

GARMENTS ACCORDING TO STATUS

Parshas Tetzaveh

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

The garments worn by the Kohanim, especially the Kohain Gadol, occupy a major part of our parsha. Its paramount significance may be gleaned from its capacity to validate the status of a Kohain Godol. Originally it was the Shemen Hamishcha (anointing oil) compounded by Moshe that elevated a Kohain to become a Kohain Godol. Following Yoshiyahu's hiding the Shemen Hamishcha, wearing the special garments designated for the Kohain Godol authenticated his status (Horioth 13a).

In reference to the linen garment called "kutones" (long coat) the Torah writes "The Kohain shall don his "fitted" linen coat MIDO VAD" (Vayikro 6:3). Rashi quotes the Sifra that this garment had the measurements fit according to the size of the Kohain. One ventures to suggest that, in addition to the Kohain's physical size, it was meant also to match in dignity the Kohain's higher spiritual dimension.

The Talmud teaches that the Kohain's vestments atoned for sins (Zevachim 88b). Indeed, each of the garments is expounded, illuminating its correspondence in atonement for a specific sin.

For example, the ME'IL (robe), one of the eight garments, atoned for the sin of evil speech (Zevachim ibid). Rabeinu Bechaya elucidates as follows: "The pomegranates and bells, hanging all around the robe at its hem, reminded us that just as the bell rings noisily only when it is vacuous inside, so it is the emptiness of a person that causes him to speak evil about another." The righteous person regards his associate as filled with mitzvahs as a pomegranate.

Another purpose of these bells at the ME'IL's hem is stated in the Chumosh. By these ringing bells "its sound will be heard when he (the Kohain Godol) enters the Sanctuary before Hashem and when he leaves..." (28:35). This sign, says the Ramban, was to announce his arrival and exit of the Kodshei Kodoshim on Yom Kippur, when no one could be present during those solemn moments.

A vital teaching is indicated here, applicable to every Jew entering and exiting a Beth Hamedrosh. A Baal Musar once taught, one needs a MATIR (a

green light, special permission) upon entering a Beth Medrosh, a sanctified place. "V'NISHMA KOLO", upon entering he acknowledges "MAH TOVU, how goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel. It is Your great mercy that permitted me to enter Your house..."

One may add: exiting also needs a MATIR. Otherwise he would stay inside studying Torah for many hours more, "Praiseworthy is the man who... and in his Torah he meditates day and night" (Tehilim 1:1,2). That MATIR is the prayer "Olainu" recited at the end of Shachris when one is about to exit. In that prayer he speaks of TIKUN OLOM, "may all people call in Thy name..." This can come about only upon exiting the Beth Medrosh and doing business, in genuine honesty, with the outside world.

The bells at the ME'IL's hem call upon all humanity to endeavor to become filled with good deeds as exemplified by the pomegranate.

While the Sidrah concentrates on the Kohain's garments, it should be deemed appropriate to deviate somewhat considering other insights in which garments play a role:

1. Already following the Mabul (flood) when Noach was in need for clothing for coverage, it was Shem who observed the Mitzva of honoring his father. "And Shem took, and Japheth, a garment... and covered their father's nakedness" (Beraishis 9:23). Shem took the initiative, and was therefore rewarded with the mitzva of fringed garments (tzitzis). Japheth who (only) followed his brother was awarded a FIVLA (fancy coat at celebrations).

2. Rivka encourages her beloved son Yaakov to receive the blessings from Yitzchok. "Rivka then takes Eisov's precious garments and clothed her younger son". To receive the blessings from Yitzchok, which determined his future, and that of his offspring, the garments worn at the time are of utmost significance. Jews experience the receipt of blessings every Shabbos. Shabbos is called MEKOR HABROCHO, source of blessing. Thus special dignified clothing is worn on Shabbos, in order to absorb from this source of blessing.

