

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**W**ith Tetzaveh something new enters Judaism: Torat cohanim, the world and mindset of the priest. Rapidly it became a central dimension of Judaism. It dominates the next book of the Torah, Vayikra. Until now, though, priests in the Torah have had a marginal presence.

For the first time in our parsha we encounter the idea of a hereditary elite within the Jewish people, Aaron and his male descendants, whose task was to minister in the sanctuary. For the first time we find the Torah speaking about robes of office: those of the priests and the high priest worn while officiating in the sacred place. For the first time too we encounter the phrase, used about the robes: lekavod ule-tiferet, "for glory and beauty." Until now kavod in the sense of glory or honour has been attributed only to G-d. As for tiferet, this is the first time it has appeared in the Torah. It opens up a whole dimension of Judaism, namely the aesthetic.

All these phenomena are related to the mishkan, the sanctuary, the subject of the preceding chapters. They emerge from the project of making a "home" for the infinite G-d within finite space. The question I want to ask here, though, is: do they have anything to do with morality? With the kind of lives the Israelites were called on to live and their relationships to one another? If so, how? And why does the priesthood appear specifically at this point in the story?

It is common to divide the religious life in Judaism into two dimensions. There was the priesthood and the sanctuary, and there were the prophets and the people. The priests focused on the relationship between the people and G-d, mitzvot bein adam la-Makom. Prophets focused on the relationship between the people and one another, mitzvot bein adam le-chavero. The priests supervised ritual and the prophets spoke about ethics. One group was concerned with holiness, the other with virtue. You don't need to be holy to be good. You need to be good to be holy, but that is an entrance requirement, not what being holy is about. Pharaoh's daughter who rescued Moses when he was a baby, was good but not holy. These are two separate ideas.

In this essay I want to challenge that conception. The priesthood and the sanctuary made a

moral difference, not just a spiritual one. Understanding how they did so is important not only to our understanding of history but also to how we lead our lives today. We can see this by looking at some important recent experimental work in the field of moral psychology.

Our starting point is American psychologist Jonathan Haidt and his book, *The Righteous Mind*. Haidt makes the point that in contemporary secular societies our range of moral sensibilities has become very narrow. He calls such societies WEIRD -- Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic. They tend to see more traditional cultures as rigid, hidebound and repressive. People from those traditional cultures tend to see Westerners as weird in abandoning much of the richness of the moral life.

To take a non-moral example: A century ago in most British and American (non-Jewish) families, dining was a formal occasion. The family ate together and would not begin until everyone was at the table. They would begin with grace, thanking G-d for the food they were about to eat. There was an order in which people were served or served themselves. Conversation around the table was governed by conventions. There were things you might discuss and others deemed unsuitable.

Today that has changed completely. Many British homes do not have a dining table. A recent survey showed that half of all meals in Britain are eaten alone. The members of the family come in at different times, take a meal from the freezer, heat it in the microwave, and eat it watching a television or computer screen. That is not dining but serial grazing.

Haidt became interested in the fact that his American students reduced morality to two principles, one relating to harm, the other to fairness. On harm they thought like John Stuart Mill who said, that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." For Mill this was a political principle but it has become a moral one: if it doesn't harm others, we are morally entitled to do what we want.

The other principle is fairness. We don't all have the same idea of what is fair and what not, but we all care about basic rules of justice: what is right for some should be right for all, do as you would be done to, don't bend the rules to your advantage and so on.

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Often the first moral sentence a young child utters is, "That's not fair." John Rawls formulated the best known modern statement of fairness: "Each person has an equal right to the most extensive liberties compatible with similar liberties for all."

Those are the ways WEIRD people think. If it's fair and does no harm, it is morally permissible. However -- and this is Haidt's fundamental point -- there are at least three other dimensions of the moral life as understood in non-WEIRD cultures throughout the world.

One is loyalty and its opposite, betrayal. Loyalty means that I am prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of my family, my team, my co-religionists and my fellow citizens, the groups that help make me the person I am. I take their interests seriously, not just my own.

