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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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Parashat Tetzaveh

The Affect Clothing Has on Man's Life

Our *parasha* states (28:2), "And you should make holy clothing for Aharon, your brother, for honor and splendor. (43) They should be worn by Aharon and his sons when they enter the Tent of Meeting or when they approach the Alter to perform the holy service, and they should not incur a sin and die. This is a statue for him and his descendants after him."

Questions:

- 1- This *parasha* mainly discusses the clothing worn by the *kohanim* and it spends an entire *perek* doing so. The Torah recodes in detail the materials the clothing were made out of as well as the colors and the way they were made. This is surprising – why is it so important for the Torah to teach us in such detailed fashion about the clothing of the *kohanim*?
- 2- Our Sages also teach us that the clothing of the kohen had the power to atone for the sins of the Jewish Nation. Why would clothing, externalities, have such power?

Man's External Appearance Affects Him Internally as Well as His Surroundings

There are many who mistakenly think that dress is meaningless when it comes to Divine Service. However, our Torah teaches us that this is not the case; rather man's dress is very significant and is not meaningless at all. As an example, the Torah discuss in very great detail the clothing of the *kohanim*, telling us from which fabric they must be sewn as well as which colors they must be and how they must look. Even more so, they must be made with the proper intentions, i.e., for the sake of the holiness of the kohen's clothing. If one does not have these intentions when making the clothing, the clothing are invalid. This is because it was important for the service of the *kohanim* that they have clothing that were made from the beginning to end according to the spirit of the Torah. Only when they were made according to the Torah's rules were they transformed into holy clothing that had the ability to atone for the Jewish Nation. On the other hand if these clothing were not worn then the kohen would be liable for the death penalty. Similarly, a regular individual clothing, it is significant and important that they are made from materials that the Torah permits; If they are made from *shatnez*, Heaven forbid, he will be punished, and it will prevent his prayers from being accepted. On the other hand, if man makes an effort to honor Shabbat by wearing honorable looking clothing, he will be rewarded. Proof that clothing is significant is that the clothing of kings is different than the clothing of the layman, as we find by Yosef and Mordechai, who wore beautiful royal attire when they were elevated in status. Why should this be so, if not for the fact that clothing is significant? Rather, we see that it is not for naught that Rav Yochanan called his clothing "his honor," for clothing honors the one who wears them as well as influences him, as well as his surroundings. Our Sages were so strict about



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this that they said that if a Torah scholar walks around with a food satin on his clothing he is liable for the death penalty! We also see this throughout the world with the army; each country's wears different clothing than the average man, to show that they are part of the army. Also a police officer is only wears his police uniform, which express his status and job. Similarly, every man's mode of dress determines his status and to what he is associated; they also have an effect on him personally. All the more so does this apply to man's wife, who must dress modestly, as the *pasuk* states that "All the honor of a King's daughter is inside; from clusters of gold are her clothing." Therefore, man must be careful to remember that he is part of Hashem's army and part of the Torah legion. How important it is for him to dress honorably, suitable for his elevated status. He must remember to dress like a *ben Torah*, as well as to dress neatly. He must make sure that his shoes are shined and that there are no stains on his clothing. His hat must be brushed and clean. He should not be like those who walk around looking unkempt, not paying heed to their mode of dress and subsequently desecrating the Name of Hashem with their appearance. This also applies to the Jewish woman, who should remember to look the way a daughter of a king should look. This applies both to the style, color, and measurements of her clothes. Too often, a woman's skirts are shortened, as if they wish to save money on a few inches of fabric. But by doing so she exposes herself. Sometimes her clothing is too tight until it leads her to look immodest. One should think about the clothing of the royal kingdom of England and the way they dress in a noble fashion. For this is how the importance of man's job is perceived. Also, sometimes a woman dresses nicely only when she goes out, but in the house, she dress sloppily. This causes a man to look at his wife disdainfully and can adversely affect *shalom bayit*. There are many more examples as well of how mode of dress affects man's life.

Story About R' Elimelech of Lizhensk

The *sefer Maaseihem Shel Tzaddikim* relates a story about Rebbi Elazar, the son of Rebbi Elimelech of Lizhensk. When Rebbi Elazar was young, he was a very wild boy. He was already close to the age of bar-mitzva but was not acting maturely. It was related to his father, who responded, "Wait and see what will be after the bar-mitzva." Rebbi Elimelech invited a tailor to his home and told him that he wished to order a suit for the bar-mitzva boy. His only condition was that he be present at every stage of the of the suit's preparation. He also requested from the tailor that when he was sewing the suit, he should sew with the intention that the suit should be for the honor of Hashem. Indeed, when the tailor began to cut the fabric, he said that he was doing it for the honor of Hashem. When he started sewing the shoulders of the suit, Rebbi Elimelech told him to say that he is sewing the shoulders so that Rebbi Elazar should move his shoulders only for the honor of Hashem. When he started the sleeves, Rebbi Elimelech told him to say that he is sewing the sleeves so that Rebbi Elazar would lift his hands only for the honor of Hashem. He said this for every part of the suit, until it was made totally for the honor of Hashem. When the day of the bar-mitzva arrived, and the boy wore the suit, holiness immediately rested upon him, and a new spirit entered him. From that moment on, he rose in spirituality until he became a *gadol be'Yisrael*.



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Words of Mussar

We have learned to what extent an individual's dress and appearance affect his Divine Service. He must therefore take care that his appearance be appropriate for his particular status. The first thing is that his clothing should be entirely kosher, i.e., they should not contain a trace of *shatnez*, which is something that causes man's prayers to be rejected. Secondly, regarding his prayers, he should not come to pray wearing slippers, looking unkempt, or wearing creased clothing, for example. This is not the way that man should stand before the Creator of the World. Thirdly, regarding the clothing he wears on Shabbat; he is required to wear different clothing on Shabbat than during the week, and he should greet the Shabbat in an honorable fashion. Fourthly, when man sits at his table, which is similar to the Alter, he should know to sit as if a distinguished guest was sitting at his table. Additionally, when he walks in the street he should be careful that there are no stains on his clothing. This especially applies nowadays when society looks at *Bnei Torah* and observant Jews with disgust. Also regarding his wife's mode of dress; her clothing should conform to the colors and sizes that the *halacha* permits. A man should also take care that his wife wears respectable looking clothing and that she not should not look shabby. Furthermore, a woman must take care to look nice in the house as well for her husband, as this will add to a harmonious home.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka