

Parasha Tetzaveh

- Exodus 27:20-30:10
- Ezekiel 43:10-27
- Hebrews 13:10-16

The Torah Portion at a Glance



YHWH tells Moses to receive from the Children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the "everlasting flame" of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, "from evening until morning."

The priestly garments, to be worn by the Kohanim (priests) while serving in the sanctuary are described. All Kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet – a full length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim -- linen breeches; 3) mitznefet ormigba'at -- a linen turban; 4) avnet -- a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the Kohen HaGadol ("high priest") wore: 5) the efod, an apron-like garment made of blue, purple and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen, a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) me'il -- a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz -- a golden plate worn on the forehead bearing the inscription "Holy to YHWH".

Tetzaveh also includes YHWH's detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons –Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar-- into the priesthood, and for the making of the Golden Altar on which the ketoret ("incense") was burned.

(adapted from chabad.org)

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The garments and sanctification of the priesthood are described in great detail in this week's Torah portion. It is no coincidence that this gives us yet another glimpse of our Master Y'shua. The priest, called "cohen" in Hebrew, was as an intercessory between man and YHWH. The cohen worked at the tabernacle and offered sacrifices. "Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people," Hebrews 5:1-3.

Aharon and his sons were chosen as the first priests of the mishkan. To be a priest, a person must have been born into their family lineage. To be a priest of YHWH today, you must be born again. "Aharon and his sons shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute so you shall ordain Aharon and his sons," Exodus 29:9.

Much of our Torah portion specifically speaks of the Cohen HaGadol – the Great High Priest. This man was chosen to go behind the veil once a year to present a special sacrifice to YHWH for the atonement of the nation of Israel. This occurred on Yom Kippur and is detailed in Leviticus 16. The High Priest was set apart over the set apart priesthood. This Cohen HaGadol is of course a prophetic picture of our High Priest Y’shua. As Aharon was chosen, so was Y’shua. “So Messiah also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek," Hebrews 5:5-6. Just as the High Priest would wear specific garments, we too must clothe ourselves in the Moshiach. The book of Romans says to “clothe yourselves with YHWH Y’shua, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

The High Priest had an amazing task to accomplish. In many ways, Messiah Y’shua is superior to the Aharonic Cohen HaGadol. You can relate to YHWH because of our High Priest. You never have to worry about YHWH rejecting you or accepting you. “Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Y’shua lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to YHWH through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens,” Hebrews 7:23-26

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Here are some weird facts about the Bible that you might find interesting:

- The only domestic animal not mentioned in the Bible is the cat. (Poor kitties)
- Stephen Langton first divided the Bible into chapters in 1228. The Old Testament was first divided by verses in 1448 and the New Testament was first versed in 1551. King James was not involved in either.
- In a 1631 edition of the King James Bible, in Exodus 20 verse 14, the word "not" was left out. This changed the 7th commandment to read, "Thou shalt commit adultery." Oops!
- The book of Esther does not contain the name of YHWH or even a direct reference to Him.
- “Tetzaveh” is the only Torah portion in the books of Exodus and Leviticus that does not contain Moshe’s name.

Pretty weird, eh?

“Tetzaveh,” the title to this week’s Torah portion, literally means, “you shall command.” In this reading, YHWH told Moshe to command the children of Yisra’el to do several specific actions. In the previous chapters of Shemot (Exodus), YHWH reveals His will to have a mishkan (tabernacle) built for His presence. These instructions for building and worship continue in our weekly reading.

Within the few short chapters of our reading, detailed words are given concerning lighting the menorah, the clothes and consecration of the priesthood, and the building of the incense altar.

Moshe paid close attention to these instructions given by YHWH. Some teach that Moshe had visions of the finished tabernacle while others say that Moshe saw actual blueprints for how everything was to be made. Regardless of how the mishkan was presented to Moshe on the mountain, it must be remembered that Moshe received very specific instructions. His building plans were set in stone, you could say.

Moshe could not shorten his message, compromise on the details, or allow just anything to be built for YHWH. Moshe had received from YHWH exact measurements, colors, and materials to be used. Moshe was to “tetzaveh” or pass along these mitzvah to the sons of Yisra’el.

The text of this Parasha brings to mind an important point – YHWH is very specific. He is picky. YHWH wants things done His way in His time and by His chosen people. The world says that “god works in mysterious ways,” yet YHWH does not. He is not mysterious in the idea that His attributes and works are hidden. YHWH has laid out His plan, His instructions, and His ways in the Torah. Moshe paid close attention to YHWH’s words and memorized them to the exact facet. We should do the same.

Too many people have accepted the modern view of “god on Prozac” – a god that accepts anything anyone will dish out. But, YHWH has not changed - He is the same forever. Many people believe the teaching that the Almighty simply does not care and is not picky. It seems that the mindset is that the Father who was once very specific and demanding is now highly medicated on “grace” and doesn’t require obedience or devotion. What the Father wanted in the past was too difficult...too hard...and too demanding. Moshe would disagree with this idea. So would Messiah Y’shua.

