

Parshas Tetzaveh – David Freedman (reprinted)

י"א אדר תש"פ – 7th March 2020 – שבת פי תצוה - זכור

The sedra devotes the entire chapter 28, (43 verses), to details of the making and wearing of the BIGDAI KEHUNAH, the priestly Garments. We are informed of the four garments worn by the ordinary Kohen, Kohen Hedyat, and the additional four worn by the Kohen Godol. The Gemara (Zevachim 88b) teaches us that each of the garments provided an atonement for a different sin of the nation. The garments, and the sins atoned for, are as follows:

Bigdai Kohen Hedyat made of white linen
Kesones – shirt - accidental murder
Michnasayim - breeches/trousers - immorality
Avnait – belt - evil feelings of the heart
Mitznefes - turban - arrogance

Bigdai Kohen Godol
Me'il - mantle - slander, lashan hora
Ephod - apron - idol worship
Choshen - breastplate - false judgement, sins committed connected to the heart
Tzitz - headplate - stubbornness

The posuk states (28.2) that Moshe was to "**make vestments for the sanctity of Aaron, your brother, for Glory and Splendor LECHOVOD UL'SIFORES.**"

Our Rabbis teach that any Kohen not properly dressed who officiates without all his garments is liable to penalty by death. Many questions arise from the chapter of Bigdai Kehunah. Why so much detail and why such elaborate clothing; is dressing up the Jewish way? How and why did each item atone for the particular sin on the nation?

We shall look at a few explanations of the many offered although the writer encourages all to research further on this vast subject. Ramban suggests that Glory and Splendor are the hallmark of Royalty, to enhance the dignity and status of the Kohen within the Kehilla. We learn elsewhere that clothing serves two purposes; to enhance the wearers' beauty whilst also covering up their nakedness. This analogy also can be applied to the Bigdai Kehunah. The Gemara suggests that the clothing cover the collective nakedness of the sins on the nation, whilst also enhancing the prestige, glory and splendor of the officiants. The Ksav Sofer suggests a slightly different perspective. Unique magnificent attire serves to remind the wearer that he occupies a special position of responsibility and must not lower his standards to that of the general populace. Also unique attire informs the people that the wearers are of special status and proper respect must be maintained. With Aaron, the Torah speaks only of Glory and Splendor, as there is no need to remind Aaron of his responsibilities of high office.

So how did each individual garment atone for the particular sin of Bnai Yisroel?

For example, the Me'il, which atoned for lashan hora, was made of turquoise wool, woven with twelve strands. It had no sleeves and was worn on top of the Kesones. The Kohen Godol put it on over his head as the neckband was doubled to prevent tearing. Its shape was similar to a Talis Koton. The turquoise colour was reminiscent of the oceans that have set boundaries to remind us that our speech should remain within permitted confines, whilst the turquoise blue also reminds us of the heavens and the ever presence of Hashem. Its bottom edge was also doubled to take the weight of the alternate thirty six golden bells and thirty six pomegranates.

PAAMON ZOHOV VERIMON, PAAMON ZOHOV VERIMON golden bells and pomegranates; golden bells and pomegranates.

Although Hashem was certainly aware who was entering, the sound of the bells was to give notice to the angels to allow the Kohen Godol entrance to perform his tasks without harm and also for the Kohen Godol to request permission to leave. Perhaps this is the reason why we should knock before entering unannounced and ask permission of others to leave. The Gemara, (Arachim 16a) also states that the Me'il atones for lashon hora for the nation. It asks why if the Me'il atones for lashon hora, why does the speaker of lashon hora become afflicted with tzaras? Though distinguishing between the different types of lashon hora, the thirty six clappers on the golden bells is a manifestation of the thirty six types of tzaras.

On one hand the pomegranates allude to silence that one must generally maintain, (Avos 1:17: *none is more fitting to a man than silence*), particularly with regard to others, whilst the bell symbolises the positive power of speech, one must use for prayer, Torah study and helping others. As the Chafetz Chaim puts it "if one uses his speech sparingly and selectively, the Torah promises that his prayers will be answered" as stated in this week's Sedra, **its (his) sound will be heard when he enters the sanctuary before Hashem** (28.35). After all, it was not mankind that invented fashion design and haute couture, but Hashem who made the first clothes and dressed the first individual "the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and he clothed them, (Bereshis 3.21).

May we merit the Bigdai Kehunah in our midst and the building of the Beis Hamikdash speedily in our days.