

Torah Weekly

PARSHAT TETZAVEH

5 – 11 Adar 5786
22 – 28 February 2026

First Torah: Tetzaveh: Exodus 27:20 – 30:10

Second Torah: Parshat Zachor: Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Haftarah: Samuel I 15:1-34

PSALMS DAILY

Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

Psalm 117

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

SEFER HAMITZVOT

Positive Commandment 73: Confessing Sins

One who has sinned is obligated to verbally confess and say, "Please, G-d, I have sinned by doing..." The individual should then elaborate to the best of his ability and ask G-d for atonement. This mitzvah applies whether the sin was against G-d or against a fellow man. Even in the times of the Holy Temple when a person would bring a sin-offering to attain forgiveness, he was still required to orally confess his sin. The same for those who were guilty of capital offenses, they were asked to confess their sin prior to their execution.

THE ENEMY OF YOUR ENEMY

Have you ever heard, "The enemy of your enemy is your friend"?

It makes perfect sense: a common enemy does, indeed, usually bring together two prior enemies, making for some seriously strange bedfellows throughout history.

So, when there's someone you simply can't get along with, just find a common enemy and voila!—you're now friends. But is it really that simple? What if you don't have a common enemy? Or, worse yet, if you're arguing, fighting, or just not getting along with people you actually like, or even love. Who should be the common enemy in such cases?

"A belt," as we'll discover in this week's Torah portion, strange as it may sound.

Sacriligious Belt

Our parshah is all about the clothes worn by the priests as they went about their sacred duty in the Temple. Four garments for the ordinary priests, and an additional four elaborate vestments for the High Priest.

"The clothes shall be for glory and honor," the verse reads, and indeed, they comprised quite the outfit. A curious oddity about these garments, though, was the fact that some of them (the "avnet," the long belt, for example) were spun from both wool and linen—a clear departure from the Torah's command not to mix the two, a mitzvah called shaatnez.

How could this be?

It boils down to this: positive mitzvot override negative ones. In other words, when two competing mitzvot come head to head, the positive (or "active") one supersedes the negative (or "passive") one. So if the eighth day from when a baby is born falls on Shabbat, we go ahead with the brit milah, even though surgery is not normally allowed on Shabbat. Why? Because a positive mitzvah overrides a negative one.

Here, too, we have two conflicting mitzvahs: the positive mitzvah that a Kohen must wear a belt sewn from wool and linen vs. the negative mitzvah of shaatnez. As we just learned, the positive mitzvah prevails. This is all very well in legal, technical terms. But the question really does remain, why? Why would the holiest people of the Jewish nation, in the holiest place in the world, be walking around with a belt that was otherwise in flagrant violation of Torah law? Yes, the Kohen could wear it with no compunction, but why jump through legal loopholes in the first place? Does it really make sense to rely on dispensations in the Temple?

Toxic Mix

To get to the bottom of this, let's step back for a moment and examine why shaatnez—mixing wool and linen—is a problem in the first place.

There are several forbidden mixtures in the Torah, and tradition offers various explanations. One offered by the early medieval sage Rabbi Bachya ben Asher suggests that it's all about toxic mixes.

When the Torah proscribes two items together, it's not necessarily because either one of them is bad, rather they simply don't go well together. Each item on its own can be

perfectly splendid, but together they clash and collide.

Imagine fire and water. Individually, both are wonderful. Fire warms our homes and cooks our food, while water quenches our thirst and yields all botanical growth. But when these two come together, it's always a sorry ending. Either the fire consumes the water, or the water douses the fire. They simply don't get along.

We all know people like this, too. Think of two friends who are strong-headed and extremely opinionated. It could very well be that on their own, each one in his or her circle of influence is an absolute rock star, a paragon of human success. But put those two in a room together to decide even the most basic of things such as which topping to order on the pizza, and boom! —it's chaos, and you have to work overtime just to prevent fists from flying. Are they bad people? Of course not. They're actually each terrific—apart. Together, it's a hot mess.