Another is respect for authority and its opposite, subversion. Without this no institution is possible, perhaps no culture either. The Talmud illustrates this with a famous story about a would-be proselyte who came to Hillel and said, "Convert me to Judaism on condition that I accept only the Written Torah, not the Oral Torah." Hillel began to teach him Hebrew. The first day he taught him aleph-bet-gimmel. The next day he taught him gimmel-bet-aleph. The man protested, "Yesterday you taught me the opposite." Hillel replied, "You see, you have to rely on me even to learn the aleph-bet. Rely on me also about the Oral Torah." (Shabbat 31a) Schools, armies, courts, professional associations, even sports, depend on respect for authority.

The third arises from the need to ring-fence certain values we regard as non-negotiable. They are not mine to do with as I wish. These are the things we call sacred, sacrosanct, not to be treated lightly or defiled.

Why are loyalty, respect and the sacred not how liberal elites think in the West? The most fundamental answer is that WEIRD societies define themselves as groups of autonomous individuals seeking to pursue their own interests with minimal interference from others. Each of us is a self-determining individual with our own wants, needs and desires. Society should let us pursue those desires as

far as possible without interfering in our or other people's lives. To this end, we have developed principles of rights, liberty and justice that allow us peacefully to coexist. If an act is unfair or causes someone to suffer, we are prepared to condemn it morally, but not otherwise.

Loyalty, respect and sanctity do not naturally thrive in secular societies based on market economics and liberal democratic politics. The market erodes loyalty. It invites us not to stay with the product we have used until now but to switch to one that is better, cheaper, faster, newer. Loyalty is the first victim of market capitalism's "creative destruction."

Respect for figures of authority -- politicians, bankers, journalists, heads of corporations -- has been falling for many decades. We are living through a loss of trust and the death of deference. Even the patient Hillel might have found it hard to deal with someone brought up on the creed of "We don't need no education, We don't need no thought control."

As for the sacred, that too has been lost. Marriage is no longer seen as a holy commitment, a covenant. At best it is viewed as a contract. Life itself is in danger of losing its sanctity with the spread of abortion on demand at the beginning and "assisted dying" at the end.

What makes loyalty, respect and sanctity key moral values is that they create a moral community as opposed to a group of autonomous individuals. Loyalty bonds the individual to the group. Respect creates structures of authority that allow people to function effectively as teams. Sanctity binds people together in a shared moral universe. The sacred is where we enter the realm of that-which-is-greater-than-the-self. The very act of gathering as a congregation can lift us into a sense of transcendence in which we merge our identity with that of the group.

Once we understand this distinction we can see how the moral universe of the Israelites changed over time. Abraham was chosen by G-d "so that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the lord by doing what is right and just" (tzedakah umishpat). What his servant looked for when choosing a wife for Isaac was kindness, chessed. These are the key prophetic virtues. As Jeremiah said in G-d's name: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, or the strong of their strength, or the rich of their wealth but let one who boasts, boast about this: that they have the understanding to know Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness (chessed mishpat u-tzedakah) on earth, for in these I delight" (Jer. 9: 23-24).

Kindness is the equivalent of care which is the opposite of harm. Justice and righteousness are specific forms of fairness. In other words the prophetic virtues are close to those that prevail today in the liberal democracies of the West. That is a measure of the

impact of the Hebrew Bible on the West, but that is another story for another time. The point is that kindness and fairness are about relationships between individuals. Until Sinai, the Israelites were just individuals, albeit part of the same extended family that had undergone exodus and exile together.

After the revelation at Mount Sinai the Israelites were a covenanted people. They had a sovereign: G-d. They had a written constitution: the Torah. They had agreed to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Yet at the golden calf they showed that they had not yet understood what it is to be a nation. They were a mob. The Torah says, "Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughing-stock to their enemies." That was the crisis to which the sanctuary and the priesthood were the answer. They turned Jews into a nation.

The service of the sanctuary performed by the cohanim in their robes worn le-kavod, "for honour," established the principle of respect. The mishkan itself embodied the principle of the sacred. Set in the middle of the camp, the Sanctuary and its service turned the Israelites into a circle at whose centre was G-d. And even though, after the destruction of the Second Temple, there was no more sanctuary or functioning priesthood, Jews found substitutes that performed the same function. What Torat cohanim brought into Judaism was the choreography of holiness and respect that helped Jews walk and dance together as a nation.

