

Tetzaveh - Rabbi Lerner - February 26, 2012

The Deletion of Moshe's Name

From the point in time when Parshas Shmos introduces Moshe, there is not a single parsha of the Torah until the very end of the Torah where Moshe's name is not mentioned, except for this one. There is therefore a strange construction of how this parsha begins - instead of the usual "*Vayedaber Hashem El Moshe*" it starts with "*Ve'Atah Tetzaveh*." Hashem needs to talk to Moshe, but the parsha does not mention Moshe's name - Hashem gives the command about the pure olive oil required for the Menorah, following with the command to bring Aharon and his sons to the Mikdash to become kohanim, and then there is the third statement beginning with "Ve'Atah" with the command to have artisans make the Bigdei Kehunah. Why is his name omitted?

Baal Haturim: Moshe's name is not mentioned only in this parsha because he told Hashem to wipe his name from His book if He will not forgive Bnei Yisrael for the sin of the Egel. The Gemorrah in Mackos says that because Moshe told Hashem to blot his name out from His book, when a chacham makes a curse, even if conditional, it will have some effect. His name is not completely blotted out from the book, but only in this one parsha.

There are several difficulties with this pshat. Firstly, it only works with commentaries like **Rashi** who say *Ayn Mukdam Um'uchar Batorah*," since the sin of the Egel first comes next week in parshas Ki Sisa; that is when Moshe tells Hashem to blot out his name. Rashi says these two parshios are out of order, that the Chait Ha'Egel occurred before the command to build a Mishkan, as that was somehow a tikun for the sin of the golden calf. If you hold like the **Ramban** and **Abarbanel** and others, that the parshios are in their proper order, then this answer is untenable. The second issue is, why was this parsha chosen to be the one without Moshe's name instead of any other parsha that comes later? **Oznayim LaTorah**: the reason that this particular parsha was chosen was because the parsha always comes around the seventh of Adar on the Hebrew calendar, and that was the anniversary date of Moshe's birth and death. Since it is around the time that we focus on Moshe, it is timely to erase his name from this parsha. But, this is still very dependent on our current cycle of the laining; we know that in the past, the laining schedule was different, where only portions of the parshios were read and it took three years to finish a cycle - we would have to then say that Hashem planned it out to work only with the current schedule of laining.

Because of these problems, the meforshim take widely different approaches on this issue, based on the relationship between Moshe and his brother. This is the parsha where Moshe is commanded by Hashem to take Aharon and his sons and appoint them as the Kohanim. Pasuk 28:1 says "*Va'atah Hakreiv Elechah es Aharon Achichah Ve'es Banav Ito Mitoch Bnei Yisrael Lechahano Li...*" - this was the appointment of the Kehunah; Hashem told Moshe that he is the one to make the appointment. Why was Aharon selected to be the Kohain Gadol and his sons to follow? **Rashi**: at the burning bush, Moshe kept turning down the leadership of the people, Hashem became angry at Moshe when he told Him in pasuk 4:13 "*Shelach Nah Beyad Tishlach*" - meaning that He should send Aharon to do this job. Hashem was angered in 4:14 and told Moshe that He knows about his brother Aharon's qualities - Aharon will not be angry or upset that his

younger brother was appointed to be the leader of the nation instead of him - instead he will be thrilled, and he will go and be Moshe's spokesman; this pasuk proves that Moshe was referring to Aharon in the previous pasuk. **Rashi:** the Gemorrah in Zevachim says that whenever Hashem gets angry in the Torah, His imprint is left - there is some punishment that follows; here Rav Yehoshuah says that here we don't find an obvious punishment. But Rav Yosi disagrees and says there was a punishment, a major one; Hashem says "...Aharon, your brother, the Levi..." - why does it say the Levi here? We know Aharon's lineage and that of course he was a Levi? Originally, Aharon was supposed to just be a Levi, and not a Kohen - it was supposed to be Moshe, with all of the kohanim coming from him. Because Moshe was so stubborn, continually turning Hashem down, Hashem decided to alter His plan - Aharon will be the Kohain and Moshe will be the Levi; this was the turning point in the plan. Moshe will now be part of shevet Levi. This was the punishment for Moshe continuing to say no; he remains the leader, but he loses out on a major prize - not just for him, but for all of his children forever after; we know virtually nothing about them. Now we see why Moshe's name was omitted here - this was painful to Moshe; the beginning of the parsha already became painful to him - right from the beginning, when Hashem commanded him to prepare the oil for the kohanim to light the menorah, the oil is to be used by Aharon and his sons by day and night; and then Moshe's pain deepened by the next command, to appoint his brother and his sons as the Kohanim - Moshe is told here to draw forward Aharon and his sons and make them into the Kohanim. The third Ve'atah was to make the special garments for Aharon and his children. So, this would seem to be the punishment, where Moshe himself has to do all of these things in elevating Aharon to the position he was originally supposed to have - it was his own fault; he had only himself to blame; because of his own stubbornness he is now paying the price.

