

Torah Weekly

March 1-7, 2020
5-11 Adar, 5780
First Torah: Tetzaveh:
Exodus 27:20 - 30:10 Second
Torah: 27:17-19
Haftorah:
Samuel I 15:1-34
PARSHAT TETZAVEH

Calendars
We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs
Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah
We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

The Missing Moses

A seemingly dubious distinction belongs to this week's Parshah, Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:20–30:10). It is the only reading in the Torah—from the first Parshah of the book of Exodus (in which he is born) until the end of the book of Numbers—where the name of Moses is not mentioned. (The Torah's last book, Deuteronomy, consists wholly of Moses' closing words to the people of Israel before his passing.) Tetzaveh's opening words are V'atah tetzaveh—"And you shall command." The "you" is Moses, and G-d is telling him what to instruct the Jewish people. But the verse only says "you"—no name, no "Moses." Why? Some explain that the day of Moses' passing, 7 Adar, almost always occurs in this week, and the absence of his name is an appropriate symbol of his demise. Others suggest that it is as a result of Moses' own words. Remember the golden calf episode? The people had sinned, and G-d was going to wipe them out and start over again with Moses and his own dynasty. Moses defended his errant flock before the Almighty, arguing for their forgiveness. And if not? Well, Moses used some very strong words there. "Mecheini na misifrecha—erase me from Your book that You have written!" Moses himself said that his name should be erased from the Torah if G-d would not forgive His people. So, even though G-d did forgive them, the words of a tzaddik (perfectly righteous person) are eternal and leave an impression. The effect of those words, therefore, was that somewhere in the book, in the Torah, his name would be erased. Moses would be missing where he normally should have appeared. Thus it is that in the week when we remember his passing, Moses' name is gone. So say a variety of commentaries. But,

characteristically, the chassidic commentaries, reflecting the inner dimension of Torah, go a step further—and deeper. What's in a name? they ask. Who needs a name? Does a person require a name for himself? Not really; he knows who he is. So, a name is essentially for other people to be able to attract his attention, so they can call him, address him, etc. In other words, a name is only an external handle, a vehicle for others to identify or describe a person; but it is all outside of the person himself and peripheral to his own true, inner identity. Names are secondary to the essence of an individual. The essence of every person, who he or she really is, is beyond any name, beyond any title. So, why is Moses' name not mentioned? Because he said "Erase me" after the golden calf? Because he spoke with chutzpah before the Almighty? You think it is a punishment? Not at all, says the Rebbe. On the contrary, this was perhaps the greatest moment in the life of our greatest spiritual leader. What would we imagine to be Moses' finest hour? Receiving the Torah? Leading the Jews to the Exodus? Splitting the sea? Would you be shocked if I told you it is none of the above? Indeed, Moses' finest, most glorious, absolutely greatest moment on earth was when he stood his ground before G-d, pleading for his people, fighting for their forgiveness. His most brilliant, shining hour was when he put his own life and future on the line and said: "G-d, if they go, I go! If You refuse to forgive these sinners, then erase my name from Your holy Torah!" It was through Moses' total commitment towards his people that the faithful shepherd saved his flock from extinction. And G-d Himself was pleased with His chosen shepherd's words, and acceded to his request. So the absence of Moses' name this week, far from being a negative, carries with it a profound blessing. It does not say the name

Moses, but v'atah—"and you." A name is only a name, but here G-d talks to Moses in the second person directly. You. And the you represents something far deeper than a mere name; it is the you symbolizing the spiritual essence of Moses. And what is that essence? His unflinching commitment to his people, come what may—even if it be at his own expense. This is the very soul of Moses, the faithful shepherd. The you that goes beyond the superficial, and beyond what any name could possibly encapsulate. It represents the deepest core of his neshamah, deeper than any appellation or detailed description could hope to portray. Moses' name may be missing, but his spiritual presence is felt in a way that no name could ever do justice to. May all our leaders take note and be inspired. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

The Menorah's Dual Message

This week's Torah portion begins with the mitzvah of kindling the menorah in the Tabernacle (and eventually, the Holy Temple) every afternoon. Light is a metaphor for the Torah, which sheds light in a world of darkness, illuminating it with G-dly wisdom. In a world where the divine truth is concealed, the Torah is a beacon of light which illuminates the path to a spiritual, meaningful and fulfilling life. The menorah is also a symbol of Jewish unity. Every Jewish soul is unique, possessing a distinctive nature and temperament. This is because each individual soul emanates from a unique combination of G-d's seven attributes: kindness, discipline, harmony, perseverance, humility, attachment and royalty. The seven branches of the golden menorah symbolize the idea that, although we may express ourselves differently and possess