Two further research findings are relevant here. Richard Sosis analysed a series of voluntary communities set up by various groups in the course of the nineteenth century, some religious, some secular. He discovered that the religious communes had an average lifespan of more than four times longer than their secular counterparts. There is something about the religious dimension that turns out to be important, even essential, in sustaining community.

We now also know on the basis of considerable neuro-scientific evidence that we make our choices on the basis of emotion rather than reason. People whose emotional centres (specifically the ventromedial prefrontal cortex) have been damaged can analyse alternatives in great detail, but they can't make good decisions. One interesting experiment revealed that academic books on ethics were more often stolen or never returned to libraries than books on other branches of philosophy. (Haidt 89) Expertise in moral reasoning, in other words, does not necessarily make us more moral. Reason is often something we use to rationalise choices made on the basis of emotion.

That explains the presence of the aesthetic dimension of the service of the sanctuary. It had beauty, gravitas and majesty. In the time of the Temple it had music. There were choirs of Levites singing psalms. Beauty speaks to emotion and emotion to the

soul, lifting us in ways reason cannot do to heights of love and awe, taking us above the narrow confines of the self into the circle at whose centre is G-d.

The sanctuary and priesthood introduced into Jewish life the ethic of kedushah, holiness, which strengthened the values of loyalty, respect and the sacred by creating an environment of reverence, the humility felt by the people once they had these symbols of the Divine presence in their midst. As Maimonides wrote in a famous passage in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, (Guide III:5) We do not act when in the presence of a king as we do when we are merely in the company of friends or family. In the sanctuary people sensed they were in the presence of the King.

Reverence gives power to ritual, ceremony, social conventions and civilities. It helps transform autonomous individuals into a collectively responsible group. You cannot sustain a national identity or even a marriage without loyalty. You cannot socialise successive generations without respect for figures of authority. You cannot defend the non-negotiable value of human dignity without a sense of the sacred. That is why the prophetic ethic of justice and compassion, had to be supplemented with the priestly ethic of holiness.

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#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

**M**oses and Aaron were the two great leaders of the Israelites in the desert, prophet and priest.

Moses, the master prophet, seems to have arisen to leadership not because he came from a prominent Hebrew family - indeed, the Bible introduces him merely as a child of "a man from the house of Levi who took a Levite woman as a wife" (Exodus 2:1-2), and his adoptive mother with whom he lived his most formative years in the palace of Pharaoh was a gentile Egyptian princess.

The Bible relates three incidents in which Moses fought against acts of injustice - his slaying of an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Hebrew, his berating of a Hebrew raising his hand against another Hebrew, and his protecting a Midianite shepherdess (who later became his wife) from unfair treatment by other Midianite shepherds. Apparently, Moses was chosen by G-d to lead the Israelites not because of his ancestral pedigree, but rather because of his Abrahamic character of compassionate righteousness and of a universal sense of moral justice.

Prophetic leadership apparently depends not on who your parents and grandparents were, but rather on who you are.

Aaron, the high priest, is of very different typology.

Firstly, the priesthood is all about genealogy - priesthood comes exclusively from being born into a family of priests. Hence, in our portion of Tetzaveh - the

only portion in the biblical books from Exodus to Deuteronomy in which Moses's name doesn't appear - the task of setting up the menorah is given to "Aaron and his sons" (Exodus 27:21). The Bible lists them by name, "Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron," and states that they are to be brought forward to serve as priests. Aaron and his sons comprise a unit of familial inheritance from father to son, a phenomenon completely absent in the case of Moses.

The kohanim have special vestments, which they must wear while performing the Sanctuary (or Temple) service: four specific garments for the regular kohanim, and eight specific garments for the high priest. Indeed, if a priest is without his unique garb, he must vacate the Temple Mount - which leads the Talmud to declare that the sanctity of the kohen seems to reside in his external garb. However, the prophet has no distinguishing garment whatsoever.

Apparently, the prophet is a charismatic leader whose only qualification is that he is inflamed with the fiery passion of the spirit of the Lord; the kohen inherits his position, which relies on priestly vestments to bestow "honor and glory" and inspire the masses with prideful religious fervor.

