

# GARMENT ATONEMENT

*by Shlomo Katz*

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring**  
**Edited by Shlomo Katz**

**Tetzaveh**

**Volume XVI, No. 20**  
**11 Adar 5762**  
**February 23, 2002**

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Today's Learning:

Makkot 3:10-11

Orach Chaim 589:1-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Metzia 93

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Terumot 30

At the end of each parashah, many chumashim state the number of verses in that parashah and a word or phrase that can be used to remember that number. The mnemonic device traditionally used to remember that this parashah has 101 verses is the name of the angel "Micha'el." (The gematria of Micha'el equals 101.) But to serve as a useful mnemonic, the word chosen must have some relationship to the parashah's subject. What is that relationship here?

R' Heschel of Krakow (16th century scholar known for his clever insights) explains as follows: We will read in next week's parashah that, after the sin of the golden calf, Hashem wanted to send an angel - according to the midrash, it was Micha'el - to accompany Bnei Yisrael through the desert. Moshe demanded, however, that Hashem lead Bnei Yisrael Himself, without an intermediary.

After Moshe's death, we read that this same angel appeared to Yehoshua, saying that he had been sent to lead Bnei Yisrael in battle. We find, therefore, that wherever Moshe was, the angel could not

be, but when the former was gone, the latter reappeared. This is why the angel Micha'el is alluded to by our parashah, for it is the only one in the three middle books of the Torah in which Moshe's name is not mentioned. (Chanukat Hatorah)

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*"You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon your brother . . ." (28:2)*

The gemara (Erachin 16a) teaches: Why are the garments of the kohanim written about [in chapter 29] adjacent to the laws of the sacrifices [in chapter 30, which describes the sacrifices of Aharon's inauguration]? To teach us that just as sacrifices atone for sins, so the garments of the Kohen Gadol atone for sin.

The gemara continues: The tunic atones for murder, as it is written (Bereishit 27:31), "They dipped the tunic in the blood."

The pants atone for adultery, as it is written (Shmot 28:42), "You shall make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of nakedness."

The turban atones for haughtiness, as Rabbi Chanina said, "Let that which is high up atone for him who is too lofty."

The belt atones for improper thoughts, which is apparent based on where it is worn [separating the heart, the seat of desire, from the lower organs].

The breastplate atones for misjudging, as it is written (Shmot 28:30), "the Breastplate of Judgment."

The ephod / apron atones for idolatry, as it is written (Hoshea 3:4), "There is no ephod and terafim / idols." [Rashi explains: When there is no ephod, there is the sin of terafim.]

The coat atones for lashon hara. Just as the coat makes noise (because it has bells), so it atones for a person who makes "noise."

The tzitz, the gold band bearing G-d's Name, that is worn on the Kohen Gadol's forehead atones for brazenness, as it is written (Yirmiyah 3:3), "The forehead of a brazen woman." [Until here is excerpted from the gemara.]

R' Aharon Berachiah of Modena (Italy; died 1639) writes: If G- d's intention in giving the mitzvot was only that we do them, and if they did not allude to important lessons or concepts, then we would, today, have almost nothing left of the Torah. (This is because so many of the mitzvot are dependent on having a Temple, while others can be performed only by those who live in Eretz Yisrael.) Fortunately, this is not the case. Besides the action that every mitzvah involves, each mitzvah also has a "Torah," a teaching. Even if we cannot perform certain mitzvot (such as wearing the priestly garments), we still can learn the lessons they teach.

This is the meaning of the verse (Mishlei 6:23), "For a mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light." A

candle is only one small light, and it can be extinguished. Similarly, the action of a mitzvah is only a small part of that mitzvah's content, and it can be extinguished; there is a time when a mitzvah is lost to us. But the Torah is light! Like the source of light - the sun, the "Torah" of a mitzvah cannot be extinguished. [Even at night, when we cannot see the sun, we still benefit from its light and warmth.]

Numerous times in the Torah we find the formulation: "This is the Torah of the olah / burnt offering," "This is the Torah of the chatat / sin offering," "This is the Torah of the asham / guilt offering" and so on, for the other sacrifices. This led our sages to say, "Today, when there is no Temple, if one studies the Torah of the sacrifice, it is as if he brought the sacrifice." Explains R' Aharon Berachiah: Bringing a sacrifice was intended to humble a person before G-d. Just as one who brings a sacrifice receives atonement because he subjugates himself to Hashem, so one who humbles himself before G-d can achieve atonement, even when the Temple is not standing.

The same thing is true of the Kohen Gadol's garments. When the Kohen Gadol wore this uniform, it atoned for the very common and widespread sins enumerated above. But even now, the "Torah" of the garments can bring atonement as well.

