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Parshat Tezaveh

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THE HEART BEFORE THE FORCE

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

It takes a lot to build a Sanctuary in the desert. And it takes perhaps, even more to adorn the Kohanim (priests) who serve, in beautiful vestments that both symbolize deep spirituality while depicting splendor and glory. You need more than golden threads and fine tapestry. You need more than the ability to weave and design ornate garments. You need devotion, and you need heart. Not ordinary heart. Not the heart that pennant winners have or athletic coaches call for. You need a special type of heart. You need a heart filled with wisdom -- Divine wisdom. That is why Hashem commands Moshe to gather "all the wise-hearted people whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom" to make the priestly garments (Exodus 28:1).

But the Torah is unclear. Were these select people Divinely ordained with a spirit of wisdom for this particular mission, or were intrinsic "wise-hearted" people imbued with an extra "spirit of wisdom"?

If the former is correct, then what did Hashem add? And if all their wisdom was divinely-gifted, then why didn't Hashem simply ask Moshe to "gather all the people in whom I have invested a spirit of wisdom"?

The Dubno Magid (Rabbi Yaakov Kranz) once spoke in a town and a few maskilim (members of the enlightenment movement) attended. After the talk one of the cynics, who was totally unaffected by the warm and inspiring message, approached the famed Magid. "The sages tell us," began the skeptic, "that words from the heart, penetrate the heart." Rabbi," he snickered, "I assume that you spoke from your heart. Your words, however, have had no impact on me whatsoever! How can that be? Why didn't your words penetrate my heart?" The Maggid smiled. In his usual fashion, he began with a parable.

"A simpleton once went by the workplace of a blacksmith, who was holding a large bellows. After a few squeezes, the flames of the smith's fire danced with a rage. The man, who always found it difficult to start a fire in his own fireplace, marveled at the contraption. He immediately went and purchased the amazing invention. Entering his home, he smugly announced, "I just discovered how to make a raging fire with the simple squeeze of a lever!" He set a few logs in the cold fireplace and began to push the two ends of the bellows together. Nothing happened. The logs lay cold and lifeless. Embarrassed, the man returned to the blacksmith and explained his predicament. "I want a refund!" he shouted. This blower doesn't work!"

"You yokel," laughed the experienced blacksmith. "You were blowing on cold logs! You must start a small fire on your own! If you don't start with a spark, a fire will never erupt!"

The Magid turned toward the maskil and sadly shook his head sadly. "If there is no spark, the largest bellows will not make a fire."

In telling Moshe whom to choose for the sacred task of designing the Mishkan, the Torah tells us how G-d invests. He wants people that were imbued with a ruach chachmah - a spirit of wisdom. But he prefaces the statement by telling us how one receives spiritual wisdom. The gift of spiritual wisdom does not go to just anyone. Hashem looks for those who have wisdom of heart. Those who understand what it means to be kind, compassionate, and loyal. Those who have the devotion to His will and the desire for more enlightenment get His ordination. The people who were imbued with Hashem's Divine spirit previously had a spark. And from that spark grew a force - a Divine force - that propelled wise hearts into a Divine spirit of wisdom.

Hashem tells us that we must begin the process on our own. If we supply the heart, He will supply the power to have deep, spiritual, even holy insight. He will supply the force. We must make sure, however, that we put the heart before the force.

Oily Preparation

By Rabbi Berel Wein

In the Torah reading of this week, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the preparation of the oil that will be the fuel for the flames of the great Candelabra that existed in the Tabernacle and, later, in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Torah emphasizes that the oil to be used must be of the purest kind, refined to produce only illumination. Through this verse, the commentators attempt to explain why such a special emphasis is to be placed on the oil.

Perhaps it would be sufficient for the Torah to simply command that the flames that emanated from the Menorah should be of the highest quality and have the greatest power of illumination. We would then understand that to produce flames of such a nature and quality, only the finest oil possible would have to be produced for the Candelabra to possess that proper fuel and extraordinarily fine flames. Thus, we see that the Torah emphasizes the preparation of the oil in more detail and with greater urgency than it does the description of the flame of the Candelabra that results.