In order to understand the different and complementary roles each of these officiates must play in the drama of Israelite leadership, we must first understand the essence of our Jewish mission. The first task of religion - and the fundamental search of most philosophers from earliest times - is to provide a stable and unchanging constancy in a world of frightening flux, to give people the sense that they are participating in experiences and rituals which were there before they were born and will continue after they die. This allows transient mortals to grasp eternity, and to feel that they are in the presence of G-d.

Herein lies the power and the noble task of the priest, the guardian of our ancient religious traditions. The verse which most defines him is: "Remember the days of old, understand the years of past generations.

Ask your father and he will tell you, your grandfather and he will say to you" (Deut. 32:7). His primary function is to safeguard the rituals; he must hand over the exact structure of the ritual, the precise text of the prayer or legal passage, from generation to generation.

His expertise lies in his mastery of the external form - and preserving it at all costs. But the root of every religion is the sense of awe at being in the presence of G-d, the passionate commitment to Divine command in the here and now! What happens when parts of the ritual lose their relevance, when people get so caught up in the form that they lose the essence, so involved in the precise structure of the Divine service that they forget that the real Divine service lies in their human sensitivity? Then it is the prophet who must

come forth, speaking as the mouthpiece of the Voice of the Living G-d, reminding the religionists that all their ritual is of no value if they forget the poor, the orphan, the widow and the "chained" wife-widow, the other, the stranger, and the proselyte knocking at our door. The prophet's message must insist that G-d despises our rituals (Isaiah 1:11-17), unless "moral justice rolls forth like the waters and compassionate righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5: 24).

Thus far, and especially during these last decades, the Chief Rabbinate in Israel has majored in the priesthood, but is sadly lacking in a prophetic dimension.

The last time that happened, the Holy Temple was destroyed. ©2015 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

If clothes make the man, the garments of the ordinary priests and the High Priest of Israel certainly grant them the authority and holiness of their offices. One of the major disqualifications that affected the priest's ability to perform services in the Temple was that he lacked the proper clothing that characterized and identified him. We find generally in Jewish life that clothing plays an important societal and religious role.

Modesty in dress, special clothing for the Sabbath and holidays and acceptable attire have always been the norms in Jewish society. The clothing of Jews was always affected by the influence of the countries and societies that they lived in. One need only look at the paintings of the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century portraying the Jews and rabbis of Amsterdam at their synagogue services and homes in order to realize how acculturated Jewish dress was, even amongst the most rigorously pious rabbis of the time.

The Church sought to regulate the colors of dress that Jews would be allowed to wear in the Middle Ages. It was the Church that made black the main color motif of Jewish dress. It seems that the Jews in Europe before the time of the Crusades wore brightly colored clothing as did their non-Jewish neighbors. It was only after the official medieval persecution of Ashkenazic Jews by the Church that restrictions were made on the color and type of clothing that could be worn by Jews.

Jews were also forced to wear ludicrous looking hats and badges of shame on their clothing. However, Jews made their forced shameful clothing items of Jewish pride and long after the decline of the Church and the abolition of such degrees (though they were restored by the Germans in World War II) Jews continued to wear informal peasant dress, strange hats and caps and mainly black clothing. The rule regarding all clothing was that it be modest and presentable.

The garments of the High Priest of Israel were

ornate, unique and very luxurious in manufacture and appearance. In contrast, the garments of the ordinary priests of Israel were simple, sparse and sparkling white. If the garments of the High Priest represented majesty, grandeur and power of leadership, the garments of the ordinary priests represented holiness and service.

Not everyone could aspire to achieve majesty and grandeur – there was only one High Priest present at any one given time during the periods of the First and Second Temples. However purity of life and devotion to service of G-d and of Israel was something that many could achieve. This truth was reflected in the different clothing of the High Priest and of his fellow, but ordinary, priests.