different dispositions, we an essence of pure gold. In fact, all share the same essence, the menorah wasn't a combination of parts which were screwed—or even welded—together; rather, it was a single golden slab which was hammered into the shape of a menorah. Not only are we all of the same substance, but we are actually a part of a single non-composite entity, one large menorah. Why is the menorah, a metaphor for the Torah, also the symbol of Jewish unity? There were many vessels in the Tabernacle; why, of all of them, was the menorah chosen to depict the oneness of our nation? And if one were to argue that Jewish unity is contingent upon our adherence to the Torah, this too can be questioned: are we not intrinsically brothers and sisters, members of one nation? Why is our unity dependent on the Torah? A similar question can be asked with regards to our relationship with G-d. The Zohar states that “three knots connect to each other: the Holy One, blessed be He; the Torah; and [the people of] Israel.” This is to say that through connecting to the Torah, the Jew connects to G-d. This is puzzling, for in fact the bond between the Jew and the Creator precedes the existence of the Torah. This is evidenced by the fact that the Torah is replete with phrases such as “Speak to the children of Israel,” “Command the children of Israel,” etc. Obviously, the Torah was written as a guidebook for the Jewish nation, which conceptually existed before the Torah. Why, then, is it necessary for the Jew to connect to G-d through the Torah, if we enjoyed a relationship with Him before the Torah was even conceptualized?! The chassidic masters explain that though the Jewish soul always enjoyed an intimate relationship with G-d, this relationship is concealed when the soul descends into the human body. Instead of yearning to develop the soul's relationship with G-d, the person is naturally consumed by the pursuit of materialism. Just as it is impossible to tune in to an AM broadcast with an FM radio, so too the spiritual voice of the soul cannot be heard by one who is tuned in only to materialistic radio waves. The Torah, which as mentioned above is likened to light, exposes the soul and its G-dly nature. A person who studies Torah becomes aware of the triviality of physical pursuits; becomes involved in a holy, spiritual world; and reveals his soul and connects to it. Studying Torah doesn't *create* a connection with G-d; it merely removes the layers which have obscured it. The same can be said regarding Jewish unity. True love for another Jew can be felt only by one who is in tune with his soul. As Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi writes: (Tanya, ch. 32.) “The [souls] all have one Father, and it is on account of this common root in the One G-d that all of Israel are called ‘brothers’—in the full sense of the word. Only the *bodies* are distinct from each other. Therefore, there can be no true love and fraternity between those who regard their bodies as primary and their souls secondary, but only a love based on an external factor.” The lesson of the menorah is that *true* Jewish unity, a unity which stems from the soul, is a result of the illumination provided by the study of Torah.

By Rabbi Naftali Silberberg

**Passover order forms have been sent to the Chaplains and Rabbis. Order forms must be submitted by March 6.*

March 1, 2020 --- 5 Adar, 5780

Moses' Last Day of Leadership (1273 BCE)

Moses passed away on the 7th of Adar. Following G-d's instruction that Joshua should succeed him and lead the Jewish nation into the Land of Israel, Moses transferred leadership duties to Joshua on the day before he passed away. Thus the fifth day of Adar was the last day of Moses' leadership.

March 2, 2020 --- 6 Adar, 5780

Moses Completes the Torah (1273 BCE)

Moses completed the book of Deuteronomy, concluding his review of the Torah which he began several weeks earlier, on the 1st of Shevat. He then wrote down the completed Five Books of Moses, word for word, as dictated to him by G-d. This scroll of the Torah was put into the Holy Ark, next to the Tablets of Testimony.

First Print of Torah with Onkelos & Rashi (1482)

The first edition of the Five Books of Moses (Torah) with the Targum Onkelos (Aramaic translation of the Torah) and the commentary of the famed commentator Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as Rashi, was published on this date in 1482. It was published in Bologna, Italy, by Joseph b. Abraham Caravita, who set up a printing-press in his own home.

March 3, 2020 --- 7 Adar, 5780

Moses' Birth & Passing (1393 and 1273 BCE)

Moses was born in Egypt on the 7th of Adar of the year 2368 from creation (1393 BCE) and passed away on his 120th birthday -- Adar 7, 2488 (1273 BCE)

March 5, 2020 --- 9 Adar, 5780

First Torah Dispute (1st century CE)

The schools of Shammai and Hillel for the very first time disagreed regarding a case of Jewish law. This occurred around the turn of the 1st century. In the ensuing generations, the schools argued regarding many different laws, until the law was established according to the teachings of the "House of Hillel" -- with the exception of a few instances. According to tradition, following the arrival of the Moshiach the law will follow the rulings of the House of Shammai.

All throughout, the members of the two schools maintained friendly relations with each other.

Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe arrives in America (1940)

After a 12-day sea voyage, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950), disembarked at the New York harbor on the 9th of Adar II of 1940, following his miraculous rescue from Nazi-occupied Warsaw.

March 7, 2020 --- 11 Adar, 5780

First Print of Rashi (1475)

Rashi, the most basic commentary on the Torah, was printed for the first time, in Reggio di Calabria, Italy. In this print, the commentary on the Five Books of Moses, authored in the 11th century by Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, was not on the same page as the text of the Scriptures, as it is normally printed today.

This was the first time that the rounded Hebrew font was used, the font which has since become known as "Rashi Letters."

March 7, 2020 --- 11 Adar, 5780

Passing of the "Chida" (1806)

Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, popularly known as the Chida, an acronym of his four names, was a master talmudist, kabbalist, decisor of halachah, historian, bibliophile and traveler, who raised funds on behalf of the Jews of the Holy Land. His prolific writings cover virtually every area of Jewish tradition, history and belief. Born in 1724 in Jerusalem, he studied under the greatest Sepharadic sages in the holy city, which teachings heavily influenced his prolific writings. His chronicles of his travels offer invaluable insights into Jewish life of his times, and his Torah teachings are studied until this day. Toward the end of his life, he settled in Livorno, where he passed away in 1806.