

Parshat Tetzaveh: Equilibrium and Expiation

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The Asufat Maarachot cites the *Medrash* that when Adam brought his offering to Hashem, he wore his "priestly garments," the garments which Hashem had clothed him in when He banished Him from Eden at the onset of *Shabbat*. Rabbi Goldwicht sees an inherent connection between these garments, the priestly vestments, and the clothing we reserve for *Shabbat*.

Rabbi Z. Epstein suggests that Hashem's purpose in clothing Adam in these garments was to raise his spirits from depression after his sin, to allude to his ability to raise himself once again and invest himself in the Divine light that still existed but was now hidden from him. Likewise, the *Baal Haturim* notes that the word the *Torah* uses for Hashem clothing Adam (*vayalbishem*), is used only one other time, in clothing Aharon in his priestly garments. Since the priestly service was meant to bring us back to the state of man prior to the sin, when primal light infused the world, these garments represent the ability of both Adam and of the priests to bring us back to a state of spiritual purity and inner glory.

Einei Yisroel explains that a person's clothing reveals his inner truth and creates an inner and outer attitude that influences him and defines his mission, as the saying goes, one must dress for the job. The "job" of Adam after his sin and the "job" of the priests is to bring us back to the pre sin spiritual state of mankind.

It is the concept of *kavod*, glory, that connects

the three sets of clothing, continues Rabbi Goldwicht. The Prophet Isaiah uses the word *Lehichabduhu*, they will honor it, in reference to our special *Shabbat* clothing. Likewise, the priestly garments are specifically referred to as *lechovod uletiferet*. Finally, Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer interprets the *kotnot ohr*, the garments of skin in which Hashem clothed Adam and Eve as garments of glory.

Before Adam's sin, God's glory was openly manifest throughout the world. After the sin, that light was hidden under layers that veiled God's presence, as clothing covers the physical body. Our mission is to uncover that hidden spark of Godliness in every physical entity.

Similarly, the service of the priests in offering their sacrifices, writes Rabbi Goldwicht, was also meant to reveal the Godliness of the world, for each category of offerings represented a different category of matter, animal, vegetable, and inert. Similarly, each of the priestly garments represented another area of human frailty and possible sin for which the priest was seeking atonement, explains Rabi D. Schneur, citing the Gemarra, in *Naot Desheh*. The clothing the priest wore enabled him to realize that holiness is within everything, but, just as clothing covers the human, physicality also covers the innate spirituality of everything, and just as we can reveal the spirituality within man, so must we strive to reveal the spirituality within God's world. The priest with his service in his priestly garments served both as atonement and as a

model for our behavior.

Likewise, just as *Shabbat* brings the physical and spiritual worlds into equilibrium in time, the *Shabbat* clothing is meant to bring our physical bodies in harmony with our spiritual essence, as it was at creation.

Nevertheless, it was only the *kohain* who wore the priestly garments. How could he thus atone for all of *Bnei Yisroel*? Rabbi D. Hofstедter suggests that since our nation is often referred to as *k'ish echad*, as if we are one person, the priest can represent all of us. Additionally, as clothes have the ability to elevate the priest, so do they also have the power to uplift all who see him in those clothes.

The *Tiv Hatorah* based on the *Ari Hakodosh* explains that clothes are a reflection of a person's spiritual reality and significance, and changing one's physical clothing changes one's inner spiritual energy, and vice versa. Just as the priestly vestments were transformative, so too are *Shabbat* clothes transformative.

Halekach Vehalebuv notes that while Man lost the spiritual clothing of light with Adam's sin, we regained it when we accepted the *Torah* at *Sinai*. But it was not instantaneous. We were told to wash and to wear clean clothes in preparation. That change of clothing already transformed us and made us fitting vessels for God's spirit to unite our physical bodies with our spiritual souls.

Material Requests in Shemone Esrei

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The third series of brachot in *Shemone Esrei* is for material things. In the first blessing we ask Hashem to see our pain. Exile is a painful state. It's hard for us to realize that now, because materially we're at a much better state than the previous generations were. But in truth, exile created the apologetic mentality. It made us lose track of who we were and caused a great deal of fragmentation. Although things may be relatively easier now, there's still no place on earth where a Jew feels completely safe. So, we ask Hashem to

see our pain and redeem us for the sake of His name. The Maharal says that redemption means going back to being ourselves. We ask Hashem to bring us back to that state. We conclude the *bracha*, "Blessed are you Hashem who redeems Israel." The present tense indicates that everything we're going through now is a step towards ultimate redemption.

