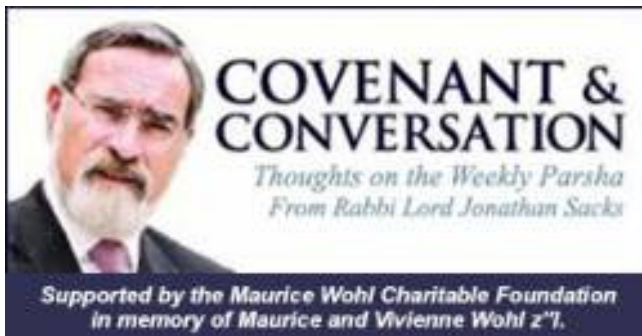


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Dressing to Impress

Tetzaveh, with its elaborate description of the "sacred vestments" which the Priests and the High Priest wore "for glory and for splendour," seems to run counter to some fundamental values of Judaism.

The vestments were made to be seen. They were intended to impress the eye. But Judaism is a religion of the ear more than the eye. It emphasises hearing rather than seeing. Its key word is *Shema*, meaning: to hear, listen, understand and obey. The verb *sh-m-a* is a dominant theme of the book of Devarim, where it

appears no less than 92 times. Jewish spirituality is about listening more than looking. That is the deep reason why we cover our eyes when saying *Shema Yisrael*. We shut out the world of sight and focus on the world of sound: of words, communication and meaning.

The reason this is so has to do with the Torah's battle against idolatry. Others saw gods in the sun, the stars, the river, the sea, the rain, the storm, the animal kingdom and the earth. They made visual representations of these things. Judaism disavows this whole mindset.

God is not in nature but beyond it. He created it and He transcends it. Psalm 8 says: "When I consider Your heavens, *the work of your fingers*, the moon and the stars which You have set in place: what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him?" The vastness of space is for the psalmist no more than "the work of your fingers." Nature is God's work, but not itself God. God cannot be seen.

Instead, He reveals Himself primarily in words. At Mount Sinai, said Moshe, "The Lord spoke to you out of the fire. *You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice*" (Deut. 4:12). Elijah, in his great experience on the mountain, discovered that God was not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the *kol demamah dakah*, the "still small voice."

Clearly, the Mishkan (the Tabernacle), and later the Mikdash (the Temple), were exceptions to this. Their emphasis was on the visual, and a key example is the Priest's and High Priest's sacred vestments, *bigdei kodesh*.

This is very unexpected. The Hebrew for "garment," *b-g-d*, also means "betrayal," as in the confession we say on penitential days: *Ashamnu bagadnu*, "We have been guilty, we have betrayed." Throughout Genesis, whenever a garment is a key element in the story, it involves some deception or betrayal.

There were the coverings of fig leaves Adam and Eve made for themselves after eating the forbidden fruit. Jacob wore Esau's clothes when he took his blessing by deceit. Tamar wore the clothes of a prostitute to deceive Judah into lying with her. The brothers used Joseph's bloodstained cloak to deceive their father into thinking he had been killed by a wild animal. Potiphar's wife used the cloak Joseph had left behind as evidence for her false claim that he had tried to rape her. Joseph himself took advantage of his Viceroy's clothing to conceal his identity from his brothers when they came to Egypt to buy food. So it is exceptionally unusual that the Torah should now concern itself in a positive way with clothes, garments, vestments.

Clothes have to do with surface, not depth; with the outward, not the inward; with appearance rather than reality. All the more strange, therefore, that they should form a key element of the service of the Priests, given the fact that "People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Equally odd is the fact that for the first time we encounter the concept of a uniform, that is, a standardised form of dress worn not because of the individual wearing them but because of the office he holds, as *Cohen* or *Cohen Gadol*. In

general, Judaism focuses on the person, not the office. Specifically, there was no such thing as a uniform for Prophets.

Tetzaveh is also the first time we encounter the phrase "for glory and for splendour," describing the effect and point of the garments. Until now *kavod*, "glory," has been spoken of in relation to God alone. Now human beings are to share some of the same glory.

Our parsha is also the first time the word *tiferet* appears. The word has the sense of splendour and magnificence, but it also means beauty. It introduces a dimension we have not encountered explicitly in the Torah before: the *aesthetic*. We have encountered moral beauty, for instance Rivka's kindness to Avraham's servant at the well. We have encountered physical beauty: Sarah, Rivka and Rachel are all described as beautiful. But the Sanctuary and its service bring us for the first time to the aesthetic beauty of craftsmanship and the visual.

