

JEWISH STUDY NETWORK

Parshat Tzav

Most Befitting

There was no room for loose or tight fits. The Kohen's clothing were required to be precisely fitting. "The Kohen shall wear his fitted linen shirt" (Shemot 6:3). Chazal say that if a Kohen performed the service while wearing improperly fitting clothing, he was punished by death from Heaven! This strict punishment was because his actions showed that he did not respect the House of G-d.

True Clothing

The Vilna Goan in the book of Mishlei states that the clothes that one wears represents his or her middot, character traits. The Talmud (Tractate Shabbos 114a) tells us that a learned person is careful to always fix his inverted clothing. The Vilna Goan explains that this refers to the process of character refinement. Sometimes we have traits that are not so nice and they are backward. A person connected to Torah gathers his strength to put in the effort to improve and reverse the negative trait to become more appropriate.

Items of Respect

Chazal (Tractate Shabbos 113a) tell us that Rabbi Yochanan would call his clothing, "my honor." The simple understanding is that one who dresses in a respectable and dignified manner shows himself to be put together and worthy of respect. The deeper meaning based on the Vilna Goan's explanation that clothing refers to character is quite powerful. Rabbi Yochanan expressed the importance



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continued ...

of having middot, proper refinement. Only one who works to refine himself deserves honor and respect.

Indeed in Megillat Esther, the verse tells us that at the most important time in the Megillah where Esther was sent by Mordechai to go speak with Achashveirosh, “Esther dressed in royal clothing” (Esther 5:1). This means (Megillah 14b) that she dressed herself with Ruach HaKodesh, Divine Inspiration, in order to gain clarity and presence of mind at this vital junction. I suggest that it was only in the merit of Esther’s character development (her royal clothing) that she was granted the power from Hashem to dress in royal Divine Inspiration.

Esther’s Greatness

Indeed, Hashem placed her in the palace to save the Jews and the Vilna Goan explains how Esther was chosen by Achashveirosh. Esther (2:9) “She (Esther) found favor in his eyes and she expressed her kindness to him...” The Vilna Goan says that the verse expresses that Esther was appreciated for two things, her beauty and her kindness. This is what it means, “favor in his eyes” (beauty) and “kindness” (she had great middot)!

Just as the Kohen and Esther achieved greatness through good middot, may we merit to find success and fulfillment through great middot.

Shabbat Shalom!

