

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT TETZAVE

“That They Not Bear Iniquity and Die”

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a. The garments that are not enumerated

The *mishna* in *Massekhet Yoma* lists the priestly garments:

The *Kohen Gadol* performs his service wearing eight garments; a regular *Kohen* – four: the tunic (*ketonet*), pants (*michnasayim*), turban (*mitznefet*) and belt (*avnet*); the *Kohen Gadol* wears in addition the breastplate (*choshen*), apron (*efod*), robe (*me'il*) and crown (*tzitz*). With this attire the *Urim Ve-Tumim* are consulted, and they are consulted only for the king or the *beit din* or for someone upon whom the collective depends. (*Yoma* 7:5)

At first glance, there seems to be a discrepancy between this list of garments and the one that appears in our *parasha*:

And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an apron, and a robe, and a quilted tunic, a turban and a belt; and they shall make holy garments for Aharon, your brother, and for his sons, that he may minister to Me as a *Kohen*. (*Shemot* 28:4)

It is immediately apparent that the *tzitz* and the pants are missing here, although they are mentioned later on in the *parasha*:

And you shall make a plate (*tzitz*) of pure gold, and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, “Holiness unto the Lord.” (*Shemot* 28:36)

And you shall make them linen pants to cover their nakedness, from the loins even to the thighs they shall reach. (*Shemot* 28:42)

The obvious question, then, is why the Torah omits these items from the list at the beginning of the *parasha*.¹

¹ The commentators address this question. With regard to the *tzitz*, Ibn Ezra (28:4) writes: “In this verse, which enumerates the priestly garments, no mention is made of the holy crown – for it is not a garment; our Sages taught, there are eight garments of the *Kohen Gadol*. Likewise the *Urim Ve-Tumim* are not counted as a garment, nor the stones...” The Ba'al Ha-Turim (ibid.) offers a similar explanation. However, without embarking on a discussion as to the definition of a “garment,” it would seem natural that the *tzitz* should be mentioned in the list of garments at the beginning of the *parasha*, since a special

Further on in the *parasha*, we discover that there are other items that the *Kohen Gadol* wears which are likewise omitted from the list. These include the two *shoham* stones, the *Urim Ve-Tumim*, and more. While these are not articles of clothing in their own right, and it is therefore clear why they are not enumerated in the list of priestly garments, we might nevertheless seek a common denominator.

b. The structure of the commands concerning the garments

In our *shiur* [last week](#), we noted that the units devoted to the vessels of the *Mishkan* follow a uniform structure. Each unit stipulates the components of the vessel in question and how it is to be assembled, and the unit concludes with a statement as to the use of the vessel. For instance, we read:

And you shall make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make for it a rim of gold round about. And you shall make for it a border of a handbreadth... And you shall make for it four rings of gold... And you shall make the poles of shittim wood and overlay them with gold, and they shall be for carrying the table. And you shall make its dishes, and its spoons, and its jars, and its bowls, used for pouring out; of pure gold shall you make them. **And you shall set upon the table showbread before Me always.** (*Shemot* 25:23-30)

A brief review of the units devoted to the priestly garments shows that they follow the same pattern. The text first lists the technical specifications of the garment, and then adds its purpose when worn by Aharon. Concerning the *efod* (apron), we read:

And they shall make the *efod* of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of an artist... And its finely wrought girdle which is upon it shall be of the same, according to its work... And you shall take two *shoham* stones, and engrave on them the names of *Bnei Yisrael*: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shall you engrave the two stones with the names of *Bnei Yisrael*... **And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulders of the *efod* for stones of memorial for *Bnei Yisrael*, and Aharon shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.** (*Shemot* 28:6-12)

Concerning the *choshen* (breastplate) we read:

unit is devoted to it (w. 37-38) and it cannot be regarded as a part of or connected to any other garment, as is the case concerning the golden fixtures for the *shoham* stones or the *Urim Ve-Tumim*. See Chizkuni.

