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Tetzaveh 5783

In Defense of Samuel

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered March 21, 1970)

There are two good reasons why I should not deliver this sermon. First, it can be argued that it is better for a Rabbi not to raise problems which might disturb the peace of mind and equanimity of his simple, devout people. And second, he ought not pose questions for which his answers are not always fully adequate.

If nevertheless I have chosen to discuss this morning the moral challenge implicit in the Haftorah's story of Samuel, it is because, first, I trust that my people are not simple and devout, but sophisticated and devout, and they are aware of the moral difficulties that I am discussing even without my broaching it to them; and, second, I have confidence in their maturity, that they know that one ought to keep the faith despite questions, that a truly religious approach is not one which presumes to have all the answers, but where one accepts even while he ponders questions and experiences their torment. In the words of one of the greatest Sages of Israel in recent generations, Rabbi Akiva Eger, פון א קושיא שטארבט מען נישט -- one can survive challenges and questions; it can't kill a person.

The problem is this. The Prophet Samuel reminds King Saul of the commandment to destroy, to blot out the memory of Amalek. He urges him to undertake the campaign against this wild and uncivilized tribe, and to spare none of them, destroying even their livestock. Saul attacks the Amalekites and achieves victory. However, we read that ויחמל שאול והעם, that Saul and the people took pity upon Agag, the King of Amalek, and some of the sheep and cattle, and spared them. Apparently, Saul acted on the basis of conscience; he was a good and generous man.

However, the Prophet chastises the King. Samuel reproaches Saul for having spared Agag and the cattle, and tells him that in consequence of his sin his dynasty will not last, and he will lose his crown. Samuel then orders the

captive King brought before him. The King is heard to utter the words אכן סר מר המות, "indeed, the bitterness of death is passed," and then Samuel stabs the pagan King to death before the Lord in the Gilgal.

Now, Jewish tradition supports the Prophet as against the King. It tells us that between the time that Agag was captured by Saul and the time that he was put to death by Samuel, he sired a child who became the ancestor of Haman, who sought to destroy all of Israel. Indeed, one of the commentaries tells us that the reason Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, was as a sort of penitence for the sin of generations ago: Mordecai, of the tribe of Saul, recognizing his grandfather's sin of sparing Agag, will not bow to Haman, descendant of Agag. All of the Jewish tradition is thus implicated in the problem, by virtue of the approval of Samuel's action.

We are not now discussing the problem of the commandment to blot out Amalek and all the people of this tribe. That is a separate issue, and it must be understood before judgment is rendered. We shall have to leave that for another occasion, although some of the things we shall say are relevant to that problem too. Primarily, we shall deal with a defense of the Prophet Samuel against the charge that he murdered Agag in cold blood.

Indeed, the New Left in Israel has made an issue of Samuel. Instead of treating him as we do, as the second greatest Prophet of Israel after Moses, it has made of Samuel the chief occupant of its rogue's gallery, the figure used to beat all the rest of Jewish tradition. It has tried to abuse this historical figure, and through him question the morality and therefore the authority of all of Judaism. It is to this charge that we address our words this morning.

(Before beginning the actual "defense of Samuel," it is

worth mentioning a comment made by my distinguished teacher, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in one of his lectures. He mentioned a Midrash which declares that the Purim incident, with its threatened genocide against Israel, came in consequence of *חטאו של שמואל*, the sin of Samuel. But was it not the sin of Saul that supposedly resulted in the rise of Haman? Rabbi Soloveitchik sees in this Midrash, referring to the sin of Samuel, a specific acceptance of the fact that Samuel's action of killing Agag in cold blood was reprehensible. The sin was not only that of Saul, but of Samuel as well. My own feeling is that while this entails a brilliant insight, I cannot accept it for two reasons. First, there is no other reference in our literature condemning Samuel on these grounds. And second, I feel that the constant references to *חטאו של שמואל* indicates that this particular phrase is simply a scribal error: a mistaken edition of a mem, and a reversal of aleph and vav; thus, instead of *שמואל* it read *שאול*.)

The first point that we must make is that Samuel's reproach of Saul was not a tirade against pity and compassion. It would be an error to interpret Samuel's reproach as an endorsement of cruelty and criticism of compassion, of which, God knows, we are perpetually in short supply. The Israeli poet, Avraham Kariv (in his "Shivah Amudei Ha-Tenakh"), has pointed to the word used in the key verse: *ויהחמל שאול והעם על אגג ועל מיטב הצאן* and *והבקר*, which we usually understand as meaning that Saul and the people took "pity" on Agag and on the best of the sheep and the cattle. But the word *ויהחמל* should not be read as synonymous with *וירחם*, he pitied or had compassion upon. The word *ויהחמל* is more accurately translated as, "he spared." Its relation to the word pity would be in an egotistical sense, as, for instance, a man who loses money in the stock market clucking his tongue and saying to himself, "what a pity!" Saul said, "what a pity" to destroy such valuable material which can be used. Saul, after all, had spared only *metav ha-tzon*, the "best" of the sheep. And the same King was wanting in compassion when he wanted to kill his own son Jonathan on a technically (I Sam. 14). That is why Samuel condemned him: the King had converted a *milchemet mitzvah*, a campaign undertaken for higher purposes, into nothing more than a battle for plunder and spoils, and thus a desecration.

