

TETZAVEH (EXODUS 27:20-30:10)

Hide and Seek

2010 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Fast of Esther

Tomorrow, February 25, is a fast day. The Fast of Esther usually takes place on the day before Purim. However, this year Purim falls on a Sunday, and we don't fast on Shabbos (with the exception of Yom Kippur.) Therefore, the fast is scheduled early. The fast commemorates the war of the Jews of the Persian Empire against their enemies that took place on that date. In keeping with Jewish tradition, the Jews repented and fasted in hope for G-d's assistance in battling their enemies. Let us pray that He will continue to watch over us and protect us.

The fast begins Thursday at dawn, (72 minutes before sunrise.) It ends at dusk, (25-72 minutes after sunset, depending upon local custom.) For sunrise and sunset times for your community [click here](#).

Purim

This Saturday night and Sunday will be Purim, the most festive day on the Jewish calendar. Learn about observing the Mitzvahs of Purim by [clicking here](#).

“Hide and Seek”

The two Readings coming up at the end of this week have something in common: The Book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not mention G-d's name. Tetzaveh, this week's Torah Reading, is the only weekly Torah Portion from Exodus (the birth of Moses) until Deuteronomy (the beginning of Moses' final sermon) that does not mention the name of Moses.

The reasons for the deletions are very different. Moses is left out of Tetzaveh as a bit of a "punishment." (More about that later.)

G-d is not mentioned in the Megillah because all of the miracles of the Purim story are behind-the-scenes "natural" miracles. All of the events in the Book of Esther are non-supernatural "coincidences" that "happen" to occur. Events seem to fall into place to save the Jews of Persia from annihilation by Haman and his cronies. As the saying goes, "coincidence is what G-d does when He wants to be anonymous."

At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, G-d chose to clearly and conclusively demonstrate that He is running the show. He turned nature upside-down by transforming the Nile into blood and the Red Sea into a 12-lane superhighway. In the Purim story, G-d limited His visibility and allowed His will to be

done through politics, intrigue, and military action.

This type of miracle, the anonymous Divine manipulation of events, seems to be the greater of the two. Thus, we find in the Talmud that after the Messiah comes, Purim will still be celebrated although other holidays will not!!

This is an essential thought for us to keep in mind during these trying times. The Talmud tells us that this month, the Hebrew month of Adar, is an especially auspicious time for G-d to protect us from our enemies. Purim is the time for us to open our hearts and our prayer books. It is a time to beg our Creator to influence political and military leaders to bring an end to the violence against our People. This is the time to ask G-d to once again frustrate the treacherous efforts of the Hamans of the world to destroy us.

But will our prayers help? That's where Moses comes in.

The Baal Haturim explains that the reason Moses' name doesn't appear in Tetzaveh is because of something we'll read about in NEXT week's Torah Reading. After the episode of the Golden Calf, Moses begs G-d to forgive His People for the grave sin they had committed, "... *and if not, please erase my name from the Book You have written.*" (Exodus, 32:32)

Moses felt that he would be remiss in his devotion to his nation if he could not convince G-d to forgive them. He preferred obscurity over being a central figure in a Torah that excluded the Nation of Israel.

The Baal Haturim writes that when a righteous man like Moses says something, G-d listens. Moses "cursed" himself, albeit conditionally, with exclusion from G-d's Book. Even that request could not go totally unanswered. Therefore, the name of Moses was omitted from one section of the Torah.

I would like to share an observation on Moses' "banishment" from the section of Tetzaveh:

The first verse of this supposedly Moses-less Torah Portion says: "**You** must command the Israelites to bring you olive oil...for the Eternal Light." (Exodus, 27:20)

"**YOU** must..."!?! To whom does the word "YOU" refer? Obviously, Moses is being addressed here. Moses is absent in name only. This section of the Torah contains commandments for Moses to fulfill. His anonymity is only a technicality.

The same holds true in G-d's "absence" from the Megillah. Moses, unnamed as he is, is a major player in this week's Torah Portion. Similarly, G-d, although we don't see Him, is intimately involved in the lives of Esther, Mordecai, and Haman. In fact, the Talmud (Chullin 139b) points out a link between Esther's name and G-d's supposed absence:

"I will surely hide (in Hebrew, HASTAIR ASTIR – sounds like **ESTHER**) My face on that day.**
(Deuteronomy, 31:18) The Talmud sees this verse as a hint of a future time when G-d will act behind the scenes through Esther.

G-d is equally involved, sometimes incognito, in your life and in mine.

Isaiah says in the Haftarah that is read on the Fast of Esther, "*Seek G-d where He can be found, call Him when He is near...*" (Isaiah, 55:6)

G-d is ALWAYS in the neighborhood. True, He's a bit on the quiet side right now; He's not splitting any seas at the moment. But make no mistake, He is right here, waiting to hear from us.

When G-d decides to hide, it becomes our job to seek.

Have a great Shabbos and a happy Purim.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

© 2010 Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz. Reprint permitted for non-commercial use with attribution to torahtalk.org.