It is to be noted that the High Priest himself also always wore the vestments of the ordinary priests. He had four additional garments that he wore that were of precious metal and fabric and unique to him. But before one could don the garments of majesty, power, grandeur and importance, one had to first learn the lessons of humility, holiness, purity and service to others and to G-d as represented by the clothing of the ordinary priests of Israel. Though we no longer have priestly vestments present in our Jewish society today, the lessons that they taught us should be remembered and followed. ©2015 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

### **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**T**his week's portion deals primarily with the priestly garments. Right at the outset, the Torah states that they were worn by the Priest for "honor" (kavod). In the words of the Torah, "and you shall make Holy garments for your brother Aharon (Aaron), and they shall be for honor (kavod) and beauty (tiferet)." (Exodus 28:2)

But honor seems contrary to the Torah ideal. R. Eliezer HaKapar states: "jealousy, desire and honor take a person from the world." (Avot 4:28) Shouldn't the Torah, therefore, request a priest to aspire to achieve the highest level of humility, rather than honor?

The answer may lie in a deeper understanding of the Hebrew word kavod. Rav Ahron Soloveichik argues that the word kavod contains within it, the root of the word kaved. Kaved means "heavy" and is linked etymologically to kavod. In concrete terms, heaviness is determined by the pull of gravity upon an object. In conceptual terms, weight is determined by the degree of responsibility one has. The greater responsibility (kaved), the greater the potential honor once those obligations are fulfilled.

The meaning of our verse now becomes clear.

The goal of the priestly garments is not honor, but rather to serve as a reminder that the priest has a greater responsibility to the community.

Notwithstanding its relationship with kaved, kavod can still be productive. While honor can sometimes lead to bloating of the ego which, in turn, can get in the way of real accomplishments, it can also be a powerful and important tool to help others. When one assists others, kavod is not only brought to the giver, but G-d is honored as well. Note the liturgy on Shabbat, the Key! Adon prayer that echoes the language of our portion when it states, pe'er v'kavod notnim lishmo, "splendor and honor are given to G-d's name".

Note the Midrash on the verse, "And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:5) The rabbis note that the Hebrew for heart (Lev) is written in the plural (Levavkha). Since the heart symbolizes human nature, the use of the plural here is viewed by the rabbis as meaning that G-d is to be worshipped with both the good and bad inclinations. In the same vein, the natural human tendency to enjoy being honored can be a factor in spurring us to undertake beneficial efforts on behalf of people in need. Perhaps the honor of the priestly garments can lead the Priest to work with greater vigor for Am Yisrael.

Sometimes greater responsibility can lead to honor and, at times, honor can inspire greater commitment. It has often been said that "clothes make the man." The Torah here is completing the sentence, with the teaching that clothes are there to make us act for others. ©2013 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER**

### **Weekly Dvar**

**T**he Torah tells us in this week's portion that the hem of the priestly robe (ephod) would have bells sewn on them. As the priest enters the sanctuary with the bells on his robe, "a voice will be heard" (Exodus 28:33-35). What is the significance of these bells and their "voices"?

Rabbi Avi Weiss explains that among his many duties, the priest would offer atonement for his own sins. As it would be embarrassing for others to be present during this personal process, the bells would signal that those present should leave, allowing the priest private moments with G-d. At the same time it was only fair that people know when the priest was entering so they not be taken by surprise. In fact, privacy is so important that Jewish Law tells us that one should be careful to knock before entering anywhere, even one's own home or a child's room (Pesachim 112a). It is these little bells of privacy and sensitivity to others that should make the Torah so private and

personal to each of us. ©2015 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

### **RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ**

## **Shabbat Shalom Weekly**

**T**he Torah states: "Make a forehead plate of pure gold, and engrave on it in the same manner as a signet ring, (the words), 'Holy to G-d'. Attach a twist of sky-blue wool to it, so that it can be (worn) right near the front of the turban" (Exodus 28:36-37).

Each of the garments of the Cohanim, the Priests who served in the Mishkan, had a spiritual correspondence and influence. The turban, which is on top of the head, atoned for arrogance and conceit. There is, however, a time for pride -- when a person is proud to do the will of the Almighty. The Ksav Sofer, a great rabbi, commented that this is alluded to in our verse. When pride is "holy to the Almighty" then it can be on top of a person's head.