This is a continuing theme in relation to the Tabernacle and later the Temple. We find it already in the story of the binding of Yitzchak on Mount Moriah which would later become the site of the Temple: "Avraham named the place 'God will see.' That is why it is said today, 'On God's mountain, He will be seen'" (Gen. 22:14). The emphasis on the visual is unmistakable. The Temple would be about seeing and being seen.

Likewise, a well-known poetical prayer on Yom Kippur speaks about *Mareih Cohen*, "the appearance of the High Priest" as he officiated in the Temple on the holiest of days:

Like the image of a rainbow
appearing in the midst of cloud...
Like a rose in the heart of a lovely
garden...
Like a lamp flickering between the
window slats...
Like a room hung with sky blue and
royal purple...
Like a garden lily penetrating the
thorn-weeds...
Like the appearance of Orion and
Pleiades, seen in the south...

These lead to the refrain, "How fortunate was the eye that beheld all this." Why was it that specifically in relation to the Tabernacle and Temple, the visual prevailed?

The answer is deeply connected to the Golden Calf. What that sin showed is that the people could not fully relate to a God who gave them no permanent and visible sign of His presence and who could only be communicated with by the greatest of Prophets. The Torah was given to ordinary human beings, not angels or unique individuals like Moshe. It is hard to believe in a God of everywhere-in-general-but-nowhere-in-particular. It is hard to sustain a relationship with God who is only evident in miracles and unique events but not in everyday life. It is hard to relate to God when He only manifests Himself as overwhelming power.

So the *Mishkan* became the visible sign of God's continual presence in the midst of the people. Those who officiated there did so not because of their personal greatness, like *Moshe*, but because of birth and office, signalled by their vestments. The *Mishkan* represents acknowledgement of the

fact that human spirituality is about emotions, not just intellect; the heart, not just the mind. Hence aesthetics and the visual as a way of inculcating feelings of awe. This is how Maimonides puts it in *The Guide for the Perplexed*:

In order to raise the estimation of the Temple, those who ministered therein received great honour; and the Priests and Levites were therefore distinguished from the rest. It was commanded that the Priests should be clothed properly with beautiful and good garments, "holy garments for glory and for splendour" (Exod. xxviii. 2) ... The Temple was to be held in great reverence by all. (Guide, Book III, ch. 44)

The vestments of the officiants and the Sanctuary/Temple itself were to have the glory and splendour that induced awe, rather as Rainer Maria Rilke put it in the *Duino Elegies*: "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure." The purpose of the emphasis on the visual elements of the *Mishkan*, and the grand vestments of those who ministered there, was to create an atmosphere of reverence because they pointed to a beauty and splendour beyond themselves, namely God Himself.

Maimonides understood the emotive power of the visual. In his Eight Chapters, the prelude to his commentary on tractate *Avot*, he says, "The soul needs to rest and to do what relaxes the senses, such as looking at beautiful decorations and objects, so that weariness be removed from it."

Art and architecture can lift depression and energise the senses.

His focus on the visual allows Maimonides to explain an otherwise hard-to-understand law, namely that a Cohen with a physical blemish may not officiate in the Temple. This goes against the general principle that *Rachmana liba ba'i*, "God wants the heart," the inner spirit. The exclusion, says Maimonides, has nothing to do with the nature of prayer or Divine service but rather with popular attitudes. "The multitude does not estimate man by his true form," he writes, and instead judges by appearances. This may be wrong but it was a fact that could not be ignored in the Sanctuary whose entire purpose was to bring the experience of God down to earth in a physical structure with regular routines performed by ordinary human beings. Its purpose was to make people sense the invisible Divine presence in visible phenomena.

Thus there is a place for aesthetics and the visual in the life of the spirit. In modern times, Rav Kook in particular looked forward to a renewal of Jewish art in the reborn land of Israel. He himself, as I have written elsewhere, loved Rembrandt's paintings, and said that they represented the light of the first day of creation. He was also supportive, if guardedly so, of the Bezalel Academy of Art, one of the first signs of this renewal.