And you shall make the breastplate of judgment, the work of an artist; like the work of the *efod* shall you make it... And you shall set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones... And the stones shall be with the names of *Bnei Yisrael*, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one with its name shall they be, according to the twelve tribes... And you shall make two rings of gold... And they shall bind the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the *efod* with a lace of blue, that it may be above the finely wrought girdle of the *efod*, and that the breastplate not be loosed from the *efod*. **And Aharon shall bear the names of *Bnei Yisrael* on the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goes in to the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the *Urim Ve-Tumim*, and they shall be upon Aharon's heart when he goes in before the Lord, and Aharon shall bear the judgment of *Bnei Yisrael* upon his heart before the Lord continually.** (*Shemot* 28:15-30)

Likewise, the command concerning the *me'il* (robe):

And you shall make the robe of the *efod* of all blue. And there shall be a hole for the head, in the midst of it; it shall have a binding of woven work around about the hole, as it were the hole of a suit of armor, that it not be torn. And beneath, upon the hem of it, you shall make pomegranates of blue and of purple and of scarlet round about its hem, and bells of gold between them round about; a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. **And it shall be upon Aharon when he comes to minister, and its sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before the Lord, and when he comes out, that he not die.** (*Shemot* 28:31-35)

c. The purpose of the garments

The presentation of the fashioning of the garments reveals an interesting fact. It is specifically the details that represent the essence and the key to the garment fulfilling its purpose. In fact, the impression the reader gets is almost that the garment itself is merely a sort of background prop:

1. The *efod* – One of the details included in the *efod* is the *shoham* stones. At the end of the description, we discover that the function of the garment is focused on these stones, when Aharon wears the *efod*:

And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulders of the *efod* as stones of memorial of *Bnei Yisrael*, and Aharon shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial. (*Shemot* 28:12)

2. The *choshen* – The description focuses on the source of the strands comprising the garment and the various stones. Thereafter, we discover that the names of *Bnei Yisrael* must be inscribed on the stones. Finally, the unit concludes with the *Urim Ve-Tumim*:

And Aharon shall bear the names of *Bnei Yisrael* on the **breastplate of judgment** upon his heart, when he

goes in to the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And you shall put in the **breastplate of judgment** the *Urim Ve-Tumim*, and they shall be upon Aharon's heart, when he goes in before the Lord, and Aharon shall bear **the judgment of *Bnei Yisrael*** upon his heart before the Lord continually. (*Shemot* 28:29-30)

The language of the text seems to indicate that it is only in conjunction with the *Urim Ve-Tumim* that the *choshen* is capable of fulfilling its function as a **breastplate of judgment**.²

3. The *me'il* (robe) – following the details of the garment itself, the text goes on to stipulate the affixing of bells and pomegranates to its hem. Surprisingly, when it comes to the purpose of the robe, the text focuses specifically on these items:

And it shall be upon Aharon when he comes to minister, and **its sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place** before the Lord, and when he comes out, that he not die. (*Shemot* 28:35)

It turns out, then, that the garment functions on two levels. On one level, we find a description of the garment in all its detail, with its various components, and the manner in which it is to be made. On another level, it contains some additional feature that represents the focus of its purpose.

Perhaps we might define these two levels in clearer terms by considering the introductory verse regarding the priestly garments:

And you shall make holy garments for Aharon, your brother, for honor and for beauty. (*Shemot* 28:2)

In other words, the garments have a dual purpose. The garment itself enhances the glory and majesty of the *Kohen Gadol*. However, it is the additional details that imbue the garments with their "holy" character.

d. "And you shall make a *tzitz* (plate) of pure gold"

To summarize the above point, let us take another look at the priestly garments enumerated at the beginning of the *parasha*. We notice that the list focuses on the garments themselves, ignoring the specific details that award them the status of "holy garments." This may help us to understand the reason for the omission of the *tzitz* from the list:

² From the start of the unit, the *choshen* is called the "breastplate of judgment," but there is no explanation of the nature of this "judgment." At the end of the unit, where the *Urim Ve-Tumim* are presented, the text is precise in its wording: "And you shall put in the **breastplate of judgment** the *Urim Ve-Tumim*, and they shall be upon Aharon's heart, when he goes in before the Lord, and Aharon shall bear the **judgment of *Bnei Yisrael*** upon his heart before the Lord continually" (*Shemot* 28:29). After the *Urim Ve-Tumim* are placed in the *choshen*, Aharon now carries the judgment of *Bnei Yisrael* upon his heart. In other words, the nature of the garment as pertaining to judgment is bestowed by the *Urim Ve-Tumim*. Indeed, at the beginning of this *shiur*, we cited the *mishna* in *Yoma* mentioning that questions are addressed to the *Urim Ve-Tumim*; there is no mention of "consulting the *choshen*."

