



## *Seeing ourselves in others, the Yom Kippur Perspective 2021*

*The Yom Kippur perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, and Shlomo Ben Edward. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

We are about to begin the holiest time of the year, the day of forgiveness, Yom Kippur. It is a day that we abstain from physical enjoyment to feel the immense holiness that is obvious during this time. A day that its loftiness alone atones for our sins against G-d. A day that our most authentic self is glowing, the essence of our soul.

For nearly twenty-six hours, we will forgo most material pleasures in exchange for spiritual awakening. We spend most of our time in Shul praying to attain angel-like status in the hopes of complete forgiveness and vindication.

The Torah reading on Yom Kippur is from Parshas Acharei Mos, where Moshe Rabbeinu details the unique service of Yom Kippur in the Beis Hamikdash. The holiest person, the Kohen Gadol, would enter the most sacred place in the world — the Kodesh HaKodashim, the holy of holies. He would bring the Ketores, an incense offering to please G-d, as he prayed on behalf of the Jewish people.

Before entering the Kodesh HaKodashim, the Kohen Gadol would change out of his golden priestly garments and wear plain white clothes. The Talmud in Yuma explains, *“En Kategoria Na’asa Sanigor – A prosecutor cannot become a defender.”* Since the standard garments of the Kohen Gadol contained gold, which is reminiscent of the Golden Calf. Hence, he would not wear any gold in the Kodesh HaKodashim to evoke that grave sin.

However, a question comes to mind: When the Kohen Gadol was not in the Kodesh HaKodashim, he **would** wear his ordinary golden garments. But if wearing the golden garments can have such a damaging effect, why does he wear them?

Why doesn't he wear his white priestly garments the whole day and avoid the issue altogether?!

There is a famous story of Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, known as the lawyer of the Jewish people, that should give us some perspective. Once on Tisha B'Av, Reb Levi Yitzchak passed a restaurant and saw a Jew sitting there and eating. Reb Levi Yitzchak approached him and asked if he knew that it was Tisha B'Av? The man calmly answered that he was very much aware that it was a fast day.

Reb Levi Yitzchak proceeded to ask him if he knew that the food he was eating was non-kosher? The man indifferently acknowledged that he knew it was non-kosher food. Reb Levi Yitzchak turned to the heavens and said, **“Master of the world, look how wonderful Your children are! Even when they disobey You, they speak the truth!”**

The previous Chabad Rebbe, Rav Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, explains that most of the Kohen Gadol's service was to prepare him to enter the Kodesh HaKodashim. He would offer personal sacrifices and confess his sins and transgressions to G-d. Therefore, he wore golden garments to remind himself of every single mistake, including **the Golden Calf**.

But when he represented the Jewish people in the Kodesh HaKodashim, he wore white **because they were G-d's children**. To the Kohen Gadol, **each Jew is a pure and unique soul who deserves every blessing G-d has to offer**. It is not his job or responsibility to judge them; rather, remind G-d that the Jewish people are unique, exceptional, **and worthy of His grace**.

The lesson of the Kohen Gadol garments has incredible practicality in our daily life, every day, **we intentionally or unintentionally judge others**. We assess them by their appearance, actions, or preconceived notions looking for their mistakes. But we must realize that we judge others based on our perspective, view, and outlook. Meaning **when we are judging others, we are actually judging ourselves**. However, if we constantly seek out the good in others, we will also find the good in ourselves!

***May we all experience G-d's forgiveness, & a year of health & happiness!***

*Have an easy fast & meaningful Yom Kippur!*

*Rabbi Sholom Yemini*