Second, Samuel's action towards Agag, harsh as reading about it may seem, was in reality not an act of cruelty, but just the opposite, a form of mercy killing.

It was the custom in antiquity that a defeated king was reduced to a human trophy, tortured, humiliated, mutilated, disfigured, a living example of what happens to a man who dares to challenge the victorious king. So, Samson when taken captive by the Philistines was blinded and tied to the posts, put on display as if he were a wild animal exhibited in a cage. Clearly, this is a fate worse than death, especially to a king, one accustomed to respect and majesty. That is what Saul wanted to make of Agag: a humbled tribute to the power of Saul. Thus, the Malbim teaches us, the last words of Agag make special sense: "that which is more bitter than death is about to pass away"; my death will be a merciful relief from unbearable torment. The Malbim considers the word *mar* as related to *temurah* (exchange); that which was exchanged for death – the humiliation – is now at an end.

My third point is more debatable, more controversial, more difficult to accept. It is that compassion, noble as it is, desirable as it is, is not an absolute.

Real moral problems occur not when we face a clear choice between right and wrong, between good and evil, when one side is black and the other white, but in the in-between areas, when moral judgments are unclear or, better yet, when we are confronted by a tragic conflict of two goods or two evils, so that we must choose one and abandon the other. There are few easy rules that can be followed in all such circumstances.

Now, what I am saying is that when compassion conflicts with other duties of man, it is not true that compassion must always, under any conditions, prevail. We Jews are proud of our compassionate characteristics. The Rabbis refer to Israel as *רחמנים בני רחמנים*, merciful ones, the sons of merciful ones. But nonetheless, we do not consider it absolute and beyond modification.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: *כל שהוא רחמן על אכזרים נעשה אכזר על רחמנים*, "whoever is merciful towards the cruel, will ultimately become cruel towards the merciful." Saul began by having compassion on Agag, and a few chapters later he cruelly destroys Nob, the city of priests, without even the pretext of any moral justification. That is why I am so furious with those who had pity on Eichmann and have compassion for Nazis in their advanced middle ages, who had been apprehended after 25 years. A show of pity for such inhuman beasts is easily converted to inhumanity towards the innocent. It should not be imagined that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, the author of

this statement, was a hard, emotionless, doctrinaire kind of person. In an age when Rabbinic authorities reinforced their positions by liberal use of the cherem, the ban or excommunication, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was a man who never permitted himself the exercise of such means (M.K. 3:1). The Talmud tells us (Ber. 7a) of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, who lived in the times of the Roman persecutions when Jewish Christians were emerging as a separate religion, and used to inform on their fellow Jews and cause them a great deal of anguish, that there was a מין, a Jewish-Christian informer, who caused the Rabbi a great deal of torment and danger to his life. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi was so disturbed that he wanted, at one time, to hurl an imprecation, a curse, on the head of the informer. Yet he restrained himself and did not do so, because of the verse in Psalms: לַכֹּל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו, that God is good to all and His compassion extends over all His creatures. Hence, the Rabbi will not utter a vile word about a man who may yet cause his death! And it is this Rabbi who said: pity yes, but not on one who is pitiless.

What the Rabbis are saying, then, is that all emotions and sentiments must be disciplined. Compassion, like all other virtues, must be rationally directed. It must be used, it must not overwhelm one.

I grant that this idea can, in the hands of the unscrupulous or the fanatic, become a source of great danger. One can justify the most brutal of actions on this basis. But we are speaking here of the commandment by a moral God, whose morality has been proven in a thousand different cases. He demands of us faith that some actions, which are not immediately understandable to us, should be obeyed because of a higher morality, which, from our limited human perspective, we cannot appreciate. Thus, the Midrash puts into the mouth of Saul a highly rational and moral argument: God, You expect us to perform the ritual of the beheading of the heifer (eglah arufah) in the event that one person is killed and we cannot find the murderer; how then can you ask of me to kill all of Amalek, including the livestock? Whereupon a heavenly voice issued forth and exclaimed: אַל תְּהִי צְדִיק יוֹתֵר מִבּוֹרְאֵךְ, “do not be more righteous than your own Creator.” Later, when Saul destroyed the city of Nob, the same voice said: וְאַל תִּרְשַׁע, “and do not be cruel” or wicked.

What we are told, then, is that momentary moral considerations must give way before the Divine imperative, which is moral in a way that transcends

our own comprehension. Again, such ideas have been terribly abused in the history of mankind, particularly in religious wars. But in the case which we discuss right now, and which is highly unusual in the story of Judaism, the decision was vindicated by history itself: Purim became evidence of the rightness of Samuel’s course of action. It was Saul’s misdirected compassion to the tyrant Agag that almost resulted in the extinction of our own people.

My fourth element in this “defense” takes us to a more sophisticated level. I grant the charge that Samuel killed Agag in cold blood, at a time that the latter was what we today would call a prisoner of war. It is true that we today would regard such conduct as immoral and reprehensible. Anyone who did that in our times would be rightly condemned. Yet, I maintain that we can not, we dare not, fault Samuel on this count.

