

Sandwiched between the instruction to build the Mishkan and clothing the Kohanim is this:

**בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד מִחוּץ לַפָּרֹכֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָעֵזָת יַעֲרֹךְ אֹתוֹ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו מֵעֶרֶב עַד־בֹּקֶר לִפְנֵי הַתְּקֵת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתָם מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:**

“In the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting Times) from outside the curtain that is upon the Testimony, Aharon and his sons shall arrange it, from evening until morning, before Hashem – an eternal statute for generations – from Bnei Yisroel.” (Shmos 27:21).

This pasuk follows the pasuk that says, “You shall command Bnei Yisroel and they shall take for you pure-pressed clear olive oil, for lighting, for kindling a lamp, always.” (Ibid 27:20). There is no other context to this pasuk. It most likely refers to the Menorah, as the “lamp” but it’s out of order. It also is singular so it cannot be referring to any extra lamps. Why not mention the Menorah by name to be clearer? Also, why stick this in now before talking about Aharon and his sons being anointed as Kohanim? It should be next to the Menorah or later, when it talks about the other service. Also, why does it say on the other side of the curtain of the Aron (referred to here as the Testimony) as opposed to next to the Shulchan?

The Aron is the central part of the Mishkan. It is mentioned first. (Ibid 25:10). The Menorah is only mentioned third, after the Shulchan. The Aron is called Ark of Testimony because the Luchas were put there. (Ibid 25:16). In our parsha it simply refers to it as “the Testimony.” That is why the Menorah is said to be on the other side of the curtain from the Testimony. There is also a deeper connection.

Later in the parsha it expounds on this performance of lighting the Menorah. Aharon lights the lamps in the afternoon at the time for burning the afternoon ketores. (Ibid 30:8) What is the connection? Another point for understanding this avodah is that while Moshe was the first to purify the Mishkan and to offer in it, he did not light the Menorah. Moshe had to inaugurate the Kohanim over a seven-day period. (Ibid 29:35). During these seven days it was Moshe that sanctified the Mishkan (ibid 29:37) and the kohanim (ibid 29:1) and brought all the offerings (ibid et seq.) However, there is no mention of Moshe lighting or preparing the lights of the Menorah or burning the ketores. These two items were first done – and for all time only done – by kohanim. The Kohen Gadol had first rights to these avodas.

A final point is the purpose of the Mishkan. “And I will make known to them My name, to Bnei Yisroel, and it (the nation) will be sanctified in My honor.” (Ibid 29:4). “And they will know that I, Hashem, their Lord, that took them out from the Land of Mitzrayim, to dwell amongst them.” (Ibid 29:46). The purpose of the Mishkan was for Hashem to testify and remind them that He took them out of Mitzrayim to be their

Lord. Worshiping Hashem is the underpinnings of being brought out and freed from Mitzrayim and receiving Hashem's Torah. Another reason why the Aron was so central is that the Aron held the Luchos which were the testimony that Hashem brought Bnei Yisroel out of Mitzrayim and spoke to them on Har Sinai.

"In the Ohel Moed, from outside the curtains that are upon the Testimony." This location is designated both from outside and from inside. Walk into the Ohel Model (the Kodesh) and then stop on the other side of the curtain that separates that room from the Aron. That places the Menorah is central. Testimony is used here both to signify the Aron and also to connect to the purpose of the avodah in the Mishkan. The Mishkan is the testimony of Hashem being Bnei Yisroel's redeemer and it sits in the Mishkan which acts at large as a testimony to that as well. Aharon lighting the Menorah was one further avoda of testimony. By him preparing the lights and lighting the Menorah it signifies he and his children were specifically chosen by Hashem to do His service in the Mishkan / Beis HaMikdash for all generations.

"Aharon and his sons shall prepare it (the lights)." It is only Aharon and his sons that can prepare and light the Menorah. Moshe could not have done this avodah because it would have tainted—in manner—the testimony that the Kohanim were specially chosen. Thus, the act of lighting and preparing the lights for the Menorah—an act of testimony—is done in the Ohel Moed—the Mishkan which is testimony—and in the other room opposite the Aron—which is testimony.

"From evening until morning." It should have said from morning until evening. The preparation took place in the morning and then the lighting in the afternoon. However, it is teaching that from the lighting in the afternoon until the time to prepare the next day's lights the following morning, the Kohanim must be at the ready and prepared. Dedicating service to Hashem in such an intimate manner, lighting a single seven-candelabra lamp, in the sanctuary, is not done by simply arriving. It is done by preparation beforehand. Everything must be ready for the morning cleaning and arranging of the lamps.

"Before Hashem." Hashem does not need the light for the evening. However, it is lit for the Kohanim for them to recall that they stand before Hashem. The Menorah is not explicitly mentioned because it is only secondary to the lighting avodah.

"An eternal statute for generations." This statute is that as long as there is a Mikdash, it is only the Kohanim that are to light and prepare the Menorah. Also, the testimony is eternal.

"From Bnei Yisroel." This is the nation's connection to this special avodah. They provide the oil so that when it is lit, they have a share in the avodah. It is so special because it is done by Hashem's inaugurated priests for His treasured nation.

Before clothing the kohen their special avodah had to be mentioned.