



Parashat Tetzave

Hilchot Purim and Parashat Tetzave

What is the Role of Garments in the Torah?

Dear Rebbetzin,

Since our Rabbi was sick, we studied on our own the chapter about Purim in the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*. We have some questions about what we learned:

1. Do we light candles for Purim, and if so do we recite a bracha?
2. We did not understand the passage about the custom to eat seeds on Purim and the reference to the verse, "He changed her and her maidens to the best place" (*Megillat Esther* 2:9).
3. We are aware that it is prohibited to pray while being drunk, how do people pray while fulfilling the mitzvah to get drunk on Purim?
4. We were also wondering why we read *Parashat Tetzave* the Shabbat prior to Purim. Is there any connection between the garments of the Kohanim and Purim?

Thank you so much,

The Students of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin

Dearest Students,

That's great you studied *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* on your own, I'm so proud of you! I look forward celebrating Purim with you!

1. Although there is a mitzvah to light candles in honor of all *seudot mitzvah* (festive meals), as being able to see the food increases its pleasure, however, since it is allowed to do (*malacha*) creative work on Purim we can enhance the meals with candle lighting or electric lights at any time during the holiday. Therefore, there is no mitzvah to light candles with a bracha at the eve of Purim as we do before other holidays. You are very welcome to light candles in honor of Purim, but without a bracha.
2. The reason for the custom to eat seeds on Purim (sunflower seeds or sprouts etc.) is that Daniel and his friends ate seeds at the castle of Nebuchadnezer in Babylon in order to keep kosher. Daniel advised Esther to do the same, in order to keep kosher in the unkosher palace. This is one of the reasons why we eat Hamantashen, made with poppy seeds, on Purim. When it states, "He changed her and her maidens for good" (*Megillat Esther* 2:9), it hints that their diet was being changed for good.
3. Most solutions to the dilemma of praying while being drunk involve either a compromise on drunkenness, or on prayer. Keep in mind that women don't have a mitzvah to become drunk on Purim. Even if you hold that women are commanded to get drunk on Purim, it is certainly suitable for women to follow the opinion that allows you to fulfil the obligation of drinking without actually getting drunk (*Rema, Mishna Brurah*). There is also an opinion that allows people to pray while drunk to a certain degree. There are three different levels of drunkenness. The first is when someone is still able to talk to a distinguished person. Rav Kook Z"l writes that although usually it is prohibited to pray even in such a state, they made an exception on Purim since there is a Mitzvah to drink. (Commentary to Sidur *Olat Re'iya* volume 1:440). The second level of drunkenness is when a person

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can no longer talk to a distinguished person properly. Even in this case, Rav Kook states that if he can still fear Hashem and control himself, he may be allowed to pray on Purim. However, one is not allowed to pray when he has reached the third level of drunkenness – being as drunk as Lot. Here is a solution for men that doesn't compromise on either being drunk or davening: Remain sober until *Mincha Gedolah*, and pray. Then get drunk at the *se'udah* (Purim meal). Sleep it off, and go to a late *Ma'ariv*.

4. The Connection between the Garments of the Kohanim and Purim

Every year, except during a leap year, we read *Parashat Tezave*, which discuss the garments of the Kohen Gadol, the Shabbat which exactly precedes Purim:

ספר שמות פרק כח (ב) וְעָשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ לְכְבוֹד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת:

“You shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother for honor and for glory” (*Shemot* 28:2). What is the underlying connection between the garments of the Kohanim and the holiday of Purim?

The Role of Garments in *Megillat Esther*

Garments are a central theme in the Scroll of Esther. At Achasverosh's grand party, which celebrated the fact that the Temple in Jerusalem had not yet been rebuilt, he wore the eight holy garments of the Kohen Gadol (*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah* 12a). Vashti would strip the Jewish girls of their clothes on Shabbat (*ibid.* 12b). When Mordechai found out about Haman's decree to annihilate all Jews, Mordechai rent his clothes and wore sack cloth and ashes (*Megillat Esther* 4:1). “Esther sent respectable clothes to him but he refused to accept them” (*ibid.* 4:4). When Esther came before the king, it states, “Esther dressed up in royalty” (*ibid.* 5:1). Mordechai, too, wore royal garments: “Let the royal apparel be brought which the King has worn” (*ibid.* 6:8). All this teaches us that the story of Purim is veiled in the secret of garments. (Rav Moshe Rephael Luria). Through the choice of his garments, Achashverosh attempted to project a false image of himself. He wanted to assume the role of Aharon with his dignity and splendor, yet, Aharon wore his clothes of dignity, honor of splendor because he understood the dignity of human distinctiveness, whereas Achasverus clothed himself in the same fashion, while attempting to strip his own wife naked of all dignity and distinction.

