



TETZAVEH AND THE MEGILLAH

The Hidden Author

In this year of 5781, here in Jerusalem, *Parashat Tetzaveh* coincides with the day of Purim itself. There seem to be great similarities between this Torah reading and Megillat Esther.

After Moshe's birth, until the end of the entire Torah, we find no *parasha* that does not contain his name.

Apart from one.

Moshe's name never appears in Tetzaveh, even though we are aware that he is the one who wrote this portion and taught it to the Jewish people during his time and for all eternity.

He is the hidden author, the director of events behind the scenes. There have been many suggestions over the ages to explain why this is so. But for our purposes here, it is sufficient simply to realize that Moshe is the teacher of the Torah par excellence who is hidden from us. As we will soon see, we are made aware of the value of people and ideas that remain hidden, not always exposed to the light of human inspection and society. The ability of Moshe to remain hidden – and the benefit of his anonymity – is one of the blessings of his noble character and humble greatness.

In the same vein, we know that G-d's Name does not appear in Megillat Esther. There is no reference whatsoever made of the intercession and interference of Heaven in the events described in the written record of the story and miracle of Purim. The book of Esther sounds like an exciting but completely rational and understandable story of political intrigue, psychologically-damaged individuals, unforeseen salvation and an example of the twists and turns that

make a mockery of human certainties and predictions.

Once again though, there is an unseen and unmentioned director of events who is controlling the narrative of this story.

Purim is the holiday that commemorates this concept.

There is no flash of lightning nor roar of thunder. No volcanic eruptions or plagues of locusts that mark this miracle. Yet it is obvious that when we piece the whole story together as one whole, the miracle of the event becomes obvious and revealed, no matter how hidden it was while it was being enacted (read the words of the Rabbis in the *Al HaNissim* prayer recited on Purim).

Perhaps this is the reason why Purim is such a day of unmitigated joy, because it represents the joy of thousands who have discovered and unraveled a mystery the solution of which was not originally obvious nor widely understood. It is the delight of discovery of the hidden Director that fills us with both merriment and joy. When a hidden treasure is revealed, humans are usually overcome with a feeling of great excitement, happiness and achievement.

The great Chassidic master of Kotzk maintained that truth is always hidden from public view. He said that if it is revealed, it will be criticized, reviled and discounted, for we live in a "false world," to use the phrase the Talmud chose to describe human existence. Ultimate truth can only be found within one's own self, and it takes an enormous amount of effort and searching to do so. Only the hidden eventually proves to be true, accurate and eternal. Falsehoods

are about wherever we turn. It is not only fake news that confounds us, but also that we live in an era in which society is actually shaped by the opinions of others and human weaknesses.

The Torah wishes to give us a direction as to where truth can actually be found. Hence it hid the name of Moshe in this week's Torah reading, and the name of G-d in the book of Esther. If we wish to find G-d, we need to search within our own selves. The same is true of understanding and appreciating the Torah that Moshe wrote, gave and taught us. The Torah itself shows us that we are not that distant from truth. But it cannot be found on the surface, but only within our own souls and tongues.

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