

BEHIND THE SCENES

by Rabbi Jeff Kirshblum

The 98th mitzvah in the Torah is the mitzvah of the Menorah (27:21). "And you shall command the Children of Israel that they take to you pure olive oil beaten for the light to cause a lamp to burn continuously... Aharon and his sons shall arrange (the Menorah) from evening until morning..." (27:20-21).

The Ramban (beginning of Parshas Ba'ha'losecha) records a Medrash. During the dedication of the Mishkan all the tribes participated in the inaugural ceremonies. Aharon was greatly saddened; all the tribes took part in bringing animals to be offered except Aharon and his sons. G-d comforted Aharon by telling him that he and his sons will have a special mitzvah, the mitzvah of the Menorah.

The question that begs to be asked is why was Aharon saddened. It is true that each day another tribe brought an animal to be offered; but who did the actual offering? It was Aharon and his sons. They performed the important tasks of the sacrificial service all twelve days. It seems that Aharon's sadness was inappropriate.

In addition, there are many authorities (Rambam, Bi'as Hamikdash 9:7) who maintain that anyone could light the Menorah even a non-kohen. So, how was Aharon comforted by G-d's telling him that he had the special mitzvah of the Menorah: a member of any tribe could light it?

Rebbe Elazar said: Greater is the one who enables a deed to be done than the one who does it (Baba Basra 9a). Aharon understood that the one who enables another to perform a mitzvah has a greater portion in that mitzvah. The tribes, that brought the animals, had a greater mitzvah than the kohanim, who performed the actual service because their animals enabled the service to take place. Aharon was sad that throughout all twelve days of sacrifices he never had the opportunity to be the enabler.

The mitzvah of the Menorah contains two parts. The first part is to prepare the Menorah for the lighting. The old wicks were removed and fresh ones were put into place. Oil was poured into each cup of the Menorah. Only Aharon and his sons could do this preparatory work. The second part of the mitzvah was the actual lighting of the Menorah. This could be performed by anyone (Rambam, Bi'as HaMikdash 9:7).

G-d comforted Aharon by telling him about the mitzvos of the Menorah. Even though anyone could light it, only he and his sons would be able to prepare it for the lighting. Aharon and his sons would be the enablers, the men behind the scenes.

We tend to strive to put our actions on center stage. We prefer the limelight and the attention. If our accomplishments are done only to enable others to act, then who will give us credit? The Torah is teaching us a profound insight regarding our approach to mitzvos. It is the one behind the scenes that is greater than the actual performer.

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

The 99th mitzvah in the Torah is for the Kohanim to wear their special priestly garments while performing the service in the Mishkan and Bais Hamikdash.

"And you shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother for splendor and beauty (28:2).

Any service performed without wearing all the proper clothing was rendered invalid.

People of important stature or who are performing an important task wear a special uniform. Judges, doctors, nurses, soldiers, policemen, firemen all have special outfits. Sometimes uniforms are worn to lend an air of dignity to the position. The outfit gives prestige to the work being done and reminds the wearer to maintain his dignity. It helps them to focus on the task they are performing. These reasons also applied to the kohanim.

Our clothes have a great influence on how we behave. Young children are not comfortable wearing elegant clothing because it "compels" them to behave. Teenagers do not like formal attire because it "restricts" their ability to express themselves. Actors are better able to act during a dress rehearsal because they can feel the part they are playing. One should never underestimate the influence our clothing has on us. Historically, Jews wore different clothing than those around them. Sometimes this was by choice; sometimes this was by government decree. But, in any event, the clothing of the Jew made him feel like a Jew and he would act like a Jew. We must always remember that just as the kohen represented the Jewish people to G-d, we represent G-d to those around us. In that respect we are all kohanim. "And you shall be unto Me a nation of kohanim, a holy nation" (Shemos 19:6). We must dress in accordance to the dignity our role demands.

Perhaps the reason why the Torah calls the priestly garments, "holy garments," is not so much because they had kedusha but rather because they inspired holiness in the kohanim wearing them.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR

The Talmud (Zevachim 88b) tells us that each of the bigdei kahuna represented atonement for some particular sin.

The shirt was atonement for the crime of murder.

The trousers were atonement for the sin of immorality.

The turban was atonement for haughtiness.

