

Parsha Ponders

Tetzaveh | February 9, 2022 | 9 Adar I 5782

*Hashem's concern for injustice*¹

וְאֶלָּה הַבָּגְדִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂו חָשֵׁן וְאֶפְוד וְגוֹי לְאַהֲרֹן אֲחִיךְ וְגוֹי וַעֲשׂו אֶת-הַאֱפֹד זָהָב תְּכִלָּת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְגוֹי וַעֲשֵׂת חָשֵׁן
מִשְׁפָט מְעוֹשָׂה חָשֵׁב וְגוֹי

These are the garments that you shall make for Aharon, your brother: The *Choshen* and the *Eiphod*...You shall make the *Eiphod* out of gold, *techeiles*, and *argaman*...You shall make the *Choshen* of Justice, the work of a craftsman...²

One of the prominent features of *parshas Tetzaveh* is the focus on the *bigdei Kehuna*, the Priestly garments. The Kohanim had to wear four special articles of clothing for their Temple service to be accepted³. The *Kohen Gadol* had four additional articles of clothing as part of his uniform. The Torah introduces these special garments by first mentioning the *Choshen*, an ornate breastplate, and then mentions the *Eiphod*, a type of decorative apron. What's interesting is when the Torah proceeds to describe how to make them, it starts with the *Eiphod*, and only then discusses the *Choshen*. Why is there this switch in the order?

Our Sages ask⁴: why is the topic of Temple offerings juxtaposed to the *bigdei Kehuna*⁵? The answer is to teach us that just like Temple offerings provide atonement, so too do the *bigdei Kehuna*. The *Choshen* atones for injustice in civil court cases, whereas the *Eiphod* atones for idol worship. Now, based on this, we can understand why the Torah starts off mentioning the *Choshen* first, and only then the *Eiphod*.

Let's consider for a moment, which upsets Hashem, so-to-speak, more? Idol worship? Or injustice in court? One might think that it would be idol worship, as it's a direct affront to Hashem's honor. However, in reality, Hashem cares more about injustice in court. Hashem can forgive His honor, and overlook the idol worship. However, when His children are being wronged, and no one is there to correct it, that's what really bothers Him.

We see this with the contrast between the generation of the Flood⁶, and the story of the Tower of Bavel⁷. The Tower of Bavel was all about waging war against Hashem. Mankind wanted to be free from G-d's influence. This was the biggest affront to Hashem's honor, yet they were simply punished with dispersion. On the other hand, almost the entirety of mankind was wiped out because violent theft was rampant. We see that human injustice is punished more severely than affronts to Hashem Himself.

To demonstrate this priority in Hashem's eyes, the *Choshen Mishpat*, the breastplate of justice, which atoned for unjust courts, was mentioned first. Only then was the *Eiphod*, which atones for idol worship, mentioned. However, that's from Hashem's perspective. From our perspective, it's the other way around. We care more about Hashem's honor than our own. As such, the actual production of the *bigdei Kehuna* focused on Hashem first, and mentioned the *Eiphod* before the *Choshen*⁸.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on *Kli Yakar* to Exodus 28:4

² Exodus 28:4, 6, 15 with *Targum Onkelos ad. loc.*

³ See *ibid* 29:9 and *Zevachim* 17b

⁴ *Arachin* 16a; *Zevachim* 88b

⁵ This is referring to the Temple offerings discussed in *Leviticus* Chapters 6, 7 and the *bigdei Kehuna* discussed in *ibid* Chapter 8

⁶ *Genesis* 6:9-9:17

⁷ *Ibid* 11:1-9

⁸ The *Kli Yakar* compares this to something similar with occurs in *parshas Masei*, where Hashem was more concerned for the Jews' honor, and the Jews were more concerned for Hashem's honor. For more on this, see <https://parshaponders.com/mattos-masei-5781>