This, then, is the secret of forbidden mixtures in Judaism—spiritual "energies" that do not go well together.

Dissolve Your Differences

Now it makes perfect sense why there was shaatnez in the Temple: this wasn't a dispensation at all; it was a positive thing, a consequence of the heightened spiritual reality that pervaded the sacred space.

Let's return to the metaphor of two people with strong personalities who can't seem to get along. Have you ever seen two such people face a crisis together? Say they're on a fishing trip and see someone drowning at sea. Or, if we want to get dark and nefarious for a moment, when they're faced with a common enemy (did someone say the word "realpolitik?").

You would hope that these two parties could put their differences aside and unite for a greater cause. And thankfully, this is, indeed, what often happens: the two quarrelling, head-strong people jump into the water together to save the flailing victim, and the two countries at odds unite to blow their enemy to smithereens (yay!). The same was true in the Temple. While the spiritual dimensions of wool and linen are diametrically at odds, in the face of the gargantuan spiritual energy manifest there, all differences dissolved.

And in the case of the Temple, it was actually a far greater coming together than two enemies banding together for a common cause. You see, the term we usually use for such instances is that two parties "put aside their differences" for a common goal. In other words, the differences still exist—Russia still hated the United States as they fought alongside each other against the Germans in WWII—it's just that the two parties are willing to put them aside to get to home base. Once there, it's very possible they'll part ways once again (looking at you, Cold War!).

What happened in the Temple was a far greater union, a "dissolving of differences." The magnificent power of

the heightened spiritual energy was able to unite the warring elements of wool and linen so that they were no longer at odds at all.

Join Arms and Dissolve Your Differences, Too

"Dissolving differences" is something we all ought to get behind.

Unfortunately, fights do happen, and it's always ugly, messy, and regrettable. Ironically, more often than not, it's the people we most love with whom we frequently fight.

You all know what I'm talking about. Be it your spouse, parents, children, siblings, or close friends, arguments, fights, or differences of opinion happen—and you don't like it.

People often say to "put aside your differences and just get along." That's sound advice, but there needs to be something or someone that acts as the Great Equalizer to put those differences to bed. If you're arguing with your spouse, each one digging in their heels, who's going to make the first move? Who's going to compromise? Why should you? Why should they?

It's a mess.

The shaatnez belt in the Temple tells us to bring G-d into our lives. Introduce a spiritual energy into your home that will be able to dissolve your differences. You don't have to sacrifice to your spouse per se, rather to the G-d Who loves and holds you both. Surrender to something greater than both of you, and you'll see that it's not so hard to stop fighting.

As long as you're focused on yourself, or even the other, you'll be in the trenches fighting a world war that's doomed from the onset. But when you collectively (or even you alone, for starters) look up to G-d and say, "It's OK. I don't need to be right or wrong, because there's a much bigger reality at play here," then your differences will dissolve.

By Aharon Loschak

RABBI JACOB HA-LEVI SEGAL
(5120-5187; 1360-1427)

Rabbi Jacob ha-Levi Segal, also known as Rabbi Jacob Molin, was born in the city of Mainz in Germany, where his father, Rabbi Moshe Molin, was the spiritual leader of the community. Rabbi Moshe Molin had other sons and daughters, who had distinguished themselves with their piety and learning, but Rabbi Jacob became the most famous of them.

Rabbi Jacob's first teachers were his father and older brother, Rabbi Yekuthiel. While still young, however, Jacob decided to "wander out to a place of Torah," in accordance with the teachings of our Sages. He longed to meet the great Torah scholars of that time and to learn Torah from them. So he went to Vienna, where he became a disciple of Rabbi Sholom ben Rabbi Yitzchok. The young and ardent Torah student was warmly welcomed by Rabbi Sholom, as well as by Rabbi Moshe Neumark of the same city. The latter gave him his daughter for a wife. Soon after his

Sacred material please do not desecrate

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marriage, Rabbi Jacob took leave of his wife and family and again set out to visit other centers of learning. He studied at various Yeshivot, and soon became known as an outstanding Torah scholar.

