

Parashah in a Nutshell, by Rabbi Shana
 inspired by the Gunther Plaut Commentary

Parashah Tetzaveh – Exodus 27:20 – 30:10

Torah Reading: p. 503 Maftir: p. 1135 Haftarah (Zachor): p. 1280

Moses continues to receive instruction for building the Tabernacle, and specifications for how Aaron and his family, the *kohanim*/priests, are to be dressed and ultimately ordained. The “priestly vestments” are highly ornamented, and depict a beautifully-adorned representative of G*d, performing the sacred service. The manner of dressing the ancient Israelite *kohanim* is still apparent in Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, whose priests, and especially bishops, wear similar robes while officiating. In the Jewish world, the Torah scroll itself is embellished - generally it is dressed in an embroidered mantle and sash and crowned by melodious pomegranates and bells.

The ceremonies of “investiture” include the dashing of blood around the altar and upon the bodies of the priests themselves, special sacrifices and other attendant rituals. Though utterly foreign to us now, these practices would have had special significance for the society of the day. We read of the incense altar, which is used when the lamps are tended in the morning and kindled at night. It was to be consecrated again annually.

בת פסוק!



“You shall instruct the Israelites to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling an Eternal Light/Ner Tamid,” (Exodus 27:20)

The only commanded practice associated with the ancient Tabernacle that is still with us is the “Ner Tamid.” Why has light been such a favorite symbol of G*d? Perhaps because light itself cannot be seen. We only become aware of it when it enables us to see other things. Similarly, we cannot see G*d, but we become aware of G*d’s presence when we see the beauty of the world, when we experience love and the goodness of our fellow beings, and become partners in creating and sustaining the world we wish to see.

~ Etz Hayim, Dr. David Lieber, z”l, Senior Editor



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This vibrant, early 20th-century Purim lithograph is from Jerusalem, and is by the Iranian folk artist Mosheh Shah Mizrahi. Haman and his sons are shown as contemporary soldiers. Look for Queen

Esther and King Achashverosh, and for Mordechai, in the king’s robes, being led through the streets by Haman. (From the Gross Family collection, Tel Aviv.) Purim is a story of suspense, concealed identity, intrigue and the ever-present battle of good vs. evil. May this year’s Purim celebration inspire us to never be afraid of who we are, and to face the future with faith and hope!

Chag Purim Sameach!