That is because we can detect two levels of morality: one we may call absolute, and the other consensual. By absolute morality I mean such moral principles as are common to human beings in all times and in all societies. They are, within the Jewish framework, the laws of the Torah or, at the very least, “the seven laws of the sons of Noah.” Whole societies may fail according to such standards, but that does not affect the universality of the moral principle – which remains absolute. However, in addition to such absolute moral principles, there are moral insights that develop slowly in the history of the human family as a result of various individual insights, until by consensus, by common agreement, they are recognized as binding moral judgments. Most of Rabbinic morality, or the moral laws referred to as minhag or custom, even those still developing, are consensual in nature.

The following examples will suffice to illustrate the difference. Adultery is, according to the Jewish perspective, always an absolute moral principle. Its violation represents the transgression of an absolute Biblical principle. Bigamy, however, is consensual rather than absolute. While Jews rarely practiced polygamy, even in the ancient past, there were some who did. It was only in the beginning of the Middle Ages, in the days of Rabbenu Gershom, that it was formally elevated to a moral principle that polygamy is to be banned. Now, anyone who today practices polygamy is utterly reprehensible, regardless of the fact that the immorality of the act is consensual rather than absolute. However, whereas we can blame any individual of the past for violation of an absolute principle, such as adultery,

we cannot blame anyone of the past who lived and acted at a time when the consensus of the consensual moral principle had not yet been achieved. It would be ridiculous, therefore, to fault David or Solomon or Jacob for having more than one wife, when we developed this particular sensitivity at a much later time in history.

Another example would be slavery. Today, slavery is something which offends our deepest moral sensibilities. Yet, it is not an absolute, but a strong consensual principle. There were highly moral people of the past who never were aware of the troublesomeness of the institution of slavery. Even the Torah, which expresses itself negatively towards slavery, did not ban it completely, and Jews kept slaves well into the Middle Ages. It is not a violation of an absolute moral principle. Of course, from our contemporary perspective, we would fight to prevent the re-establishment of slavery, but we have no right to condemn those in antiquity who practiced it before the consensus was achieved. In the same sense, we cannot fault George Washington or Thomas Jefferson or any of the other founders of the American republic for being slaveholders, since they lived before the time that the whole institution was called into question on moral grounds. Again the same point is emphasized: a moral principle, whether it is absolute or consensual, has binding force and demands that we respect it. But whether or not we can blame people of the past for its violation depends on the nature of the code.

Consider the fact that we have forms of slavery that persist into our own times. There is no question in my mind that the draft, “selective service,” is a modified form of slavery, except that a man’s freedom is mortgaged not to an individual master, but to society as such. So is our penal system a form of slavery, and it is not by any means necessarily the most humane form of punishment. Quite possibly, flogging a man once and for all and letting him free thereafter is more humane than taking 15 of the best years of his life and throwing him into jail with other criminals, there only to compound his injury by making it permanent. If 200 years from today our descendants decide that the draft was a horrible and immoral corruption, and that the penal system, no matter how enlightened, was a degrading form of inhumanity compared to systems they will develop later, can we today be faulted for practicing them? Can any of us who sat on draft boards in World War II be declared immoral? Obviously, a consensual moral

principle, like ordinary civil legislation, cannot be enacted *ex post facto*.

The same is true of murder. This is a violation of what we have called absolute morality. But there are times when killing is permitted. Judaism is not completely pacifist. It recognizes such things as “just wars,” *milchemet mitzvah*, such as a war in self-defense. It permits killing when so ordered by a legitimate court, or when a man must defend his life against an aggressor. Now, where killing is not proscribed, as in a just war, the form of killing is a matter of consensual morality. After all, from a purely rational point of view, what difference is there to a man if he is taken prisoner in war, blindfolded, and shot, or whether he dies a slow death as a battlefield casualty, draining away in agony. However, the moral consensus that has developed considers the killing of a prisoner of war immoral, whereas shooting him on the battlefield is not considered immoral. Therefore we must respect this consensus. Today, Samuel would not have killed Agag in cold blood. But, we cannot today fault Samuel for violating a principle for which the consensus developed some 3000 years later.

To summarize, then, we have made four points. First, that Saul was not being compassionate when he spared Agag and the “best” of the sheep, and Samuel cannot therefore be said to have engaged in an assault on compassion. Second, Samuel, in killing Agag, spared him from a fate far worse than death. Third, compassion is not an absolute but must be practiced rationally; excessive compassion to the cruel and the malignant, can result in a counter-reaction: ultimately, cruelty towards the innocent. And finally, the act of killing Agag who was in chains was a violation of a consensual moral principle rather than an absolute moral principle, and therefore we cannot assign culpability to one who performed the act before the consensus developed.

Perhaps these answers, individually or taken together, are not completely adequate. We can live with the problem. But I believe too that we may be more than confident that the Torah, which is the source of *tzedek u-mishpat*, *chessed ve-rachamim*, has not failed us. In the words of the Heavenly Voice: *אל תהי צדיק יותר מבוראך*: would that we could learn but an infinitesimal fraction of the divine qualities of righteousness and pity that the Torah tries to teach us. *משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקוראי שמו קוראים אל ה' והוא יענם*. Moses, and Aaron amongst his priests, and Samuel when his name is called – that is, together with

those who call upon his name and defend his reputation against unjust and unfair condemnation – will call to the Lord and He will answer them.

