Tetzaveh – Drash Notes - 5783

A few notes about our parasha this morning:

First, this Parsha is almost always in the vicinity of the 7th of the Hebrew month of Adar, today is the 11th of Adar, Purim for those who are counting is Monday night).

The 7th of Adar it just so happens is the date of Moshe Rabbeinu's yahrtzeit – the anniversary of Moses's passing. It is also, according to Midrash, his birthday! Once again another reason why 7 is a Jewish number.

Why do I mention that? Because of this next interesting factoid:

Moshe's name appears at least once in every single Parsha from Sefer Shemot through Sefer BeMidbar EXCEPT this one! His name is nowhere to be found! Happy Birthday? What's up with that?

Maybe this explains why?

The parasha begins:
"And as for you, **You** shall further instruct the Israelites to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly." [Exodus 27: 20]

The above is the opening verse of this week's Torah portion, T'Tzaveh. The instruction given regarding the collection and lighting of the lamps (menorah) makes no mention of Moses' name. The command appears impersonal, even cold. In fact, Robert Alter's translation of the Torah (Alter is a mid-20th century Torah scholar who's translation of the Hebrew Bible while is considered one of the most insightful). His read is that "And as for YOU" reflects a detached almost discourteous attitude: "As for you, you shall command the Israelites.

Why is God dragging Moses, on his birthday no less? Maybe here is why?

You'll remember, A terrible sin was committed by the People at the base of Mount Sinai. I refer, of course, to the incident of the Golden Calf (Shemot 32). God becomes so angry that God threatens to kill all the People start over again with Moshe! (Shemot 32:10) Moshe does a particularly deft bit of negotiation, presenting an ultimatum to G-d that, if God follows through on the threat to destroy the People, then "You can erase my name from Your book!" (Shemot 32:31) Long story short, God let the People live, but God does something the Torah doesn't tell us about. While God didn't delete Moshe's name altogether, He STILL deleted Moshe's name from one parsha of the Torah. And THIS is that Parsha! Moshe is addressed as "YOU" but not by name.

On Moses's birthday, Moses is given a glimpse of the day of his death, what the story will be like without him in it.