



Chassidut on the Parsha II Parshat Tetzaveh-Spiritual Clothing Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Parshat Tetzaveh describes the special clothing worn by the *kohanim* during their service in the *Beit Hamikdash*. The “white clothing” consisted of a shirt, pants, turban, and belt. The *kohen gadol* wore an additional set, the “gold clothing.” This included a breastplate, a gold plate worn around the forehead, an apron, and a long coat.

The Zohar writes that the white clothing relate to the “*Shem Havaya*” and the gold clothing relate to the “*Shem Adnut*.” The “*Shem Havaya*” signifies Hashem’s expression of *chesed*, His expansion and desire to give. The *Shem Adnut* symbolizes *din*, justice and constriction. Hashem uses *chesed* – He is limitless, kind, and gives of Himself constantly. However, He also uses *din* – He established limitations and constrictions in the form of the laws of nature, moral laws, and the *halachot* of the Torah.

Hashem created us in His divine image. We are like clay designed to be molded in His form. The more we imitate the *middot* of Hashem, the more we fulfill the purpose of creation. White represents *chesed*. It supports all colors. You can take any color and place it on a white background and it will keep its original color. Gold (including

yellow and red) signifies *din*. Blood symbolizes justice. Therefore, the Zohar concludes, the white clothing corresponds to *chesed* and the gold clothing represents *din*.

Just as *chesed* and *din* can be used for good, they can be perverted for evil. Hashem created equal powers of good and evil, so we would have free choice. The three cardinal sins stem from distorted *chesed* and *din*. The Shem MiShmuel notes that there is a fourth sin that contains the seeds of all the three sins. The prime expression of a criminal personality is the act of speaking *lashon hara*. One who involves himself in character assassination will ultimately come to idol worship, murder, and adultery. This is a result of a breakdown of *din* and *chesed*.

The Gemara in Zevachim explains that the eight priestly garments atoned for eight sins committed by the Jewish people. The white clothing atoned for sins related to perversion of *chesed*. The gold clothing atoned for sins related to *din*. The shirt atoned for murder. The pants corresponded to adultery. The turban related to the sins of egoism and self centeredness which are the foundation of idolatry. The belt atoned for evil thoughts of the heart. The breastplate corresponded to

miscarriages of justice. The apron related to idol worship, as the priests of idolatry would wear an outer robe resembling an apron. The gold plate corresponded to the sin of brazenness related to crimes of immorality. The coat atoned for *lashon hara*, which includes all sins.

Din relates to the intellectual mind, which institutes laws and creates rules and regulations. Therefore, the gold clothing represents *sechel*. The white clothing corresponds to the heart and emotions, which are related to *chesed*.

The four levels of sin and atonement correspond to the four evil kingdoms. Bavel personified idol worship, Persia adultery, Greece was about murder, and Edom contained all sins. We have survived through the ages in the merit of our three forefathers and Moshe. Avraham stood against idolatry, Yitzchak against adultery, and Yaakov against murder. Moshe, who gave us the Torah, encompassed everything. He taught us how to balance *chesed* and *din* by following the path of the Torah.

The Kohanim properly balanced *chesed* and *din*. May their lesson become a reality for all of us.