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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN. AND YOU HAD BETTER WATCH OUT!

PARSHAS ACHAREI MOS – KEDOSHIM

Rabbi Shimon Schwab zt"l held a rabbinical position in Germany in 1933, prior to immigrating to the United States. He had given a Shabbos sermon that was misunderstood to be criticizing Hitler. The Gestapo called Rabbi Schwab in for questioning. He explained the misunderstanding. He was freed but was told that they were going to investigate him. Over the next two months, he did not know what the Gestapo would do to him. During that entire time, he went to sleep at night wearing his clothes, not his pajamas. When asked about it, he explained his unusual behavior. Apparently, another rav had been recently executed by the Gestapo, in the middle of the night. He had been wearing his pajamas and was left hanging in a public place. Rabbi Schwab was afraid that he, too, would be arrested and hung in the middle of the night. He felt that it would be a chilul Hashem, a desecration of Hashem's name, for a rav to be left hanging while wearing his pajamas. Therefore, he slept in his clothes for the entire two months that his life was in the balance.

The Kohain Gadol performed various holy services in the Beis HaMikdash on Yom Kippur. When performing the services outside of the Kodesh HaKedashim, the Holy of Holies, he wore all eight special garments of the Kohain Gadol. Before entering the Holy of Holies, he removed the four special garments that were made from gold. Thus, he entered wearing only the remaining four linen garments, the same garments that a regular Kohain wore when he officiated.

Why did the Kohain Gadol remove the four golden garments? **Rashi** explains that the prosecutor cannot become the defender. The golden garments were a reminder of the *egel hazahav* the golden calf. The sin of the golden calf still hovered over the Jewish People. It would not have been judicious for the Kohain Gadol to wear clothes that were a reminder of the golden calf, while he was davening to Hashem to forgive the Jewish People for their sins.

He [the Kohain Gadol] shall don a sanctified, linen tunic and linen pants shall be on his body. He shall gird himself with a linen sash and place a linen turban on his head."
(Vayikra 16:4)

The **Midrash Rabba** (Vayikra 21:10) cites various opinions as to why the Kohain Gadol did not wear the golden clothes while performing the service in the Kodesh HaKedashim. One opinion was quoted in the above **Rashi**. The **Midrash** quotes another opinion that it was because of arrogance. The **Matnos Kehuna** explains that the Kohain Gadol should not have any feelings of arrogance while standing before Hashem. This is based on a pasuk in **Mishlei** (25:6), "Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence." The **Malbim** explains that one's own honor should be nullified in comparison to the king's honor. By dressing in a certain way, one is exhibiting the feeling that his honor is something important as well. That is not appropriate when standing before Hashem, the King of kings. One's actions would then seem to be diminishing Hashem's honor. Similarly, **Rashi** says, "Do not glorify yourself before a king to show your honor and to be proud before one who is greater than you." **Rabbeinu Yona on the Torah**

adds that the Kohain Gadol should enter the *Kodesh HaKedashim* with fear and trepidation. He should not feel arrogance that he, alone, was chosen from amongst all the Jewish People to perform this holy service. Therefore, in order not to feel arrogant before Hashem, the Kohain Gadol removed his golden garments.

The Kohain Gadol might feel a trace of arrogance before Hashem because he was singled-out for this holy task of davening for the entire Jewish People. If so, then why would those feelings of arrogance disappear if he would only wear the white linen garments without the golden ones? Apparently, the Kohain Gadol would only feel this trace of arrogance if he also wore the golden garments.

What a beautiful lesson for us! Even the Kohain Gadol, on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, in the *Kodesh Kedashim*, in the holiest place, while standing before the *Shechina*, would be apt to feel a trace of arrogance. Why? Only because of the golden clothes that he would be wearing. Even such a holy person, in such a holy place, at such a holy

time, could be influenced by the type of clothing that he would be wearing.

Chananya, Misha'el, and Azarya were thrown into a fiery furnace by King Nevuchadnetzar. The **Talmud** (Sanhedrin 92B) quotes the school of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov who taught that even during a period of danger, a person should not deviate from his prominence and demean himself. **Rashi** (Daniel 3:21) says that Chananya, Misha'el, and Azarya wore their royal garments when they were cast into the blazing, fiery furnace. The **Maharsha** (Sanhedrin 92B) adds that if one doesn't wear respectful clothes, it shows that he is pained and saddened by Hashem's justice. Wearing respectful clothes will help one lovingly and joyfully accept Hashem's justice.

We see from this that even tzadikim who are ready to give their lives *al kiuddush Hashem*, for the sanctification of Hashem's name, can have their feelings influenced by the clothes that they wear.

***The clothes that we wear influence our thoughts and feelings. We should be alert to how we dress.
We should dress respectfully, modestly, not extravagantly, and not arrogantly.***

*Based on a dvar Torah by Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz zt"l
as recorded in Sefer Chidushei Halev by Rabbi Binyamin Luban*

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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