And you shall make a *tzitz* of pure gold, and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, "**Holiness unto the Lord.**" And you shall put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the *mitznefet*, upon the forefront of the *mitznefet* shall it be. And it shall be upon Aharon's forehead, that Aharon may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which *Bnei Yisrael* shall hallow in all their holy gifts, and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord. (*Shemot* 28:36-38)

Perhaps the reason that the *tzitz* is not mentioned in the introductory list is because the purpose of the *tzitz* itself is to be a "holy garment." It has no place in the list of garments that are "for honor and for beauty." Support for this interpretation may be found in the term used for the *tzitz* later on, in the ceremony of the *Kohanim*'s induction:

And this is the thing that you shall do to them **to hallow them**, to minister to Me as *kohanim*: Take one young bullock and two rams without blemish... And you shall take the garments, and put upon Aharon the tunic, and the robe of the *efod*, and the *efod*, and the *choshen*, and gird him with the finely wrought belt of the *efod*. And you shall place the *mitznefet* upon his head, and **put the holy crown** (*nezer ha-kodesh*) upon the *mitznefet*. (*Shemot* 29:1-6)

Aharon dons all the garments he is commanded to wear. The text notes the aim of "hallowing them [the *kohanim*]," but nowhere in the list of garments mentioned here is there any mention of any connection to sanctity. Only at the end, as the completion of his preparation for his role, is the "holy crown" placed upon his head. This highlights the contrast between the *tzitz* and the other garments. The others involve no mention of holiness, while the *tzitz* is not mentioned by name, but rather is referred to as the "holy crown."³

e. **"And make for them linen pants"**

Now let us turn our attention to the omission of the *michnasayim* (pants) from the list of the priestly garments at the beginning of the *parasha*. Surprisingly, we discover that the explanation may be rather similar. Immediately after the list of the priestly garments, the text goes on to command the fashioning of the garments for Aharon's sons – the regular *kohanim*:

And for Aharon's sons you shall make tunics, and you

³ The *tzitz* is also referred to as a "holy crown" (albeit in conjunction with the name *tzitz*) in the parallel verses in *Sefer Vayikra*:

And Moshe brought Aharon and his sons... And he put the tunic upon him and girded him with the belt and clothed him with the robe and put the *efod* upon him, and he girded him with the artistically wrought girdle of the *efod*, and with it he bound it to him. And he put the *choshen* upon him, and he put in the *choshen* the *Urim Ve-Tumim*. And he put the *mitznefet* upon his head, and upon the *mitznefet*, upon its forepart, he put **the golden plate** (*tzitz ha-zahav*), **the holy crown** (*nezer ha-kodesh*), as the Lord had commanded Moshe... And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aharon's head, and anointed him, **to sanctify him**. (*Vayikra* 8:6-12)

shall make belts for them, and turbans shall you make for them, **for honor and for beauty**. And you shall put them upon Aharon your brother, and his sons with him, and shall anoint them, and consecrate them, **and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as kohanim**. And you shall make them linen pants to cover their nakedness, from the loins even to the thighs they shall reach. And they shall be upon Aharon, and upon his sons, when they come in the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place, that they not bear iniquity and die; it shall be a statute forever to him and his seed after him. (*Shemot* 28:40-43)

Here, too, we might divide the garments into two groups. There are three garments that are meant "for honor and for beauty," while the fourth, an exception, appears at the end of the list. Once again, we might propose that the pants are omitted from the initial list since they, like the *tzitz*, are not meant "for honor and for beauty." Indeed, the Ba'al Ha-Turim notes:

No mention is made of the pants, since the verse says, "for honor and for beauty." (Ba'al Ha-Turim, *Shemot* 28:4)⁴

However, we must still understand the purpose of the garment. Unlike the *tzitz*, the pants are clearly not part of what lends the priestly garments their sanctified nature. Proof of this lies in the fact that Moshe is commanded to sanctify the *kohanim* before he is given the command concerning the pants.