Hiddur mitzvah - bringing beauty to the fulfilment of a command - goes all the way back to the *Mishkan*. The great difference between ancient Israel and ancient Greece is that the Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty whereas

Judaism spoke of *hadrat kodesh*, the beauty of holiness.

I believe that beauty has power, and in Judaism it has always had a spiritual purpose: to make us aware of the universe as a work of art, testifying to the supreme Artist, God Himself.



No Embarrassment

In Parashat Terumah, which was read last week, the instructions to build the Mishkan were given to Moshe, and through him, to the entire nation. But the Mishkan would have to be staffed and maintained. Who would serve in the holy tasks that the Mishkan was intended to fulfill? Who would do the actual work, the hands-on service of God? Who would serve as the intermediary between God and the people? In Parashat Tetzaveh, Aharon and his sons are chosen for this august role.

The Torah describes, in great detail, the special uniforms they will wear when they perform their holy tasks, but this issue is far from straightforward. Clothing is complicated; it has a dual purpose. While it may identify the wearer's role or position, it can hide and obscure.

The Hebrew words for clothing used in this section hint at this complexity.

You shall bring forward your brother Aharon, with his sons, from among the Israelites, to serve Me as kohanim (priests): Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, Elazar and Itamar, the sons of Aharon. Make holy clothing (*bigdei kodesh*) for your brother Aharon, for dignity and adornment. (Shmot 28:1,2)

The word used for clothing is *begged* (the plural, *bigdei*, is used in the verse above). The root of this word is the same as the Hebrew word for betrayal, infidelity, disloyalty, or treason. These are not the words we would wish to associate with Divine service.

A few verses later the Torah lists the various vestments, among them the *me'il*, an outer garment. Once again, the Hebrew word for this article of clothing shares its root with a highly problematic concept: *Me'ilah* means embezzlement, misappropriation, or sacrilege. If anything, *me'ilah* is the antithesis of the Divine service the kohanim are to perform.

To understand the complexity of clothing and to clarify its role in the Mishkan, a place of purity and forgiveness, we must go as far back as the very first garment – and even further.

God creates a mate for Adam and presents her in the Garden of Eden. When Adam first meets his wife, the Torah tells us,

The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame (*lo yitboshashu*). (Bereishit 2:25)

While the text attests to their nudity, in a certain sense, they were not naked; nakedness implies a sense of embarrassment, even humiliation. It would therefore be more correct to describe them as merely unclothed.

Later, after Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, they become acutely aware of their nakedness, and desperately try to cover themselves:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths. (Bereishit 3:7)

Covering strategic parts of their anatomy with fig leaves is not quite the same as wearing clothing. We may easily imagine that Adam and Eve felt more vulnerable, more naked, after covering themselves with fig leaves after the sin, than they had felt when they were completely unclothed, prior to the sin.

They had committed a crime, and punishment soon followed: After brief but thorough questioning by God, and after attempting to deny their culpability, they are found guilty, and exiled from the Garden. Before they are evicted, though, they are the beneficiaries of an unanticipated gesture of compassion and kindness:

And the Almighty God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them (*vayalbishem*). (Bereishit 3:21)

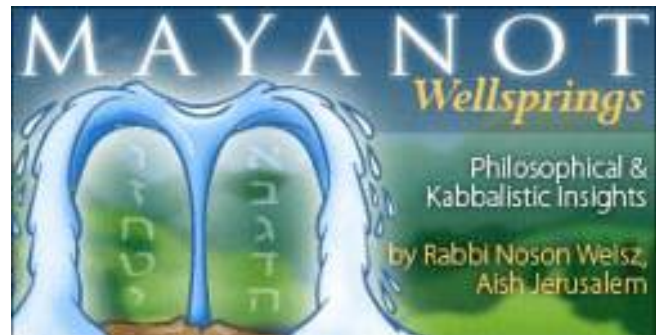
The word with which the clothing fashioned for the disgraced couple is described, "*vayalbishem*," echoes the word that had been used to describe their innocent, unembarrassed nakedness before the sin, "*yitboshashu*" – both of which draw on inter-related root forms (*b-(o)-sh* and *l-bh-sh*). The subliminal message of *vayalbishem* draws upon their earlier innocence, when they were unclothed but not ashamed (*lo hitboshashu*). Now, in His mercy, God clothes them, in effect covering their shame, and allows them to look away from their sin. By replacing the flimsy fig leaves with sturdy leather garments, God clothes them in forgiveness and restores their dignity. The verse combines two Divine Names – the Almighty, God of Judgement, and the Name of God as Judge.