The belt was atonement for wrongful thoughts and desires.

The breastplate was atonement for a miscarriage of justice.

The apron was atonement for idolatry.
The robe was atonement for gossip.
The forehead plate was atonement for stubbornness.

The heart is the seat of the emotions. Emotions can be good, such as love, or they can be bad, such as anger. Most acts of murder are committed out of hatred in a time of uncontrolled anger. The shirt, which covers the heart, teaches us that we must be in control of our emotions.

Man instinctively has desires. The strongest desire is the animal instinct for sexual pleasure. The trousers gives cover to teach us that man is above the level of an animal and must contain his instinctive desires.

Haughtiness prevents us from admitting our mistakes. It prevents us from learning from our errors. It prevents us from doing teshuva. One must always keep in mind that there is One above us, G-d. The turban, or hat, reminds us of the One above and that humility suits us better. This is one reason Jewish men wear a yarmulke.

The belt separates the heart from the lower body. This teaches us that man must separate his emotions (heart) from his animalistic desires (lower body). A man should love (emotion) his wife not for her beauty (animalistic desires) but for her deeds.

When two people have a dispute they are not at peace with one another. Administering justice can resolve the issue and create harmony where there was once discord. A miscarriage of justice will only intensify the discord. When there was a matter of national importance that threatened the peace and harmony of the Jewish people, the kohen gadol would consult the glowing stones and letters of the breastplate. Its Divine message would insure that a just decision will be made that would insure peace and harmony.

All things in creation can be used for good or for evil. Fire can destroy or it can give warmth and light. Man must learn to use all things for noble accomplishments. In ancient times, the custom of idolatrous priests was to wear an apron in their unholy service. Our kohen gadol also wore an apron to show that all things can be used for the good, to serve G-d.

The kohen gadol's robe symbolized the mouth. Just as the mouth has two lips which can move apart or shut together, so too a robe has two vertical edges in front that can be moved apart or closed together. It reminds us that, just as we can control our robe, we should be in control of our mouth.

An important concept for living a good life is to learn to compromise. Most things in life are not so important that we should be unyielding. Compromising with a spouse, friend or neighbor strengthens relationships. Stubbornness prevents compromise and gives more life to dispute. One who is stubborn is selfish. He thinks only in terms of himself. The remedy for selfish stubbornness is to think of G-d and that all our motives should be to create a Kiddush Hashem, to glorify and sanctify His name. To combat stubbornness, the kohen gadol wore on his forehead a plate of gold with the

words Kodesh L'Hashem, to sanctify G-d (The above is based on the Malbim's Rimazai Bigdei Hakodesh, Parshas Tetzaveh).

SHATNEZ: GOOD VS. EVIL

"And you shall make the apron of gold, blue wool, purple wool, scarlet wool, and fine linen twisted" (28:6).

Normally, the Torah prohibits wearing garments that are composed of both linen and wool, as it is written, "You shall not wear shatnez, wool and linen together," (Devarim 22:11). An exception was made in the case of the bigdei kahuna. Wool and linen were mixed together. The question is why?

Though the prohibition to wear garments of both wool and linen, shatnez, is considered a chok, beyond our comprehension, still we are permitted to find some symbolic meaning in it. The Medrash Tanchumah (Bereishis 9) mentions the story of Kayin and Hevel. Each one brought an offering to G-d. Hevel offered the finest of his wooly sheep. Kayin offered flax seeds, the poorest of all his crops. G-d accepted Hevel's offering and turned away from Kayin's. Kayin sought to avenge what he felt was an injustice and killed his brother Hevel. The Medrash continues, G-d declared that it is not fitting to join the offering of Kayin, the sinner, with the offering of Hevel, the gracious one.

Linen is made from flax seeds. Wool comes from sheep. Because of the great sin of Kayin, we do not join linen and wool together in a garment (Medrash Tanchuma 9). The offering of the wool represented the choicest of the flock (the intention of good) while that of flax seeds represented the most inferior of crops and was followed by an act of murder (evil). Thus this association resulted in death. Perhaps what the law of shatnez is teaching is that good and evil can not mix. In this world, they must be kept apart; otherwise, as we see in the clash of Kayin and Hevel, evil will prevail.

