



Dress to impress, the Purim perspective 2023

The Purim Perspective This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna and Shaul Ben Berta.

The Purim Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha, Tetzaveh, continues to speak about the building and service of the Mishkan. G-d tells Moshe that only the purest of olive oils can be used for the daily kindling of the Menorah. G-d appoints Aaron and his sons to serve as Kohanim in the Mishkan on behalf of the Jewish people.

During their service, the Kohanim must wear the four special Priestly garments, **Michnasayim** - underpants, **Ketones** - a large tunic, **Avnet** - a belt, and **Mitznefes** - a turban.

The Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, would wear four extra garments during his service.

- The **Me'il**, a blue sleeveless robe with the lower hem fringed with small golden bells.
- The **Ephod**, a vest with a gemstone on each shoulder, with the names of each tribe engraved upon it.
- The **Choshen**, a breastplate with twelve gems, each had engraved the name of one of the tribes.
- The **Tzitz**, a golden plate inscribed with the name of G-d, attached to his turban.

However, a question comes to mind: Introducing the special priestly garments, the Pasuk writes (28:2), "וְעָשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אֶתְּךָ לְכָבוֹד וְלִתְפָאֳרָתוֹ - *Make sacred and holy vestments for your brother, Aaron, for dignity and adornment.*" The entire Perek (28) describes the beautiful and intricate designs of the Priestly garments. But why the major emphasis on the physical clothes of the Kohanim? What is the purpose behind the beauty and elegance of the Priestly garments?

The Sforno, Rav Ovadiah Sforno, gives a simple explanation. He answers that the Priestly garments served two different purposes. First, to render honor and glory to G-d by wearing unique and distinct clothing in His home. Second, to inspire awe and reverence for G-d in those who see the sacred garments.

The Sforno explains that just like the servants of a king wear unique uniforms while on duty as a symbol of realness and royalty, so do the Kohanim. They wear sacred and holy vestments to respect and honor the King of kings, the Master of the universe.

However, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks of blessed memory gives a deeper and more profound explanation. In his Torah commentary, *Covenant and Conversation*, he writes that the Priestly garments represent the relationship between G-d and our world.

Judaism seems based on worshiping and serving an invisible and concealed G-d. A religion that rejects physicality for a spiritual journey that is difficult to feel and experience. **But nothing could be further from the truth**, writes Rabbi Sacks.

He explains that at the center and nucleus of Judaism is a physical and tangible relationship with G-d. A connection that encompasses our mind, body and soul. A bond that stems from G-d's Oneness and Perpetuity to our time frame and moment on His earth.

Rabbi Sacks continues that the purpose of the physically beautiful Priestly garments is to illustrate the necessity of a physical relationship with G-d. Although our connection with G-d may seem spiritual, as we say, "שמע ישראל - *Listen o Israel,*" not **see**. The objective of listening, which is innately spiritual, is to see, recognize and witness G-d.

On Yom Kippur, we read about the Kohen Gadol, the high priest who entered the Holy of Holies three separate times. Each one for a unique purpose; the first was to bring the Ketores, an incense offering to please G-d, as he prayed on behalf of the nation.

The next time he entered, he sprinkled the blood of the burnt offering as he asked G-d for atonement and a year of blessings for His nation.

The final time he would enter the Holy of Holies, the Kohen Gadol would take out the burning Ketores - incense he brought in the first time he entered. After he exited the Holy of Holies for the final time, every person would struggle and try to catch a glimpse of the Kohen Gadol.

The prayer describes the aura surrounding the Kohen Gadol after completing the service. *"Like a groom's face after his wedding, like a rose in a beautiful garden, like a bright star on the eastern horizon."*

Seeing the face of Kohen Gadol was the culmination of Yom Kippur. Watching his emergence and observing his euphoric spirit with our very own eyes was the pinnacle of the holiest day, **as it should be in our everyday life.**

This important lesson is evermore relevant as we approach the holiday of Purim. The story of Purim took place after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash when some Jewish people went to the feast with king Achshverosh. This immensely angered G-d, who then allowed Haman to plot the demise of the Jewish nation.

However, the leader of the Jewish people, Mordechai HaTzadik, didn't just sit by and accept this horrific fate. He took 22,000 children to learn Torah openly in the streets and inspired the people to look beyond the evil decree and see the hand of G-d guiding their every move. His incredible belief in G-d and extraordinary actions changed the fate of the Jewish people from a dire outcome to the most joyous holiday.

The lesson of Purim is that our job is to believe in the oneness of G-d and recognize His presence and existence in our physical world. To experience His love and mercy as the Jews in the Purim story and countless others.

The Pasuk says, “*ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששן ויקר*” - *the Jews enjoyed light and gladness, happiness and honor.*” The Talmud in Megillah explains that “*אורה - light*” refers to the Torah.

The Jewish nation showed their complete devotion to G-d at the end of the story. Therefore, they merited to have a spiritual awakening similar to the one at Mt. Sinai by giving the Torah.

May we experience the same spiritual awakening, success, happiness, and prosperity!

*Have a meaningful & joyous Purim,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*