The Midrash Pliah relates (91) Bilaam says to Bolok, who set him on a mission to curse the Israelites, "Do you not know that Jews wear special dignified garments on Shabbos?" That would render this mission unachievable". The meaning of Bilaam's statement is obvious. The Shabbos garments facilitate the blessing (source of blessing) to take effect and destroy Bolok's designs.

Yishayahu gives two directives for Shabos, one is ONEG SHABOS, and one is Kovod, honoring the Shabbos (58:13). Rambam interprets ONEG referring to the Shabos Seudah, and KOVOD to special dignified garments. [Since both requirements are mentioned simultaneously, some Chasidim wear the Shabbos clothing during the Shabos Seuda as well.

3. The beginning chapter of Melochim I illustrates the high esteem of garments, and caution against depreciating them. "King David was old, advanced in years, they covered him with garments, but this did not keep him warm." Expounds the Talmud (Brochos 62b) "Whoever degrades garments, will end up lacking its warming benefit, as Scripture writes about David, that his garments did not keep him warm. This, says the Talmud, was retribution for an earlier incident when David cut the corner of Saul's garment (I Samuel 24:4) in order to convince Saul that he doesn't want to harm him (ibid 24:11).

[Following that incident, Scripture writes, in juxtaposition, that David felt remorse for cutting into the garment (24:5). Possibly the lack of clothing warmth was executed on David immediately, but its impact was felt more seriously when he got old.]

4. The Talmud relates (Shabos 113b) that Reb Jochanan called the garments "Mechabdusa", from the word KOVOD, honor, for garments bring honor to the wearer. And so we return to the Parsha, "You shall make vestments of SANCTITY for Aaron your brother, for honor and splendor" (28:2).

Since the garments are imbued with sanctity, we can appreciate the Halacha requiring the Kohain Godol on Yom Kippur to wash his hands each time he changed from the white garments to the gold garments, and back to the white. Ten times on Yom Kippur such washing took place (Mishna Yuma 30a).

That precious word "Kedusha", sanctity, is applied to the Kohain Godol's garments as it is applied to the Kohain Godol himself. How eloquently the Medrash Hagodol renders (Shemos 28:2): "Let Aaron come, Aaron who is called Kodosh (holy) - 'and Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy' (Divrei Hayomim1 23,13) - And don the garments called KODOSH (Shemos 28:2) ... and bring atonement for the Israelites who are called KODOSH, 'for you are a holy people, AM KODOSH, to Hashem'" (Devorim 14:2).



HEIGHTS UNREACHABLE BY THE TZADIK

Parshas Ki Sisa

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

One of the most difficult aspects in Jewish history, conveyed in our Sidra, is the request by Moshe of Hashem "Show me Thy glory". (Yes, it is history, because Hashem's response is not only to Moshe, but the whole Jewish people in all generations.) Moshe spent forty days with Hashem on Sinai. That closeness to Hashem was more than any human ever achieved. "Peh el Peh," says Hashem, mouth to mouth do I speak to him (to Moshe) in a clear vision (Bamidbor 12:8). "Hashem would speak to Moshe face to face, as a man would speak with his fellow" (our Sidra 33:11). Even on that propitious level of closeness it did not dawn on Moshe to request to "see" Hashem. Now after the tragic downfall of Israel, hundreds of rungs down the slope, because of the terrible sin of idol worship, dancing to the golden calf, Moshe has the courage to ask for it? Amazing, shocking!

Moshe, who was always the humblest of the humble, was even more broken as he came down, and saw the abyss to which his brethren plunged. He smashed the Tablets. Was this the appropriate time to request super high levels of closeness to Hashem?

[Smashing the tablets was considered a colossal achievement. The very last passage in the Torah credits Moshe for his courage to do that. "For all the signs and wonders that Hashem sent him to perform in the land of Egypt... and for the strong hand and awesome power that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel". Rashi expounds this as a reference to smashing the Tablets.

