

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Tetzaveh / Shabbat Zachor
February 28, 2026 *** 11 Adar, 5786

Tetzaveh in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1320/jewish/Tetzaveh-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The name of the Parshah, "Tetzaveh," means "Command" and it is found in Exodus 27:20.

G-d 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 till 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 or migba’at—a linen turban; 4) avnet—a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the kohen gadol (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) the 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 G-d.”

Tetzaveh also includes G-d’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.

Zachor in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/73232/jewish/Zachor-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This being the Shabbat before Purim, on which we celebrate the foiling of Haman the Amalekite's plot to destroy the Jewish people, the weekly Parshah is supplemented with the "Zachor" reading (Deuteronomy 25:17–19) in which we are commanded to remember the evil of Amalek and to eradicate it from the face of the earth.

Remember what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt. That he encountered you on the way and cut off those lagging to your rear, when you were tired and exhausted; he did not fear G-d. And it shall come to pass, when the L-rd your G-d has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the L-rd your G-d is giving you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget.

Zachor Haftarah in a Nutshell: I Samuel 15:2 – 34

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/647445/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's special haftarah discusses G-d's command to destroy the people of Amalek. This to avenge Amalek's unprovoked attack on the Israelites that is described in the Zachor Torah reading.

Samuel conveys to King Saul G-d's command to wage battle against the Amalekites, and to leave no survivors—neither human nor beast. Saul mobilizes the Israelite military and attacks Amalek. They kill the entire population with the

exception of the king, Agag, and they also spare the best of the cattle and sheep.

G-d reveals Himself to Samuel. "I regret that I have made Saul king," G-d says. "For he has turned back from following Me, and he has not fulfilled My words."

The next morning Samuel travels to Saul and confronts him. Saul defends himself, saying that the cattle was spared to be used as sacrificial offerings for G-d. Samuel responds: "Does G-d have as great a delight in burnt offerings and peace-offerings, as in obeying the voice of G-d? Behold, to obey is better than a peace-offering; to hearken, than the fat of rams. . . . Since you rejected the word of G-d, He has rejected you from being a king."

Saul admits his wrongdoing and invites the prophet to join him on his return home. Samuel refuses his offer. "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you, today; and has given it to your fellow who is better than you." Samuel then kills the Amalekite king.

Food For Thought

[Prophet and Priest: Tetzaveh by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l 5767](https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tetzaveh/prophet-and-priest/)
<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tetzaveh/prophet-and-priest/>

The sedra of Tetzaveh, as commentators have noted, has one unusual feature: it is the only sedra from the beginning of Shemot to the end of Devarim that contains neither the name nor the words of Moses. Several interpretations have been offered.

The Vilna Gaon suggests that it is related to the fact that in

most years it is read during the week in which the seventh of Adar falls: the day of Moses' death. During this week we sense the loss of the greatest leader in Jewish history – and his absence from Tetzaveh expresses that loss.

The Baal HaTurim relates it to Moses' plea, in next week's sedra, for God to forgive Israel. "If not," says Moses, "blot me out of the book you have written" (Ex. 32:32). There is a principle that "The curse of a sage comes true, even if it was conditional" (Makkot 11a). Thus, for one week his name was "blotted out" from the Torah.

The Paneach Raza relates it to another principle: "There is no anger that does not leave an impression." When Moses, for the last time, declined God's invitation to lead the Jewish People out of Egypt, saying "Please send someone else", God "became angry with Moses" (Ex. 4:13-14) and told him that his brother Aaron would accompany him. For that reason, Moses forfeited the role he might otherwise have had, of becoming the first of Israel's priests, a role that went instead to Aaron. That is why he is missing from the sedra of Tetzaveh, which is dedicated to the role of the Kohen.

All three explanations focus on an absence. However, perhaps the simplest explanation is that Tetzaveh is dedicated to a presence, one that had a decisive influence on Judaism and Jewish history.