In a strange way, it is as though the oil itself, which after all is only the fuel in the cup of the lamp of the Candelabra, somehow receives more prominence and detailed instruction than the flame itself. Not only that, but the great Candelabra has miraculous powers, and one of its lamps burned continuously, according to many commentaries, without having any added oil to the cup of that lamp. As such, if we are relying on that miracle, then why should the production of the oil for the Candelabra be deemed important at all? Judaism places great weight not only on the fulfillment and actualization of commandments, but also regarding the preparation that precedes the actual fulfillment of the wishes of Heaven. Holiness and holy acts require preparation and forethought. They are not random acts that rarely occur because of the spontaneity of the moment.

All the holy days of the Jewish calendar require periods of planning – thirty days before the holiday itself, as well as physical, mental, and emotional preparation. One must enter the performance of commandments prepared. They are not to be performed haphazardly and without proper forethought and cognitive intent. This is also true for the Sabbath day that occurs every week as well as all the daily commandments that we are privileged to perform on a regular basis. The Talmud teaches us that preparation is an important aspect of life – many times as important as actualizing the commandment.

Without proper preparation, performance of the commandments is likened to a body to which no soul is attached. Therefore, if we understand and appreciate this attitude towards life and commandments, we can readily appreciate why the Torah is so emphatic regarding the necessary methods of production of the oil to be used to light the lamps of the holy Tabernacle and Temple.

Make Sure That The Man Fits the Clothes

The garments of the kohanim – the priests of Israel – occupy a great deal of space in this week's parsha. These garments were meant to bring "honor and glory" to those who donned them. But they were also meant to bring "honor and glory" to all of Israel. For when our religious leaders are objects of honor we, their followers and public supporters also share and bask in that glory.

The garments of the kohanim represent their sense of devotion and service to the God and people of Israel. This sense of devotion and holiness was supposed to cover the kohein at all times and to become part of his personality and worldview. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that this was the message of the rabbis that stated that nothing was to be between the actual body of the kohein and the clothing that he wore. The garments of "honor and glory" were to become the very being, the skin if you will, of the kohein himself. Only if he constantly operated on the lofty plane of service and honor to God and Israel could he meet the challenge of being a kohein.

Clothes may or may not make the man but the sense of honor, duty and loyalty that the garments of the kohanim represented certainly defined the sense of greatness that was expected from him. Once having had the privilege of wearing those holy vestments, the kohein was bound forever to the concept of "honor and glory" that those garments represented and demanded.

Clothing plays a great role in current Jewish society. Certain sectors of our society identify their closeness to God and tradition in terms of the clothing that they wear. There is no doubt that clothing makes an impression upon those who see us and upon those who wear it. Research has shown that schools that have a dress uniform have an ability to deal with problems of student discipline more easily than the free and open schools of casual, whatever you like type of dress. But there is a responsibility that comes with wearing special clothing. And that responsibility is to be people of "honor and glory." The Talmud states almost ironically that he who wishes to sin should travel to a place where he is unknown and to wear "black clothing" so that his behavior will not reflect on the whole of Israel.

There are differing interpretations of what "black clothing" means in this context. But it is clear that it means a type of anonymous and casual clothing that will not reflect upon the Torah community and Judaism generally. One cannot wear the garments of "honor and glory" and behave in a fashion that contradicts those values. Wearing garments is something that should never be taken lightly. For with the garments come the responsibilities and challenges as well.

Searching For a Heart of Gold

by Rabbi Ari Kahn

Clothes can do many things; they can express a mood or serve as camouflage, attract attention, even seduce. Clothes can both conceal and reveal who we are. In this week's parasha the clothes of the newly-appointed High Priest are described in unusual detail. These clothes were stunning; the combination of colors and precious metals created a collage that expressed the importance of the clothes themselves, and presumably of the person wearing them. These clothes were both ornamental and ceremonial, laden with precious gems and metals, and we might wonder how such opulence is commensurate with the spiritual nature of the High Priest's mission.