There are times in our lives where we face our own mixtures, shatnez, and try to keep apart the evil that confronts us from our good intentions. Should we be friends with this person even though they may be a negative influence on us, should we take this job, or should we move into that neighborhood? We must be careful to avoid a "shatnez" pattern of life in which only evil will prevail.

Shatnez, however, was allowed in the garments of the kohen. The purpose of the service of the Kohanim in the Temple was to help the Jewish people atone for their sins. Every sin-offering had to be accompanied with the repentance of the one who brought the offering to the Bais Hamikdash. The Talmud (Yoma 86b) says that teshuva can change a sin into a mitzvah. That being the case, the Kohanim have the potential to change a sin like Kayin's into a mitzvah like Hevel's. Therefore, the Kohanim were permitted to have shatnez in their garments.

HAFTORAH TETZAVEH

The haftorah is found in Yechezkiel 43: 10-27.

The parshah had described the inauguration of the kohanim into the sacred service of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan was the precursor of the First Bais Hamikdash. During the lifetime of Yechezkiel, the First Temple was destroyed. A significant component of Yechezkiel's prophecy describes the Third Temple that will be rebuilt in the time of Mashiach. In this portion of the Haftorah, Yechezkiel describes the sacrificial Altar and the inauguration of the kohanim in the future.

The question to be asked is why the prophet is describing the Third Temple when the Second Temple had not been built yet? The Third Temple, as described by Yechezkiel, differs radically from the Second Temple. The Third Temple was much larger and had a completely different layout than the Second Temple. Yechezkiel should have told the Jewish people about the laws and measurements of the Second Temple.

The history of the Jewish people can be divided into two periods. The first period began with the birth of our nation in Egypt. It reached its climax with the building of the First Bais Hamikdash in the time of King Shlomo. >From that time onward there was a slow descent in the Israelites' religious conviction. That led to the eventual destruction of the First Bais Hamikdash and the exile to Babylonia. The second period began with the rebirth of our nation in Babylonia and it will reach its climax with the coming of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Temple.

The end of the Babylonian exile, when the Jews returned to their homeland, did not mark the total end of the Exile for the Jews. In truth, most of the Jews remained in Babylonia and did not return to the land of their fathers. In addition, during the time of the Second Temple, Israel was not a free nation. They were still subjects of foreign governments. In the beginning they were under the dominion of Persia, then under Greece, and finally under Rome. Thus, with this absence of independence, we still experienced an element of galus during the era of the Second Bais Hamikdash.

In the Second Bais Hamikdash there was no Holy Ark. The Ner Ma'aravi did not always burn through the night. The kohen gadol was unable to read the Urim V'Tumim. At times the foreign governments prohibited the Temple service. All of this was to show that the Second Temple was not the climax of the second period of our history. It was only the beginning. The climax will be reached when Mashiach arrives. That was Yechezkiel's message to the Jews. The Third Bais Hamikdash will be the pinnacle of humankind's history and destiny. What was the Second Temple if not a climax in our history? It was simply a gift, a kindness that G-d bestowed upon His children. Therefore, the Second Bais Hamikdash was constructed primarily according to the dimensions and layout of the First one. Difficult times would confront the Jews of that era. There would be foreign invasions and persecution. There would be Jewish cults that would try to take over the priesthood. To keep the hope for the future alive, the Altar in the Second Bais Hamikdash was built according to the specifications of the Altar in the Third Bais Hamikdash, as described by Yechezkiel, rather than according to the dimensions of the Altar of the First Bais Hamikdash.

Though the Jews in the early years of the Second Temple must have felt that they were a free

nation, a redeemed nation, a nation at the height of its history, the fact that the Temple was built similar to the First Temple, and not Yechezkiel's Temple, reminded them that they were still in galus. At times, we too think that the galus has ended. We have freedom to worship the way we want. We can walk the streets without fear of government agents hauling us off to a deportation camp. Many of us are financially successful and secure. But we must always keep in mind that as long as we do not see the Temple of Yechezkiel standing on top of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, we are still in galus. Copyright © 2004 by [Rabbi Jeff Kirshblum](#) and **Torah.org**

These Divrei Torah are excerpts from Yochanan "Jeff" Kirshblum's new book, Thinking Outside the Box, which can be purchased at any local Judaica book store or online at www.israelbookshop.com.