When Rabbi Jacob returned to his native town, the community of Mainz elected him to succeed his father as the Rabbi of that important community.

Rabbi Jacob Molin was very highly respected and beloved by the entire community. On one occasion, when the Rabbi was suddenly stricken by a paralyzing malady and lay gravely ill in bed for three days, the whole community proclaimed a solemn period of prayer and fasting every Monday and Thursday for the remainder of the year, until Rosh Hashanah. The Rabbi became well and came to synagogue, and he was greatly moved to learn that the community had decided to continue carrying out their solemn pledge, even though there still remained several months to Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Jacob was a true communal rabbi in the fullest sense. He dedicated himself to spreading the Torah and strengthening the Jewish way of life of the community. He conducted a large Yeshiva, which attracted many brilliant students from far and near. One of his most outstanding students was Rabbi Jacob Weil, who became famous as a great authority on the Talmud and Jewish Law, and as the author of an important work of Shaaloth and Teshuvot (Responso).

With fatherly interest Rabbi Jacob cared for his students, and he saw to it that they would be treated with respect and affection by all the members of the community.

Among the many gifts which Divine Providence bestowed on Rabbi Jacob Molin was also the gift of a beautiful voice and melodious feeling. On special occasions, particularly on the High Holidays, Rabbi Jacob was the Sheliach Tzibbur who led the community in prayer. His heartfelt prayers made a lasting impression on the community and his High Holiday melodies and renditions became standard in many congregations.

Rabbi Jacob Molin served this old Jewish community on the Rhine for about forty years. Thanks to his devotion and influence, the community flourished in regard to all the "three pillars upon which the world rests": Torah, prayer and acts of loving-kindness."

Towards the last years of his life, he received a call from the ancient community of Worms, where the great Rashi and Rabbi Eliezer Rokeach, Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg and other great luminaries lived and occupied the Rabbinate. The community invited Rabbi Jacob to become its Rabbi. Rabbi Jacob Molin accepted the invitation and served in his new post for just over one year, until he passed away on the 22nd day of Elul, in the year 5187 (1427).

Rabbi Jacob Molin is best known by the abbreviation Maharil (Morenu HaRav Yaakov Levi). As a great authority on Jewish Law in general, and on all laws pertaining to the synagogue, prayers and customs in

particular, the Maharil frequently received written inquiries from other Rabbis, to rule on various questions of Jewish life. The questions and answers (Shaaloth uTeshuvot Maharil) were published in Vienna in 1549. They contain 233 chapters, and it became an authoritative source of Jewish law, especially for the Jewish communities of Germany and Poland. Another work, Minhagei Maharil (the "Customs of Maharil") was published in 1556. Both works were reprinted many times.

The Shaaloth uTeshuvot of the Maharil serve not only as a source of Jewish Law, but also as a source of Jewish history. From them we learn about the many problems which faced the Jewish people in those days; about their personal circumstances as well as about community affairs. We learn of the saintliness of Jewish life, not only during the Sabbath and festivals, but also in their everyday life and relationships.

From the "Customs of the Maharil" which were published by his disciples, we learn of the Maharil's great humility. Thus, for example, he carried with him a little Chumash, so that when people would rise to give him honor, he would consider it as an honor for the Torah, not for him personally.

While the spiritual life of the Jewish communities in Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Poland was on a very high level, their material circumstances were very difficult, often quite critical. Many Shaaloth uTeshuvot of the Maharil deal with problems of orphans, widows, and agunoth (wives, whose husbands' death could not be ascertained), and similar tragic circumstances which came in the wake of the Black Death. The Jews were cruelly accused of having poisoned the wells and causing the Plague. As a result, there were widespread attacks and massacres (in 1349), when many Jews fell victim to this inhuman persecution by their Christian neighbors. Other problems with which the Maharil had to deal included cases of Jews who had been forced into conversion to Christianity, questions of mourning, inheritance, and the like.