Glory and Splendor for Whom?

The choice of our dress influences both our own mindset and the way others perceive us.

1. The garments of the Kohanim imbue all who look upon them with the glory and splendor of G-d and his Holy Temple. Just as the guards of a king wear uniforms that signify that the person who lives inside is of great importance, so too, the Kohanim reveal the importance of their work and their “boss,” by wearing uniforms.” They inspire awe and respect, making it clear to all Israel that Hashem wishes to honor Aharon, and considers him to be worthy of being a vehicle for the Divine Presence. 2. Clothes affect our mindset. The glory of the garments is a means of ensuring that the Kohen has the proper state of mind during the Temple service. Whatever part of his body he looks at, will arouse him to realize that the presence of G-d is to be found in the Temple, and thereby remember before Whom he stands (*Sefer HaChinuch*). Clothing gives us respect and honor. In our everyday lives, we should dress for the part of striving to be a servant of G-d.

The Underlying Theme of *Megillat Esther*: Return of Israel's Spiritual Garments Besides the external clothing that we wear in this world, there are also spiritual garments to clothe ourselves in the next world, which are created from our Torah and Mitzvot. The purpose of descending into this world is to

get dressed up in these splendid spiritual garments of light, when we return from this world. Just as the purpose of the Mishkan and Temple is to recapture the Divine light of the Garden the purpose of the garments of the Kohanim is to return us to the place in Eden where our exterior body is a pure reflection of our soul. Each one of the Kohen Gadol's eight garments atoned for a different kind of sin of Israel. They represent our spiritual garments and had the ability to return us to our original state of purity in the Garden of Eden. When Israel lusted for the meal of Achashverosh's party, they stripped off their spiritual garments. This gave Haman the opening for his evil decree. Mordechai did not accept the garments Esther sent him, because the blemish on Israel's spiritual garments had not yet been rectified. According to the Zohar, when "Esther dressed up in Malchut (Royalty)" (*Esther* 5:1), she dressed up in the supreme spiritual garments of Adam and Eve before the sin. She caused Israel to repent and once again to dress in glory and cleave to the Most High. This is what caused Haman's decree to be nullified, and enabled Mordechai to go "out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white and with a great crown of gold, and with a wrap of fine linen and purple" (*Esther* 8:15). This was the sign that Hashem had accepted the repentance of the Jewish people. Esther and Mordechai's dedication to Torah not only succeeded in preventing Haman's holocaust, but moreover brought about the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The peak of its service is the Kohen Gadol in his glorious attire.

Accepting Diversity in Dress Returns the Divine Presence

Tiferet (Splendor) shines forth from contrast, while sameness and conformity tend to be dull. G-d is extolled by our uniqueness and the entire tapestry of all Jewish souls. Yet, when Haman and Achashverosh sought to destroy us, they wanted to homogenize us. Haman told Achashverosh, "There is one people" (*Esther* 3:8) – "Those Jews are all the same," negating our individual uniqueness. Achashverosh donned the magnificent robes, to say, the Jewish people are no longer unique. "But Mordechai left the king's presence, clad in royal attire" (*Ibid.* 8:15). By being clad in magnificent, uniquely colored garments, he brought each person to accept his own specific role, while also accepting the unique contribution of his fellow (Rabbi Nachman). Eating from the Tree of Knowledge caused self-awareness and embarrassment because of our separate existence, giving rise to insecurity, jealousy and hatred throughout the generations. The need for conformity in clothes is an outcome of insecurity. Yet, on Aharon's heart was the breastplate with the names of all the children of Israel. There was a unique stone representing each of the 12 tribes upon his heart. Aharon merited this breastplate because he was truly happy in his heart for Moshe's achievements. "Is not Aharon the Levite your brother? ... and also behold he comes to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart" (*Shemot* 4:14). This happiness and acceptance of the other's unique qualities is the kind of happiness that brings back the Shechina to Israel. Our fragmentation into groups of black hats, knitted kipot etc. wouldn't have to cause so much tension and *sinat chinam* (Senseless hatred), if we would only understand that our own personal choice of identification does not negate the choices of others. If only we would realize that by expressing the unique inner sparks of our own soul, as well as accepting and embracing someone else's individual contribution, that we gather the dispersed sparks of Adam and Chava, and rebuild the holy Temple.