He will answer us by revealing to us explicitly the morality that is implicit in the divine command.

He will answer us by showing us the way to a life of utter

Dress for Success

Dr. Erica Brown

Fashion icon Ralph Lauren once said, “I don’t design clothes. I design dreams.” This week’s Torah reading, Tetzaveh, involves a detailed description of the High Priest’s garments. To understand the ‘dream’ behind them, we must understand more about the design of this clothing, specifically the tunic:

On its hem make pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all around the hem, with bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around the hem of the robe. Aaron shall wear it while officiating, so that the sound of it is heard when he comes into the sanctuary before God and when he goes out—that he may not die (Exodus 28: 33-35).

This garment alone invites a rich visual and sensory reaction. The gemstone colors appeal to the eyes. The small pomegranates on the hem remind one of taste. The bells between the pomegranates invoke sound. Rashi and Chizkuni add that there were clappers in each bell that would make noise when the High Priest walked. Nahmanides believed that the bells functioned as clappers inside pomegranates. In the Talmud, R. Yitchak said, “This teaches that the Divine Presence jangled before him, inspiring him, like a bell (BT Sotah 9b). In this reading, the bells were not only making noise for the people to sense the close presence of the High Priest but also functioned as a constant reminder to Aaron of his mission. Whenever the Cohen Gadol moved, he was aware of his Divine service.

Rabbeinu Bahya (1255-1340) elaborates on this: “When a person wishes to receive an audience, he first knocks on the door of the king or prefect from whom he requests the audience. Aaron would announce his intention to pray by means of the chiming of the bells at the hem of his robe. What is customary as a sign of deference to a mortal king must also be observed when one petitions the King of Kings.” In the Mishkan, the bells were a sign of respect to prepare for meeting God.

nobility, of generosity and goodness and compassion.

And may He answer us as well, as He answered our ancestors in Persia, by giving us what He gave them: אורה ויקר, light and joy, happiness and honor.

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Each stitch of the priest’s clothing also had to be made with proper intention, signaling the care that a spiritual leader must put into clothing choices and the service performed in them. In the Talmud, R. Yohanan made clear how sartorial choices impact others long after the priestly service stopped: “Any Torah scholar on whose garment is found a stain deserves death, as it says (Prov. 8:36) ‘All who hate Me love death.’ Do not read it ‘who hate Me’ but ‘who cause (people to) hate Me’ (BT Shabbat 114a). To bring majesty to an office, one must dress the part. Those who represent Torah must understand that people’s impressions are almost always shallow and based on external realities; the leader has to communicate, at all times, the dignity of the position.

In their article “Clothes Make the Leader! How Leaders Can Use Attire to Impact Followers’ Perceptions of Charisma and Approval” (*Journal of Business Research*, Jan. 2021), Thomas Maran, Simon Liegl, Sebastian Moder, Sascha Kraus, and Marco Furtner sought to understand the impact of clothing on leaders: “While popular media relishes leaders who catch the eye by way of such distinctive fashion, we know little about how this salient daily practice of dress specifically affects perceptions of leaders in their daily business.” Their findings? “...leaders’ charisma and approval were higher when a person’s clothing style contrasted their organization’s culture.” Lastly, in their study of CEOs of Fortune 1000 companies, they discovered that, “leaders can manipulate their style of attire to actively shape their followers’ impressions of themselves.”

In “Dress for Success: How Clothes Influence Our Performance” (*Scientific American*, Jan. 1, 2016), Matthew Hutson and Tori Rodriguez cite multiple studies that correlate behavior with clothing. In the journal *Social, Psychological, and Personality Science* (Aug., 2015), researchers asked participants to wear either formal or informal clothes before taking cognitive tests. They

discovered that, “Wearing formal business attire increased abstract thinking—an important aspect of creativity and long-term strategizing. The experiments suggest the effect is related to feelings of power.” A 2014 study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* concluded that informal clothing may hurt in negotiations. In a 2012 study in the same journal, subjects made half as many mistakes on a particular task when wearing a white lab coat. Clothing, in this study, not only positively influenced others, it also changed one’s own sense of self-worth and performance.

According to one view in the Talmud, the High Priest’s clothing represented more than mere ceremonial fitness for office: “R. Simon said, just as sacrifices atone, so the garments of the High Priest atone: shirt, trousers, turban, and vest” (JT Yoma 7:3). The High Priest was the intermediary between the human and the Divine.

Wide Shoulders

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z”l

Among the special garments that the kohein gadol wears is the ephod, an apron-like piece of clothing as Rashi explains it, which has two shoham stones (avnei shoham) one each on its two shoulder straps. The Talmud tells us that the names of the twelve tribes were written on these stones, six names on each one. The Talmud in Yoma (72 a-b) tells us that each one of the kohein gadol’s garments is meant to bring atonement for different transgressions. The ephod, says the Gemara, atones for avodah zarah, or idolatry. What, then, is the connection between idolatry and the message of the names of the tribes written on the stones of the ephod?

Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim, in his commentary to parshas Tetzaveh, writes that the names of the tribes divided between the stones on the two shoulders of the kohein gadol point to the importance of unity among the Jewish people. The names are written on two stones, and those names must unite in order to indicate the unity of all of the tribes, despite the separate roles that each of them plays within the nation. This unity is reflective of the unity of God, which the Jewish people represent in this world. Perhaps, then according to the Malbim, the unity of the Jewish people as reflected in the names of the tribes on the avnei shoham is a means of combating idolatry, which denies the unity of God. Why, however, within the context of this symbolism, are the stones placed on the shoulders of the kohein gadol, rather

Followers, therefore, needed to see in their spiritual leaders, the possibility of getting closer to God. The priest’s clothing conferred dignity and authority to the role and inspired repentance in those who observed the High Priest’s activities. That was the dream behind the design.

Today, with no centralized worship space, clothing still communicates authority, but you don’t have to be a priest for clothing to matter. “To be a leader,” Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, “you don’t need a crown or robes of office. All you need to do is to write your chapter in the story, do deeds that heal some of the pain of this world, and act so that others become a little better for having known you” (“Defeating Death” Nitzavim, *Covenant & Conversation*).

So, how do your clothing choices communicate leadership to you and to those around you?

than on another location on his body?

Rabbi Yosef Salant, in his Be’er Yosef, says that the shoulders of the kohein gadol represent the responsibility that he has to carry the burden of the Jewish people, both in terms of their physical needs and in terms of their spiritual needs. Perhaps, then, in the context of the unity of the Jewish people, we can add that the kohein gadol, as the successor of Aharon, who was the first kohein gadol, is the great unifier of the Jewish people. Whenever there was a dispute between people, Aharon would find a way to bring them back together. It was, therefore, on Aharon’s shoulders to bring about the unity among the Jewish people that the avnei shoham were meant to reflect. Alternatively, we can suggest that it is on the shoulders of the Jewish people themselves to strive for this kind of unity among themselves. The Ramban writes that all of the special clothes of the kohein gadol are similar to the clothing which kings wear, and are meant to enhance the honor of the kohein gadol. However, the kohein gadol is really the representative of the nation as a whole, and the display of royalty in his clothing can be seen as being reflective of the royal status of the Jewish people, who God charged, at Mt. Sinai, to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. There is a need for unity in order to be carrying out this charge, and it is up to the tribes to affect this unity. The burden is therefore really on their shoulders, and the

kohein gadol, by wearing the stones on his shoulders, is conveying this message to the people, whom he represents.

Rabbi Amnon Bazak, in his *Nekudas Pesicha*, demonstrates that all of the special garments of the kohein gadol are meant to honor the Jewish people. The Talmud (Megillah, 12a) tells us that King Achashveirosh wore these garments at the feast he made. Perhaps his purpose in doing this was to undermine the special status of the Jewish people, as part of his plan to cause them to assimilate by joining in his feast. The unity of the nation that is reflected in the stones of the ephod would also be undermined in this way, and perhaps this is why Achashveirosh was receptive to Haman's description of the nation as one that is dispersed among the nations. When Esther told Mordechai to gather all of the Jews to fast in order to counter Achashveirosh's decree to wipe out the Jewish people, she was, in effect, combating

his attempt to break their unity. The Talmud tells us that on Purim, there was a kind of reenactment of the acceptance of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, but, this time, without any element of coercion such as there was at Sinai, when God lifted the mountain above them and told them that if they don't accept the Torah they will be buried on that spot. In any case, part of the experience at Mt. Sinai, as Rashi tells us in parshas Yisro, was the unity of the Jewish people in accepting the Torah. The vane shah, worn by the kohein gadol on his ephod, symbolized the need for this unity in order for the nation to fulfill its charge, given at Mt. Sinai, of being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. On Purim, when the nation reenacted, and in a sense completed, the experience at Mt. Sinai, they did so with the necessary sense of unity that characterized the original acceptance of the Torah, and that the ephod of the kohein gadol served to remind them.

Bells of Importance

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur originally given at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on Mar 9, 2017)

This week's Parsha teaches us about the Bigdei Kehuna, one of which is the Me'il. The Torah emphasizes the importance of the bells at the hem of the Me'il making noise—*ve-nishma kolo bevo'o el ha-kodesh lifnei Hashem u-ve-tzeiso ve-lo yamus*. Whenever the Kohen Gadol walked around, he had to make noise with his bells—like a cow or a cat in the olden days. What can we learn from this?

Many of the Rishonim assume it is a matter of anava or sheirus. A servant might have a bell on him to let his master know where he is rather than just showing up unexpectedly. Unlike a ba'al ha-bayis—who can come and go anytime without telling anyone—a servant needs to announce his presence. Perhaps, those bells reminded the Kohen Gadol of his role of servitude in the *Mikdash be-derech sheirus* to Hashem and not *be-derech ba'al ha-bayis*.

