

# Exodus 27:20-21

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*God's focus shifts from the construction of the tabernacle and the courtyard to the responsibilities of the priests in and around the tabernacle. The first task is ensuring that the lamp would burn continually. This requirement is repeated in Leviticus 24:1 – 4.*

It was *the sons of Israel* who were to supply *clear oil of beaten olives*. The people were commanded to supply the *clear oil* squeezed from *olives*. Aaron and his sons had the job of keeping the lamps burning. The initial squeeze from an olive press creates “virgin” olive oil, which is *clear oil*, free of residue from the olives. After being further filtered, this is likely what was used for the oil of the tabernacle. The *clear oil* would create a pure flame, and minimize smoke. This *oil was for the light, to make a lamp burn continually*. There was never to be a time where darkness was allowed in the LORD's dwelling place.

The word Gethsemane is Hebrew for “olive press.” The Garden of Gethsemane was likely a garden that contained an olive press. When Jesus shed great drops of blood like sweat, it is a picture of the immense pressure being put on Him. The weight of the world squeezing Him like a great olive press ([Luke 22:29-46](#); [Matthew 26:36-46](#)).

Jesus is the light of the world ([John 8:12](#)). It is worth noting that Jesus referenced the command that the light in the tabernacle be burning *continually*. Jesus says in [Matthew 12:5](#), “Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?”

It was forbidden to kindle a fire on the Sabbath day, and yet the priests must keep the tabernacle *lamp* burning *continually*, which meant it was tended even on the Sabbath. A couple of verses later Jesus quotes another biblical passage, [Hosea 6:6](#), saying the Pharisees did not understand this verse: “I [God] desire compassion and not sacrifice.” This makes clear that the primary point of all these instructions was to train the hearts of the people toward obedience to God, toward compassion, and service to one another.

The lamp was to be placed *in the tent of meeting*, which was another name for the tabernacle. It was to stand *outside the veil which is before the*

*testimony*. The *veil* separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and being *outside* means that the lamp was in the tent and not the Holy Place, where the ark was located. The *veil* stood before *the testimony*, which refers to the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments which were placed in the ark in the Holy of Holies. The *veil* separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the tent, which contained the lampstand (Hebrew, “menorah”) upon which sat seven lamps. Light from each *lamp* was to light the way to the entrance to the place of the mercy seat and the law, inside the Holy of Holies. The law is the word of God, which is a light unto our paths ([Psalm 119:105](#)). The light from the lamp showed the way to the light of God’s word.

Inside the tabernacle, *Aaron and his sons* were charged to *keep it in order from evening to morning before the Lord*. This introduces *Aaron and his sons* having priestly duties to perform in the tabernacle. *Aaron and his sons* were to maintain the *lamp* and ensure that it was lit continuously, even through the nighttime. This was both practical and symbolic. It provided light in the Holy Place for the priests to carry out their other duties, and it symbolizes the idea that priests were to provide light in order for the people to have access to their LORD, and His word. This was another *perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel*, just like Passover ([Exodus 12:14](#)).

This passage makes clear that it was the task of every Israelite to provide the oil for the lamp, and it was the job of the spiritual leaders of Israel (the priests) to use it in the worship of the LORD.

So, whereas the previous section (25:1 – 27:19) concentrated on the plans for the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the surrounding courtyard, this section introduces the priesthood and the light it is to bring. This is likely also symbolic of the role of a priest, which is to bring light to those whom they serve. Israel as a nation was assigned the job of being a priestly nation, and bring light to the surrounding nations ([Exodus 19:5-6](#)).

### **Biblical Text:**

<sup>20</sup> “**You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually.** <sup>21</sup> **In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the Lord; *it shall be* a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.**