The transition from being naked to being clothed is not merely having better, more appropriate attire. The clothing is an expression of God's willingness to forgive. At the same moment He hands down their sentence, He wraps them in loving kindness. Like a parent who must punish a wayward child, God cares for them, despite what they have done and despite what He is forced to do as a result. God kicks them out of the Garden of Eden, but He makes sure they have clothing to protect them from the elements.

This new clothing helps temper their feelings of rejection and abandonment. It is a tangible reminder that God cares, even after their sin. The necessity for this clothing was created by their bad behavior; the clothing, in a very real sense, symbolizes their treason, their disloyalty, their betrayal of the trust God had placed in them, their embezzlement and misappropriation of the

treasures of the Garden, and their sacrilegious disregard for the one commandment God had given them. On the other hand, the clothing, made with loving care by a forgiving God, covers their embarrassment and eases their shame.

This is the key to the clothing of the kohanim, and to the Mishkan itself: By enabling and empowering us to build the Mishkan, God provided a place where we, so full of hubris and tainted by sin, may approach and appeal to God – who is, at one and the same time, the God of Judgement and the God of Mercy. The clothing of the Kohanim remind us that God still cares. Despite our transgressions, He covers our nakedness and removes our shame.



Clothes and the Man

Just as last week's Torah portion presented us with an enormous amount of bewildering detail regarding the construction of the Tabernacle and its vessels, this week's Torah portion bombards us with minute instructions regarding the preparation of the vestments of the priests.

As we pointed out in our discussion of the Tabernacle, the key to appreciating the detail must

start from the realization that neither the Tabernacle nor the Temples that followed were meant to be "cathedrals"; places of worship designed to instill a sense of awe of God's majesty in the hearts of their visitors. These uniquely Jewish structures were designed around the idea of serving as God's residences; places in which the Divine Presence could be made manifest in a physically detectable way. As such, there was no need for the actual structure to inspire a sense of God's awe and majesty. These were there in abundance without the need to employ any physical props; the Divine Presence inspired them.

The vestments of the priests should be regarded in a similar light. Their design was also not audience inspired. There was no need to impress the worshippers with the importance of the priests by dressing them in gorgeous vestments. Their importance would be obvious from the fact that they served in the house where God was Present. The background to understanding God's instructions concerning the vestments is that the appearance of human beings arrayed in such garments pleases His eye. We shall attempt to shed some light on just what God finds so pleasing about these particular clothes. The first step is to explore the power of these clothes.

CLOTHES WITH THE POWER TO ATONE

Rabbi Inimi bar Sason said: "Why did the Torah list the instructions regarding the offering of sacrifices immediately adjacent to the instructions that relate to the vestments of the [priests] *kohanim*? To teach you that just as sacrifices are

offered to atone for sins, the clothes of the *kohanim* also atone for sins (as follows):

- The tunic atones for the sin of spilling human blood, as it is written: "*They slaughtered a goat and dipped his tunic in the blood.*" (Genesis 37)
- The trousers atone for the sins resulting from sexual license, as it is written: "*you shall make them linen trousers to cover the flesh of the sexual organs.*" (Exodus 28:42)
- The turban atones for the sin of haughtiness. How do we know this? R' Chanina said, let something that is worn on high [the top of the head is the highest point in an erect human being] atone for the sin of holding oneself high.
- The belt cleanses the heart of impure thoughts; we know this from its location as well (the belt was wrapped around the body of the priest from just under his arms to his mid section).
- The breastplate atones for the sin of miscarriage of justice, as it is written: "*You shall make a Breastplate of judgment.*" (Exodus 28:15)
- The *ephod* atones for the sin of idolatry, as it is written: "*Without ephod and trafim* (talisman)." (Hosea 3:4)
- The robe atones for the sin of *lashon hara*. From where is this known? R' Chanina said: Only something with a voice (the robe had bells that tinkled as the High Priest walked) can atone for the evil voice.
- The head plate atones for the sin of insolence, as is written, *It shall be on*

Aaron's forehead always." (Exodus 28:38)
And it is written about the trait of
insolence, "*You have the brazen forehead
of a harlot.*" (Jeremiah 3)" (Talmud,
Zevachim 88b)

How can wearing clothes possibly atone for the commission of sins? Atonement is a spiritual process that requires repentance; true repentance takes place in the innermost regions of the human heart; clothes are entirely external. Repentance and atonement is about who you really are, whereas clothes are entirely concerned with what you look like!