Arrogance is a trait that is detrimental to one's spiritual development and causes many difficulties when dealing with other people. However, when you are proud of fulfilling the Torah commandments, you will continue to do so even if others will mock or insult you. *Based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2015 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

## **Inconspicuous Assumption**

**I**n this week's portion Moshe is charged to prepare every detail of the priesthood for his brother Aharon and his descendants. In intricate detail, the sartorial traits of every one of the priestly vestments are explicated, down to the last intertwined threads.

And though Moshe is in charge of setting up the administration and establishing the entire order of service while training his brother and nephews, his name is conspicuously missing from this portion.

Our sages explain the reason for the omission. When Hashem threatened to destroy His nation, Moshe pleaded with Him: "And now if You would but forgive their sin! -- but if not, erase me now from Your book that You have written"(Exodus 32:32) As we all know, Moshe's plea were accepted. The nation was spared. But Moshe was not left unscathed. His request of written eradication was fulfilled in one aspect. He was left out of one portion of the Torah Tezaveh. Thus the words of the tzadik were fulfilled in one aspect. But why this portion?

Though this English-language publication is not wont to discuss Hebrew etymological derivations, it is noteworthy to mention a thought I once heard in the name of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef. Moshe's plea "erase me now from Your book," bears an explanation. The word sifri'chah, "your book" can be broken down to two words

sefer chaf -- which means the twentieth book. Thus Moshe was removed from this portion of Tezaveh, the twentieth portion of the Torah.

But why would Moshe intone such omission in this, of all the portions of the Torah? Why not omit his name in the portions that declare the tragic outcome of sin or the calamities of insurrection? Wouldn't that be a better choice for omission? Why did Moshe allude to having his name omitted in the week he charges Aharon with all the honor and glory that is afforded the High Priest?

Rav Yitzchak Blaser was once seated at a gathering of the most prominent sages of his generation that was held in his city of St. Petersburg.

Among the Talmudic sages present was Rabbi Yosef Dov HaLevi Soleveitchik of Brisk, world renown for his Talmudic genius. Rabbi Soloveitchik presented a Talmudic question that his young son, Reb Chaim, had asked. After posing the question, a flurry of discussion ensued, each of the rabbis offering his own answer to the riddle, while other rabbis refuted them with powerful rebuttals. During the entire repartee, Rabbi Blaser, who had a reputation as a Talmudic genius, sat silently. He did not offer an answer, nor did he voice approval to any of the answers given by the Rabbis.

When Rabbi Soloveitchik ultimately offered his son's own solution, Rabbi Blaser sat quietly, neither nodding in approval nor shaking his head in disagreement. It seemed as if he did not comprehend the depth of the insightful discourse. It was as if he was not even there! Bewildered, Reb Yosef Dov began having second thoughts about the renowned Rabbi Blaser. "Was he truly the remarkable scholar that the world had made him out to be?" he wondered.

Later that evening, Rabbi Soloveitchik was in the main synagogue where he got hold of the book "Pri Yitzchok," a volume filled with Talmudic exegesis authored by none other than Rabbi Blaser himself.

After leafing through the large volume he saw that the afternoon's entire discourse, his son's question, the offered and reputed responses, and the final resolution, were all part of a dissertation that Rabbi Blaser had himself published years earlier!

"Now I realize," thought Rabbi Soloveitchik, "Rabbi Blaser is as much a genius in humility as he is in Talmudic law!"

Our sages tell us that actually Moshe was to have been chosen as the Kohen Gadol in addition to the leader of the Jewish nation. It was his unwavering refusal to accept any of those positions that lost him the opportunity to serve as Kohen Gadol. Instead, Hashem took it from him and gave it to Aharon.

Many of us would have always harped on the fact. How often do I hear the claims "I got him that job!" "I could have been in his position!" "I started that company! Had I stayed, I would be the one with the stock options!" "That was really my idea!"

Moshe, too, could have injected himself as the one who propelled and engineered Aharon's thrust to glory -- especially after a seemingly tainting experience with the Golden Calf. In his great humility, Moshe did just the opposite.

Moshe did not want to diminish Aharon's glory in any way. He wanted the entire spotlight to shine on Aharon and his great service to Klal Yisrael. Therefore, in the portion in which Moshe charges, guides, and directs the entire process of the priesthood, his name is conspicuously omitted.

