

The Hoshen: Unity, Dignity, Equality, Coexistence

וְעַשֵּׂת בְּגִידִים נְדָשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אֲחִיךָ לְבָבָז וְלִתְפָּאָרָת:

Make sacral vestments for your brother Aaron, for dignity and adornment. (Ex.28:2)



The *Hoshen* served as an intermediary between the twelve tribes and God. The gemstones represented the link between the perfection of nature and the aspirations of man. There were 12 precious stones in the *Hoshen*. Various Jewish sources teach us that in addition to representing the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel, and each stone has served as an expression of faith and optimism throughout the generations. The twelve stones symbolize the unity of the Jewish people and their equal status before the God. As precious and nonprecious stones were set together in the *Hoshen*, so too are the nobleborn and the commoner all equal before God.

Carnelion /Ruby	<i>Reuven</i>	symbol of love and marriage; aids conception, pregnancy and birth
Topaz	<i>Shimon</i>	brings blessing of joy and abundance to your life
Emerald	<i>Levi</i>	symbol of generosity, modesty and kindness
Turquoise	<i>Yehuda</i>	leads to success in business affairs
Lapis Lazuli	<i>Yissachar</i>	symbol of honesty and clarity of thought
Quartz	<i>Zevulun</i>	bestows strength; symbolizes purity and the love of truth
Jacinth	<i>Dan</i>	stimulates creativity; brings on to self-fulfillment
Agate	<i>Naphtali</i>	has a special calming effect
Amethyst	<i>Gad</i>	symbol of spiritual strength; guards against negative energies
Chrysolite	<i>Asher</i>	purifies both body and soul; brings inner peace
Onyx	<i>Yosef</i>	strengthens one's courage and self-control
Jasper	<i>Binyamin</i>	bestows physical strength; raises self-esteem

Ramban on 28:2

AND THOU SHALT MAKE HOLY GARMENTS FOR AARON THY BROTHER FOR SPLENDOR AND BEAUTY — this means that he be distinguished and glorified with garments of distinction and beauty, just as Scripture says, *as a bridegroom putteth on a priestly diadem.*²⁷*Isaiah 61:10.* For these garments [of the High Priest] correspond in their forms to garments of royalty, which monarchs wore at the time when the Torah was given. Thus we find with reference to the tunic, *and he made him a tunic of 'pasim'*²⁸*Genesis 37:3.* — meaning, a cloth woven of variegated colors, this being *the tunic of chequer work* [mentioned here], just as [Ibn Ezra] explained, which clothed him *as a son of ancient kings.*²⁹*Isaiah 19:11.* The same applies to the robe and the tunic, as it is written, *Now she [Tamar] had a garment of many colors upon her; for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled,*³⁰*II Samuel 13:18.* which means that a garment of many colors was seen clearly upon her, for such was the custom that the virgin daughters of the king wore robes with which they wrapped themselves; thus the coat of many colors was upon her as an upper garment. It is for this reason that it says there, *and she rent her garment of many colors that was on her.*³¹*Ibid., Verse 19.* The mitre [mentioned here] is to this day known among kings and distinguished lords. Therefore Scripture says with reference to the fall of the kingdom [of Judah], *The mitre shall be removed, and the*

