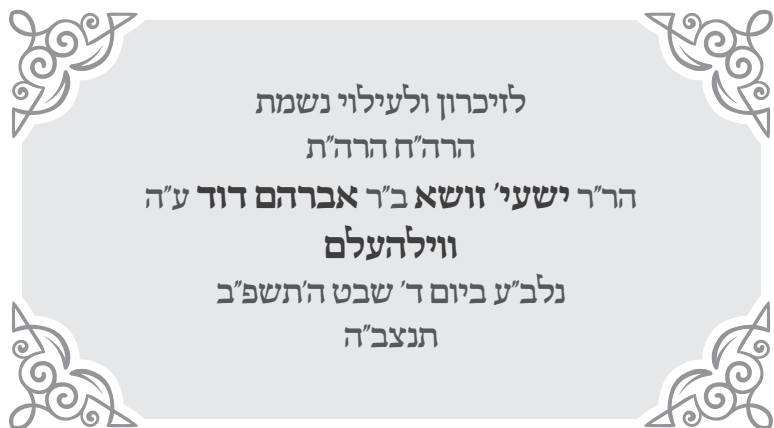


Tetzaveh

THE WEISS EDITION

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THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
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תצווה

Tetzaveh

27:20 | כז:כ

וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And you shall command Bnei Yisrael.

Nameless

From the account of his birth at the beginning of the book of Shemos until his final monologue in the book of Devarim, Moshe is mentioned by name in every Torah portion with the exception of Tetzaveh. This notable absence hints to the timing of this portion's reading, which is always close to the 7th of Adar—the date of Moshe's passing.¹

But why hint to Moshe's passing by erasing his name? Is not the name and legacy of a righteous person remembered even after his physical demise? In addition, it seems that Moshe is *more* present in this Parshah than in many others. Often Moshe is mentioned in the third person, as though he himself is absent. In Tetzaveh, however, Moshe is repeatedly

1. See Me'or Einayim, Tetzaveh.

addressed by G-d in the second person, beginning with the uncharacteristically direct reference “*You shall command*,” emphasizing that he is indeed “present.”

The Zohar teaches that a *tzaddik* who has passed on is “present in all the worlds—our physical world included—even more than during his lifetime.”² For on the one hand, the *tzaddik’s* physical passing reflects his soul’s *ascent* to its spiritual essence, such that it utterly transcends visible manifestation in this physical world. On the other hand, in its heightened condition the *tzaddik’s* soul is now fully accessible for all who wish to draw spiritual life and inspiration from it, even more so than during his physical lifetime. No longer confined to a body, the *tzaddik’s* influence is far greater than when he was limited to what he expressed in words and thoughts.³

Accordingly, we can understand why Moshe’s passing is hinted to in Tetzaveh by the absence of his name, even while referring to him directly in the second person. For a person’s name is not his essential identity; it is merely the means by which he can be identified to others. The absence of Moshe’s name in the Parshah, yet simultaneously his additional presence—“you shall command”—thus aptly represents the passing of Moshe on the 7th of Adar, when on the one hand Moshe’s soul ascended from its *external* plane (i.e., his name), yet at the same time his nameless *essence*—“*you*”—became revealed in the world to an even greater degree than before.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 26, pp. 204–206

2. Zohar 3:71b.

3. See Tanya, Iggeres Hakodesh 27.

 כח:לה | 28:35

וְנִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ בְּבֵאוֹ אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְפָנָי ה' וּבְצֵאתוֹ וְלֹא יָמוּת

And its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy before G-d and when he leaves, so that he will not die.

Sounds from a Distance

The hem of the Kohen Gadol's robe was adorned with golden bells that chimed as he moved about the Mishkan. The sound of these bells was of such significance that the Kohen Gadol's very life depended on it: "Its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy... so that he shall not die."

What did the bells signify?

A person who senses his utter nothingness before G-d and serves Him with perfect humility can be aptly described as serving G-d with "silence"—a virtue and ideal to aspire to in the service of G-d.⁴

But what about the person who feels distant from G-d, whose passions are unholy, or whose very sense of himself as an independent being separated from the G-dly energy that animates him creates distance between himself and G-d? Like a drowning man facing the horror of imminent death, the "distant" Jew kicks and screams, trying to escape his current state of detachment from G-d—the Source of all life. This Jew's search for G-d is noisy and tumultuous.

The ringing of the bells reminded the Kohen Gadol that he was to represent *all* elements of Bnei Yisrael in his service, including those whose relationship with G-d is not yet at the

4. See I Melachim 19:11–12.

level of perfect “silence.” By wearing the chiming bells on the lowermost hem of his robe, the Kohen Gadol symbolically “carries with him” even the furthest members of the Jewish community—those who relate to G-d not in silence, but with the thunderous rush of their scramble to return.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 338-339*

 כח:ל"ה | 28:35

וְהָיָה עַל אַהֲרֹן לְשָׁרֵת וְנִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ בְּבֵאוֹ אֶל
הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְפָנֵי ה' וּבִצְאוֹתוֹ וְלֹא יָמוּת

It shall be on Aharon when he performs the service, and its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy before G-d and when he leaves, so that he will not die.