In the next blessing we ask for healing. "If you heal us Hashem, we will be healed, if you help us, we will be helped." The commentators

explain that the repetition is meant to include both physical and mental healing.

There are two types of mental illness. The first is physiological, something is not operative in the person's body such as the wrong number of genes or an injury. An ill person has a different set of choices than a healthy person. We who are not suffering have no way of appreciating the significance of these peoples' lives and the validity of their choices. For example, a Down Syndrome child who gives a

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cookie to another child might have offered a much greater sacrifice than a millionaire who donated a building to charity.

There's another kind of mental illness which is a consequence of people making bad choices until they eventually walk through a door that says no return. Picture a person who didn't grow up in the most nurturing environment. He tries to compensate by attempting to get other people to give him validation. If he doesn't get it, because the amount he demands is disproportionate to what a normal relationship will normally bring about it, it will impede his ability to have relationships. It may get worse and he might start hallucinating that everyone hates him. He might start seeing wrongs which were never intended or never even happened. At that point employment becomes tricky. Let's say it goes even further and he starts fantasizing that there are bad

guys waiting to get him until he ends up killing innocent people. To what degree is a person held accountable? Only Hashem can judge. You might say- "I would've never responded that way." That might be true. But only Hashem knows if the mental illness is physiological or self-inflicted. Therefore, we still pray for them.

How should we view the role of a doctor? The Rambam describes three levels.

The worst way is to think that the illness has nothing to do with you and is not a challenge from Hashem. It's seeing yourself as a victim and seeing your recovery as depending totally on the expertise of the doctor. People deity doctors. We can all rise above that.

The middle way is to know that there's a reason for the illness and part of the effort to respond is to treasure your body enough to try

to heal it by going to the doctor. Whether or not he succeeds depends only on Hashem. The perspective should be, I need a body that works to serve Hashem. The doctor is only a messenger. Maybe Hashem will heal you through him and maybe not. You won't deify him if he succeeds and you won't be angry if he fails because it's not up to him at all.

The highest level is to say that the illness is part of the great spectrum in which Hashem is saying, "Find me in the dark places." Perhaps it might be through encouraging others or through deep *tefillah*. You go to the doctor because it's part of the game of not expecting miracles. But you don't see him as a major part of the drama. You're not as much concerned with the illness itself as with seeing how you can reveal Hashem, though He seems concealed.

Purim: The Power of Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

When the evil decree to annihilate the Jewish people became known, the city of Shushan sank into mourning. Mordechai Hatzadik tore his clothing, donned sack and ashes, and entered the city crying bitterly. He came till the gates of the palace but could not enter dressed as he was. Esther sent Mordechai clothing so that he could enter the palace, but he refused to don them. Instead, he asked Hasach to relay to Esther that she should go to the king and plead for her nation.

The *Megilah* tells us, "And Mordechai knew all that had happened..." Chazal explain that he knew not only what had transpired between Achashveirosh and Haman, but what was happening in heaven. He knew what the true cause of the decree was, namely that the Jews had sinned by attending the feast of Achashveirosh. They now needed to rectify it. If the Jewish people had detached themselves from Hashem, the solution now had to be to reconnect to Him again via prayer.

The word for sacrifices in Hebrew is *korbonot* which comes from the root word, *l'hakriv*, to come closer. When the *Beit Hamikdash* was destroyed, prayer became the medium through which the Jewish people could come closer to Hashem.

Why did the negotiations that was supposed to take place between Mordechai and Esther, happen through Hasach? The Gaon of Vilna explains that Mordechai did not want to stop praying for even the short time it would have taken to change his clothes and enter the palace. He wanted to emphasize a point. Hashem allows us to do whatever is necessary in order to get out of difficult situations. But there are two approaches. The first approach is where the goal is just to get rid of the painful situation. The second approach requires thinking more deeply. It's asking oneself- "What is the cause? Why did this come upon me?" The goal is to rectify the cause of the problem. One can pray in a time of difficulty

because one wants the suffering to end, but that's not the ultimate goal. We have to look for the cause which is detachment from Hashem. This means that our goal should be to re-connect through prayer.

Normally, when we encounter a difficult situation, we do what we need to do and in order to succeed we also add prayer. Mordechai taught us to do the exact opposite. If a painful reality will change, it will happen based on our behavior and if Hashem wills it. The first thing we need to do is pray and reconnect to Hashem. Then we can plan a practical course of action. And that is exactly what Mordechai did. He cried out to Hashem. He led the nation in fasting and praying. Then he devised a plan to foil the evil decree.

At the moment when Achashveirosh wanted to annihilate the nation, Mordechai taught the Jewish people a timeless lesson. It is only the power of prayer that can turn things around.