

Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch Tetzaveh 21 “Deferred”

Gut Shabbos. Shabbat shalom. First, I'd like to acknowledge that last week's sermon was sponsored by Sara and Joe Glyn, in honor of Parshat Terumah and Joe's bar mitzvah anniversary. Mazal tov!

I'd also like to remind everyone that our Virtual Moshav concert is coming up this weekend, on Sunday February 28 at 8pm. Due to Covid, we can't hold our annual gala this year, but we hope you'll show your support for Mekor and join us at this exciting event. If you haven't signed up yet, you can find the link in this week's newsletter, and also under the Special Events tab on our website homepage.

Last week we observed that in most years, Moshe's yahrtzeit, Zayin Adar, falls during the week before Parshat Tetzaveh, which is the only parsha after his birth where Moshe's name is never mentioned. The Vilna Gaon interprets this omission to be symbolic of Moshe's death, his departure from this world. But this year, his yahrtzeit does not fall in Tetzaveh, and so the omission of his name from the parsha must have a different meaning.

The Ba'al Haturim gives a reason based on the episode of the Golden Calf that is presented in next week's Parsha, Ki Tisa. God plans to destroy the Jewish people for their transgression, but Moshe defends them, declaring, *v'im ayin, mehchaini na mesifricha asher katavta, if you are intent on destroying our people, then instead erase me from your Book.* According to the Ba'al Haturim, God responds with a counteroffer, so to speak: *When I spare the Jewish people, I won't erase your name from the entire Torah, but I will erase it from one Parsha.*

As the gemarah says in Mesechet Makot 11a, *Killilat Chacham afilu al tnai ba'ah, Even the contingent words of a wise person come true,* and this was God's way of acknowledging Moshe's entreaty. The Babover Rebbe in Sefer Kedushas Tziyon (and others) explain that God specifically chose Parshat Tetzaveh because He wanted to defer the removal of Moshe's name until the very last parsha before he made that declaration. Since Moshe asked God to erase his name from the book in next week's Parsha, Ki Tisa, God pushed off fulfilling Moshe's words until an entire cycle of Torah reading had passed, and thus removed his name from this week's parsha, Tetzaveh.

This is also how we approach most fast days that fall on Shabbat, except for Yom Kippur (and according to some, the 10th of Tevet), when we do fast on Shabbat. According to our tradition, we postpone the fast day, for example Tisha B'Av, or the 17th of Tamuz, to Sunday, in order to push off a negative day to the future. But Ta'anit Esther is a unique exception. Instead of deferring it to Sunday, we move it **earlier**, to Thursday, because it's **not** a negative day. It's a holiday; true, it is a day of repentance, but it's also a day of celebration that we won the war against our enemies in the Purim story.

In fact, the Chidushei HaRim explains that the reason we fast before Purim is to increase happiness, because if you deprive yourself the entire day, you'll be all the more joyful when the fast ends on Purim.

Moreover, this year in Yerushalayim, their Purim, Shushan Purim falls out on Shabbat, which means it's 3 days long -- a Purim Meshulash – which only occurs once in a blue moon. So, those in Yerushalayim read Megillah and perform matanot l'evyonim on Friday, on Shabbat they say *al hanisim* during the prayers and add an extra dessert or course to their Shabbat meal, and on Sunday they bring mishloach manot and then hold the festive meal.

It's a 72-hour holiday, which creates more festivity than usual – it certainly fulfills the injunction, from mesechet Taanit 29a, *Mishenichnas Adar marbin b'simcha*, *You should increase your happiness in the month of Adar*. According to the Mishna in Taanit, this makes Adar the mirror image of the month of Av, when we mourn the churban beit hamikdash. The fact that we celebrate a 3-day holiday in Yerushalayim this year is symbolic of the Jewish people's dreams of Tziyon and hopes for restoring the greatness of our nation – the very opposite of the defeat we commemorate in Av. And this extended holiday is meaningful not only for residents of Yerushalayim but for all of us, because Yerushalayim represents the hopes and dreams of the entire Jewish people.

So, I think it's no coincidence that Purim has all 3 of these distinctive features this year – first, instead of representing Moshe's death, the omission of his name in Parshat Tetzaveh represents the postponement of *puraniyut*, the negative event of Moshe's omission from the Torah; second, that we observed Ta'anit Esther on a Thursday, the day of deferral we use in years when it falls on Shabbat, which reminds us that it is a celebratory fast day and so we push it back, not forward;

and lastly, we can all find inspiration in *Purim Meshulash*, the 3-day Purim celebrated in Yerushalayim. Our prayer is that these are all signs that our happiness will be increased in Adar even more than usual, and all of our negative circumstances will be ended for all time. Shabbat Shalom.