Judaism is unusual in that it recognises not one form of religious leadership but two: the Navi and Kohen, the prophet and the priest. The figure of the prophet has always captured the imagination. He or she is a person of drama, "speaking truth to power", unafraid to challenge kings and courts or society as a whole in the name of high, even utopian ideals. No other type of religious personality has had the impact as

the prophets of Israel, of whom the greatest was Moses. The priests, by contrast, were for the most part quieter figures, a-political, who served in the Sanctuary rather than in the spotlight of political debate. Yet they, no less than the prophets, sustained Israel as a holy nation. Indeed, though the Children of Israel were summoned to become “a kingdom of priests” they were never called on to be a people of prophets. [1]

Let us therefore consider some of the differences between a prophet and a priest:

- The role of priest was dynastic. It passed from father to son. The role of prophet was not dynastic. Moses’ own sons did not succeed him; Joshua, his disciple, was chosen instead.
- The task of the priest was related to his office. It was not inherently personal or charismatic. The prophets, by contrast, each imparted their own personality. “No two prophets had the same style.”[2]
- The priests wore a special uniform; the prophets did not.
- There are rules of kavod (honour) due to a Kohen. There are no corresponding rules for the honour due to a prophet. A prophet is honoured by being listened to, not by formal protocols of respect.
- The priests were removed from the people. They served in the Temple. They were not allowed to become defiled. There were restrictions on whom they might marry. The prophet, by contrast, was usually part of the people. He might be a shepherd like Moses or Amos, or a farmer like Elisha. Until the word or vision came, there was nothing special in his work or social class.

- The priest offered up sacrifices in silence. The prophet served God through the word.
- They lived in two different modes of time. The priest functioned in cyclical time – the day (or week or month) that is like yesterday or tomorrow. The prophet lived in covenantal (sometimes inaccurately called linear) time – the today that is radically unlike yesterday or tomorrow. The service of the priest never changed; that of the prophet was constantly changing. Another way of putting it is to say that the priest worked to sanctify nature, the prophet to respond to history.
- Thus the priest represents the principle of structure in Jewish life, while the prophet represents spontaneity.

The key words in the vocabulary of the Kohen are **kodesh** and **chol**, **tahor** and **tamei**, **sacred**, **secular**, **pure** and **impure**. The key words in the vocabulary of the prophets are **tzeddek** and **mishpat**, **chessed** and **rachamim**, **righteousness** and **justice**, **kindness** and **compassion**.

The key verbs of priesthood are **lehorot** and **lehavdil**, **to instruct** and **distinguish**. The key activity of the prophet is to proclaim “**the word of the Lord**” The distinction between priestly and prophetic consciousness (**torat kohanim** and **torat nevi'im**) is fundamental to Judaism, and is reflected in the differences between **law** and **narrative**, **halachah** and **aggadah**, **creation** and **redemption**. The priest speaks the Word of God for all time, the prophet, the Word of God for this time. Without the prophet, Judaism would not be a religion of history and destiny. But without the priest, the Children of Israel would not have become the people of eternity. This is beautifully summed up in the opening verses of Tetzaveh:

Command the Israelites to bring you pure oil from crushed olives for light, to kindle the lamp, every night. From evening to morning, before the Lord, Aaron and his sons shall set it up to burn in the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain that veils the Ark of the Testimony. This shall be a rule for all time for the Israelites, throughout their generations. Ex. 27:20-21

Moses the prophet dominates four of the five books that bear his name. But in Tetzaveh for once it is Aaron, the first of the priests, who holds centre-stage, undiminished by the rival presence of his brother. For whereas Moses lit the fire in the souls of the Jewish people, Aaron tended the flame and turned it into “an eternal light”. [1] Moses said, “Would that all God’s people were prophets”, but this was a wish, not a reality.

[2] This, incidentally, is why there were prophetesses but no priestesses: this corresponds to the difference between formal office and personal authority. See R. Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, Responsa Binyan Av, I:65.

[Shabbat Zachor: Remember Your Humanity by Rabbi Abi Weber](https://truah.org/resources/abi-weber-shabbat-zachor-moraltorah_2026/)
[https://truah.org/resources/abi-weber-shabbat-zachor-](https://truah.org/resources/abi-weber-shabbat-zachor-moraltorah_2026/)
[moraltorah_2026_ /](https://truah.org/resources/abi-weber-shabbat-zachor-moraltorah_2026/)

Each year, on the Shabbat prior to Purim, we are commanded to hear a special maftir (final Torah reading) from the book of Deuteronomy (25:17-19):

“Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt — how, undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear. Therefore, when the LORD your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you

as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!”

Even before the horrible massacre of October 7, there has been a stream of Judaism that views all Palestinians as incarnations of Amalek — an ideology that leads to real-world acts of violence against Palestinians. In March 2023, an anonymous Jewish Israeli posted a photo of the village of Huwara on fire. Above the photo, he wrote: “Breaking news: This Shabbat we are going to blot out the memory of Amalek.” And on the photo itself it is written: “Haman they hanged on a tree. Huwara, we will blow up. Happy Purim.” And indeed, a group of Jewish terrorists rampaged through the village that day, burning down businesses and homes, injuring hundreds of innocent people, and murdering one.

