

TorahFax: Tetzaveh

Rabbi Zalman Marozov

Friday, Adar 10, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 3, 2023

This Shabbat we read from two Torahs. In the first Torah we read the Parsha of the week, Tetzaveh. The Parsha tells us about the special clothing which the High Priest and the regular priests wore when performing the service in the Holy Temple.

In the second Torah we read Parshat Zachor (Deuteronomy 25:17), which commands us to remember the war which Amalek waged against the Jewish people when they came out of Egypt. Parshat Zachor is always read on the Shabbat before Purim.

The festive holiday of Purim will be celebrated next week, Monday night, March 6 and Tuesday, March 7.

Q. Why is Parshat Zachor and the story of Amalek read on the Shabbat before Purim?

A. Parshat Zachor states, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt; He met you on the way and cut down all the weak trailing

behind you, while you were weary and exhausted. He did not fear G-d. Therefore, when the L-rd your G-d will relieve you of all your enemies around you, in the land which the L-rd your G-d gives you as a heritage, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven. Do not forget!"

Amalek was the first nation to wage war against the Jewish people after the Exodus. All subsequent wars and incitement against the Jewish people are rooted and a continuation of the war which Amalek began. The reason we read Parshat Zachor before Purim is because Haman, who tried to destroy the Jewish people, was a direct descendant of Amalek.

There is also a positive lesson in the reading of Parshat Zachor. It serves as a reminder that just as G-d saved us from Amalek and Haman in their time, so too, He will protect us against those who, openly or through various disguises, in every generation, threaten and spread hate against the Jewish people.

Q. Why do we read from a Megilah which is folded in layers, rather than a Megilah rolled like a Torah?"

A. Esther and Mordechai refer to The Megilah as "Igeret" - "letter". Thus, we fold the Megilah to look like a "letter".

On the lighter side: A notorious antisemite goes to consult a Jewish psychic about the exact date of his death. Closing her eyes and silently reaching into the realm of the future she finds the answer: "You will die on a Jewish holiday."

"Which one?" he asks nervously.

"It doesn't matter," replied the psychic. "Whenever you die, it will be a Jewish holiday!!"

Thursday, Adar 9, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / March 2, 2023

This week's Parsha is Tetzaveh, in the Book of Exodus. The Parsha begins with the mitzvah of lighting The Menorah (candelabra) in the Holy Temple. The oil used for the Menorah was the purest of pure olive oil. Only the first drop of each of the best olives was used for lighting The Menorah. One can only imagine how many olives were used to produce the oil for The Menorah each day.

The Menorah represents the soul, as it says, "G-d's candle is the soul of man." The soul at its core is always pure. External forces may diminish the effect it has on the body, but in essence it is as pure as pure can be. The lighting of The Menorah symbolizes the lighting of the Jewish soul. Thus, the lighting of The Menorah had to be with the purest of oil.

Q. Moshe's name appears in every Parsha in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, except in this week's Parsha, Tetzaveh. Why is Moshe's name is not mentioned in this Parsha?

A. The reason is that one of the attributes that made Moshe so special was his love for every single Jew. When the Jewish people sinned by worshipping the Golden Calf, Moshe pleaded with G-d for their forgiveness. He said to G-d, "If you don't forgive the people of Israel, then erase me from The Book (Torah) that You wrote."

G-d listened to Moshe and forgave the Jewish people. He also listened to Moshe's request, "Erase me from The Book that You wrote." So, while G-d did forgive the people, Moshe does not appear in this week's Parsha, Tetzaveh. By omitting Moshe's name G-d showed all future generations the great love Moshe had for the Jewish people.

Q. Why was Parshat Tetzaveh chosen to have Moshe's name omitted?

A. Parshat Tetzaveh is usually read on the Shabbat before, or after, the 7th of Adar, the day of Moshe's passing away from this world. By not mentioning his name in Parshat Tetzaveh, The Torah alludes also to his passing.

Q. Purim is next week, Monday night and Tuesday. On Purim we listen to The Megilah reading and we have to listen to each word. Yet, during The Megilah reading on Purim, there are times when lots of noise is made by gragers, banging etc. Why?

A. When Haman's name is mentioned during The Megilah reading, we make noise. The reason is that Haman, who wanted to annihilate all the Jews was a descendant of Amalek, who had the same intentions one thousand years before Haman.

Concerning Amalek, The Torah commands us, "You must erase the remembrance of Amalek." Thus, when Haman's name is mentioned, we "erase" and blot out his name by making noise.