Throughout history, there have been contenders for this exalted position and the trappings that are its hallmark. In fact, the rabbinic tradition regarding Korach's rebellion emphasizes that Korach coveted Aharon's garments as well as his job. Korach, we are told, complained that Aharon strutted about, dressed like "a bride on her wedding day;" apparently, that is precisely the kind of preening Korach desired. His fixation on the garments was part of a narcissistic fantasy: He wanted to be no less than the center of attention. He wanted to be dressed in the beautiful clothes. This may have been the motivation in another episode recounted in the Talmud of a man who approached Hillel the Elder and asked that he facilitate his conversion to Judaism – but only on condition that he would become the High Priest.

What was the nature of this clothing? Was it considered magical, or was it simply a sort of uniform, intended to set apart the High Priest from all others, lending the wearer the authority and power of office? Rabbinic teachings stress that the priestly garments had symbolic significance that was part and parcel of their appearance. The garments were an integral part of the job of the High Priest, and when they were worn by the person worthy of them, the clothes themselves brought about forgiveness for many of the indiscretions of which the nation was guilty.

First and foremost among these special garments was a vest, worn on the heart, which bore the names of the twelve tribes. Careful consideration of this vest reveals the secret of the clothes, the man who wore them, and the task with which he was entrusted.

At the burning bush, God revealed Himself to Moshe, and tasked him with a job that seemed – to Moshe – to be far beyond his own capabilities: Moshe pointed out his own inadequacies, but God reassured him that He Himself would see to it that the mission would be successful, and that, in addition, Moshe would be assisted by his brother Aharon. In fact, God told Moshe, Aharon was already on his way to meet him, "happy in his heart" that his younger brother Moshe had been chosen for greatness (Shmot 2:14). This was no polite smile or superficial social gesture; this was an authentic emotion from the depth of his being, attested to by God Himself. Coming after the entire book of Genesis, in which it seems brothers can never get along, we are relieved when Moshe and Aharon are joyfully reunited, when Aharon feels no jealousy or resentment that his younger brother has been chosen, or that he himself has been called upon to "play second fiddle" to Moshe. He feels only happiness for Moshe, and is more than willing to play a secondary role in the mission that lies ahead.

This was the greatness of Aharon. We may say that he had a heart of gold: He loved and respected his younger brother, and rejoiced in Moshe's success. In fact, he loved all of his "brothers" and "sisters", and did his utmost to assist them in any way he could. This went beyond his immediate family; Aharon considered the entire nation his extended family, his brothers and sisters, and in his heart they were all precious, holy, and immensely valuable.

The selection of Aharon for the unique position of Kohen Gadol was, therefore, a natural choice: Aharon never saw his job as the expression of his own needs or desires; he consistently put the needs of his family first. Aharon mastered the art of thinking and feeling in the plural. He thought in terms of "we", not "I", which is why he was uniquely capable of wearing the precious stones and gold of the priestly vest on his heart: He wore them as an expression not of his own ego and needs, but as a representation of the entire Jewish people. He wore on his heart a mirror, as it were, of what he felt in his heart. He did not wear clothes that glorified him; he basked in the clothing that expressed the holiness and preciousness of his brothers and sisters, and carried the weight of their spiritual and physical wellbeing in – and on – his heart. When Aharon entered the sanctuary, he never entered as an individual. He represented the dreams and aspirations, the holiness and sanctity, as well as the shortcomings and failures, of the entire nation. He prayed, from the depths of his heart, for forgiveness for the nation – a nation that was nothing more or less than his own extended family, whose names were inscribed on the vest on his heart. Only a man with a heart of gold, a heart that was filled with happiness by the success of others, could be capable of wearing such clothing.

“They shall take the gold, the blue, purple, and crimson wool, and the linen” (28:5)

Rashi comments that the craftsmen were to take the materials directly from the donors. Why did it have to be done this way? R' Moshe Feinstein, in his sefer Kol Rom, says that one who spreads Torah must also take care of the mundane aspects of the job like fundraising. He must do all that is necessary to support Torah, both the religious and mundane parts, rather than assign individualized roles to different people. The designers of the bigdei kehunda also had to take the lead in collecting the materials for their projects.