You could ask an interesting question: why didn't a Kohen Hedyot need to wear bells? Perhaps the simple, white garments a Kohen Hedyot wore would remind him that he is just a servant and not the ba'al ha-bayis. On Yom Kippur, when the Kohen Gadol wears simple garments, he doesn't need bells because he knows he is just a pashut guy. In contrast, when the Kohen Gadol wore fancy clothes—with gold, jewels and a crown, and the royal colors of techeiles ve-argaman—all fit for a king—he

could easily cross the line, supposing he is dressed like this for his personal honor instead of realizing that he is just serving Someone who is truly important—the real King. Therefore, the Torah commanded davka the Kohen Gadol to wear the fancy clothes with bells attached. And this teaches us the need to remind yourself that you are interested in kavod Shomayim even if you are a Torah leader or a Gadol. You are not in it for yourself; you are not a ba'al ha-bayis. And this seems to be the pashut pshat.

The Sefer Yalkut Yehuda takes a different approach to answer why the Kohen Gadol needed to wear bells. He says that wearing bells means he makes noise—wherever he goes, people hear him. It is essential for you as a Torah leader to remember that wherever you are, you make an impact. People learn from you, whether you have the right midos or otherwise. If you are mekadesh Shem Shomayim with your dibur, actions, and hanhaga, that makes a roshem on people. Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well. With every step you take, people learn from you. Therefore, the more Torah you learn and the greater your Yiras Shomayim—the more you must remember that your every move makes “noise”, makes an impact on people and changes the world for better or for worse. May we all remember the lesson of the bells and create a Kiddush Shem Shomayim with every step we take. Shabbat Shalom

Clothing of Justice and Kindness

Rabbi Hershel Reichman

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 *mechaprím*, 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.

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*.

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*.

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’eih 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.

Remembering Who We Are

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Make sacral vestments for your brother Aaron, for dignity (*kavod*) and adornment (*tiferet*).” (Shemot 28:2, JPS tr.)

God commands Moshe to make special garments for Aharon to wear as Kohen, describing two goals: *kavod* and *tiferet*, dignity and adornment. What is the difference between these terms? Are they suggesting one or two purposes for the garments?

Commentators offer a range of explanations for these two terms:

- Ibn Ezra suggests that the word “Dignity” reflects the honour of the place in which the Kohanim would serve. “Adornment” refers to the honour that would come to the Kohanim when they wore clothes no one else could wear.
- Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam understands both terms as expressions of holiness, reflecting

the limited legitimate use of the garments.

NonKohanim may not wear them, and even Kohanim may use them only when serving in the Mishkan.

- In a third approach, Ramban explains both words as describing the honour granted to the Kohanim when wearing these garments.
- Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch suggests that *kavod* refers to honouring the spiritual position of the Kohen, while *tiferet* adds that the garments should be physically impressive.
- Rabbi Ovadia Seforno and Rabbi Yaakov Mecklenberg note that the garments bring honour to God and inspire awe in the Kohanim.

Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin (Chibah Yeteirah) offers a very different understanding. *Kavod* refers to the honour given to the Kohanim. However, this was not simply to

add honour, but to negate a potential problem. Specifically, there was a danger that because the Jews knew Aharon, they would have difficulty treating him with respect, rather than friendship.

One could add that Moshe is personally commanded to make the clothes. As Aharon's brother, for him it would be most natural to relate to him as Aharon rather than as Aharon HaKohen. Ibn Ezra makes this point about Moshe as well in a different context. He suggests that the reason Moshe had to grow up as an adopted prince among Egyptians rather than among the Jews was so people would respect him. This would be hard had he grown up among the Jews because "a person cannot be a rabbi in his own community." His parents' friends would always see him as a child, as it were. ("We remember when you were a kid...") As Ibn Ezra puts it, "Had Moses grown up among his brothers and had they known him from his youth they would not have feared him because they would have considered him as one of themselves." (Extended commentary to Shemot 2:3, Strickman/Silver translation) The translators suggest that, "That is, familiarity breeds contempt." Aharon, however, did grow up among the Jews. God needed a way to ensure that

they would internalize Aharon's new role and accord him honour. The clothes would help psychologically, drawing attention to his position. This was critical to avoid familiarity and maintain awe in the Mishkan.

On the other hand, the word *tiferet* indicates that Aharon needed a reminder of who he was and the role he was filling. Humility may be wonderful, but that cannot justify forgetting the responsibilities of the position and the atmosphere that must be created. The grand clothes would keep Aharon in this headspace.

In general, one of the greatest threats to experiencing greatness is being closed to wonder and awe. We daven at shul daily, so we forget that it should be treated as a miniature Beit HaMikdash. We need to consider ways to maintain this perspective, no matter how often we attend. We also often fail to take ourselves seriously enough. We know we are normal people who make mistakes and need to relax, and therefore we sometimes doubt we can achieve greatness. We thus must remind ourselves that we have responsibility and potential. While we may not be the Kohen Gadol, the lessons of his clothes can help us frame our own lives.

