

TETZAVE

CLOTHING OF
JUSTICE AND KINDNESS

A

Four Clothes of Gold, Four Clothes of White

The *parsha* deals with the *bigdei kehuna*, the clothing that the *kohanim* wore in the Mishkan, and later in the Beis Hamikdash. There were two sets of *bigdei kehuna*. The first is called *bigdei lavan*, clothing worn by the regular *kohanim*. The second is called *bigdei zahav*, including golden components and worn only by the *kohen gadol*. Actually, the *kohen gadol* would normally wear both sets. He would wear the four white clothes, and on top of them, he would wear an additional four articles of clothing, the *bigdei zahav*.

Let us discuss the meaning of these eight articles of clothing.

The four kinds of clothing worn by a regular *kohen* are pants, a shirt, a belt, and a turban—simple clothes.

In contrast, the *bigdei zahav* are more elaborate. On his forehead, the *kohen gadol* wore the *tzitz*, a gold plate with strings to fit onto his head. He also wore the *me'il*, a long cloak, the *eiphod*, an elaborate apron, and the *choshen*, a breastplate that held twelve precious stones. The Gemara (Zevachim 88b) explains that these

two sets of clothing functioned as *mechaprim*, providing atonement for the Jewish People for various sins.

The *kesones*/shirt atoned for the crime of murder. When the brothers of Yosef sold him, they stripped him of his *kesones* and dipped it in blood. From here, the picture of a clean white shirt tainted with red blood is connected with the sin of murder. The pants atoned for *giluy arayos*, failings of promiscuity. The turban atoned for egoism and self-centeredness. The belt atoned for bad thoughts of the heart, as it is worn high up near the heart. These are the four white clothes.

The *choshen* atoned for *dinim*, miscarriages of justice. The *eiphod* atoned for idolatry. The *me'il* atoned for *lashon hara*. The *tzitz*, worn by the *kohen gadol* on his forehead, atoned for *azus panim*, *chutzpa* and audacity.

B

Four Letter of Hashem's Names

The Shem Mishmuel develops a systematic idea about the nature of the various sins and their connection to the clothing. He starts with a teaching from the Zohar that the four *bigdei lavan* are associated with God's name of *Havaya*, while the four *bigdei zahav* are associated with God's name of *adnus*.

The *sheim Havaya* is the name of existence. We don't even really know how to pronounce this name. Since it is so exalted, it may only be pronounced in the Beis Hamikdash. It has been thousands of years since we had the Beis Hamikdash, so we don't know exactly how to pronounce that name anymore. On the other hand, we do know how to pronounce the *sheim adnus*. When we pronounce it in the way it is spelled, it means "My Lord."

Each of these names has four letters. The Zohar sees a connection between the two sets of four in both the letters of the two names and the two sets of four garments worn by the *kohanim*.

The four *bigdei lavan* are associated with the letters of the four letters of *Havaya*, and the four *bigdei zahav* are associated with the four letters of *adnus*.

C

Four Letters of *Chesed*, Four Letters of *Din*

Now we will take a deeper look at the meaning of this connection. These two names of Hashem represent two different *middos*: *chesed* and *din*. These are the two pillars of God's creation and how He interacts with the world. In Chassidus and Kabbala, *chesed* represents expansion. Charity and kindness involve reaching out to others and giving. *Din*, on the other hand represents a movement of contraction, limitations, and definition. In the system of justice, rules are well-defined.

Havaya is the name of *chesed* and expansion. This represents the limitless nature of God's being and the infinite goodness and giving of His existence. God is all goodness, and He gives of this goodness all the time. We human beings always benefit from Hashem's goodness just like all other creations of the universe. He supports us and sustains us in untold numbers of ways, from the air that we breathe to the food that we eat to our bodily functions. His *chesed* is limitless. This comes from the concept of the *sheim Havaya*.

Adnus, by contrast, connotes contraction, law, and limitations. In order for this world to function properly, God made nature and its rules, such as gravity, electricity, DNA structures, etc. The moral laws, the laws of the Torah that Hashem has promulgated for humanity, are another set of important limitations. Any law that God places in the world comes from the root of *din*. Hashem even limited Himself, so to speak, according to the ways that He communicates to us in the Torah. If people do good deeds, He will reward them. And if people do bad things, He will punish

them. He thereby constricts Himself. According to Chassidus, God had to restrain and restrict Himself in order to create space for something other than Himself to exist. All of this comes from the concept of the *sheim adnus*.

In summary, we know God through two primary names. *Havaya* is the name of goodness, giving, and expansion. *Adnus* is the name of law, rules, restrictions, and reward and punishment. We are supposed to identify with both names. We are supposed to mimic the modes that these two names represent, using Hashem as our model. He has given us a *tzelem Elokim*; we are the clay that can be modeled after His form, as it were. The very purpose of creation is for us to become more Godlike, in our human way. We, therefore, also have two sides to our personalities—*chesed* and *din*.

Part of us wants to give, expand, and reach out. We think of the universe and infinity, we entertain grand plans, ideas, and dreams. This is *chesed* in a human context. On the other side of the human experience is *din*, including the regulations and restrictions that characterize human society. All of humanity is characterized by personal and social expectations and laws. We are creatures of *din*. In Chassidus and Kabbala, this is represented by the right and left sides. *Yemin Hashem oseh chayil*—we experience God’s “right hand” as *chesed*. Restriction and regulation are represented by His “left hand”.

In Chassidus and Kabbala, *chesed* and *din* are represented by different colors. The color white represents *chesed*, expansion. White is an open color. It has no special agenda. On a white background, any other color will appear with its integrity. *Chesed* is openness, giving, opportunity, and expansion. The several colors of *zahav*, gold, yellow, and red, represent *din*. Taking blood, for example, is a very strong judgment. Yellow and red are colors of *din*.

