that the soul derives pleasure from lighting candles; it becomes excited from the enjoyment of the light, for it itself is a piece of light. Therefore, it is drawn after its kind—light—even though one is a physical flame, and the soul is a pure, spiritual, and abstract light. [Nevertheless, both are a type of light.] This is why King Solomon compares the soul to a light, as the verse states, “A person’s soul is G-d’s lamp.”

The human soul is a lamp; like the *menorah*, it is natural for the soul to shine its light unto others.





# TEXT 11

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, p. 167*

אויב ווען עס רעדט זיך וועגן זיך אליין און ער האלט גאר בתחלת העבודה, אדער אפילו שפעטער אבער זיין עבודה איז (מאיזה סיבה שתהיה) אן עבודה מוגבלת — איז זיין מצב: פיו למעלה.

אבער ווען ס'קומט צו דער עבודה פון טאן מיט א צווייטן אידן, ובפרט — צו דער עבודה פון מאכן די וועלט פאר א דירה לו יתברך — מוז מען וויסן, אז דא מוז זיין למעלה מהגבלות, ווערט דער רחב — כלפי (המקבל ממנו — ה)מטה.

It can be that with regard to our own personal spiritual journey, our base is “narrow” and limited. This could be at the beginning of our journey, or even later on for whatever reason.

But when it comes to influencing another person, and especially when it comes to influencing the world at large to make it into a home for G-d, we must know that we must engage in this service without any limitations. Our state must be that of a “wide-open, upside-down goblet.”

# TEXT 12

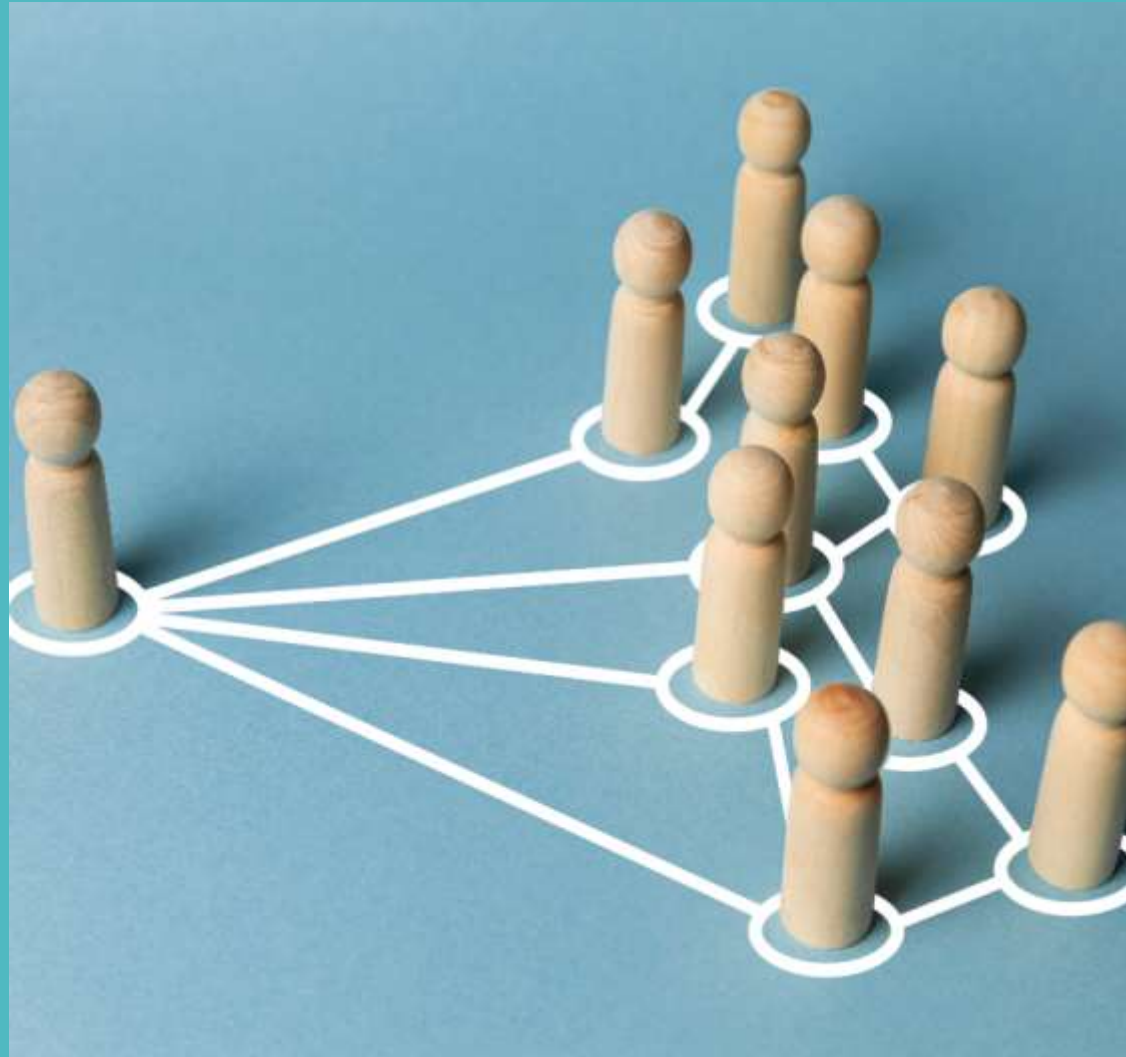
*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Torat  
Menachem 5713:2 (8),  
pp. 32–33*

וכמו כן צריכה להיות העבודה הן בנוגע לעצמו והן בנוגע להזולת, מבלי לעשות חשבונות שיש לו עדיין רבוי ("פלענטי") עבודה עם עצמו, ובפרט בידעו מעשיו דיבוריו ומחשבותיו במשך כל היום וכל הלילה וכו', ואם כן, איך יכול להיות "משפיע" על הזולת, ובלשון חכמינו ז"ל: "סמוך לפלטירין שלך לא הורשת".

אלא כמו שכתב כבוד קדושת אדמו"ר מהורש"ב נשמתו עדן שאין אתנו יודע עד מה בסוד הבירורים, ובמילא, אין לערוך חשבונות, אלא כל דבר המזדמן ליד, צריכים לחטוף ולעשותו תיכף ומיד.

Just as we work on improving ourselves, so must we engage with others as well. We must not rationalize that "I still have plenty to do to work on myself—knowing myself and my flaws—so what right do I have to influence others?"

Rather, as the Rebbe Rashab said, we have no idea what still needs to be accomplished in the task of preparing the world for the era of Mashiach, so we must not make any rationalizations. Any opportunity we encounter, we must immediately seize.



Whether we feel qualified or not, it's our responsibility to share our light and have a positive impact on those around us.

# TEXT 13

*Rabbi Mendel  
Kalmenson, "A Poor  
Man's Gift,"  
[www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org)*

A college student once approached the Rebbe in the middle of a chassidic gathering to greet him with a *l'chaim*. The Rebbe turned and asked him if he was involved with encouraging and helping his fellow students to put on *tefillin* every day. "But Rebbe," admitted the young man, "I myself don't put on *tefillin* every day!"

"Why is that their fault . . . ?" replied the Rebbe, with a smile.

If you know  
*alef*, teach *alef*.



## ANSWER 2

Just like the Beit Hamikdash's *menorah*, the goblets on your soul's *menorah* are upside down, in a constant state of “outpour.” Even if you're narrow on bottom, even if you feel like you don't have that much to offer, you should still be wide on top, and shine your light unto others.

## KEY POINTS

1. In Maimonides's sketch of the *menorah*, the goblets are depicted upside down.
2. The windows of the Beit Hamikdash were also constructed in a counterintuitive manner, with the narrow side on the inside and the wide side on the outside.
3. The windows of the Beit Hamikdash were designed this way to indicate that the Beit Hamikdash did not need light; rather, it would spread its light out unto the world.
4. The goblets of the *menorah* were upside down for the same reason: to indicate the outpouring of the *menorah*'s G-dly light.

## KEY POINTS

5. The human soul is a lamp; like the *menorah*, it is natural for the soul to shine its light unto others.
6. It is not a person's responsibility to calculate whether they are worthy of influencing others. The important thing is to act. If you have something to share, share it.