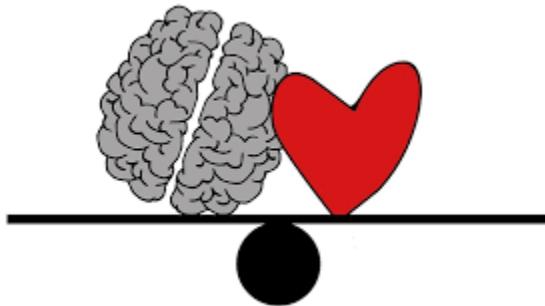
crown taken off.³²*Ezekiel 21:31*. Similarly it is written, *and a royal diadem.*³³*Isaiah 62:3*. Scripture also calls them *the ornamented high caps*,³⁴*Further, 39:28*. and it is further written, *They shall have linen ornamented [caps] upon their heads,*³⁵*Ezekiel 44:18*. which are for the beauty and glory of those that are adorned with them. The ephod and the breastplate are also royal garments, just as it is written, *and thou shalt have a chain of gold about thy neck.*³⁶*Daniel 5:16*. The plate [around the forehead, which the High Priest wore], is like a king's crown. Thus it is written, '*yatzitz nizro*' (*his crown will shine*).³⁷*Psalms 132:18*. — *Ramban thus associates the word tzitz (plate) with the expression yatzitz nizro (his crown will shine), thus suggesting that the tzitz of the High Priest is a sort of royal crown*. Furthermore, [the High Priest's garments] are made of *gold, blue-purple, and red-purple*³⁸*Further, Verse 5*. [which are all symbolic of royalty]. Thus it is written, *All glorious is the king's daughter within the palace; her raiment is of chequer work inwrought with gold,*³⁹*Psalms 45:14*. and it is further written, *thou shalt be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about thy neck.*³⁶*Daniel 5:16*. As for the blue-purple, even to this day *no man will lift up his hand*⁴⁰*Genesis 41:44*. to wear it except a king of nations,⁴¹*See Isaiah 14:9*. and it is written, *And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a 'tachrich' (robe) of fine linen and purple*⁴²*Esther 8:15*. — the *tachrich* being a robe in which the wearer wraps himself. By way of the Truth, [the mystic teachings of the Cabala,] majesty is to *kavod* (glory) and to *tiphereth* (splendor),⁴³*Cabalistic terms for certain Emanations*. the verse thus stating that they should make *holy garments for Aaron* to minister in them to the Glory of G-d Who dwells in their midst, and to the Splendor of their strength, as it is written, *For Thou art the Glory of their strength,*⁴⁴*Psalms 89:18*. and it is further stated, *Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee,*⁴⁵*Isaiah 64:10*. meaning [“the house of] our Holy One” which is the Glory, and “of our Splendor” which is the Splendor of Israel. And it is further stated, *Strength and beauty are in His Sanctuary,*⁴⁶*Psalms 96:6*. and similarly, *To beautify the place of My Sanctuary, and I will make the place of My feet glorious*⁴⁷*Isaiah 60:13*. — meaning, that the place of the Sanctuary will be glorified by the Splendor, and the place of His feet, which is the place of the Sanctuary, will be honored by the presence of the Glory of G-d. *And in Israel will He glorify Himself*⁴⁸*Ibid., 44:23*. also means that in Israel He will show and designate His Splendor. Likewise He says further with respect to the garments of all of Aaron's sons, that they are *for splendor and for beauty.*⁴⁹*Further, Verse 40*. Of the sacrifices He also says, *they will come up with 'ratzon' ('will' — acceptance) on Mine altar, and I will glorify My glorious house.*⁵⁰*Isaiah 60:7*. Thus the altar is His Will and the house of His Glory is the Splendor.

The [priestly] garments had to be made with the intention to be used for that purpose. It is possible that in making them, intent of heart [for what they symbolize] was also needed on the part of their makers. It is for this reason that He said, *And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom*⁵¹*Verse 3*. — who will understand what they will do. And the Rabbis have already said [of Alexander the Great, that when asked by his generals why he descended from his chariot to bow before the High Priest Simon the Just, he answered]:⁵²*Yoma 69a*. *The story told there is that when Alexander the Great conquered the Land of Israel the Samaritans petitioned him to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem. Thereupon a procession of notables went out from Jerusalem headed by Simon the Just, the High Priest, who was attired in the high priestly garments. They walked a whole night with torches in their hand until dawn. In the morning as soon as Alexander saw Simon the Just, he descended from his*

chariot and bowed down to him. When the Samaritans said to him, “Such a great king as thou art dost thou bow thyself to that Jew?” He replied, “His image etc.” “His image glistened before me whenever I had a victory.”

Tetzave. Head and Heart

<https://www.alexisrael.org/single-post/2020/03/05/tetzave-head-and-heart>



This week we read about the sacred garments of the High Priest. They are rich with spiritual symbolism. Interestingly, some have writing, text, emblazoned upon them. We shall speak about two garments:

The Tzitz – made of pure Gold. It sits on the High Priest’s forehead. It is engraved with the phrase: “Holy to the Lord!”