Just last week, a Palestinian-American teenager named Nasrallah Abu Siyam was shot and killed, one of hundreds of Palestinians murdered in the last year alone, as some Israelis’ desire for vengeance has lent an unofficial seal of approval to settler violence.

It was in this context that I joined a delegation of T’ruah rabbis last November to serve as a protective presence for Palestinians as they harvested olives, pastured their sheep, and simply existed on the land. As has been reported, residents of a nearby Jewish settlement harassed our group of rabbis, activists, and Palestinian olive harvesters with a loud drone. Towards the end of the day, they lowered their drone so close to our group that it badly scraped one of the rabbis. Moments later, two armed settlers approached us, demanding that we return the damaged drone, shouting and shooting live ammo.

The image that stays in my mind the most from that day is

the pe'us (curled sidelocks of hair worn by some Orthodox Jewish men) of the settler whose gun was cocked at me. Pe'us are based on a command in Leviticus to not round off the corners of hair on one's head, nor destroy the corners of one's beard. (Leviticus 19:27) Like the corners of one's field, which we are commanded a few chapters later to leave untouched so that people who are poor may eat from them, pe'us serve as a reminder to do justice and help those in need.

And what was this heavily sidelocked man doing? Holding an M16 in the faces of a group of peace activists harvesting olives together. What mitzvah did this allegedly religious man feel that he was fulfilling?

Perhaps he believed that we volunteers were aiding Amalek. Indeed, his reading of our Torah's violent rhetoric is understandable. But as rabbinic Jews, we read Torah not only in its own context but also in our own. We look for the ideals that matter in our time, that fit with other ideals that our Torah teaches. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the 19th-century founder of the Torah im Derech Eretz movement, writes about these verses: "Do not forget this if you ever waver and, like Amalek, disregard duty, disregard God, and seek only opportunities, in small or great matters, to exercise your superiority to the detriment of your fellow human beings!"

Hirsch continues: "Do not forget this if you ever suffer cruelty and violence yourself. Remain upright! Remain true to the humanity and respect for justice that your God taught you... [H]umanity and justice will remain victorious over cruelty and violence, and you yourself are sent, through your destiny and example, to herald and help bring about this victory and this future."

In other words, should you ever be tempted to be like Amalek — blot out that very thought. Remember your humanity. Do not forget that to be a Jew is to be a light unto nations, not a threat. Amidst the violence and the pain and the suffering of the world, remember this and aspire to live up to it. Do not forget. (Abi Weber is the associate rabbi at Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel in Philadelphia, where she has served for the last five years. She is a proud alum of the Jewish Theological Seminary; Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps; Svara: The Traditionally Radical Yeshiva; Moishe House; and T’ruah’s Israel Fellowship.)

[Zakhor in a Fractured Age by Sandra Fox](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/zakhor-in-a-fractured-age/)

<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/zakhor-in-a-fractured-age/>

(17) Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt—(18) how he surprised you on the march, and cutting down all the stragglers in your rear, when you were famished and weary: he did not fear God. (19) Therefore, when Ad-nai your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that Ad-nai your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

“Could you have chosen a more loaded week?” said my husband with a face that can only be described as both bemused and pitying when I told him that I had agreed to write my first JTS Torah Commentary on Shabbat Zakhor. As the heaviness of the reading sank in, with its commandment to recall Amalek’s unprovoked attack on the Israelites and to “blot out” Amalek’s memory, I became apprehensive.

Like many Torah portions, Zakhor is often used by Jews not only to make sense of history, but to make sense of their contemporary moment. The story has represented a call to fight against evil and complacency; and also as a metaphor for the many persecutions faced by Jews across history, and a convenient label for any and all enemies of the Jewish people. And since October 7th, it has been politicized in ways that have been both surprising and painful when Hamas, and sometimes the entire Palestinian people, have been referred to as Amalek by Israeli politicians and religious leaders, including by Netanyahu in a speech describing the unity of Israelis in the fight against Hamas. Walking through Tel Aviv last month, I found graffiti quoting Zakhor, a sign that it remains a rallying cry to some everyday Israelis. Loaded, indeed.