“You shall make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue wool” (28:31)

Chazal teach that the *מעיל* atoned for the sin of *loshon hara*. The Kli Yakar explains how this is readily apparent in the fabric from which the *מעיל* was made. It was entirely blue, a color which is reminiscent of the sea. One of the remarkable things about the sea is that Hashem set the sand as a boundary for the sea and the water never crosses this barrier under normal circumstances. Similarly, Hashem has created protective barriers for a person's mouth – his teeth and lips – to prevent inappropriate speech from coming out. When a person sees the blue *מעיל*, he is reminded of the sea which never goes past its limits and he remembers not to allow any improper speech to pass the barriers of his mouth. Chazal also teach that the tongue is a very potent tool and, as such, is the only limb of a person that is on the inside of the body so that it remains protected. Despite the protective measures that Hashem provided for us, it is still very common for people to misuse the tongue and remain inattentive to the laws regarding evil speech.

“For a seven-day period shall you bring atonement for the altar and sanctify it; the altar shall be holy of holies; whatever touches the altar shall become sanctified” (29:37)

The Mizbeach is “*kodesh kodoshim*” and sanctifies all that comes into contact with it, even *korbanos* that are by law unfit to be placed on it. These unfit *korbanos* remain on the mizbeach to be burnt even though were not meant to be placed there in the first place. R' Moshe Feinstein teaches an important lesson based on this rule. A Torah scholar is referred to as “*kodesh kodoshim*” and has the ability and responsibility to spread his sanctity to people who are far away from the Torah way of life. He should not shy away from this task out of concern that he will not have an impact on such people. The Torah teaches us that sanctity makes an impression on all, even those who are removed from it. This obligation works in the reverse as well. The Rambam says that a person should attach himself to a *talmid chacham* and thereby fulfills the *mitzvah* to cleave to Hashem. A person who comes into contact with a *talmid chacham* in any way becomes holier because of the encounter. He will undoubtedly be influenced by the scholar to become a better person.

“I shall rest my presence among the Children of Israel, and I shall be their G-d” (29:45)

The Chofetz Chaim said that if one brings beautiful silver and gold vessels into a dirty house, they will not make the house look any nicer because it will still be filthy. Only if the person first cleans up the house will the beautiful additions have the intended effect. Similarly, if we want to bring Hashem into our lives, we have to create the right atmosphere within ourselves. If we clean out the evil inclination and prevent him from returning, we allow Hashem's presence to beautify us. When a husband and wife actively create a peaceful home, they allow the presence of Hashem to enter. This cannot happen on its own. Only by first working on ourselves, thus allowing Hashem to have an impact on our lives, can we truly experience the beauty of a life lived according to the Torah.

“They will know that I, Hashem, am their G-d, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt in order that I may dwell in their midst; I am Hashem their G-d” (29:46)

The Mishkan enabled Hashem's presence among the Jewish people. Today, even without a Mishkan or Mikdash, we can still connect to the Divine Presence by attending a minyan in a shul, by studying Torah, and by building homes dedicated to serving Hashem together with our spouses. Chazal connect all of these with Hashem's presence. The connection of the Mishkan to leaving Mitzrayim is as follows: Slaves cannot focus on their religious goals because they have no time to themselves. Now that the Jewish people were independent, they were free to focus on Hashem. Hashem says that He will “dwell in their midst,” in the plural, because Hashem's is present in the life of each individual. We all have the ability to connect with Hashem, each of us in our own way.

By Rabbi Mayer Friedman

The Robe and the Incense

by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen

"You shall make the Robe of the *Ephod* entirely of turquoise wool.... You shall make on its hem pomegranates of turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, on its hem all around, and gold bells between them, all around; a gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate on the hem of the robe, all around."

One of the vestments of the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) was the *Me'il*, a robe that was adorned with bells and rang whenever the Kohen Gadol walked. The Talmud in Arachin discusses how all of the *Kohen Gadol's* vestments atoned for a particular sin; the robe atoned for the sin of *lashon hara* (evil speech); the robe, which made a loud sound, should atone for *lashon hara* which makes a loud noise.

However, the Talmud brings a seemingly contradictory *braissa* that says that the *ketores* (incense) that was used in the Tabernacle atones for *lashon hara*. It answers that there are two different types of *lashon hara*. The *ketores* atones for a more 'quiet' form *lashon hara*, when the speaker hides his true feelings from the subject of his criticism and the 'victim' has no awareness that someone is criticizing him. In contrast, the *lashon hara* that is atoned for by the robe is characterized by the speaker making no secret of his true feelings about the victim, and the victim is likely aware of what is being said about him.

But this explanation seems to pose a new difficulty; why is it necessary for there to be two separate functions of the Mishkan to atone for the single sin of *lashon hara*? Why can't either the robe or the incense atone for both 'loud' and 'quiet' *lashon hara*? Moreover, it would seem that loud *lashon hara* is significantly more damaging than 'quiet' *lashon hara*. Therefore, if the robe has the power to atone for the more severe form of *lashon hara*, then it should surely be able to atone for the seemingly less damaging 'quiet' *lashon hara*?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to understand more specifically the negative aspects of these two forms of *lashon hara*: 'Loud' *lashon hara* is very damaging in that the victim is aware of the evil speech that is directed towards him and this naturally causes him great pain. In this aspect, 'loud' *lashon hara* is considered more destructive than its quieter counterpart.

However, there is a certain way in which 'quiet' *lashon hara* is more pernicious than 'loud' *lashon hara*. 'Quiet' *lashon hara* is characterized by the perpetrator of this grave sin behaving in a two-faced manner towards his victim; in front of him he is very friendly, but behind his back he slanders him mercilessly and instructs the listeners not to reveal his true feelings to his unfortunate fellow. Since the victim is totally unaware that he is being vilified, he makes no efforts to protect himself from these attacks and they may continue unabated. In contrast, the victim of 'loud' *lashon hara* is far more likely to find out about the *lashon hara* spoken about him, consequently he will be able to protect himself.

With this understanding we can now explain why it is necessary for there to be two separate functions of the Mishkan to atone for *lashon hara*. Each form of *lashon hara* is more detrimental in some way than the other. Consequently, whilst the robe has the capacity to atone for the damaging aspect of 'loud' *lashon hara*, it cannot atone for the harm caused by 'quiet' *lashon hara*. Similarly, the incense can atone for the pernicious features of 'quiet' *lashon hara* but it cannot do so for the areas in which 'loud' *lashon hara* is more damaging.

What is particularly striking about this explanation is that in some ways speaking *lashon hara* in a hidden fashion is worse than doing so in a blatant manner. The Chafetz Chaim discusses how speaking *lashon hara* of the 'quiet' kind can also involve a transgression of the mitzvah "do not hate your brother in your heart (*loh sisna es achicha bilyavecha*).\" The simple understanding of this mitzvah is that one only transgresses it when he keeps his hatred in his heart and does not reveal it to anyone, including the subject of his hatred. However, if he expresses his hatred even in a negative way, he does not transgress "do not hate your brother in your heart" because he did not keep the hatred in his heart.

The Chafetz Chaim argues that this is not necessarily the case; a person may hate his fellow and tells others of his hatred, but act towards him in a friendly manner. This, the Chafetz Chaim writes, also constitutes a transgression of keeping hatred in one's heart. He explains that the root of the sin of keeping hatred in one's heart is that the subject of the hatred is unable to protect himself from the person who despises him. Consequently, if the 'hater' hides his true feelings to his fellow he is guilty of "do not hate your brother in your heart" even if he tells others about his hatred. We learn from the Chafetz Chaim the above concept that 'quiet' *lashon hara* has a particularly insidious aspect to it, in that its victim is totally unable to protect himself from the silent bombardments that he is subjected to.

