

# INDUCED HOLINESS

*by Rabbi Naftali Reich*

How is this week's parashah different from all the other parshios in the last four Books of the Torah? Parashas Tetzaveh is missing something that appears in every parashah from Shemos and on - the mention of the name of Moses. From the time he first appears in the hallowed pages of the Torah as a baby in a basket floating among the reeds of the Nile River, Moses's name is mentioned thousands of times in every context. But not this week. Not even once. Why?

The Talmud tells us that when Moses pleaded with Hashem to forgive the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf, he declared, "If You do not forgive the people, erase me from Your Book." And Hashem, apparently not having forgiven the Jewish people completely, accommodated him by removing the mention of his name from one part of the Torah - this week's parashah.

But Hashem certainly did not pick a parashah at random from which to delete mention of Moses's name. There must have been some significance in the selection of Tetzaveh. What message is implied in this omission?

The answer lies in our appreciation of Moses as the greatest prophet who ever lived. How exactly did his level of prophecy differ from that of other prophets? Maimonides explains that Moses had the gift of spontaneous prophecy. Other prophets needed to induce a state of ecstasy in themselves before they could attain to prophecy. In the Book of Kings, we read about Elisha calling for a musician to help him achieve a state of serenity and expanded consciousness. Moses, however, needed no special preparations of this kind. He could naturally and easily communicate with Hashem at all times. Through his tremendous devotion and righteousness, he had risen to such a level of spiritual development that he was permanently in a state of prophetic ecstasy. He no longer needed external stimuli to induce the spirit of prophecy.

Tetzaveh, this week's parashah, highlights the importance of a particular kind of external stimulus to the spiritual condition of a person - his garments. "Clothes make the man," goes the saying. The priestly garments described in this week's parashah certainly made the Kohein. When he donned these consecrated garments, he was infused with a state of priestly sanctification, without which he would not have been qualified to perform the Temple service. According to the Talmud, a Kohein who omitted even one of these special garment was considered a zar, a non-Kohein, with regard to the service. The priestly garments, then, are the epitome of external stimuli by which a state of holiness is induced.

In this light, we can understand why Hashem chose Tetzaveh for the omission of the name of Moses. Not only did the laws of the garments themselves not apply to Moses, the very concept of the garments was not relevant to him. He had purified and sanctified himself to such a degree that his state of prophetic holiness had become part of his very being, not a temporarily induced condition.

A guest in a hotel heard that a certain sage famed as the "guardian of his tongue" was in the dining room. The man, who had never seen the famous sage, rushed to catch a glimpse of him. In the dining room, he found two venerable sages deep in conversation. But which was the famous one?

The man watched them for a few minutes. One was speaking animatedly and at great length. The other was practically silent. Aha! He thought. The silent one must be the "guardian of his tongue."

With great awe and trepidation, he approached the silent sage and greeted him.

"You are mistaken, my friend," the silent sage replied. Noticing the look of bafflement on the man's face, he continued, "Let me explain. Guarding his tongue had become such a natural characteristic of my friend that he can allow himself to speak freely. But I, alas, must consider my words carefully before I speak, and it is safer for me to remain silent."

In our own lives, although we cannot expect to attain the spiritual levels of Moses or one of our great sages, we can follow their lead within the parameters of our own abilities. We can take the fine characteristics in which we excel personally - whether it is kindness, charity, concern for the sick, honesty or anything else - and integrate them so deeply into our personalities that they become part of our very essence. To do so does not require additional expenditures of time or exertion, only an investment of spiritual and emotional energy. It is an investment guaranteed to pay wonderful dividends. Text Copyright © 2008 by Rabbi Naftali Reich and **Torah.org**.

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