Tuesday, Adar 7, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / February 28, 2023

Today, the 7th day in the month Adar, is the birthday and the day of passing of the greatest leader of the Jewish people of all times, Moshe, or as he is commonly called, Moshe Rabeinu (Moshe our Teacher).

Moshe led the Jewish people out of Egypt, split the sea, and brought them to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. He guided the Jewish people throughout their forty-year

journey in the wilderness of Sinai. It was to his merit that they received the daily manna from heaven, during these forty years.

Moshe very much wanted to go into the Promised Land, but G-d denied his request because he failed to speak to the rock to give water and hit the rock instead.

Moshe was exactly 120 years on the day he passed away. He was born on the 7th of Adar and passed away on the 7th of Adar, 120 years later.

The Torah tells us that, at the time of his death, his strength had not weakened, his eyesight had not dimmed even though he was 120 years old. The Torah (Five Books of Moses) ends with the story of the passing of Moshe.

Q. Where was Moshe buried?

A. He was buried on Mount Nebo. The Torah tells us that no one knew, nor will anyone ever know his exact burial place.

Q. On which day of the week did Moshe pass away?

A. Moshe died on Shabbat.

Q. How did he pass away?

A. The Midrash describes Moshe's death as "Mitat Neshikin" – G-d took back his Neshama-soul through a G-dly kiss.

The Midrash relates that when the time came for Moshe to return his soul, G-d told him to go into a cave where three angels attended to him. G-d said, "Moshe, close your eyes," and Moshe closed his eyes. Then G-d told him, "Put your hands together," Moshe did. G-d said, "Put your feet together," and Moshe obeyed. G-d then took his Neshamah (soul) back with a kiss.

The Torah tells us that there never was, nor will there ever be, a prophet like Moshe; a man who saw G-d, "face to face" (Deut. 34:10). Moshe is called the "Father" of all the prophets. No other prophet attained Moshe's level. The Torah says, "Moshe was the most humble person upon the face of the earth" (Num.

12:3). Indeed, true greatness is in great humility. May his memory bring blessings to all. Amen.

Monday, Adar 6, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / February 27, 2023

This month, Adar, is a special month in the Hebrew calendar. In some years we have two months of Adar (Adar 1 & Adar 2). This year there is only one month of Adar.

As mentioned last week, our sages tell us, "When Adar comes, we increase in happiness." During this month we increase in happiness more than other months of the year.

Happiness is something we all desire, yet, at times it may be one of the most difficult mitzvot to perform, for one reason or another. True happiness comes when we believe and trust in G-d and whatever happens in life is for the good, because G-d is good. When we feel this way it has an effect on high and in turn G-d sends us His blessings to maintain our happiness.

The holiday of Purim is next week - Monday night, March 6 and Tuesday, March 7.

Purim celebrates one of the greatest miracles in Jewish history - the miracle of Jewish survival, as recorded in the Megilat Esther. The Megilah is read twice during Purim; once in the evening after the fast & Maariv service and during the morning service. The Megilah is hand written on parchment by a scribe.

Q. Why is the holiday called Purim?

A. "Purim" comes from the word "pur" which means "lots." The Megilah tells us that, upon receiving permission to annihilate the Jewish people, Haman cast lots for the best day and month in which to execute his plan. When the lot fell on the 13th day of Adar, Haman was very pleased, for he knew that Moshe (Moses) passed away in the month of Adar.

The Talmud tells us that Haman said, "Now I am sure that my plan will succeed for the leader of the Jewish people died in Adar and thus this month is not good for the Jews."

But, as our sages tell us, Haman didn't know that Moshe's birth was also in the month of Adar. In the end, it turned out to be a good month for the Jewish people and Haman's downfall.

Q. Mordechai and Esther together played a role in the story of Purim, so why is the Megilah called Megilat Esther - Scroll of Esther, when it should have been called, Scroll of Esther and Mordechai?

A. Esther was the one who put her life at risk for her people. Esther's Jewish identity, when she married King Achashveirosh, was not known, so her life was not affected by Haman's decree. Yet, she placed her own life in danger to plead for her people revealing her Jewish identity. Since Esther put her life in danger more than Mordechai, the Megilah was named after her.

Another reason is that Esther was the one who insisted that the story of Purim be recorded and be added to our Holy Scriptures, thus, it was named in her honor, "Megilat Esther."