During the lifetime of the Maharil, there was yet another great upheaval in Bohemia and Austria, which led to the Hussite War, a bloody religious war between the followers of Jan Huss, who had formed a separate Christian sect, and the ruling Christian Church. Jan Huss (born in Bohemia around the year 1369) was a monk who, at the age of 30, became a professor in the University of Prague, and later its President. He attacked the Christian Church for meddling in politics instead of confining its activities to religious and spiritual matters. The Pope in Rome, as well as the cardinals, branded Huss as a "heretic" and forbade him to preach. Huss took no notice, and continued to attack the princes of the Christian Church for abusing their office and degrading their religion, using it for personal advantages to obtain riches, honor and power. Finally, Jan Huss was tricked to appear for a debate with leading cardinals, which was to take place in Constance. He was assured protection by Emperor Sigismund.

However, when he arrived there, he was seized and condemned by the cardinals to be burned at the stake (in 1418). The followers of Huss, the Hussites, began a fierce war against the Pope and the Emperor. The war spread, and as usual in the case of such upheavals, the defenseless Jews were easy prey for both sides in the battle.

At that time, Rabbi Jacob Molin, sent out a call from Mainz to all Jewish communities, proclaiming a solemn fast for a period of three days. All Jews of twenty years and older, except the aged and sick, were to fast for three consecutive days beginning with the day after Shabbos-Bereishis. Boys of 13 and girls of 12, and older, were also to fast for three days, but they could break their fast at night. The Maharil also arranged for special prayers to be said during this period of fasting and repentance. At the same time, he encouraged his brethren to have faith in G-d, and remain loyal to the Torah.

Special emissaries carried the Maharil's message, and everywhere his instructions were carried out. The religious war lasted for about twenty years. Many Jews bravely faced death in their loyalty to the faith of their fathers. Many Jewish communities were destroyed, but many others were miraculously saved.

In this, as in many other situations, both happy and sad, the Maharil was always with his brethren. His influence extended far and wide, and he was a pillar of strength and comfort for the Jews in a very critical period. The Maharil certainly has a prominent place among the Gallery of Our Great.

By Nissan Mindel

TETZAVEH IN A NUTSHELL

G-d tells Moses to receive from the children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the "everlasting flame" of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, "from evening till morning."

The priestly garments, to be worn by the kohanim (priests) while serving in the Sanctuary, are described. All kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet—a full-length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim—linen breeches; 3) mitznefet or migba'at—a linen turban; 4) avnet—a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the kohen gadol (high priest) wore: 5) the efod—an apron-like garment made of blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen—a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) the me'il—a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz—a golden plate worn on the forehead, bearing the inscription "Holy to G-d."

Tetzaveh also includes G-d's detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons—Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar—into the priesthood, and for the making of the golden altar, on which the ketoret (incense) was burned.

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, 5 Adar, 5786 – 22 February 22, 2026 **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.

Monday, 6 Adar, 5786 – 23 February 23, 2026 **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.

Tuesday, 7 Adar, 5786 – 24 February 24, 2026 **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)

Wednesday, 8 Adar, 5786 – 25 February 2026 **Oath on Torah Permitted (1674)**

In the 1660's the Jewish community of Barbados gained considerable importance. However, they had a decided disadvantage in that their testimony was not admissible in court due to their refusal to take an oath on a Christian Bible. In October 1669, the Jewish community presented a petition requesting permission to take oaths on the Five

Books of Moses, the Jewish Bible. Several years later, on Wednesday, February 14, 1674, Barbados passed a law granting the Jewish community the permission they requested.

Thursday, 9 Adar, 5786 – 26 February, 2026

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.