Nevertheless, it would seem that there is a common denominator connecting these exceptions to the rule. This denominator may be discerned through a comparative reading of the respective purposes of the garments in question. The language of the text uses identical language, mentioning the "bearing of iniquity" specifically in relation to these two garments, but not any of the others.

Concerning the *tzitz*, we read:

And it shall be upon Aharon's forehead, that **Aharon may bear the iniquity of the holy things** which *Bnei Yisrael* shall hallow in all their holy gifts... (*Shemot* 28:38).

Likewise, concerning the *michnasayim* we read:

And they shall be upon Aharon and upon his sons when they come into the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place, **that they not bear iniquity and die**... (*Shemot* 28:43).

We shall first explore the meaning of this concept in relation to the *michnasayim*, and then try to understand it in relation to the *tzitz*.

⁴ Rashbam and Chizkuni concur. However, Ibn Ezra writes, "And so it was when Aharon washed himself with water that he put on the linen pants. There is no need to mention them here [in the list of garments], nor when he put them on, for it is the general custom for people to wear pants" (Ibn Ezra, long commentary, ad loc.).

f. **“That they not bear iniquity and die”**

The *michnasayim* are the last garment to be treated in the text. After the verse commanding that they be worn, we find the concluding verse quoted above:

And for Aharon's sons **you shall make** tunics, and **you shall make** belts for them, and turbans **shall you make** for them, **for honor and for beauty**. And you shall put them upon Aharon your brother, and his sons with him, and shall anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as *kohanim*. And **you shall make** them linen pants to cover their nakedness, from the loins even to the thighs they shall reach. And **they shall be upon Aharon and upon his sons**, when they come in the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place, that they not bear iniquity and die; it shall be a statute forever to him and his seed after him. (*Shemot* 28:40-43)

The final verse can be understood in two ways. It may refer to all the garments mentioned previously, or as some of the commentators understand it, it may refer to the pants alone.⁵ This distinction is explained as follows by the *Meshekh Chokhma*:

Anything whose presence brings honor will not bring deficiency in its absence; conversely, something which, in its absence, entails deficiency, will not confer wholeness and honor in its presence. These [priestly] garments entailed honor, but *michnasayim* do not confer honor through wearing them; rather, their absence is a deficiency. Therefore the death penalty is mentioned in relation to the *michnasayim*, for if [the *Kohen*] does not wear them, there is a deficiency and he is deserving of death. (*Meshekh Chokhma*, *Shemot* 28:40)

The *michnasayim* are not in the same category as the other priestly garments; they belong to a different dimension of the *Kohen* and his role in the Sanctuary. It is they that allow him to be there at all. Only after that fundamental requirement is fulfilled do we consider the other garments to be worn during the performance of the priestly service. Accordingly, the *michnasayim* are not outwardly visible; they are covered completely by the tunic (*ketonet*).

In the same vein, the *Meshekh Chokhma* explains a halakhic implication of this distinction, citing R. Yitzchak of

⁵ Ba'al ha-Turim and Ramban understand the verse in this way. The rationale behind this reading is that the *gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 83b) chooses to bring a different source for the prohibition of entering the Sanctuary without the priestly garments (*Shemot* 29:9), ignoring the seemingly explicit prohibition in our verse, following the command about the *michnasayim*. This would seem to suggest that the Sages limit the prohibition in the verse against entering while improperly dressed to the requirement of pants alone, and therefore seek a different verse as the basis for the prohibition against entering without the other priestly garments. This still leaves us with a difference between the prohibition concerning the pants and the prohibition concerning the other garments – a difference explained by the *Meshekh Chokhma*; see above.

Orleans in the *Tosafot*. He maintains that a *Kohen* who enters the Sanctuary while not wearing *michnasayim* is liable for death owing to his very presence in the Tent of Meeting, whereas a *Kohen* who enters while missing a different item of his uniform is liable only if he performed some service, but is not liable for his mere presence while improperly dressed.