The "Death" of Relinquishing Our Unique Role

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

The Ba'al Ha'turim at the beginning of Parshas Tetzaveh makes the famous observation that Moshe Rabbeinu's name does not appear in this parsha – making it the only parsha since Moshe's birth from which his name is omitted. The Vilna Gaon noted that this parsha is always read around the time of 7 Adar, the day of Moshe's yahrtzeit, and thus the omission of his name signifies his passing at this time of year.

The question remains, however, as to the connection between Parshas Tetzaveh and Moshe's yahrtzeit. Why would there be an allusion specifically in this parsha to Moshe's eventual passing?

Rav Soloveitchik offered a fascinating insight, explaining that this parsha tells about the designation of Aharon and his sons as the kohanim. Parshas Tetzaveh presents the guidelines for the bigdei kehuna, the special garments worn by the kohanim, and outlines the formal procedure whereby Aharon and his son were consecrated for their role. Chazal teach that Moshe Rabbeinu was to have

assumed the position of kohen. When God appeared to Moshe at the burning bush and assigned him the mission to confront Pharaoh and demand that he release Benei Yisrael, Moshe initially refused. He argued with God, giving various reasons why he felt he could not accept this mission. Finally, the Torah writes, *ויחר אף ה' במשה* – God became angry with Moshe, and he said, *הלא אהרון אחיך*, – "Behold, your brother, Aharon the Levi, I know that he will assuredly speak" (Shemos 4:14). The Gemara (Zevachim 102a) explains this pasuk to mean that God, in His anger, punished Moshe, and named Aharon the kohen gadol instead of Moshe. Aharon is referred to here as *הלוי* because he was to have been the levi, with Moshe serving as kohen, but because Moshe repeatedly refused to accept the mission assigned to him, Moshe forfeited the role of kohen and became a levi, instead.

Rav Soloveitchik explained that this is the significance of the omission of Moshe's name from Parshas Tetzaveh,

the parsha that tells of his brother's appointment as kohen gadol. Moshe is "erased" from this parsha to allude that he was "erased" from the priesthood, which was to have been his, but was taken and given to Aharon.

This parsha is associated with 7 Adar, Rav Soloveitchik explained, because it, in a sense, marks the beginning of Moshe's "death." This parsha tells of the role that Moshe was to have played but did not, and, in this sense, this parsha is about Moshe's "death." When a person fails to fulfill the mission for which he was destined, this marks the beginning of his demise.

We all have a mission to accomplish, a role for which we were brought into this world. We wake up each

morning and proclaim *רבה אמונתך*, that God believes in us, as evidenced by the very fact that we are here. And this is how we must approach every day of our lives – in pursuit of the fulfillment of our mission. If we run away from our mission and purpose, if we decide to sit back comfortably and let somebody else take on the project, sit on the committee, or assume the responsibility for a task that needs to get done, then this is the beginning of our "demise." We are betraying our purpose, the reason why we are here.

We are truly "alive" when we live with vigor, when we passionately and ambitiously pursue our unique mission for which Hashem brought us here.

Keeping the Priests Humble

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

In this coming week's parasha, parashat Tetzaveh, we read, in rather minute detail, about the garments that were worn by the כֹּהֲנִים—Kohanim, the priests.

As opposed to last week's parasha, which was an architect's dream—and a rabbi's nightmare, this week's parasha is a tailor's dream—and a rabbi's nightmare!

In parashat Tetzaveh (Exodus 28:39-40, 42) we find mention or descriptions of the four basic garments that were worn by all priests: the מְכַנְסֵי—*the knee-length pants*, the כְּתֹרֶת תְּשֻׁבֵּץ—*the honeycomb-patterned linen robe*, the מִצְנֶפֶת—*the miter or hat made of a single long linen ribbon*, and the אֲבִגְנֵט—*the multi-colored belt*, wound about the waist of the priest.

In addition to the basic four garments, the High Priest was attired in four additional garments: the מְעִיל—a sky blue-colored poncho-like covering, with bells and pomegranates attached to the bottom; the אֵפוֹד—*Ay'phod*—the multicolored apron upon which the breastplate was affixed; the חֹשֶׁן—the holy breastplate adorned with twelve beautiful stones and containing the יְהוָה's ineffable name of G-d; and finally, the צִיץ—the golden plate inscribed with G-d's name that was worn on the forehead of the High Priest.

The role of the priest and the priesthood in Jewish tradition is complex and challenging.

The first allusion to the selection of the priests may be found in the story of the midwives who refused to abide by Pharaoh's command to kill the newborn male children. The Rabbis (cited by Rashi Exodus 1:15), maintain that

the midwives were Moses' mother and sister, Yocheved and Miriam. In Exodus 1:21, we read that G-d was impressed by the bravery and sincerity of the midwives and that He rewarded them—וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתֵּימִם, *He [G-d] made for them houses*. The Rabbis in Sotah 11b, explain that because of Yocheved's heroic acts, she was blessed to be the progenitor of the houses of Priesthood and Levites. And so, it seems, that essentially from the womb, the priests were marked for greatness. The Torah informs us as well (Numbers 3:12-13) that the Levites, (which includes the family of the priests), were chosen to replace the first born as the ministers of the People of Israel in the service of G-d, because they did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf.