FORGIVENESS

Hebrew has three different words to express the idea of forgiveness: *mechila*, *slich* and *kapara*. The Gaon of Vilna explains that these words are not synonyms; each of them expresses a different idea. We can get some insight into the different shades of meaning by glancing at how we use these words in the *Amidah* Prayer: "Forgive us (*s'lach*) Father for we have sinned (*chotonu*), pardon (*mechal*) us our King for we have transgressed (*poshonu*)."

The text of the prayer associates *s'lach* with God the Father and the sort of sin called *chet*; while *mechal* relates to God the monarch and the sort of sin known as *pesha*. The Gaon explains that this is not poetic eloquence but surgical precision!

The Jewish people enjoy a dual relationship with God; we are His children, and also His subjects. In terms of the Father-child relationship, the main consequence of our sins is the lowering of God's status in the eyes of mankind. The world tends to

evaluate parents according to how polished and successful their children turn out to be; when children fail for whatever reason parents inevitably suffer a loss in prestige. How seriously can we take you in light of the fact that you raised such pathetic children? When we fail to live up to the standards God set for us – even if our failure is caused by sloppiness and lack of attention rather than by active rebellion against God's edicts – we sin against God our Father.

This type of sin is a *chet*, a word whose precise meaning is 'wrongful deed committed without thought', and the type of forgiveness required is called *s'lich* in Hebrew. Parents who are disappointed in their children still love them but they are no longer willing to invest in them. If I cannot trust my child not to waste the resources I pour into his development I will refrain from wasting my wealth and my energy. Instead of helping my child make a more spectacular crash I will allow him to crash on his own and preserve my resources to face the task of wiping up the inevitable mess. *S'lich* means that God our Father will retain His optimism concerning our ultimate success and will continue to invest in us despite our disappointing performance to date.

As God's subjects, our sins are damaging as acts of rebellion. Unlike the parent who is vulnerable to being hurt through the sheer sloppiness of his children, the king always has enough competent servants to govern the realm as long as he is perceived as powerful. But when his power seems to slip people stop taking his regime seriously. Respect for authority disappears and soon everyone is actualizing his own selfish desires and hang the common good.

Sins of rebellion are known as *p'shaim* and the type of forgiveness required for them is known as *mechila*; this type of forgiveness represents the King's consent to continue to accept his wayward subjects and to continue to grant them the privileges of citizenship despite their rejection of His authority.

But even when the father can be induced to overcome his reluctance to invest more resources in the disappointing child; even when the King is persuaded to pardon the rebellious subject, things are never quite the same. The enthusiasm and the trust are irrevocably gone. With God we have the opportunity to entirely overcome the past through a process known as *kapara*.

Kapara, or "atonement," is a level of forgiveness that leaves no trace or blemish of sin and allows the sinner to appear in God's eyes as spiritually fresh and clean as the day he was born. We do not ask for *kapara* in our daily prayers at all. This level of forgiveness is only attainable on special occasions such as Yom Kippur.

COVERING UP

According to our rabbis, the clothes of the *Kohanim* not only bring forgiveness; they bring a *kapara*, the special level of forgiveness that wipes out the very memory of sin. We shall see how this idea which merely seems to deepen the problem provides the key to understanding the atonement of the vestments of the priests.

We find the association between clothes and sin earlier in the Torah. Following the sin of Adam and Eve in Paradise, after they both partook from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, it is written:

"Their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked, and they sewed together date leaves and made themselves coverings." (Genesis 3:1)

Later in that same passage, after God finished His exposition concerning the various consequences of their sin, it is written:

"God fashioned for Adam and his wife robes of leather and dressed them." (Genesis 3:21)

In Chapter 2 of the *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides points to a startling phenomenon that is revealed by this association between the commission of the first sin and the resultant realization of the need to cover one's nakedness. One would expect that the commission of a sin would leave the sinner in a less exalted state than he was before he sinned. Yet the opposite seems to have been the case following the very first sin in history.

