

# TRIBUTE OF ANONYMITY

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 363, The Mazik on Purim. Good Shabbos!*

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## Why Kohanim Need Not Have Priestly Garments Checked For Shatnez

This week's parsha is devoted almost exclusively to the bigdei kehunah [priestly garments]. The regular kohanim [priests] wear four garments and the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] wears eight.

The purpose of these beautiful uniforms was for the honor and glory of the Master of the Universe. The overriding theme of the bigdei kehunah is that they are to be made for "honor and glory" (l'kavod u'l'Tiferes). The kohanim were the so-called "Palace Guard", because our palace is the Beis HaMikdash, the Temple.

There are two unique anomalies regarding the bigdei kehunah. The first anomaly is that these garments -- by requirement -- contain shatnez, the forbidden mixture of wool and linen threads. Under normal circumstances, if someone prays while wearing a shatnez garment, his prayer is rejected for forty days! That is an indication of how unappealing shatnez is to G-d. Nonetheless, the kohanim who were performing the service were not only allowed to wear shatnez, they absolutely had to wear shatnez!

The second anomaly regarding bigdei kehunah is the emphasis on 'hidur' -- on beautification of the mitzvah. Normally, 'hidur mitzvah' [beautifying the performance of a mitzvah] is always appropriate. We should strive to acquire beautiful Tefillin, a beautiful Esrog, etc. We strive to light Chanukah candles in the most beautiful manner (mehadrin min ha'mehadrin). But the lack of 'hidur' does not prevent a mitzvah from being effective. If we cannot find a beautiful Esrog or beautiful Tephillin, we can still fulfill the mitzvah with simple but Kosher varieties of these Mitzvah objects.

However, the entire purpose of the bigdei kehunah is, as mentioned, for honor and glory. Consequently, if a Kohen knowingly wears a ripped or soiled priestly garment, he can deserve death at the hand of Heaven. In this situation, 'Hidur' is a requirement, the lack of which renders the wearing of bigdei kehunah forbidden. We do not find such a phenomenon anywhere else.

Rav Avigdor Nevinsahl, the Chief Rabbi of the Old City of Jerusalem, explains both of these apparent quirks of halacha with a beautiful insight.

In order to understand both anomalies, we must investigate why the Torah forbade the wearing of Shatnez. The prohibition of wearing a garment containing both wool and linen is one of the classic 'Divine Decrees'. It is in the category of mitzvos that seemingly do not have an understandable reason behind them.

The Zohar, however, traces this prohibition to the dispute between Kayin and Hevel (Cain and Abel). Kayin brought an inferior offering of linen from his flax. Hevel brought an offering of wool from his flocks of sheep. Kayin's offering was rejected. He became jealous of Hevel his brother and killed him. This incident involving wool and linen caused the very first murder in the world. Therefore, the Torah forbade to Jews the unification of wool and linen in a single garment.

What, in fact, was Kayin's problem? He was the first person in the world to bring an offering to G-d. Once he was bringing the offering already, why didn't he make it nice, do it right? Why did he just take the first thing that came to his hand?

The Mesilas Yesharim explains that Kayin's error was that he did not think that form made a difference. We all know there is a dichotomy between 'form' and 'substance'. Kayin was a 'substance' person. "As long as you do the mitzvah, who cares how you do it? Isn't the main thing just the substance?"

The Mesilas Yesharim responds to Kayin: No. That is not always true. Form and meticulousness count as well. The way one offers a sacrifice to G-d reveals something about the one who brings the offering.

When a person gives a check to a Bride and Groom at a wedding, he does not just write out a check, rip it out of the checkbook and hand it to them. He writes a nice card, puts it in a nice envelope and so forth. The bottom line is that a check is a check, but the mode of delivery says something. It tells the recipient that the giver wants to honor them.

This was Kayin's problem -- the inability to understand that form does matter. We should not get too caught up in form, but form does have its place.

The tikun ['correction'] for Kayin's sin is precisely the Mitzvah that emphasizes form -- the bigdei kehunah. Form is the critical component of the mitzvah. When serving G-d, 'hidur' becomes crucial. Form is essential. This mitzvah represents the diametric opposite of Kayin's behavior.

This is why there is no prohibition of shatnez by the bigdei kehunah. The prohibition of shatnez directly relates to Kayin's inattention to the importance of form. Since the bigdei kehunah represents the antithesis to Kayin's action -- in that it is the epitome of form, the need to observe shatnez is no longer present.

## **Moshe Not Mentioned In Tetzaveh: The Tribute of Anonymity**

There is a very famous statement of the Baal HaTurim in this week's parsha. The Baal HaTurim notes that this is the only Parsha in the Torah after the birth of Moshe that does not mention his name. He attributes this to Moshe's offer "Erase me from your book that you have written" when he was pleading on behalf of the Jewish people after the sin of the Golden Calf.

When a wise man utters a curse -- even a conditional curse -- the curse is destined to be fulfilled. This is the fulfillment of Moshe's self-curse. Ironically, every year the reading of this parsha falls out during the week of the Yahrtzeit [anniversary of the death] of Moshe Rabbeinu.

This is a strange Baal HaTurim. Moshe's pleading on behalf of the Jewish people was a very noble deed. As a result of his efforts, the Jewish people were saved. The Succas Dovid cites a Zohar that if Noach would have waged such a forceful argument to G-d on behalf of his generation, the Flood would have never occurred. It doesn't seem fair that Moshe should be punished for such heroic efforts.

The Succas Dovid consequently explains that the omission of Moshe's name in Parshas Tetzaveh is not a punishment. It is the price, however, that he was willing to pay. He knew that offering "erase me from the Book You have written" was going to cost him. But he said, "I do not care. I am more worried about the Jewish people than about my honor."

Parshas Tetzaveh is not a punishment. It is the tribute to the self-sacrifice of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was willing to have his name erased from the Torah, in order to save the Jewish people.

There are two places where the Torah mentions accolades about Moshe. One place is in Parshas BeHaaloscha after Miriam and Aaron apparently spoke against Moshe and G-d chastised them. The other place is in Parshas Zos HaBracha where the Torah relates his final obituary. Seemingly, these are the only two places where the Torah provides testimony to Moshe's greatness.

The Baal HaTurim is telling us that there is a third parsha that speaks volumes about the character and qualities of Moshe Rabbeinu. Parshas Tetzaveh shows us how much Moshe Rabbeinu loved the Jewish people. He loved them so much that he was willing to forgo having his name in the Torah in order to save them. Parshas Tetzaveh provides 'silent testimony' to the greatness of Moshe. It illustrates the ultimate self-sacrifice that the leader had for his people. That is why it is not ironic, but most appropriate that this tribute should be paid to Moshe, specifically on the week of his Yahrtzeit.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Tezaveh are provided below:

- Tape # 045 - The Gartel: To Wear or Not to Wear
- Tape # 088 - Parshas Zachor and Other Purim Issues
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- Tape # 229 - Purim Issues II
- Tape # 273 - Taanis Esther and the Personal Purim
- Tape # 319 - Conditional Licht Benching
- Tape # 363 - The "Mazik" on Purim
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