One of the greatest attributes of true humility is to let others shine in their own achievement without interfering or announcing your role in their success. The greatest educators, the wisest parents, and most understanding colleagues know when to share the spotlight and when to let another friend, colleague, sibling, or child shine in their success or accomplishment. They know exactly when to be conspicuously or inconspicuously "missing from the book." © 2015 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky ©2015 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

**R**ashi (Sh'mos 28:15 and 28:30) gives us two reasons why the Choshen, the breastplate worn by the Kohain Gadol, is called the "Choshen Mishpat." One of the reasons, based on the Talmud (Z'vachim 88b and Arachin 16a) and the Midrash (Vayikrah Rabbah 10:6; see also Y'rushalmi Yoma 7:3), is that just as the offerings brought in the Mishkan (and in the Temple) atoned for various sins, the Bigday K'hunah (priestly garments) also atoned for certain sins, with the Choshen atoning for perverted justice ("mishpat"). The Kli Yakar provides numerous parallels between the Choshen Mishpat and improperly conducted court cases, including it being one of only two garments that are described as "work requiring thought," something obviously required if judges are to come to the most appropriate decision.

Even though there are parallels between the two, and the very name "Choshen Mishpat" (and the Torah describing Aharon "carrying" the "mishpat" of the Children of Israel) indicates that this garment impacts "judgments," these connections don't tell us why or how the Choshen atones for improper decisions, only that it does. With some garments, such as the pants covering the part of the body involved in adultery, the connection is clear. Is the decision-making process being thought of as coming from the heart enough to warrant the Kohain Gadol wearing the Choshen on his heart being an atonement for bad judicial decisions?

The other reason given by Rashi for it being called the "Choshen Mishpat" is based on its ability to facilitate a definitive answer (when the right kind of question is asked, using the appropriate process). It is

therefore possible that the contrast of only G-d being able to provide a definitive answer with human beings, who are prone to both error and stretching the truth, is what brings about this atonement. Since the only Being to always be right, and always be completely truthful, is G-d, atonement must be available for the inevitable mistakes made by (and through) human judges.

Another possibility is based on the consequences of misapplied justice (whether the misapplication is done inadvertently, as implied by Rashi's wording on 28:15 or done purposely, as implied by his wording on 28:30, or a combination, such as appointing unworthy judges who are not qualified to render decisions, even if their decisions were not purposely wrong). Although there could be a miscarriage of justice in both capital cases and monetary disputes, since we are told (Bamidbar 35:33) that there shall be no atonement for improperly spilled blood, it is unlikely that the miscarriage of justice the Choshen atones for is a court that wrongfully (or mistakenly) put someone to death, or let someone who should have been executed go scot free. True, the context there is different, but the concept is similar; there is no "substitute atonement" for spilled blood (or not avenging it). Besides, there is a strong preference (if not mandate) for the courts to avoid executing anyone (see Makos 7a). Therefore, the atonement of the Choshen is likely limited to a court decision that requires a monetary payment when there shouldn't be one, or not requiring payment or compensation where there should be.

Imagine the following scenario: Two business partners, with multiple shared bank accounts, come before a court, with one partner saying that a check was deposited into the wrong account and the other insisting it was deposited in the right account. Both partners have equal access to both accounts, and the money from each account is shared equally by the partners. (Let's put aside why they have multiple accounts.) Assuming the case isn't thrown out based on its ridiculousness, there can be no "miscarriage of justice" in this situation, because the money belongs to both partners no matter which account it's deposited into. Would a person be upset at himself for putting the change from a purchase in his left pocket instead of his right pocket (assuming neither has a hole in it and he didn't encounter any pick-pockets)? The only way there could be a "miscarriage of justice" in a monetary case is if money that belongs, or should belong, to one party is in someone else's possession instead!

