

FIT TO SERVE

by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

"Moshe brought the sons of Aharon forward, he dressed them in tunics and girdled [each of] them with a belt and wrapped the turbans upon them..." (8:13)

Parshas Tzav details the seven day inaugural process prescribed for Aharon and his sons prior to their serving in the Mishkan. Moshe proceeds to bathe them in a mikveh and dress them in the Priestly vestments. The verse describes Moshe dressing them in "kuttonos" - "tunics", girding them with their "avneit" - "belt" and wrapping their "migbaos" - "turbans" around their heads. The "kuttonos" and "migbaos" are recorded in the plural form. However, the "avneit" is listed in singular form. What prompts the Torah to make this distinction?

The Rambam records that the turban was sixteen amos long (between twenty-four and thirty-two feet). The belt was thirty-two amos long and was wrapped around the Kohein.¹ Why does the Rambam not mention that the turban was also wrapped around the Kohein?

The Rambam is teaching us that it was necessary for the belt to be wrapped around the Kohein each time he put it on. However, it was required to wrap the turban only the first time, and once it fit the Kohein, he would continue to wear it without unwrapping and re-wrapping it. Therefore, the Rambam records the act of wrapping with the belt and not with the turban. Since the belt was wrapped each time, it was transferable from Kohein to Kohein, whereas the turban had to be fit to the head of the individual for whom it was first wrapped and could not be transferred from one Kohein to another. What is the Rambam's source for this ruling?

When the Torah records the donning of the kuttonos and migbaos, these garments are listed in the plural form for they had to be tailor-made to fit each individual Kohein. By switching to the singular form for the avneit the Torah is revealing to us that it was not necessary to have a special avneit for each outfit, for it was transferable; each Kohein could wrap the thirty-two amah avneit to accommodate his girth. Whereas each Kohein needed his own tunic and turban, in theory only one avneit had to be made. The Rambam deduced that the reason the turban was not transferable was that it had to be permanently wrapped the first time worn, tailor-made to accommodate its wearer.

1.Yad Hil. Klei Mikdosh 8:19

The Jewish Problem

Come, let us deal wisely with them..." (1:10).

The Torah relates that the Mitzrim were afraid that Bnei Yisroel were becoming too numerous. Looming over their heads was the possibility that in the case of a war Bnei Yisroel would join forces with the enemy and drive the Mitzrim out of their land. Pharaoh and his advisors devised a course of action to prevent their worst fears from materializing.

The Ba'al Haggada states "vayarei'u osanu hamitzrim" - "the Mitzrim dealt with us in a malevolent manner", as it is recorded in the Torah "havah nischakmah lo" - "come let us deal wisely with them". Why is Pharaoh's strategizing as to how to deal with a perceived threat viewed as a malicious act against Bnei Yisroel? His solution and the manner in which his orders were executed should be cited as examples of his evil behavior, not his desire to protect his nation's security.

In contemporary society we search continuously for methods by which we can categorize different conditions and behaviors. By identifying and labeling a problem we gain a certain confidence that the problem can be corrected. Unfortunately, often in our haste to identify a situation which we are having difficulty controlling, we mislabel a condition and create a problem where no problem exists. Particularly when dealing with children, care must be taken to ensure that we, as parents and educators, do not label our children as "problems". Even when the correct diagnosis has been made, we must proceed with caution to ensure that we do not transform a child with a problem into a "problem child". The grossest injustice that can be done to a person is to label him as a problem. The damage caused to a child's self-esteem due to the manner in which he is perceived by others and consequently comes to view himself, can be irreparable.

Whereas the harm which Bnei Yisroel suffered at the hands of the Mitzrim lasted only for the duration of time they spent in servitude and affected only those who were present, the perception created by Pharaoh that Jews are a public menace still haunts us today. The ultimate act of evil perpetrated against Bnei Yisroel by Pharaoh was labeling them as "the Jewish Problem".

1:1:9,10