When I want to understand something in a new way—or when the contemporary resonance starts to overwhelm me—I consult history, looking for answers in the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of Jews past. How did Jews who lived before this intensely conflicted contemporary moment understand Zakhor? A search of the Jewish Historical Press reveals that 1,116 English-language articles in North America cited the word Amalek (and that's just using this spelling). Reading through several, it was clear that, for Jews in the early twentieth century, Amalek as metaphor served them well for describing enemies of the Jews in Europe.

“One can readily understand... that Amalek is not used to designate a particular people, but rather as a synonym for every and any art of cruelty, oppression, hatred and bigotry, whenever and wherever encountered,” wrote Ben Aronin in the American Jewish newspaper *The Sentinel* in 1932. Jews have learned “that in every generation there arise many of the

'hosts of Amalek'... We have only to mention men of the stamp of Herod, Hadrian, Haman and Hitler to emphasize the peculiar fanatical suspicion and hatred of the Jew which have characterized those proponents of cruelty." But Aronin argued that Zakhor should not just remind Jews to remember the cruelty of the enemies of Jews past, but to commit themselves "to unremitting efforts against the forces of ignorance and evil" more broadly. In other words, they should use Zakhor as a call to fight for a better world. In the midst of a news cycle filled with an overwhelming degree of persecution and violence both at home and abroad, Aronin's call to commit to the fight against ignorance feels particularly resonant and powerful.

Despite the fact that Yiddish has its own words for remembrance and memory, secular Yiddish speakers also evoked Amalek and Zakhor quite frequently. "Amalek" was mentioned in the American Yiddish press a whopping 1,488 times, an astonishing number considering that most Yiddish newspapers in the early twentieth century represented the growing ethos of secular Jewishness. What were they thinking about the week's Torah portion? To me, this reveals that, much like secular Israelis no doubt understand Netanyahu's references to Amalek based on their education and cultural touchstones, so too did even the most ardently secular Yiddish speakers.

Not only did Yiddish speakers understand what Amalek referred to, but they still found use for this framing as a tool for understanding their people's contemporary struggles around the globe. For a wide variety of Jews in the early twentieth century, it seems, the metaphor of Amalek was clear and uncontroversial: several obvious enemies of the Jewish people and so little reason to interpret them otherwise. For Jews at that historical juncture, the commandment to

remember yielded possibilities of hope in a context of rising antisemitism and eventually the Holocaust. It is not as easy today to make contemporary connections to Zakhor that work for everyone in a given synagogue, let alone every reader of a Jewish newspaper. I do not envy the rabbis across the country writing their divrei Torah as I write mine, figuring out how to deal with communities that no longer agree on who the enemies of the Jewish people are or how to remember. And yet, as I scrolled through the thousands of articles, interpretations, and words of Torah published in the Jewish press, I found myself comforted by the generations of Jews with different worldviews, languages, and religious practices that forged relationships to the words of Zakhor in their own unique ways. May we find a way to remember, even as contemporary events continuously shift and challenge our understanding of the text. *(Sandra Fox is the Robert S. Rifkind Chair in American Jewish History at JTS)*

[Tetzaveh: Building Stronger Communities Through Women's Obligation by Chana Borow](https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/post/parshat-tetzaveh-building-stronger-communities-through-women-s-obligation)

<https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/post/parshat-tetzaveh-building-stronger-communities-through-women-s-obligation>

This week, Jews around the world will listen to Parshat Zachor, the Torah passage describing Amalek's attack on the Jews in the desert. The Torah commands us to obliterate Amalek, and since we can't do that today, we are obligated to hear the account instead.

Women's commitment to hearing Parshat Zachor stands out across the Orthodox spectrum. Even in communities where women rarely attend synagogue, there is an overwhelming

consensus that women make efforts to hear Parshat Zachor. This phenomenon reveals a profound truth: obligation brings people in, and communities grow stronger when women participate as obligated members.

The Sefer HaChinuch, a 13th-century halachic work, rules that women are exempt from Parshat Zachor because they don't wage war against Amalek. However, the Minchat Chinuch, a commentary written by Rabbi Joseph ben Moses Babad in the 19th century, disagrees. He argues that women are obligated for three reasons: because the word “zachor”—remember—a positive commandment from which women might be exempted—is paired with “lo tishkach”—“do not forget”—a negative commandment binding on women; because the mitzvah isn't time-bound (making it less likely that women would be exempted); and because the Gemara states in Sotah 44b that everyone—even a bride under the chuppah—must go to a milchemet mitzvah, an obligatory war like the one against Amalek.