Moshe was committed to his call. He was submitted to YHWH’s authority and Moshe had an insatiable desire to please YHWH. While Yisra’el “said” they would obey Him, Moshe did obey. Of Moshe the scripture says that “there has not arisen a prophet in Yisra’el like unto Moshe, whom YHWH knew face to face,” Devarim (Deuteronomy) 34:10.

Yet there is One who is greater than Moshe...Y’shua HaMoshiach. “And Moshe verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Moshiach as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,” Ivrim (Hebrews) 3:5-6. Moshe was detail-oriented while building the dwelling place of YHWH, - the people of YHWH – Yisra’el. Y’shua also came to build the people of YHWH into the dwelling place of His presence.

Part of Y’shua’s ministry was to call people back to heartfelt Torah obedience through love. He did not come to do away with Moshe or the Torah but to turn Yisra’el’s heart back to the Father. Y’shua would say things like “you have heard it said yet I tell you...” These comments were made to draw people to the intention behind the commandment. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” Mattitiyahu 5:27-28. Y’shua was not nullifying the Tanakh commandment on adultery here. What He was doing was exposing a fuller meaning of the mitzvah. Y’shua was being like Moshe here. Y’shua was being concerned about the details.

You see, Y’shua and Moshe were both concerned about “tetzaveh” or commanding others what they had been commanded. Moshe and Y’shua both were to hear the commands of Abba YHWH and relate those to Yisra’el. YHWH has not changed since Moshe and Y’shua is proof of that.

So, who cares that Moshe's name is not mentioned in this Parasha? It is clear to see that Moshe is present – he is the one receiving the instructions and he is the one that is to instruct Yisra'el. He is the one that will pass these words along and relate the details about the mishkan, the priests, and the sacrifices.

Who cares that YHWH's name isn't in the book of Esther? Even a blind man can see YHWH's hand present in the book's story.

There are many weird facts in the Bible. Perhaps the weirdest of all is that how a large group of Bible believers have accepted an un-Biblical view of an Elohim who doesn't care. The Almighty who commanded an exact replica of the heavenly mishkan has been traded for the "Almighty of Bliss." God on Prozac, now that's really weird.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Tetzaveh." What does this mean?
2. Read Ezekiel 43:10-27. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 13:10-16. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. What was the shape of the tabernacle? What about the holy of holies? Compare these shapes to the shape and size of the New Jerusalem spoken of in the book of Revelation.
7. Why was olive oil used in the mishkan/tabernacle and not some other type of oil?
8. Research and discuss the process for grinding olives into pure olive oil. What can be learned from such? How does the Garden of Gethsemane relate to olive oil?
9. Does this command to light the Menorah appear to be out of place?
10. From what times of day did the priests serve?
11. Explain each specific garment of the high priest. Should people dress like this today?
12. What is the Hebrew term for "high priest?"
13. Why would the holy garments for the priests be made for "glory" and "beauty" as seen in Exodus 28:2?
14. What characterized the people who made Aharon's garments?
15. Use this Torah portion to help you draw out the garments of the high priest. Review how each piece fit with the other and was given for a specific purpose.
16. What was the purpose and use of the robe?
17. What was the purpose and meaning of the breast plate?
18. Why use did the turban have?
19. Why would the priest wear the "band of the ephod?"
20. What was the "ephod" as mentioned in Exodus 28:6-14, 39:2-7?
21. What colors were used for the priests garments? Why did the Torah specify these colors?
22. Why would the priest wear a girdle?
23. Were the priests to always cover their heads? Why or why not?
24. Explain how the priests were "set apart" or ordained into YHWH's service.
25. What items were used for sacrifices during the ordination of YHWH's priests?
26. Were the priests washed/baptized before they were able to serve in the Temple?
27. How much anointing oil was used on the high priest?
28. Did the High Priest and the other priests wear the same type and style of head covering?
Compare the Hebrew words used in Exodus 28:1-4 and Exodus 39:28 and Exodus 29:9.

29. Why did the priests place their hands on a bull and a ram?
30. Where the priests allowed to eat fat?
31. In your opinion, is there enough work in the tabernacle to keep all the priests in Israel busy all year long?
32. What are the priests and Levites expected to do with the rest of their 'spare time'? [See Deuteronomy 17:8-10, 33:10.
33. Explain how the priests wore garments that were hand-me-downs.
34. How many days did it take to set apart the priests and the altar?
35. What were purpose and symbolism of the pomegranates and the bells on the priest's garments?
36. During the seven day sanctification process both the priests and the tabernacle need cleansing. Why would the priests need atonement?
37. What were the names of Aharon's sons? What became of these four men?
38. According to Exodus 29:42-46m what is the point of the tabernacle?
39. What does it mean that "the sons of Israel" should take oil (ch. 27, v. 20-1)? What does it mean that "Israel" brought a daily sacrifice? (ch. 29, v. 38-46) Is there a difference between the sins of a Hebrew, the sins of "Israel" and the sins of every Hebrew?
40. How do the garments of the high priest relate to the spiritual armor of YHWH as given in Ephesians 6:11-16?
41. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

The Open Bible is a teaching series written by Daniel Rendelman of Emet Ministries. Find more teachings, audio messages, videos, and music at www.emetministries.com.

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