There may be occasions in a person's life where he develops a dislike for someone. It is self-evident that this loathing does not justify speaking *lashon hara*. We learn further from the Talmud in Arachin that acting towards him in a two-faced manner makes the *lashon hara* even more destructive. The Rabbis tell us that Yosef's brothers were wrong in hating him, but to their credit they did not act in a hypocritical manner towards him. The lesson we derive from the brothers' behavior towards Yosef is that whilst it is wrong to hate someone, it is far worse to hide that hatred of him and speak badly about him behind his back. This mode of behavior only succeeds in causing enmity and discord. The ideal course of action is to try to resolve the situation by speaking to the subject of his hatred in a calm and reasonable manner and strive to resolve the issue in a mature fashion. By acting in an honest and candid manner, one can greatly improve his relationships with those around him.

War is Not the Norm

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The *pasuk* says, “For a seven-day period he shall don them—he who serves in his stead from among his sons, who shall enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Sanctuary.” [Shemos 29:30] Rashi explains this *pasuk* to mean that the son of the previous *Kohen Gadol* has the right to become *Kohen Gadol* after his father (provided he is worthy of serving in the position). The *pasuk* concludes with the words “*Asher yavo el Ohel Moed, l'shaves b'Kodesh*” (who shall enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Sanctuary).

The Talmud [Yoma 72b] says, “I might think that the son of the Kohen Anointed for War (*Mashuach Milchama*) shall succeed his father in the same way that the son of a *Kohen Gadol* succeeds his father...” The Gemara teaches however that this is not the case. The Gemara learns this exclusion from the very *pasuk* we just quoted: Only one who is “fit to enter the Tent of Meeting to serve in the Sanctuary” succeeds his father, but one who does not enter into the Tent of Meeting (because he is out on the battlefield) is not fit to serve in place of his father.

Why is this so? If the High Priesthood passes from father to son, why shouldn't the office of *Mashuach Milchama* also pass from father to son? It is true that the Gemara learns it out from a *pasuk*, but what is the rationale?

I heard an explanation in the name of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, zt”l, regarding why we do not pass down the office of the Kohen Anointed for War through inheritance. Rav Kook explains that inheritance is all about continuity. It passes from father to son, from son to grandson, from grandson to great-grandson. It is about “*hemshech*” (continuity). This is appropriate for *Kehuna Gedola*. The Gemara says it is also appropriate for rabbinic leadership. Ideally, *Rabanus* should go from father to son. Ideally, the position of being head of a Talmudic Academy (*Rosh Yeshiva*) should go from father to son, if the son is worthy of the position. Continuity.

However, there is one area of Jewish life where continuity is not appropriate. On the contrary, we do not want to emphasize continuity. That area is the area of war. War is not supposed to be a permanent function of Jewish life. War is an exception to the rule. It is an anomaly. We do not want it to happen. There should not be a need for a Kohen Anointed for War. Linking inheritance with the role of *Kohen Mashuach Milchama* is saying that we view war as part of the eternal continuity of Jewish existence. We do not want that.

The Mishna states, “A man should not go out on Shabbos (into the public domain) with his sword. Rav Eliezer says that it is considered an ornament (and he may go out into the public domain wearing it). The Rabbis (disagree with Rav Eliezer and say it is not an ornament) but rather it is something that is unseemly (a *g'nai*) as it is written: ‘They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift sword against nation and they will no longer study warfare’ [Yeshaya 2:4].” [Shabbos 63a]

The Rabbis reject the idea that a sword should be considered an ornament. A weapon should be an ornament? This is not what we live for! This is not supposed to be a function of our lives! It is true that when war occurs, we need to fight the war and be successful in our battles. However, to make it a permanent institution—to say the position of *Mashuach Milchama* should pass down to son and grandson—that would send the wrong message. That would send the message that war needs to be a part of our lives. That is not the case. Our goal is that nation should not lift sword against nation and that they should no longer study warfare.