Before Adam sinned he did not realize his nakedness and was unembarrassed by it. Only following his sin were *'his eyes opened.'* Man seems to have acquired his most precious attribute – his great intelligence – as a consequence of his sin. Does this make sense? We shall explore Maimonides' answer because it relates directly to our discussion.

TRANSFORMATIONS

Maimonides explains that the transformation wrought by the sin was an increase in emotion rather than an improvement of the intellect. Before the commission of his sin, if Adam perceived intellectually that a certain action was

necessary to his survival and/or morally right, the realization itself gave rise to the emotional desire to carry it out. On the other hand when he perceived that an action was morally wrong or counterproductive, the intellectual perception was sufficient to instill a sense of revulsion towards its performance. This dominance of the intellect over the emotions left him following his sin.

There is a remarkable passage of Talmud that describes the human condition following Adam's sin:

The Talmud recounts that following the destruction of the first Temple the members of the Great Assembly successfully abolished the evil inclination for idol worship. Inspired by their success they turned their attention to the evil inclination for sex and decided to destroy it as well. Fortunately a spirit of caution set in and they made a three day trial before making the destruction final; much to their astonishment they discovered that following three days without the evil inclination for sex they couldn't locate a single fresh egg. Needless, to say they decided to leave the inclination for sex almost entirely untouched. [Talmud, Sanhedrin, 64a]

This passage of Talmud indicates that following Adam's sin man needs the help of the evil inclination to perform even the most necessary actions. We need to feel lust in order to have sex and reproduce even though it is clear that reproduction is essential to survival. If the desire is missing people cannot engage in sex simply because it is necessary. This is not God's fault. When He created us, our intelligence was our chief motivator; it was our own sin that reduced

the status of our intelligence from motivator to watchdog.

As long as Adam's mind controlled his motivations, his physical desires had the same effect on his behavior as the itch we feel in our toes upon being tickled. An itch is definitely a powerful sensation but it is not a motivator by any stretch of the imagination.

As seen from the standpoint of pure intellect, the sexual organs are no different than other portions of the human anatomy and there is nothing shameful about exposing them to open view. But when control over human behavior switches from the mind to the emotions, the sexual organs diverge from the rest of the human anatomy and their exposure becomes embarrassing indeed. Let us see if we can appreciate how.

The transformation wrought by the sin did not alter our self image. We still feel that we are rational creatures and that our minds are in control of what we do. Of course we ourselves realize that this sense of control is more illusion than reality. How many times have we had the feeling, "Why do I have so much trouble doing this if I know that it is the right thing to do?" We may experience this feeling regarding many areas of life, but we can generally successfully fool ourselves and others that we are rational creatures after all.

Unfortunately, the loss of intellectual control over human behavior is clearly manifest in our anatomy. The constant reminder of the loss of mental control is the apparent independence of the sexual organs, which pay absolutely no attention to our reason and react as they choose

no matter how inappropriate the circumstances may be. If we ever manage to forget our powerful irrational side, they are always there to bring us back to a humbling sense of who we really are. Covering his nakedness was Adam's way of hiding his shameful secret – the dichotomy between his passions and his reason.

In fact, the existence of this dichotomy is the source of all our transgressions. As it is a given that we are unable to do anything we do not desire to do at least slightly – even if we are totally convinced that it is absolutely the right thing to do – we are in serious trouble when our minds and our desires are in conflict.

CONFLICT OF MIND AND HEART

Picture the Jewish immigrant who arrives in America and becomes convinced that his business can only succeed if he abandons Sabbath observance. In his mind he knows that observing the Sabbath is the right thing to do, and that Jewish law demands that he observe the Sabbath laws even if the consequence of such observance is bankruptcy and failure.

In his heart he desperately wants to succeed in the new world and finally escape the abject poverty from which he fled. His heart is totally inflexible. He cannot control the desire to succeed and become financially independent, nor can he escape the conclusion that attaining success depends on dropping Sabbath observance.

He has one of three choices to make:

1. He can give up his dream of success.
2. He can drop Sabbath observance while still believing that he is committing a great

sin each time he goes to work on the Sabbath.

3. He can change his mind about the moral necessity of keeping Sabbath and go to work with a clear conscience.

What he absolutely cannot do is bring himself to desire to keep Sabbath under such circumstances. Is it any wonder that almost three million Jews who immigrated to America between 1800 and World War Two stopped observing the Sabbath?