The two sets of clothing that the *kohanim* wore, says the Zohar, represent the two *middos*. The white garments of the *kohanim*

represent *chesed*, and the golden clothing of the *kohen gadol* represent *din*.

D

Evil *Chesed* and Evil *Din*

Just as in the good part of the world this duality of charity and law exists, a similar pattern exists, unfortunately, on the opposite, evil side of the world. Chassidus explains that in order for man to have free will, he must be tempted to sin. He must feel evil pulling him as powerfully as he feels attraction for good. “*Re’eiḥ nasati lifanecha hayom es hachaim v’es hatov v’es hamaves v’es hara*” (Devarim 30:15). Hashem places these opposing forces before us equally.

The dark, evil side is an important part of this world. It mirrors the good side of the world. Just as there are two motions for goodness in the world, expansion and constriction, there also is an evil expansive force and an evil constrictive force. For example, the urge for inappropriate sexual lust pushes a person to reach out in an evil way. Lust to build empires and for power over others drives leaders to expand a country’s borders. Colonialism and oppression are evil. These are examples of the *chesed* of the evil forces of the *sitra achra*.

The Shem Mishmuel explains that we find these two facets in the three cardinal sins of *avoda zara*, *giluy arayos*, and *shfichus damim*—idolatry, illicit relations, and murder. The Torah emphasizes the evil of these three *aveiros*. These three sins come from evil *chesed*. Idolatry appeals to people who want to expand and are looking for a system that grants them freedom to do what they want. Then they create an idolatrous freedom. We have discussed the lust urge. Murder can also come from evil *chesed*, when people want to expand their control over others and dominate them.

Din can also create evil. It takes the form of harsh cruelty. Evil

restrictions and wicked ordinances lead to idolatry, wicked sexual practices and, of course, murder. The desire and will to dominate and control contains evil *din*.

Thus, the three sins can come from an excess of *din* or from an excess of *chesed*. The Shem Mishmuel explains based on the Zohar that the three cardinal sins also have an accompanying fourth sin. Whereas the three sins come separately as individual crimes, the fourth primal sin encompasses all three. There are people or societies who commit isolated crimes, and there are people or societies who develop themselves into criminal personalities.

Occasionally, the problem is not that a society commits a particular *aveira*, but that their criminal attitude makes them susceptible to all these crimes, causing their society to degenerate into a criminal one. A criminal personality, which is the universal crime (*cheit hakolel*), is represented by the sin of *lashon hara*, slander. Obsession with destroying other people's personalities and standing in the community is the root expression of a criminal personality. This evil person is dedicated to social assassination of others through evil speech. This person may also literally murder later on. He may have illicit relations, because he views a woman as an object for his own pleasures. And he can do idolatry because he really is just serving himself.

The egotistic, self-centered braggart is evil at his root and has a criminal personality. He does not realize that he is a creature of the Almighty God and thus should be humble. He will destroy anyone in his way. Even if it seems at this point like a relatively harmless destruction—he's not actually killing anyone or raping a woman, and he isn't bowing down to an idol—he foments strife and hatred between people. He has a spiteful, hateful, criminal personality. He hates everybody. Why? Because he worships himself. He therefore might commit real idolatry, rape, or murder. This sin of *lashon hara* contains the fundamental aspects of the three worst sins.

The Kohen's Atoning Attire

As we learned already, the crimes that we unfortunately commit that fall into the three categories come from a breakdown in *chesed* or in *din*. Too much expansion or contraction can cause sin. These are the sins of the white and the gold priestly garments, respectively. The function of the *kohen gadol* in the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash is to atone for these sins through his actions. Additionally, he is supposed to be a model and a teacher for the rest of the Jewish People not to fall into these flaws and failings. So he wears both the white and gold *bigdei kehuna*.

His white clothes reflect good *chesed*, goodness and giving. The *kohen gadol* should be flowing with holy goodness. The *kohen gadol* adds four garments of gold on top of his own white clothing. These golden garments atone for the sins of *din*, crimes of cruelty and domination.

Din relates more to the mind and thought rather than to emotions and the heart. The mind is constricting, balanced and logical. The mind should decide according to good *din*. The golden clothes are thus more related to the mind. The white clothes of *chesed* are more for the heart, since kindness and goodness are centered more in the heart than in the mind. Proper *din* and *chesed* require a proper Torah mind and heart.

As we learn about the white and golden clothing of the *kohanim*, we think of how important it is for us to be committed to Torah study, to learn the right balance of expansion and contraction, of *chesed* and *din*. The regular *kohen*, dressed in white, was the model of *chesed*. The *kohen gadol*, dressed in white and gold, was the model of the combination of *chesed* and *din*. We pray that this model will become a reality for all of us, for every Jew and for every human being in the world.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which *kohen/kohanim* wore white clothing?
2. Which *kohen/kohanim* wore golden clothing?
3. What trait does the color white represent?
4. What trait does the color gold represent?
5. What does the *sheim Havaya* represent?
6. What does the *sheim adnus* represent?
7. Can *chesed* be evil? Explain with an example.
8. Can *din* be good? Explain with an example.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a personal role model for proper *chesed* behavior?
2. Do you have a personal role model for proper *din* behavior?

EXERCISES

1. Make a list of proper *chesed* acts that your personal model has done.
2. Make a list of proper *din* acts that your personal model has done.
3. If you don't have a model for *chesed* and *din*, try to find one. How will you choose one? After you find your personal model, do exercises 3 and 4.
4. Try to copy your model's behavior for a week. Keep a chart of when you used *chesed* and *din* during the week.

