



Why Do the Garments of the Kohanim Have Healing Properties?

Do the Garments of the Kohanim Bring Healing to the World?

During these trying times, we are all longing for healing more than ever. We are tired of the drama of friction, discord and dissension. We sincerely desire to return to the lost paradise, in which Adam and Chava lived, before eating from the Tree of Fragmentation. We are yearning for healing, redemption, and the return of the Temple – the spiritual healing structure – that brings us back to paradise. Every material, dimension and vessel within it, is divinely ordained for the healing and purification of our souls. The temple incense was also an enlightened remedy to purify people from sin. Whoever smelled the fragrance of the incense, when it was being burned on the altar, would have thoughts of repentance (Meam Loez). If every detail of the Temple and its contents was designed for our healing, then certainly the each garment of the Kohanim, especially of the Kohen Gadol (High Kohen), must also have special healing properties. It is well-known that each of the Kohen Gadol’s eight garments had the ability to rectify the iniquities of Israel and return them to their original perfection in Eden before the sin. The כֵּתוֹנֶת /*ketonet* – “tunic” atoned for the sin of murder; מִיְּכַנְסָיִם /*michnasayim* – “pants” would atone for aultery; the מְעִיל /*me’il* – “robe” for *lashon hara* (evil speech); the אַבְנֵי טָבַח /*avnet* – “sash” rectified impure thoughts; the אֶפֶד /*efod* – “apron” atoned for idol-worship, the חֹשֶׁן /*choshen* “breastplate” atoned for unfair judgement; מִצְנֶפֶת /*mitznefet* – “turban” rectified haughtiness; whereas, the תִּצִּיט /*tzitzit* – “the golden head plate” atoned for brazenness (*Babylonian Talmud, Zevachim 88b*). Each of these sins is a *klipah* (husk) that emanates from a negative character-trait, blocking us from receiving Hashem’s lifegiving healing.

How Can Garments Heal our Arrogance?

Arrogance is a very dense husk, that blocks us from working on ourselves to change our negative thoughts, emotions and actions – the garments of our soul. Therefore, overcoming arrogance is primary, for receiving healing on all levels. Rebbe Nachman explains that arrogance and honor-seeking weave the threads of our ‘soiled garments’ that prevent us from serving Hashem. These ‘soiled garments’ – emanating from our sins – block us like a river from holiness. Arrogance represents the aspect of idol-worship, the extraneous bodily waste that needs to be eliminated. The best way to achieve healing is by feeling true humility, through becoming aware of how we are blemished by the stain of sin. Then, we can turn with all our strength to the true Healer, Who can heal all of our spiritual diseases. For the soiled garments confuse our mind, and prevent us from perceiving the truth, to the extent that we don’t recognize our negative actions. Through true humility, we can break all the stumbling blocks of the world and learn to recognize the real truth. This is because all blemishes emanate from the mind, which refuses to see truth. This causes a blemish in the letters of the Torah, from which the root of our soul derives. Haughtiness confuses the letters, which then form mixed up words, that are far from truth. This is the meaning of “The Torah becomes a deadly poison for him” (*Yoma 72b*). It causes him to have negative thoughts, and opposite understandings that turn him from the true path, G-d forbid. All this is caused by arrogance, that expresses itself in the soiled garments (*Likutei Halachot Yore De’ah, Hilchot Orlah, Halacha 5*). However, the turban, which the Kohen Gadol wore in humility, in order to fulfill Hashem’s mitzvah, brought healing to the world, by rectifying the negative trait of haughtiness for us all.

Rectifying the Forbidden Mixture of Wool and Linen

The fabric of the Kohen Gadol's אַבְנֵט/avnet – "sash" is described explicitly in the Torah as containing the forbidden mixture of wool and linen called 'shatnez.' The prohibition of wearing wool and linen together is written explicitly in both (*Vayikra* 19:19) and in (*Devarim* 22:11). The surprising suspension of the prohibition of shatnez, also pertained to additional garments of the Kohen Gadol, as it states, "Aharon and his sons...they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet wool, [together with] fine linen" (*Shemot* 28:4-5). Although shatnez is categorized as a *chok*, a law whose rationale eludes us, our sages were not against offering suggestions to explain *chukim*. Wool and linen represent a very different kind of energy. Linen, growing from the ground, symbolizes *gevurah* – it is a coarse, hard fabric which is difficult to tear. Wool, deriving from the animal kingdom, is symbolic of *chesed*. It is soft and comes from the gentle sheep. Taking care of sheep is always viewed as a sign of *chesed*. These two divergent realms represent the first brothers in the world: Kayin, the farmer and Hevel, the shepherd. Each brother made an offering, but when Hashem refused to accept Kayin's offering, he killed his brother Hevel in his jealous rage (*Bereishit* 4:3-8). Aharon, the Kohen Gadol, who received the good part of the neshama of Kayin (*Sefer Emek HaMelech* 13:45), was able to rectify this sibling rivalry and jealousy. When Hashem selected Moshe and sent him on a mission to lead the Israelites out of the Egyptian bondage, Moshe hesitated. He felt that this position should be given to his older brother, in order not to slight his honor. Regarding this concern, Hashem responded: "Is not Aharon your brother, the Levite? I know that he will surely speak, and behold, he is coming forth toward you, and when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart" (*Shemot* 4:14). Not, as you think, that he will resent your attaining a high position. Because of this [Aharon's goodness and humility], Aharon merited the ornament of the breastplate, which is placed over the heart (*Shemot* 28:29); (*Midrash Shemot Rabbah* 3:17); (Rashi, *Shemot* 4:14). Thus, it seems to me, that since Aharon the Kohen Gadol was able to rectify jealousy and sibling rivalry, something so rampant throughout the generations, the prohibition of wearing wool and linen together is suspended for him and his descendants, the high priests. Everyone else, who are not on that level, are obliged to strictly keep the laws of separation between wool and linen. Yet, when the Kohen Gadol would wear his holy garments, the rest of Israel would be healed from jealousy and sibling rivalry.

Removing the Blocking Snakeskin and Letting the Light of our Soul Shine Through

Returning to the origin of garments in the Garden of Eden, before eating from the Tree, Adam and Chava did not have physical bodies, but rather their entire being consisted of light. Yet, when they ate the forbidden fruit, their אור/ohr – 'light' became transformed to עור/or – '[physical] skin.' They, therefore, needed to cover their body – which blocked the light of their soul. The Hebrew word for naked – אָרוּם/arum is related to the word for skin – עור/or. This word is spelled the exact same way as the Hebrew word for blind עִוֵּר/iver. When our light was transformed into skin, our nakedness became apparent. This nakedness, which caused us to become blind to the upper light, was induced by the snake. About him it states, "The serpent was אָרוּם/arum – naked or cunning" (*Bereishit* 3:1). Originally, our bodies were so refined and transparent that they reflected the light of our souls. Now, the body has become a mask for the soul, concealing our true inner being. Instead, our corporeality is mistaken for our true self. The purpose of garments is to conceal the mask of our body and allow the revelation of the original light of our soul. The snake brought about the קְלִפּוֹת/klipot – 'husks' that block our soul and cause negative character traits and disease. The healing garments of the Kohen Gadol have the ability to rectify our snakeskin body, and return the original light of our souls, as it was before eating from the Tree. When the Kohen Gadol was dressed in honor and splendor, the blocks that blocked us from connecting with the light of our soul disintegrated and we became a channel for the Divine Healing Light. May we merit to experience the rebuilding of the Temple and watch the Kohen Gadol serve in all his healing garments of glory!