

Parshas Tetzaveh

Much can be said just on the first Posuk of the Parsha. Moshe's name is not mentioned in the parsha as a commemoration of the fact that he stood up for the Jews after the sin of the golden calf (one of his rebuttals to Hashem was if Hashem would destroy the Jews, Moshe said erase me from your book). Our Chassidic masters, and specifically the Lubavitcher Rebbe, explains that the opening words of the posuk "v'ateh tezaveh- and you shall command" is, in fact, a term of endearment.

In an encounter, there is generally a power dynamic. For example, children are taught to refer to their parent's friends as Mr. and Mrs. so and so. This is out of respect.

Similarly, when a person earns a designation such as Doctor, they are referred to by that title. Often, people who are close friends will refer to each other by their first names or even a nickname. This is because this relationship has closeness, endearment, and an equal balance of "power," so the two parties can relate in this way. It is considered rude when someone on a lower level of power balance (for example, simply due to age) calls someone older than them by their first name. In a power dynamic, if there is a person of authority, they will be referred to in high title (such as "your lordship, or "right honourable" to refer to parliamentary positions of power). That person can refer to someone not in their class of authority in the usual form of a respectable title.

When thinking about Hashem and Moshe, we frame the relationship as a (very holy, but still) human versus the Master of the Universe. When Hashem says, "and you should command," it breaks the barriers of distance and shows how dear Moshe was to

Hashem. Hashem commands Moshe straight to his core, the mitzvah of crushing olives to make pure olive oil for the eternal lighting. The Rebbe quoting the Previous Rebbe in the Ma'amer of the same title explains that the root of the word command also relates to the word connect or bond. Really when Moshe is being spoken to his core, it is due to the mission of Moshe to connect every Jew back to the source, to Hashem and His infinite light. This bond is reflexive in the metaphorical definition of the remaining command in the posuk. What is the commandment? "Take pure olive oil, crushed, to light for the eternal candle." The metaphor is that something pure (olive oil) comes from crushing it out of its source. Much in the same way, the journey of a Jew, and arguably all people, is through hard work (crushing), something pure will arise. Oil is fuel for a fire. A fire can ignite another fire without diminishing itself. In this way, through life's journey and hard work, one can create themselves to be pure oil, which is used as a light to ignite a flame in others. Specifically, ignite the flame of passion for serving Hashem from one person to another.

One can ask, based on the above, when Moshe said to Hashem, you can blot me out from the book you wrote (32:32), is it not a rude expression by Moshe to Hashem? Is it not belittling based on the power dynamics I explained above? (Meaning referring to Hashem as "yours") There are (at least) 2 answers. First, when we look at the Midrash on the posuk in 32:32 (Ein Yakov), we see that it references the idea that on the High Holidays, there is the book of life, punishment, and intermediates (this is based on Talmud in Rosh Hashana 16b). So, one can argue that Moshe isn't stating to

Hashem a 'rude' comment of removing me from **your** books- the rude part referring to Hashem as "you." He was talking to the Jews. If you remove your sin, you will be removed from the 'books' (of punishments). (This is a different approach to the primarily accepted idea that Moshe was 'standing up to Hashem' by saying he would rather be removed from the Torah than see the Jews destroyed.) Hashem corroborates this commandment of Moshe to the Jews, so to speak, by saying in the next posuk, "And Hashem said to Moshe, whoever sinned, will be erased from my record," that is my record of the book of rewards (as Ein Yakov and Ibn Ezra and Ramban explains there). I want to acknowledge that this explanation is somewhat unconventional, and the accepted explanation is as stated above. The second answer I posit is as follows. Moshe said erase me from your book before this week's parsha takes place. In response to the phrase in 32:32, Hashem removed Moshe's name from this week's Parsha, which begins at 27:20. We know there is no chronology in the Torah. Still, not having Moshe's name is a response to saying, "remove me from your books," which occurred before he was removed from the Parsha. Therefore, Moshe used the word "you" to Hashem first. There is an argument between Ramban and Rashi on

¹ Although further research needs to be conducted on my part. Because to me, Moshe received the whole Torah in the 40 days on Mt. Sinai, which included the laws of the Mishkan. How it was transcribed would be based on the events that unfolded. But the laws in the Torah predate history. Therefore, to me, these first laws take place as they were stated to Moshe during the 40 days he was on Mt. Sinai, and it was during this interaction with Hashem tells Moshe that the people have sinned. Moshe goes down the mountain, breaks the Tablets, and beseeches forgiveness from Hashem. Then everything "continues" so to speak in the

whether the sin of the golden calf took place before or after the commandment of the building of the Mishkan, meaning my explanation takes the side that the sin of the calf took place before the commandments of the Mishkan¹, as Rashi seems to hold (based on the idea that there is no chronology to the Torah.)

A metaphor to explain myself is as follows. A father is reprimanding his child very harshly about something that the child cannot prevent² or because it is truthfully the father's fault. The son, in turn, cries out a seemingly unrelated counterattack and tears, bringing out the point that he is not to blame, and because of the emotional response, the father breaks down, realizes the 'error' of his harshness, and hugs the child. When the pesukim are describing the events of the sin of the golden calf, Moshe states, for the record, about remembering the forefathers and the Jewish History until the point of the sin. Then, when Hashem threatens to act to punish the Jews, Moshe responds in this child-to-father way. You take me out of your book. Hashem then, in turn, confirms His endearment for Moshe (and the Jews) and the endearment of Moshe of the Jews (that he was willing to sacrifice everything for them) by saying, "Vateh Tetzaveh," and you should command. That is to tell **you**, Moshe, my

commandment order they are given, and so we see that Hashem acknowledges and commemorates Moshe's request for the removal of his name, as we see in this week's Parsha. More on the topic can be found here:

<https://tanach.org/shmot/truma/trumas1.htm>

² This is an important detail, as it is inspired by the explanation and parable provided by Rashi on 32:31, for why Moshe describes the idol as golden. That is why it must be referred to with this detail (gold). And Rashi there explains that because the Jews were given the tools to sin, can you blame them for sinning?

son, are worthy of commanding the Jews, their commandments, but how they ought to act, and you, my son Moshe, and My children are beloved to me.

This first posuk would easily be connected to Chanuka (oil lighting lamps, shining light, crushing events), but it is also connected to Purim, coming this week. The Rebbe in the discourse on “Vateh Tetzaveh” quotes the other discourse on Purim about “V’kibel Hayehudim” (and the Jews accepted, on Purim, that which they received earlier. The Jews on Purim concretized their commitment to Hashem and the Torah, which wasn’t apparent until then. The Rebbe explains that the Mesiras Nefesh (self-sacrifice) of Moshe is a theme of Purim and Mordechai and Esther from the events of Purim. Mesiras Nefesh is the theme of the crushing olives to make olive oil.

On the one hand, crushing can be a personal discipline versus an external crushing (societal one). Both are relevant to growth. But when there isn’t an external crushing, we must remember the phrase from Megilla 6b, believe someone if they say I have worked hard and was successful. Hard (crushing) work breeds success. The same is for all tasks, how much more so our journey through life as servants of Hashem, where our goal is to connect ourselves (our whole selves) to Hashem, which happens through hard (crushing) work.

Hashem loves His creations, and more than that, he loves every one of us, even if we fail at times (personally or as a nation). We are always able to connect to Hashem on the level of “you” as Hashem is our Father in Heaven, and no matter how far gone we think we are, there is a direct connection, which Moshe paved the way for, and put his self on the line for.

Good Shabbos