To Wear or to Serve?

After detailing the construction of the *ephod* (apron), *choshen* (breastplate) and *me'il* (cloak), three of the unique garments to be worn by the Kohen Gadol, the Torah warns that Aharon must wear these garments “so he shall not die.” Rashi elaborates: “...If he is wearing them, he will not be liable to death; but if he enters lacking one of these garments, he is liable to death by the hands of Heaven.”

At first glance, it would seem that this warning is superfluous. After all, later the Torah warns regarding *all* the priestly garments that are to be worn by any Kohen, “They shall be upon Aharon, and upon his sons... that they bear not iniquity, and die.”⁵ As Rashi comments there, “Thus you may learn that he who serves lacking the proper garments is liable to death [at the hands of G-d].”

A careful reading of Rashi, however, shows a difference between these two warnings. Whereas a Kohen who is missing one of his garments is liable to death only if he *serves* in the Temple, according to Rashi a Kohen Gadol who is not wearing the *ephod*, *choshen* or *me'il* is liable to death even if he merely *enters* the Sanctuary. As Rashi’s words indicate, this warning

5. Shemos 28:43.

is unique to “these garments”—the three described by the Torah in the preceding verses, but not to the other garments of a Kohen or Kohen Gadol.

This distinction can be explained in light of the difference between the Torah’s description of the *choshen*, *ephod* and *me’il*, and its description of the other garments. After describing each of the first three, the Torah gives a specific outcome that is achieved when the Kohen Gadol comes before G-d wearing them. Concerning the *ephod*, “Aharon shall carry their names before G-d upon his two shoulders as a remembrance;”⁶ concerning the *choshen*, “Thus shall Aharon carry the names of Bnei Yisrael... as a remembrance before G-d at all times;”⁷ concerning the *me’il*, “It⁸ shall be upon Aharon... and its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy before G-d.”⁹

Regarding the other garments, however, after stating that wearing them initiates and sanctifies the Kohanim for the service,¹⁰ the Torah simply says that by wearing all the garments, a Kohen can serve in the Temple without dying:¹¹ i.e., their *collective* purpose is to facilitate the Kohen’s *service*. Hence, Rashi concludes that aside from the *choshen*, *ephod* and *me’il*, a Kohen is liable to death only if he *serves* without one of the garments, but not if he merely enters the Sanctuary without it.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 21, pp. 181–187*

6. Shemos 28:12.

7. Ibid 28:29.

8. Ibid 28:35.

9. Though the Torah makes a similar statement regarding the *tzitz* (see Shemos 28:38), Rashi explains there that the *tzitz* serves its purpose even when the Kohen Gadol is not wearing it.

10. Ibid 28:41.

11. Ibid 28:43.

 כח:לט | 28:39

וְאַבְנֵט תַעֲשֶׂה מְעֻשָׂה רֶקֶם

And you shall make a sash of embroidery.

Fasten Your Avnet

Each of the Kohanim's splendid garments adorned a specific part of their bodies. Each of the additional garments and ornaments worn by the Kohen Gadol served a defined purpose: the *choshen* was made of twelve stones corresponding to the Twelve Tribes, the *tzitz* atoned for sacrifices brought in a state of impurity, and so on.

The exception is the *avnet*, the sash or belt, which doesn't seem to have served any specific purpose. The other garments did not actually require a belt to hold them in place, and even the garments which might have benefited from a belt certainly did not need a 32-cubit long belt, which required the Kohen to wrap it around himself repeatedly!¹²

The purpose of the *avnet* is simply to express the Kohen's "readiness" to serve before G-d (unlike the other garments, which are each associated with a particular mode and theme of Divine service, corresponding to a specific part of the body). This is akin to the Talmudic directive to wear a belt when praying,¹³ in fulfillment of the words of Amos, "Prepare yourself to greet your G-d, O Israel,"¹⁴ for girding your body signifies that you have completed the necessary preparations and are now mentally ready to stand before and serve the King of all kings.

12. See Mishneh Torah, Hil. Klei Hamikdash 8:19.

13. Shabbos 10a.

14. Amos 4:12.

In light of that, the *avnet*—more so than the other garments—represents the general sense of submission to G-d with which the Kohanim served in the Mishkan. Accordingly, we can understand why the *avnet* was so long, requiring the Kohen to wrap it around himself repeatedly. This symbolized the Kohen's absolute dedication to G-d: he girded himself not once, but again and again, until his sense of humble devotion before G-d was perfect and complete.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 36, pp. 155-159



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