The Hoshen – the priestly breastplate. It is a knit of gold, blue, crimson and purple thread. Inset into the breastplate are twelve semi precious stones, each stone is engraved with a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is worn on the High Priests heart. The fabric of the breastplate is doubled over, and inside the fold are the Urim veTumim, an oracle that allow Israel to ask questions of and receive answers from God.

The distinction between these two garments has aroused the attention of scholars throughout the ages:

"The Titz is placed upon Aaron's forehead, corresponding to the centre of intelligence and wisdom.

The Hoshen was on Aaron's heart, the centre of love and affection for Israel. All the names of the Tribes were engraved upon it, and the Torah calls it the Hoshen Mishpat – the breastplate of Justice/Judgement – the judging of Bnei Yisrael was entrusted to the Hoshen.

The Tzitz ruled questions of ritual law, the impure and the pure, obligations and prohibitions ... the Hoshen would rule on very different questions: Shall we go to war or not? Do I protest against a government that has fallen short of the values of Israel or not?" (Rav Soloveitchik – The bearers of the Tzitz and the Hoshen. In *Divrei Hagut VeHaaracha* pg 191-2)

Here Rav Soloveitchik suggests that these two pieces of apparel represent contrasting religious functions.

The Tzitz, pure gold, is dedicated to God. It is on the forehead, the mind, seat of the intellect, representing an intellectual, theoretical approach to religion. The Tzitz represents purity. But if we can view the Tzitz in its relationship to Torah, Rav Soloveitchik sees the Tzitz as the study of pure Torah in an almost theoretical manner. Detached from the realities of everyday living, hidden from the turbulence of the pressures of life, family, statehood, conflict, Torah remains pristine.

The Hoshen is a contrast to all this. A weave of different colours, the Hoshen represents variety and diversity. And that is reflected in the engraving of the tribes of Israel on the stones. Not a single stone with twelve names, but a different stone with its unique colour and texture for each of the Tribes of Israel. It is this garment that represents the Mishpat – the judgment, guidance, and direction – of the nation. It is this garment that holds the collective identity of the people in all its frenetic difference.

The Tzitz remains above time and space. The Hoshen is an oracle, offering answers to worldly questions in the here and now. It was placed upon the heart, the seat of passionate emotion, not the seat of intellect. The Ephod represented the trials and tribulations of the nations of Judaism.

Both contain God's name. For the Tzitz, it is exposed, visible, clear, coherent. In contrast the Hoshen contained, within its folds, a plate engraved with the name of God (Rashi 28:30). But this Divine name was hidden, obscured, and its spiritual power, enveloped deeply in the weave. It is filtered, refracted differently for Reuven than for Shimon, for Yissachar and Asher. twelve very different channels, each tribes with its special character, temperament, needs, dreams, and shortcomings.

Two opposites:

- Theoretical Torah and applied Torah;
- The purity of intellect and the tensions and variety of twelve tribes;
- The brain versus the heart.

All these tensions lie in the dichotomy between the Tzitz and Hoshen.

There are many avenues to God; sometimes it is the head, and at others it is the heart.

The Message: There are many avenues to God; sometimes it is the head, and at others it is the heart. Judaism, the light of God, must be perceived at times through the medium of the Tzitz – intellect, pure theoretical thinking, unadulterated by practical concerns; the ivory tower, the Yeshiva, removed from life. But at other moments, the relationship with God takes place in the marketplace, in the battlefield, in the stormy heart, and the pressure of the rat-race, in the imperfect, messy tensions we call life.

Please Discuss

- Does Torah belong in the Yeshiva or in life?
- How would Torah differ in the Yeshiva than in life?
- Do you connect more to Judaism of the head or of the heart?
- Is it possible for different “tribes” or sub-groups in Judaism to have different expressions of Judaism or is there only a single way of living Jewish practice? Should all groups practice the same Judaism? Would we expect a person to pray the same length of time if he is a college student as compared to if he is a combat soldier in Tzahal?
- Some people think that Torah scholars should weigh in on issues of morality and public policy. Do you see our topic as relevant to this question?
- Lastly, The Sefer Hachinuch suggests that Tefillin mirror the Tzitz and Hoshen. How might the Tefillin of the head mirror these two garments?