This was a very difficult thing for Moshe. At the burning bush, Hashem called out "Moshe, Moshe" and Moshe responded Henaini, I am here and ready. The Medrish Tanchuma says that his response meant that he was ready for the Kehuna and Malchus - for both positions - for the priesthood and royalty. Hashem says to Moshe, don't draw so close - this implied don't draw so close - you are not going to get as close as you think; ultimately the kehuna will go to your brother Aharon. Another way of learning this, was that Moshe lost the kehuna because he kept on saying no; and the trait of kohanim is being zerizim lamitzvah, of jumping to do the mitzvos - Moshe's persistent refusal to take the job is the opposite trait of kohanim. Hashem wants kohanim to exemplify an attitude of incredible excitement to obey the His commands - this was the opposite of what Moshe was doing. The kohanim would bring the korbanos at the earliest possible time - they never waited to the last hour, to the deadline - that is why we do not know for sure the final time to daven which replaced the korbanos after the Temple was destroyed - the latest time for korbanos was never tested because of the enthusiasm of the kohanim.

Baal Haturim: another reason that Moshe's name was left out of the parsha: because he refused to go be the leader, the job was given to Aharon - his name was left out because of the pain knowing that his kids lost out forever the possibility of greatness forever; by leaving his name out, we diminish his pain; it shows Hashem's sensitivity to Moshe's pain. **Medrish Rabah:** there is a pasuk in Tehilim 119: *Were it not for your Torah in which I found such delight, I would have been lost, perished in my pain and suffering - Lulai Toraschah Shashui Az Avadidi Be'Onyi.* Although this pasuk was said by

David, who suffered so much and survived only because of the solace the Torah provided, the Medrish says that it applied to Moshe who said this after he was commanded to anoint Aharon and his children - it was so painful to Moshe that Aharon was taking his place, and his sons replaced by Aharon's - Hashem says why should you be so sad - you messed up and lost the kehuna, but you still have the Torah which is the greatest thing of all, the Torah which was used to create the entire world; Moshe was then comforted and said these words, that he would have perished in his sadness if not for the comfort of the Torah. This paints a picture of Moshe as a normal human being, with some jealousy and sadness.

Other interpretations: Aharon is completely above this - when Moshe keeps declining the job, Hashem tells him that he shouldn't worry so much about his brother - he will not be jealous and instead will have tremendous joy in his heart. That was the incredible power of Aharon - he loved peace, he was never jealous. Moshe was not quite at Aharon's level when it comes to peace. **Rav Simon**: quotes a **Kli Yakar**: The word Ve'atah was added because after the sin of the Egel which preceded this parsha, Aharon was diminished in the eyes of Hashem because of his involvement in the sin. In Ekev it reviews the sin of the Egel, God's anger and desire to destroy the nation and Moshe's role in saving the nation, and in pasuk 9:20 it says that Hashem was extremely angry at Aharon who was partially responsible for the idol, and Hashem wanted to destroy him; Moshe davened not just for the people, but also for Aharon. The Kli Yakar says that Hashem says Ve'Atah because even when Hashem listened to Moshe and refrained from destroying him, Hashem had no plans of allowing Aharon to be the Kohein Gadol - like all of the first-borns who lost out, Aharon and his children should also have lost out. It was only because of Moshe's tefilos that Aharon was able to be the Kohain Gadol. Moshe told Hashem that Aharon was part of Moshe's flesh - just as he prayed for Miriam in Beha'alozechah. Because Moshe drew Aharon so close to him and prayed so hard for him, Hashem left the plan intact and did not scuttle the appointment of Aharon as Kohain Gadol. It was because of the zechus of Moshe that Aharon, who was in the midst of the people's sin, that Aharon retained the job. **Rav Simon**: When the Torah says *Ve'atah Hakreiv Elechah*, it is saying to Moshe that only because of you will Aharon get this job; you saved him by davening for him - you therefore get the privilege of elevating him and anointing him as the Kohain Gadol. Had Moshe not davened for him, it would have reverted back to the original plan, and Moshe would have been the Kohain Gadol as well as the king. Moshe's davening for Aharon was an incredible act of Mesiras Nefesh; he overcame his own powerful desire to help his own children and prayed for Aharon to get the job; this is what made Moshe so special. We learn from here that just as Aharon was happy with Moshe's selection as the leader, Moshe here was overjoyed for Aharon and his sons - it was tremendous praise for Moshe when it says Ve'atah - it was not intended to ease Moshe's pain as the first pshat says. The word Ve'atah says that you are responsible for Aharon being the Kohain Gadol, despite having strong internal feelings of what you want for your own children. It shows that these brothers were a real time, without rivalry and competition. **Rav Moshe Reis**: we get an understanding of Aharon's incredible character, of his total lack of jealousy for his brother and only happiness for his success; the **Maharal** says that Aharon was so amazing, that he could be totally happy for the elevation of his younger brother, shows that he overcame the normal jealousies and feelings of brothers; because he had joy in his heart, his heart was the perfect and

most pure one - that is why he can have such happiness. That is why he was deserving of being the Kohain Gadol and wearing the 8 begadim, including the Choshen Mishpat that was the conduit to Hashem; Aharon's power comes from his heart - he wore the Choshen on his heart. The power of the garment came from Aharon's heart - he was the model of what a Kohain Gadol should be. People would seek out Torah from the Kohain Gadol because in the eyes of God he is like an angel who was not subject to the pettiness and jealousies of ordinary humans. Aharon, the first Kohain Gadol was the model of that. Aharon's heart gave the power to the Choshen Mishpat to light up and guide the people. Aharon was the great unifier of the people - he was pure, without jealousy, who sought only peace; that is why the people mourned his death more than the death of Moshe. Moshe could not be the Kohain Gadol because he was too elevated spiritually and did not have the people skills that Aharon had.