Since the basis for the concept of a financial "miscarriage of justice" to even exist is that there are two distinct parties involved, it is only when the parties see themselves as "distinct" that such a miscarriage can come into play. Although there are, unfortunately, too many cases of siblings fighting over their inheritance, it is certainly possible for children of the

same parents to consider themselves as one "unit," as interested in the financial well-being of their siblings as they are of their own. In such cases, one sibling would never bring another sibling to court over financial matters. By extension, the same can be said of extended family, and of a shared community. Very often, when two members of a community are unsure of something of a financial matter, the involved parties will agree that the money in question should be donated to a community charity. What if each of the two parties had so much "Ahavas Yisroel" that it didn't bother them if the other one had money that rightfully belonged to him? Could the concept of a "miscarriage of justice" apply there?

The Choshen Mishpat had twelve precious stones embedded in it, each with the name of one of the twelve Tribes engraved on it. When the Kohain Gadol wore it, he "carried the judgment of the Children of Israel" (28:30), all as one unit. And if they were really one unit, not twelve separate units, or 600,000 separate units, it really didn't matter which "pocket" the money ended up in; once they are considered one unit, there couldn't be a "miscarriage of justice." Therefore, since the Choshen Mishpat symbolically brought the nation together into one unit, it was able to atone for any (perceived) miscarriage of justice. ©2015 Rabbi D. Kramer

#### RABBI YISROEL CINER

### Parsha Insights

**T**his week's parsha, Tetzaveh, deals primarily with the appointment of the Kohanim {priests} and their garments. Moshe is told: "V'atah {And you} hakrev elecha {should draw close to you} Aharon, your brother, and his sons, from amongst the Children of Israel to serve as kohanim {priests} to me. And you shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother, for honor and for glory. [28:1-2]"

Earlier in Shmos we learned that the kehunah was supposed to come from Moshe. However, when he repeatedly showed reluctance in his being sent to Paroah, Hashem said to him: "Aharon, your brother, the Levi... you will place the words in his mouth and he will speak on your behalf. [4:14-17]" At that point Aharon was appointed to be the Levithe kehunah was taken from Moshe.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that this is why the passuk {verse} stressed "V' atahAnd you!" Don't allow it to be done in a grudging, forced manner but rather, you do it. Accept My will as yours and in that way it will serve as atonement for your earlier hesitation to fulfill My will.

With this, the Ohr HaChaim affords a deeper glimpse into the words "hakrev elechadraw close to you." He explains that a person distances himself from an aspect of the essence of his neshama {soul} by going against Hashem's will. The degree of the

distancing will depend on the extent of the infraction.

Moshe, by resisting Hashem's mission to Paroah, caused a breach between himself and an aspect of his neshama. Even with the result that Aharon and his descendants would now be the kohanim, Moshe needed to willingly accept this. "V'atahAnd you" should play the willing role in the official appointing of Aharon to this position.

"V'atah {And you} hakrev elecha {draw close to you}..." By doing this you will fulfill the ultimate objective of a person who has gone against the will of Hashem. You will draw close to yourself. To that vital aspect of your essence that you have distanced yourself from. You will draw close to you. Your physical entity, the you of this world, will draw close to your spiritual essencethe eternal you.

The Ohr HaChaim then goes on to say that this gives us an understanding in a very difficult passage of the Talmud. "One is obligated to bless Hashem for evil the same way that he blesses for good. [Berachos 54.]" The same happiness that we feel when things go well should be felt when things go wrong.

He writes that the epitome of evil, the most sorry state that one can be in, is this state of being removed and out of touch with oneself. The recognition that the difficulties we encounter in life are there to enable us to reconnect to our priorities, goals and purpose. This can shed an entirely new light on our perception of these events and can even lead one to ultimately bless Hashem for evil the same way that he blesses for good.

Moshe showed his willingness to accept this decree of Hashem by making and giving those garments "for honor and for glory." By doing so, he was willingly accepting Hashem's will, correcting his previous hesitation to do so and thereby reconnecting to his true essence.

Throughout the years, the Jews in the diaspora have always expressed their solidarity with Israel -- sympathizing and empathizing with the many crises that have been endured. Having recently moved from Israel, it is eerie to see pictures of N.Y. police checking bags before allowing people to carry them into a museum and hearing advisories to prepare sealed rooms. Perhaps this is a way for us to really connect to that greater entity of Israel and by doing so, to connect to ourselves. ©2015 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

