

CSH Shabbat Service Schedule

February 12 | Tetzaveh
February 26 | Vayakhel

Friday, February 11, 2011 Candle Lighting 5:01 pm (Sag Harbor)

This week's Torah reading: Tetzaveh

Annual: Ex. 27:20 – 30:10 (Etz Hayim, p. 503)

Triennial: Ex. 27:20 – 28:30 (Etz Hayim p. 503)

Haftarah: Ezekiel 43:10 – 27 (Etz Hayim, p. 520)



Musings on Tetzaveh –

“**And as for you**, you shall instruct the Israelites [וְאַתָּה תִּצְוֶה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל] to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling an eternal lamp...(Exod. 27:20)

At first glance it does not appear that there is anything unusual or extraordinary about this verse. God is simply giving Moses another instruction concerning the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), just as God instructed him in the last *parashah* on how he was to build it. However, it is precisely because God’s instructions to Moses had been at the center of the preceding narrative that commentators have questioned why the verse begins “and as for you, you shall command” rather than simply “command” or “you shall command.” After all, “and as for you” would seem to imply that the previous verses had been addressed or referred to someone else.

In her exploration of this strange wording Aviva Zornberg points out that there are two other instances where God’s instructions begin “and as for you.” These other commands are “bring forth your brother Aaron, with his sons, from among the Israelites to serve me as priests (28:1)” and “speak[ing] to all who are wise of heart ... to make Aaron’s vestments for consecrating him to serve Me as priest (28:3).” In all of these cases, preparing the oil for the Menorah, bring Aaron and his sons forward to be made priests, and instructing others how to make the priestly vestment, God is instructing Moses concerning aspects of the priesthood, the realm that is to be his brother’s and not his....

“**And as for you, you shall command**” can be interpreted as God saying, “I am commanding you, Moses, to do this. I am not speaking to your ego; I am not speaking to your brother. I am speaking to you directly. We are here face-to-face. There is nothing between us.” So, it is from this place of egoless connection with the Divine that Moses is able to continue his journey as a leader meant to bring all the people to understand that ultimately there is nothing between us and God, for all is God and God is all.

To read this d’var in its entirety, go to: <http://mindfultorah.blogspot.com/2010/02/beyond-ego-commentary-on-parshat.html>



The following Midrash elucidates the tension created by the text between the vanishing Moshe and Aharon:

"And as for you, you shall bring forth Aharon your brother with his sons, from among the Children of Yisrael, to serve Me as priests." – When God told Moshe to bring Aharon forward, He injured Moshe ... *This is like a wise man who married his relative, and after ten years together, when she had not borne children, he said to her, "Seek me a wife!"* He said to her, "I could not marry without your permission, but I seek your cooperation." So God said to Moshe, "I could have made your brother High Priest without informing you, but I wish you to be great over him."

The metaphor is startling. Moshe's appointing Aharon to serve as Kohen Gadol is equivalent to a husband asking his wife to find him a more fertile spouse. Sefat Emet takes several approaches in deciphering this analogy. In some of his *derashot*^[1], Sefat Emet suggests that Moshe's elevated spiritual stature was beyond the comprehension of the Jewish people. Therefore, God needed to appoint Aharon in Moshe's stead, for his spiritually was more accessible to the nation. In this understanding, it is the people's unworthiness, not Moshe's failings, that removes Moshe from the position of Kohen. In other *derashot*, Sefat Emet proposes that Aharon is simply the external manifestation of Moshe [in Kabbalistic terms, Moshe is the *kol* (the internal voice), and Aharon is the *dibbur* (the external sound)]. However, in one year, Sefat Emet suggested that the very fact that Moshe achieved such closeness to God precluded him from serving in roles that were, by nature, hereditary. Fathers can teach Kingly and priestly functions to their children. Through education and imitation, they can be passed on through generations. Not so with the encounter of an individual with the Divine. Moshe's spiritual achievements were inimitable. As the very relationship is unique, it defies duplication or imitation. The Rabbis remarked upon this aspect of Moshe's service at the beginning of his initiation. When God commanded Moshe at the burning bush "Do not come any closer" in response to Moshe's exclamation "*Hineni* – here I am" (*Shemot* 3:4,5):

And he said, "Here I am!" – 'Here I am,' ready for priesthood. 'Here I am,' ready for kingship ... God replied, 'Do not approach closer' – that is, your children will not offer sacrifices (literally – bring close to me), for the priesthood is reserved for your brother Aharon ... and the kingship is reserved for King David. Yet, Moshe attained both (temporarily), the priesthood when he officiated during the seven days of consecration for the Mishkan, and the kingship, as it states, "Then he became a King in Yeshurun" (*Devarim* 33:5) (*Shemot Rabba* 2:13).

While Moshe did not manage to attain greatness for his descendants, he did achieve these ranks in his lifetime.

To read this d'var in its entirety, go to: <http://vbm-torah.org/archive/intparsha68/20-68tetzaveh.htm>

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In opening of this week's *parashah*, the threefold expression "*ve'atta*" also introduces a 'surprise attack', an about-shift. On the one hand, the expression singles out *You*, Moshe, and, at the same time, it anticipates that the prophet will eventually be displaced by the very role he now initiates into service – he will *not be* the Cohen, but his brother, Aharon, will serve as Cohen in the *Mishkan*. Furthermore, Moshe's name is never mentioned in this *parashah*, while Aharon's name is mentioned an auspicious seven times in the first seven verses (27:20-28:5). Moshe is, paradoxically, present and yet occluded; he remains anonymous, while his brother is insistently named. Why? The occlusion and focus on Moshe is reflected in liturgical practice.

This week's *parashah* invariably falls on the week in which, according to legend, Moshe was born and also died – the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar. He enters as well as exits the stage of history at this auspicious time. The Baal HaTurim, on the other hand, relates the absence of Moshe's name to his demand that God wipe him from the book, in his appeal for the people's forgiveness after the Sin of the Golden Calf: "And now bear their sin, and if not, wipe me out of your book which you have written [מִתּוֹךְ סֵפֶרְךָ]" (Exod. 32:32). That is, if God is wholly bent on destroying his people in his wrath, Moshe wants no part of it – no record of his name in the annals of Jewish history. Though, in the end, God does bear their sin (that is, He forgives the Israelites), a token price is paid by absencing Moshe from this one *parashah*. It is the only chapter, since the Exodus narrative in which the prophet's name does not appear. So Moshe is symbolically, and also literally, erased from the book here.

According to the Zohar, “this is an example of the curse of a sage [being fulfilled] even when it is conditional.” Yet the erasure of his name from print is expressive of a deeper spiritual layer, which requires some excavation.

What psychological reason lies behind this literary Houdini act – Moshe’s strange “appearance-disappearance” in *Parashat Tetzaveh*?

To read this d’var in its entirety, go to: <http://www.racheladelman.com/page/2/>



### **Mazel tov**

**Professor Lenore Weitzman** on the honor of being Keynote speaker at the United Nations Holocaust Memorial Ceremony: “Women and the Holocaust: Courage and Compassion” on Thursday, February 10. The entire webcast of the program can be found at:

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/02/memorial-ceremony-women-and-the-holocaust-courage-and-compassion.html>



### **End Quote** –

“...bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, *for kindling an eternal lamp*”

**River of Light** by Zelda (translator unknown)

To light candles in all the worlds –  
that is Shabbat.  
To light Shabbat candles  
is a soul-leap pregnant with potential  
into a splendid sea, in it the mystery  
of the fire of sunset.  
Light the candles transforms  
my room into a river of light,  
my heart sets in an emerald waterfall.

Shabbat shalom.

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