

THE HIDDEN ESSENCE

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Tetzaveh and then move into the holiday of Purim. This week also marked the end of the shloshim [the thirty-day period following the loss of a close relative] for my father, hk"m. As I had the opportunity to speak on the shloshim both in the community here and in the yeshiva, I thought I'd share with you some of the thoughts that I expressed.

Our parsha begins: "And you shall command the Children of Israel that they will take pure olive oil, grinded to be used for light... [27:20]"

I was always taught to call someone by their name as opposed to "hey, you!" Yet, not only in this passuk [verse] was Moshe referred to as "you," but his name was omitted from the entire parsha. In fact, from the point that Moshe entered the scene, Tetzaveh is the only parsha that doesn't mention his name. Why is this?

The Vilna Gaon explains that Moshe's yahrtzeit [anniversary of death], the seventh of Adar, usually falls before the parsha of Tetzaveh. His name is omitted to show that in a physical, revealed sense, he is no longer with us.

Of course, in regard to the teachings that comprise his very essence, Moshe has never died. The Torah he transmitted to us is the lifeblood of our nation to this day. In such a sense, he is very much alive even after his death.

This is also alluded to in our parsha. Moshe's name is spelled 'mem'-'shin'-'hay.' As the name of each letter is actually a word, each letter has its revealed part and its hidden part. The word for the letter 'mem' is written 'mem'-'mem.' The first 'mem' is revealed and the second is hidden. The word for the letter 'shin' is spelled 'shin'-'yud'-'nun.' The 'shin' is revealed, while the 'yud' and 'nun' are hidden. Lastly, the letter 'hay' is spelled 'hay'-'aleph.' The 'hay' is revealed and the 'aleph' is hidden.

The numerical value of the hidden letters of Moshe's name, the mem (40), the yud (10), the nun (50) and the aleph (1), equal 101--which is the number of passukim in this week's parsha. The physical embodiment of Moshe has left us but, looking past the external, the essence of Moshe is very much with us even now.

Purim contains a similar message. Hashem's name is conspicuously absent from Megillas Esther--it's not mentioned a single time. Why is this?

The miracle of Purim took place historically at the end of the Babylonian exile. This was a critical

juncture in Jewish History as the era of prophecy had come to an end. The nation felt somewhat cut off and distanced from Hashem. They wondered if Hashem was still as intimately involved as He was when He spoke to them through the prophets.

The events of Purim were clearly miraculous. Every piece of the puzzle fit together to create a glorious portrait of divine intervention. Bnei Yisroel {the children of Israel} were shown that Hashem's involvement hadn't diminished one iota but had simply moved behind the scenes. The clearly revealed, external aspect existed no longer, but the essence of Hashem's involvement hadn't changed.

Shloshim is a time when the reality of one's loss is setting in but at the same time, one can look past the external and focus on the essence of the person that remains with us.

In life, we grow accustomed to a certain situation and assume that the status quo will basically stay the same. As my cousin said beautifully at the funeral, we think we know the song that we are meant to be singing and we are prepared to keep singing that song. When tragic events radically change our life and life plans, it is extremely difficult to pick ourselves up and "Shiru la'Hashem shir chadash"--sing to Hashem a new song.

In his mid-forties, my father, hk"m, had a wonderful wife and five sweet children. He thought that would be the song he'd be singing, but the song often doesn't remain the same. He lost his wife and lost his daughter but remarried to a wonderful woman who had a son and daughter of her own. A new family with its unique challenges and sources of gratification became the shir chadash, the new song that he sang for close to thirty years.

When one looks past the surface and realizes that the essence--Hashem's intimate involvement in our lives--never changes, one can then draw the strength to live a life of shir chadash--an ever changing song.

Good Shabbos,
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