While garments are often taken for granted, Jewish tradition accords a special sense of sanctity to garments that are worn by people. The Torah records that clothes were a gift of G-d to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Genesis 3:21: וַיַּעַשׂ ה' אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְחַוָּה בְּתֹגְרוֹת עוֹר, וַיְלַבְּשֵׁם, *The L-rd, G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and He clothed them*. In effect, clothes reflect the Divine element of the human being. Clothes, of course, often reflect a person's profession, and by examining a person's clothes or uniform it is possible to recognize a sea captain, a policeman, a doctor, a nurse, or a religious minister.

Similarly, it is often possible as well, to identify a person's mental state by their proper dress or lack of proper dress. Even a person dressed in the most costly clothes may appear disheveled. And, of course, the economic

circumstances of a person may be revealed by the condition and cleanliness of a person's garments.

While there are those who express dissatisfaction with the seemingly undemocratic nature of the priesthood, and argue that priests are given unfair advantages as a result of a mere accident of birth, the priests are also accorded "unfair" responsibilities as a result of that accident of birth.

The benefits of priesthood seem to be bountiful. The priests play a very public leadership role for the Jewish people, serving as the chief ministers in the Tabernacle and the Temple. They are the beneficiaries of the people's valuable heave offerings, the Terumah, a gift of approximately 2% of all the farmers' produce, which goes directly to the priest and his family. On the other hand, priests are not given any land as patrimony in Canaan as are the other tribes.

Even in contemporary times, priests are accorded great personal honor—they are always called first to the Torah, they are privileged to lead Birkat Hamazon (Grace after Meals), and they bless the Jewish people with the Priestly blessings in Israel as part of the daily prayer service, and in the diaspora on holidays. Nevertheless, the priests' personal lives are rather restricted. They are not permitted to marry a divorced woman, and may not attend funerals or visit cemeteries, except for their seven closest relatives.

It is interesting to note, that Jacob's son, Levi, the progenitor of the priestly tribe, started out as a violent "fanatic," who, together with his brother, Simeon, disgraced their father Jacob by murdering the people in Shechem after the rape of their sister Dina (Genesis 34), Apparently, Jacob, nevertheless, felt that the Levites were redeemable.

In his blessing to his sons, at the end of his life, Jacob castigates both Simeon and Levi. Genesis 49:7, אָרוּר אַפֶּם, בִּי עוֹ, וְעִבְרָתֶם כִּי קָשָׁתָהּ וְעִבְרָתָהּ, "Cursed is their rage for it intense and their wrath for it is harsh," אֲחַלְקֵם בְּיַעֲקֹב, וְאֶפְיִצֵם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, "I will separate them within Jacob and will disperse them in Israel." This verse is generally understood as the source for the dispersion of the tribes of Levi and Simeon among the other tribes, and their not receiving designated tribal land in Canaan. Once dispersed, we don't hear much about Simeon. However, the fanaticism of Levi is apparently redirected into a passion for faith, and channeled toward the service of G-d.

It is while performing the service of G-d, that the priests are clothed in holiness. While the vestments certainly serve to elevate the priests above the rest of Israel by

singling them out as they appear in their divine uniforms, the holy garments also serve as a cogent reminder of modesty and humility. While decked out in these noble clothes, the priests know full well that these honorable garments are, in effect, hand-me-downs, produced by, and tailored from, the generous donations of the Jewish people. While bedecked in majesty, the priests are at the same time clothed in humility. Hence, the priestly garments are subject to multiple restrictions. The garments may only be worn while the priest is on duty, while serving in the Tabernacle or Temple. Priests are not permitted to sleep in their holy garments, and the rabbis even question whether they are allowed to walk around in them when not performing the holy rituals. That the priestly vestments are clearly not the private possession of the priests is underscored by the fact that the Talmud in Sukkah 51a, notes that worn out priestly garments are fashioned into wicks for the torches used in the celebration of Simchat bet Hashoeyva, the festival of the water libation, during the joyous festival of Sukkot.

Perhaps the most effective way of keeping the priest humble is reflected in a slight, almost imperceptible, textual nuance that appears in the verse regarding support of the priests. While the Torah instructs the people of Israel to give their תְּרוּמוֹת—tithes, directly to the Levite "who lives in your midst," (Deut. 12:12 & 14:26), there is no such parallel instruction or obligation for the Jewish people to give their heave offerings, תְּרוּמוֹת—Terumot, directly to the priests who live in their midst. In order to make certain that the priests were effectively fulfilling their missions, the Israelites could choose to give their gifts to the priest who they felt served them most diligently. Clearly, while the priests are accorded many privileges, their ultimate sustenance depends squarely upon their effectiveness and meritorious work.

Indeed, Judaism tries to provide a balance of priorities in the function and role of the priesthood. While the priest may be robed in glorious garments and vestments, what the Jewish people truly desire is that our priests be robed in righteousness and justice. As we declare in the verse (Psalms 132:9), that is recited in the Shabbat prayer as the Torah is returned to the Ark, בְּהִנֵּי יִלְבָּשׁוּ צְדָקָה, וְחֹסֵי דִיךָ יְרַנְּנוּ, "May your priests be clothed with righteousness and may your faithful followers shout with joy."