

PARSHAS TETZAVEH

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

The clothes of Aharon and his sons were made so that they could officiate before Hashem in holiness, in honor and in glory. However, it is difficult to understand why their laws and details were given at this time, when they were only made at a later date, and Aharon and his sons had not then yet been chosen as kohanim; the first born only lost their priestly duties after the Maaseh Ha-eigel. It is true that Rashi and the Rambam explain this by the principle of "Ain mukdam u me'uchar ba Torah". However, surely we would expect at least the same logical order from Hashem that is normal in ordinary human authors? So we have to agree with the Ramban when he writes that we only apply this principle when there is a reason for changing the logical sequence of the text. Therefore, we have to seek a reason for these commandments being given at this time.

[The whole purpose of the Mishkan, its vessels and the 'bigdei kehuna' depends on whether we agree with Rashi that the Parshiot Trumah and Tetzaveh were actually given after Ki Tisa, or with the Ramban that they were given in the order in which they appear in the Torah. According to the first view the whole purpose of the Mishkan was to atone for the Eigel; if they would not have sinned there would have been no necessity for the Mishkan, bearing in mind the great spiritual level that Israel had reached because of the Revelation at Sinai. The other view [held also by Abarbanel, the mystics and the Chassidic Masters], would teach that because of their perfect and elevated spiritual level, the Mishkan was originally meant to serve as Israel's meeting place with G-d. It was only because of the sin of the Eigel, that the idea of atonement was added later.

The text that tells of the making of the pure olive oil in this parshah, is written as 'You shall command' Tetzaveh' and not 'command the People of Israel,' 'Tzav', as is usually the wording of the duties to be commanded by Moshe. The intention was merely to denote that in the future Moshe will have to command the commandment connected with the oil, rather than its actual fulfillment that we find written in its logical place in Parshat Emor, nor in relation to the Menorah and its lights, as given in Behalotcha. Its only purpose here is in order to teach us that the oil, the Menorah and the lights were a function of Aharon and his sons dressed in the clothes that Hashem was about to command here.

The Ibn Ezra would like to see the mention of the oil and the Bigdei Kehunah here, simply as the conclusion of the Mishkan and its vessels. There is much logic to this, but there is actually a far deeper meaning and a far more importance to the Torah's mentioning at this particular point in time, even though the choice of the Kohanim was not yet public knowledge. Already at this stage it was

important to make it clear that the role of Aharon and his 4 sons, [any other sons were not included- Pinchas earned his special status with his action regarding Zimril, was not a matter of the default of the firstborn. Rather, it flowed simply and wholly from the spiritual and religious qualities of Aharon, who was second only to Moshe himself, as denoted many times in the Torah. Furthermore, the choice of Aharon as the Kohen and of his sons to succeed him throughout the generations is further proof of the Divine Wisdom rather than flowing from Moshe's, since normally men would have appointed their own son's.

The oil and 'Bigdei Kehunah had to linked to Aharon and his sons at his very point in time, in order to make it quite clear that they and only they were to do the Avodah of the Mishkan, they and only they were to officiate at the korbanot, and they and only they were to arrange the lights in the Menorah that was never to be extinguished.

The Kohen Hagadol dressed in the 8 garments symbolizes one man, all of whose faculties and spiritual qualities and yearnings are all united, logically ordered and intractably interwoven together. The Tzitz on his forehead symbolizes the world of the mind and the intellect free from all materialism; that is why it has 'Holy to the Lord' written on it. The Mitznefet is a reference to the forces of the heavenly worlds. Their relative positioning comes to teach the absolute superiority of both of them above the rest of the begadim; the wisdom implements the forces of the heavens while they transform nature. The Ephod refers to the material things and is therefore made from simple natural products symbolizing the 4 basics [earth, fire, water and wind], but also the gold that was the product of artisans to show that they are wrought by human thought and study. The two 'avnei hashom' placed on the shoulders the uppermost part of the body, to symbolize Bnei Yisrael, who are more qualified and prepared to receive the Divine Plenty than any other people. These stones are the Tribes carried together by the Kohen Hagadol, though there are 2 of them simply to refer to East and West, whereas the 12 stones of the Choshen refer to the Tribes in their individuality. The Choshen showed Israel after Matan Torah whereby they were elevated above all other peoples, even though like them, Israel also is of the 4 elements, material and earthbound. Indeed, the oil and the garments were destined to be worn by Aharo and his sons.

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