

# INCONSPICUOUS ASSUMPTION

*by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky*

In this week's portion Moshe is charged to prepare every detail of the priesthood for his brother Aharon and his descendants. In intricate detail, the sartorial traits of every one of the priestly vestments are explicated, down to the last intertwined threads.

And though Moshe is in charge of setting up the administration and establishing the entire order of service while training his brother and nephews, his name is conspicuously missing from this portion.

Our sages explain the reason for the omission. When Hashem threatened to destroy His nation, Moshe pleaded with Him: "And now if You would but forgive their sin! -- but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written"(Exodus 32:32) As we all know, Moshe's plea were accepted. The nation was spared. But Moshe was not left unscathed. His request of written eradication was fulfilled in one aspect. He was left out of one portion of the Torah Tezaveh. Thus the words of the tzadik were fulfilled in one aspect. But why this portion?

Though this English-language publication is not wont to discuss Hebrew etymological derivations, it is noteworthy to mention a thought I once heard in the name of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. Moshe's plea "erase me now from Your book," bears an explanation. The word sifr'chah, "your book" can be broken down to two words sefer chaf -- which means the twentieth book. Thus Moshe was removed from this portion of Tezaveh, the twentieth portion of the Torah.

But why would Moshe intone such omission in this, of all the portions of the Torah? Why not omit his name in the portions that declare the tragic outcome of sin or the calamities of insurrection? Wouldn't that be a better choice for omission? Why did Moshe allude to having his name omitted in the week he charges Aharon with all the honor and glory that is afforded the High Priest?

Rav Yitzchak Blaser was once seated at a gathering of the most prominent sages of his generation that was held in his city of St. Petersburg.

Among the Talmudic sages present was Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk, world renown for his Talmudic genius. Rabbi Soloveitchik presented a Talmudic question that his young son, Reb Chaim, had asked. After posing the question, a flurry of discussion ensued, each of the rabbis offering his own answer to the riddle, while other rabbis refuted them with powerful rebuttals. During the entire repartee, Rabbi Blaser, who had a reputation as a Talmudic genius, sat silently. He did not offer an answer, nor did he voice approval to any of the answers given by the Rabbis.

When Rabbi Soloveitchik ultimately offered his son's own solution, Rabbi Blaser sat quietly, neither nodding in approval nor shaking his head in disagreement. It seemed as if he did not comprehend the depth of the insightful discourse. It was as if he was not even there! Bewildered, Reb Yosef Dov began having second thoughts about the renowned Rabbi Blaser. "Was he truly the remarkable scholar that the world had made him out to be?" he wondered.

Later that evening, Rabbi Soloveitchik was in the main synagogue where he got hold of the book "Pri Yitzchok," a volume filled with Talmudic exegesis authored by none other than Rabbi Blaser himself.

After leafing through the large volume he saw that the afternoon's entire discourse, his son's question, the offered and reputed responses, and the final resolution, were all part of a dissertation that Rabbi Blaser had himself published years earlier!

"Now I realize," thought Rabbi Soloveitchik, "Rabbi Blaser is as much a genius in humility as he is in Talmudic law!"

Our sages tell us that actually Moshe was to have been chosen as the Kohen Gadol in addition to the leader of the Jewish nation. It was his unwavering refusal to accept any of those positions that lost him the opportunity to serve as Kohen Gadol. Instead, Hashem took it from him and gave it to Aharon.

Many of us would have always harped on the fact. How often do I hear the claims "I got him that job!" "I could have been in his position!" "I started that company! Had I stayed, I would be the one with the stock options!" "That was really my idea!"

Moshe, too, could have injected himself as the one who propelled and engineered Aharon's thrust to glory -- especially after a seemingly tainting experience with the Golden Calf. In his great humility, Moshe did just the opposite.

Moshe did not want to diminish Aharon's glory in any way. He wanted the entire spotlight to shine on Aharon and his great service to Klal Yisrael. Therefore, in the portion in which Moshe charges, guides, and directs the entire process of the priesthood, his name is conspicuously omitted.

One of the greatest attributes of true humility is to let others shine in their own achievement without interfering or announcing your role in their success. The greatest educators, the wisest parents, and most understanding colleagues know when to share the spotlight and when to let another friend, colleague, sibling, or child shine in their success or accomplishment. They know exactly when to be conspicuously or inconspicuously "missing from the book." Good Shabbos © 2000 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

*Dedicated by Ira & Gisele Beer in memory of Harry Beer -- L'Iluy Nishmas Reb Zvi Mendel ben Reb Pinchas -- 8 Adar Aleph*

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