CLOTHES AS IMAGE BUILDERS

Let us sum up what we have discovered so far. The story of Adam's sin teaches us that sheltering us from the elements is not the major reason for wearing clothes. Clothes were invented primarily to conceal the fact that we are governed by our passions. They are designed to convey the impression that we have not changed; we still follow the dictates of reason.

Despite the fall of humanity caused by Adam's sin, we still perceive ourselves as a being controlled by our superior reason, and instinctively cover up the fact that it is passion that rules us – by hiding the chief symbols of our passion.

By serving as an insulating layer between ourselves and the outside world, clothes allow us to project the image of ourselves we desire and successfully avoid the trauma of allowing others a glimpse of who we really are.

THE TRUE IMAGE

But there is another aspect to clothes.

Suppose that someone worked really hard at perfecting his character and managed to bring himself under the discipline of his mind until his behavior actually came to resemble that of Adam before his sin. How can this feat be accomplished? Through Torah observance of course! The myriad commandments and prohibitions contained in the Torah are all there to teach us how to behave as rational beings controlled entirely by the power of reason.

Adam's sin only transferred the control over his emotions and desires from his mind to his heart. But his mind still retained the ultimate control over actions. Human behavior still reflects the decisions reached by the human mind. What we have discovered is that the mind has become incapable of reaching totally rational decisions because of the power of the drives and emotions that it no longer controls. The Torah teaches those who follow its dicta to behave as though the mind still retained control over their basic motivation as well and eliminates the confusion caused by the mind-emotion confrontation.

"You are my sheep, the flock that I shepherd; you are Adam" (Ezekiel) – that is, you, Israel are called Adam; the nations of the world are not Adam. (Talmud, Yevomat 61b)

Presented by a bewildering maze of mixed motivations none of which originate in the mind, man needs a guidebook to teach him to behave as though he was still a purely rational being. The Mitzvos of the Torah are designed to do this, and therefore Israel, who accepted the Torah still reflects Adam as he was before his sin.

Thus the information contained in the mind of the Torah Jew is the same as the information contained in Adam's mind before his sin – a product of pure reason. His behavior is the same; only his emotions are different.

In the case of the Jew, wearing clothes that are designed to match the ideal human state does not amount to misrepresentation; such clothes accurately project the ideal inner being that his outward behavior actually reflects. These types of clothes do really constitute a *kapara*, the removal of the blemish left by traces of sin.

THE CLOTHES OF THE HIGH PRIEST

The High Priest wears eight articles of clothing:

The Tunic

The innermost layer right next to the skin is representative of the most basic and primitive human emotions. At that most primal level, I know that that my affairs are no more important than any one else's, but in my heart I am ready to kill anyone who gets in the way of my attempts to satisfy my desires.

The tunic is a *kapara* for these aggressive impulses. The *kohen's* behavior towards others is governed by the commandment of "love your brother as you love yourself" (Leviticus 19:18] and reflects his mind rather than his heart.

The Trousers

In my mind I realize that the purpose of the sexual drive is to populate the world and help cement the relationship between men and women with the powerful bond of romantic love. In my heart I want to engage in sex for the simple satisfaction of my lust.

The trousers are a *kapara* for the sexual impulse, because the wearer's behavior in this area is governed by the laws of the Torah.

The Turban

In my mind I realize that my importance in the scheme of things cannot possibly outweigh that of other human beings – we are all God's creations after all, but in my heart I feel that I am the center of the universe.

The turban acts as a *kapara* for these feelings of haughtiness in one who is dedicated to act towards others with humility.

The Belt

The inner turmoil and confusion that leads me astray comes from my inability to distinguish between the thoughts that are generated by the desires of my heart, from those that are the products of pure reason.

The belt that the *kohen* wears represents the determination to eliminate this confusion by testing every thought against the dictates of the Torah.

These four articles are worn by the high priest and by all priests. The remaining four are worn only by the high priest. We will discuss these, God willing, in the essay on Parshat Pikudei.

Let us end with the following thought. The word for clothing in Hebrew is *beget* – composed of the letters *beth*, *gimel*, and *daleth*. The Hebrew word for treason or betrayal is spelled with the identical letters.

These letters are also sequential; they are the 2nd, 3rd and 4th letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Clothes have a dual aspect. They are either a disguise worn by the traitor to help conceal his treachery, or they flow naturally out of the number one, and allow us to trace the wearer back to his true Source.