This is the meaning of the “bearing of iniquity” that is unique to the *michnasayim*. It refers to the *kohen's* brazen trespassing of the boundaries of the Sanctuary in a state unbefitting its sanctity.

With this in mind, let us now try to understand the “bearing of iniquity” in relation to the *tzitz*.

g. **“And Aharon shall bear the iniquity of the holy things”**

At the beginning of the enumeration of the priestly garments, the text defines them as “holy garments” (literally, “garments of holiness”) which are meant to sanctify Aharon in his service:

And you shall make **holy garments** (*bigdei kodesh*) for Aharon, your brother, for honor and for beauty. And you shall speak to all who are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aharon's garments **to consecrate him** (*le-kadesh*), that he may minister to Me as a *Kohen*. (*Shemot* 28:2-3)

In the list of garments that follows, there is no hint of any garment that is holy in and of itself. The text takes pains to point out that Aharon needs each garment when he comes to perform his service in the Sanctuary:

And Aharon shall bear the names of *Bnei Yisrael* on the breastplate of judgment, upon his heart, **when he goes in to the holy place**, for a memorial before the Lord continually. (*Shemot* 28:29)

And it shall be upon Aharon when he comes to minister, and its sound shall be heard **when he goes in to the holy place** before the Lord, and when he comes out, that he not die. (*Shemot* 28:35)

And for Aharon's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make belts for them, and turbans shall you make for them, **for honor and for beauty**. And you shall put them upon Aharon your brother, and his sons with him... **and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as Kohanim**. (*Shemot* 28:40-41)

And you shall make them linen pants... And they shall be upon Aharon, and upon his sons, when they come in the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar **to minister in the holy place**, that they not bear iniquity and die... (*Shemot* 28:42)

Among all the garments there is only one which is described by the text in terms of holiness in its own right:

And you shall make a plate (*tzitz*) of pure gold, **and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, “Holiness unto the Lord.”** (*Shemot* 28:36)

In fact, this conclusion stands out clearly and prominently in the following chapter, in the verse already cited above:

And this is the thing that you shall do to them **to hallow them** to minister to Me as *Kohanim*...: And you shall take the garments, and put upon Aharon the tunic, and the robe of the *efod*, and the *efod*, and the *choshen*, and gird him with the finely wrought belt of the *efod*. And you shall place the *mitznefet* upon his head, and **put the holy crown (*nezer ha-kodesh*)** upon the *mitznefet*. (*Shemot* 29:1-6)

Thus, we see that the text seeks to convey the idea that it is speaking of a sanctified sphere. There is a sanctified place, in which sanctified service takes place. Those responsible for the operation of this place must likewise be sanctified, and their garments play an important role in this process. However, the text does not specify how the garments act to sanctify the *Kohen* for his holy service. In light of our discussion, it would appear that *tzitz*, sitting atop the other garments as a “holy crown,” is the source of their sanctity; it is this item that imbues them with their significance as “holy garments” (or “garments of holiness”).

This helps us to understand the meaning of the “bearing of iniquity” by means of the *tzitz*, according to the Rashbam’s interpretation:

“And Aharon shall bear the iniquity of the holy things...”
– On the plain level, the text is not speaking about ritual impurity of holy things. Rather, [in the event of] any sacrifice brought by an Israelite - a burnt offering, or a sin offering, or a guilt offering to atone for them – the *tzitz*, along with the sacrifice, aids their remembrance before God, that it may be favorable, and as a remembrance for *Bnei Yisrael*, to make atonement for them. (Rashbam, *Shemot* 28:38)

The *tzitz* defines Aharon as a man of holiness, thereby closing the circle of holiness in the Sanctuary and allowing it to operate. As a result, the sacrifices effect their atonement.

Here we arrive at the paradoxical common denominator linking the *tzitz* and the *michnasayim* at the two poles defining the *Kohen* in terms of his garments. These are not priestly garments like the others, but rather are part of the very definition of the *Kohen* standing before God. The uniqueness of the *michnasayim* among the “garments of linen” is paralleled by the uniqueness of the *tzitz* among the “garments of gold.” The *michnasayim* represent the pedestal or base of the *Kohen*’s journey into the sanctified realm, while the *tzitz* is its crowning glory.

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