Major poskim agree: Rav Nosson Adler, a prominent 18th-century German rabbi, ensured that all women in his household heard Parshat Zachor. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, a 20th-century Israeli posek; Rav Ovadia Yosef, another 20th-century Israeli posek who was the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel; and the Minchat Elazar, a Chasidic Polish 19th-century rabbi, all ruled that women are obligated. Even the Aruch HaShulchan, a 19th-century Lithuanian rabbi, who questions women's biblical requirement, acknowledges: “Women have adopted the stringency to come to synagogue to hear Parshat Zachor (Aruch HaShulchan 685:7).”

The contrast is striking: in communities where women's synagogue attendance is generally low, Parshat Zachor sees

a dramatic increase in participation. Why? Because women understand themselves as obligated. The Gemara in Kiddushin 31a states: “Greater is one who is commanded and performs than one who is not commanded and performs.” Doing something out of obligation is more important than choosing to do something. Obligation heightens the status of the mitzvah. Obligation creates identity and consistency: optional practices fluctuate with motivation, while obligation creates structure. When communities treat women’s participation as obligatory, they signal that women fully belong to the community.

Communities that emphasize women’s obligation see real change. Where women’s obligation in Talmud Torah is emphasized, following the Chafetz Chaim, a prominent turn-of-the-century Lithuanian Rabbi who wrote the Mishna Berura, ruling that modern women must learn Torah broadly, learning sustains itself. Compare this to regular Torah reading throughout the year. The Gemara in Bava Kamma 82a teaches that Ezra instituted public Torah reading as a communal obligation, and the Aruch HaShulchan (282:7) writes that the more people who hear Torah, the greater the honor to the Torah and the community. Yet women’s attendance varies dramatically—not for halachic reasons, but for cultural ones.

Parshat Zachor proves our model works. When we prioritize women’s participation by offering accommodations to help them attend, teaching about the obligation, and ensuring accessibility, women respond with dedication and consistency. This creates fundamentally stronger communities.

Memory requires everyone. Collective memory cannot exclude half the community. Women have always been central to the

transmission of memory and identity. Women's role in transmitting Torah to the next generation isn't peripheral; it's foundational to covenantal continuity.

If Torah reading serves the community rather than an individual, women's presence doesn't raise questions about who may or may not participate; rather, it enriches and completes the community. The Netziv, a Russian 19th century rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva, writes that Amalek attacked “kol ha'necheshalim” all those who straggled behind. Our communal memory cannot leave anyone behind or pushed to the margins. Complete remembrance requires the complete community.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, a major 20th-century Orthodox rabbi, taught that covenant creates community. When women and men share obligations, we build communities of genuine partnership. Women are halakhically obligated in numerous mitzvot where communal infrastructure lags far behind what we've built for Zachor. To build stronger communities, we must extend the Zachor model more broadly. We must remove barriers by applying the same accommodations. Creating expectation changes communal culture, speaking about women's synagogue attendance with the same normative expectation as they do for men, planning programming with women's presence assumed rather than treated as exceptional.

Finally, we should celebrate women's participation, highlighting women fulfilling their obligations not as exceptional or praiseworthy beyond the norm, but as the natural expression of their covenantal identity. Our communities have demonstrated that women have accepted and embraced Parshat Zachor as an obligation.

As we prepare for Purim, celebrating the defeat of Haman, descendant of Amalek, let us draw inspiration from women's commitment to Zachor. The Ramban, a 13th-century Spanish rabbi and philosopher, teaches that we will ultimately fulfill "blotting out Amalek's memory" only when we have built a complete society, when Israel dwells securely with justice and peace. Part of building that complete society is ensuring our entire community participates fully as obligated members of the covenant. Remember, do not forget. Let us remember to build communities in which every member's obligations are honored, supported, and celebrated. Our communities will be strongest, most vibrant, and most aligned with Torah values when everyone participates in our sacred work, not as volunteers or guests, but as equal participants. *(Chana Borow has a master's in Jewish Education and a BA in History, and she currently serves as a Pulpit Intern at Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel in Chicago and Program Assistant at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. Her experience includes teaching Middle School and High School Tanakh, Talmud and Jewish history at multiple institutions including the Abraham Joshua Heschel School. Chana specializes in making traditional Jewish texts accessible while fostering inclusive community spaces.)*

Yahrtzeits

Shari Mevorah remembers her grandmother Chana Kirsten on Tuesday March 3rd

Karen Brandis remembers her father Stanley Grossel on Tuesday March 3rd

Ami Cooper remembers her father Norman Pearlman on Thursday March 5th