The Power of Tumim

It must have been very convenient for the *Kohein Gadol* to have the power of the *Urim* and *Tumim* at his disposal. Whenever he needed to know something important, all he had to do was put on the *Choshen Mishpat*, the Breastplate of Judgment into which were set precious jewels representing all the Jewish tribes, and ask a question. Lights would flash, and an answer would appear. This is what I thought when I was a young child. The reality was not quite so simple.

The Ramban explains that the Divine message was received through a combination of the *Urim* and *Tumim* powers. The message used the letters of the names of the tribes engraved on the stones of the *Choshen Mishpat*. When the *Kohein Gadol* asked his question, a number of letters would light up. This was the power of *Urim*. But those letters still needed to be arranged and deciphered. A set of holy Names also appeared. These provided the *Kohein Gadol* with a special ability to decipher the message, called the power of *Tumim*, akin to *ruach hakodesh*, Divine inspiration.

Sometimes, the *Kohein Gadol* erred in his interpretation. For instance, we are told (*I Samuel* 1:13) that Eli Hakohein made a serious error regarding Chanah, the prophet Shmuel's mother. The Gaon of Vilna explains that the letters *shin*, *kaf*, *resh* and *heh* lit up. They spelled out the word *kesheirah*, worthy woman. But Eli thought they spelled out the word *shikorah*, drunken woman, and he treated her as such. At that precise moment, Eli did not have the power of *Tumim*.

The Beis Av explains the modern-day form of the *Urim* and *Tumim*. There are many people who are great in Torah. When they are presented with a question, they look into the Torah, and many words, verses and passages light up for them. They see the lights, and they feel confident they can interpret their message. But this is only the power of the *Urim*, the lights. Only a few people in each generation also have the power of *Tumim*, which gives them the ability to interpret the lights correctly. They are the ones that have true *daas Torah*. They can discover the Divine message by looking into the Torah.

A profound example of the *Urim* without the *Tumim* can be found in story of the prophet Shmuel and King Shaul (*I Samuel* 15). Shmuel told Shaul in the Name of Hashem to destroy Amalek, to wipe them out, man, woman, child and all the animals, from camels to donkeys. But Shaul disobeyed. He allowed Agag, the Amalekite king, to live, and he did not kill the animals that could be used for sacrifices to Hashem. For these failures, he would lose his throne.

The next day, Shmuel came, and Shaul went out to greet him. What would we expect him to say to Shmuel? "I'm sorry. I made a terrible mistake. I know I should have followed your instructions, but I was overcome by misplaced mercy." That is what one might have expected, but incredibly he said, "I have fulfilled the word of Hashem."

What was Shaul thinking? Did he expect to fool Shmuel? How could he claim to have fulfilled the word of Hashem?

Clearly, Shaul believed he had indeed fulfilled Hashem's will. He was great in Torah, and somehow, he arrived at a different interpretation of the instructions he received from Shmuel. This is the classic example of having the power of *Urim* but not the power of *Tumim*. And so, he could in all honesty tell Shmuel he had fulfilled the word of Hashem, at least according to his understanding. And yet, he was completely wrong.

At the end of *Sefer Shoftim*, we read about one of the most sordid affairs in Jewish history, the story of "*pilegish b'Givah*," the concubine of Givah. Without getting into the details, suffice it to say that one thing led to another, and soon all the

tribes were filled with righteous anger and mobilized against the lonesome tribe of Binyamin. There was a war, and the tribe of Binyamin was just about wiped out. Afterwards, they realized they had gone too far and tried to make amends to revive the stricken tribe.

How could such a thing happen? How could the well-meaning tribes of the Jewish people make such a mistake that an entire tribe was nearly eradicated forever?

The answer lies in the last verse of *Sefer Shoftim*, "In those days, there was no king in Israel, and everyone did as he pleased." Here is the problem. People can have the best intentions, the most righteous motivations, they can see the lights in the Torah and read in those lights support for their own opinions, but all that is no more than the *Urim*. If they do not have to answer to a higher authority, if they are not compelled to seek the guidance of sages who also have the power of *Tumim*, they can make tragic errors. If there is no king in Israel, if there is no bona fide leader who possesses the power of *Tumim*, if each individual can do as he pleases, then even the best and the brightest can easily go astray.

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