[R' Aharon Berachiah proceeds to analyze the lesson of each garment. We will discuss one.] "The turban atones for haughtiness, as Rabbi Chanina said, 'Let that which is high up atone for him who is too lofty'." A turban, or any head covering, reminds us to fear G-d and to place Him above us. [Some say that the word "yarmulke" is a contraction of "yarei malka" / "fears the King."] Haughtiness indicates that one lacks yirah / fear of G-d. Perhaps if one reminds himself that even Aharon Hakohen, a person of almost angelic quality, wore a head covering to subject himself to G-d, one will conquer his haughtiness. (Derashot Ma'avar Yabok)

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*"You shall make a tzitz / head-plate of pure gold. . ." (28:36)*

R' Eliezer Papo z"l (Serbia and Yerushalayim; 1785-1828) writes: The word tzitz is related to "maitzitz" / "looking" (see Shir Hashirim 2:9). The verse is teaching that one should look at his gold and see that it is pure, i.e., honestly earned.

Alternatively, the verse is teaching that one should learn how to act from the way in which he examines his gold. One should examine his Torah study and his performance of mitzvot with the same care with which he studies his valuables, for just as a small nick, dent or scratch reduces the value of a bar of gold or a piece of fine jewelry, so any defect in one's Torah study and performance of mitzvot reduces their value.

R' Papo concludes: Our verse refers to the tzitz as "pituchei chotam." In context, this means "engraved like a signet ring." It can also mean, however, "opening that which is sealed." One who follows the advice given above will open that which is sealed, i.e., the World-to-Come, which is now invisible to us, will be revealed before him. (Elef Ha'maggen)

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*"You shall offer one sheep in the morning . . ." (29:39)*

The midrash states that this verse incorporates the entire Torah. How so?

R' Yitzchak Nunes Belmonte z"l (Izmir, Turkey; 18th century) explains that the significance of this verse is in the fact that it describes a communal offering (specifically, the daily korban tamid). Only when the Jewish people are united in their service of G-d can one sacrifice serve them all. This, says the midrash, is the essence of the Torah: Serve G-d together, as one people.

Our Sages state that the death of a tzaddik atones for the Jewish people just as a sacrifice does. Yet, we read (Yishayah 57:1), "Before the trouble, a tzaddik is gathered in." Aren't Chazal's teaching and this verse contradictory? Is a tzaddik taken from us to atone for us, or protect him from the coming trouble?

R' Belmonte answers that it depends on our own state. If we are united, if the Jewish people as a group notice the death of the tzaddik and are moved by it, then the tzaddik's death will be an atonement and will save us from the coming trouble. However, if we are so busy fighting with each other that we do not notice the tzaddik's death, then the trouble will come.

We read in next week's parashah that it is prohibited to count the Jewish people. Why? Because counting things indicates their separate identity. In contrast, Jews should be one, united entity.

When King David erred and counted his subjects, a plague struck. When did the plague end? After the tzaddik Avishai ben Tzeruyah died at the hour of the korban tamid. Asks R' Belmonte: If Avishai's merit was sufficient to save the Jewish people from the plague, why did G-d not take him immediately? Why did thousands of people have to die? He answers: Because the Jewish people lacked unity; indeed, this is how King David came to count them as individuals. Only at the time of the korban tamid, when their unity was highlighted, could the death of the tzaddik have any meaning. (Derashot Derech Ha'shaar No. 9)

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### **R' Avraham Bornstein z"l** **born 5599 (1839) - died 11 Adar I 5670 (1910)**

R' Avraham Bornstein was the chassidic rebbe of Sochatchov (Sochaczew, near Warsaw), and was also a rosh yeshiva and one of the leading halachic authorities of the turn of the last century. R' Bornstein's works - his seven volumes of responsa, She'eilot U'teshuvot Avnei Nezer, and his encyclopedia of the laws of Shabbat, Eglei Tal - are popular classics.

R' Bornstein was the son-in-law of R' Menachem Mendel, the legendary "Kotzker Rebbe," and he followed in his father-in-law's ways. This included allowing only a small number of chassidim to become close to him and constantly pushing his chassidim to greater levels of commitment to

Torah study. Chassidim who called upon R' Bornstein were expected to share their Torah thoughts with him, and he insisted on personally heading a yeshiva despite the objections of his followers (who presumably wanted him to devote his full time to them). Several of the scholars featured in recent issues of Hamaayan were his students.

R' Avraham's style in learning - directed towards ascertaining the practical halachic conclusions of the subject - was also learned from his father-in-law. His lectures in the yeshiva lasted six to eight hours, often starting at midnight and continuing until morning, except for a 15-minute break when he napped.

One of R' Avraham's best known teachings is found in his introduction to Eglei Tal. There he asserts that not only is learning Torah a mitzvah, but also enjoying that learning is a mitzvah. (Some other sages contend that if one enjoys learning, his motivation is improper.)

Some of R' Avraham's teachings on Chumash and chassidic thought have been gathered from manuscripts and the works of others, and are published under the title Neot Desheh. Also, R' Bornstein is frequently quoted in his son's classic work Shem Mishmuel.

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