Commentators explain that by smashing the Tablets, Moshe actually saved Israel. By bringing the Tablets to the Israelites it were to constitute a complete relationship, as a full marriage, so to speak. Turning afoul with the golden calf would have been likened to a married woman cohabiting with a stranger, rendering her forbidden to the husband. By smashing the Tablets, the full "marriage" not having

been taken place, thus treated as a single woman, the "marriage" was still permitted to take place. For this the Torah concludes with huge credit for Moshe. The question now becomes more wondrous: Was this the appropriate time for Moshe to ask for that gift of high level closeness?

An astonishing saying of the rabbis affords us a clue to understand the above. The rabbis say: "The place (level) where a Baal Teshuva (repenter) stands, even a complete Tzadik cannot reach" (Brochos 34b, Sanhedrin 99a).

The period when Moshe came down from Sinai on Yom Kippur, with the good news of "SOLACHTI", I have forgiven, that was the time when he came down with the second Tablets. In a sense, all our connection to Torah is a Yom Kippur connection, the contact through repentance. As Rav Hutner z.l. once observed in a pre Yom Kippur shiur, the only time we pray for Torah in the Shemona Esra is in the fourth Bracha "Hashivainu, Return us back O our Father, to thy Torah". The Bracha concludes Boruch Who seeks repentance. This coincides with the above that ours is a Yom Kippur Torah.

On Moshe's emboldened request to see G-d, Rashi comments, Moshe realized that this was a "Ais Ratzon" a moment of opportunity, (to take advantage of). One conjectures Rashi refers to Moshe's realization that a special relationship with Hashem developed in connection with repentance and atonement, a level superbly higher than ever before. That was the "ais ratzon" Moshe sought to take advantage of.

Though Hashem's response to Moshe's request was not positive, "You will not be able to see My face, for no human can see My face and live" (33:20) - the request was not completely ignored. "You will see my back". Cites the Talmud (Brochos 7a) that Hashem showed Moshe the knot on His Tefilin, which contains the verse "and who is like Your people, one nation in the world" (II Samuel 7:23). That knot symbolizes that Hashem and Israel are tied; the sin of the golden calf forgiven and again tied as one.

It is interesting to note, that just as Hashem's Tefilin is indicative of Hashem's forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf, so has our Tefilin a reference to that forgiveness. So it seems from the Shulchan Aruch chapter 32, Halacha 44 where we learn that portions inserted inside into the Tefilin come encircled with a hair from a calf "in order to bring atonement for the sin of the golden calf" (Mishna Brura ibid 210).

Hashem's response to Moshe's request, showing him the Knot on the Tefilin, is indicative of the capacity of the mitzva of Tefilin to "see" the Torah of Hashem. All the peoples of the earth will SEE that the name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will revere you" (Devorim 28:10). "This is a reference to the Tefilin on the head" (Menochos 35b). Obviously, can the wearer of Tefilin himself SEE the name of Hashem upon him? The mitzva of Tefilin comes for the sake of "the Torah of Hashem to be in your mouth" (Shemos 13:9), to understand and SEE in mind. Hashem's response with the Tefilin, thus, is not unrelated to Moshe's request to see Hashem.

One who reads Shema without Tefilin is likened to giving false testimony (Brochos 14b). For the Shema includes the mitzva of Tefilin, which he fails to observe. One may add: Shema includes to "see" (understand) Hashem's Torah, which is facilitated through the mitzva of Tefilin.

The above affords insight into the very observance of holiday Succoth. Since this holiday celebrates the miraculous existence in the Midbar following the Exodus, the Manna, the water "BEAIR of Miriam", the protection from the clouds, all this began when we went force from Egypt, why not observe the Mitzva on Pesach? However, since, as we have learned, our Torah is a Yom Kippur Torah, based on the repentance of Yom Kippur, it is appropriate to observe the Mitzvahs after Yom Kippur, when we have been elevated to higher levels through repentance.

