

Parsha Ponders

Tetzaveh | March 4, 2020 | 9 Adar 5780

Meaningful clothing¹

ואלה הבגדים אשר יעשו חשן ואפוד ומעיל וגו' ועשית את-מעיל האפוד כליל תכלת: והיה פי-ראשו בתוכו שפה יהיה לפיו סביב מעשה ארג כפי תחרא יהיה-לו לא יקרע: פעמן זהב ורמון פעמן זהב ורמון על-שולי המעיל סביב: וגו' ונשמע קולו בבאו אל-הקדש

These are the garments that you shall make: The *Choshen*, the *Eiphod*, the *Me'il*...You shall make the *Me'il* of the *Eiphod* completely [dyed] *techeiles*. Its head-opening will be within it. It shall have a lip sewed around it's opening. It shall have like the opening of scale armor, [so that] it will not tear. [It should have] alternating golden bells and pomegranates on the bottom, going around...its sound will be heard as he enters the Holy²

This week's *parsha* describes the manufacturing of the various garments that the Kohanim were to wear during the Temple Service. The *gemarra* explains³ that each of these garments had some significant purpose, besides serving as a standard uniform for them to wear. Each garment atoned for a particular sin. We are taught that the *Me'il*, a *techeiles*-dyed tunic, atoned for the sin of improper speech. Can we find any allusion to this connection between these two seemingly unrelated things?

As mentioned, the *Me'il* was entirely dyed *techeiles*. *Techeiles* is similar to the color of the sea, which in turn is similar to the color of the sky. We are taught that the color of the sky is similar to the color of Hashem's Throne of Glory⁴. That means, the color of the *Me'il* reminds a person of Hashem's Throne. As well, we are taught elsewhere⁵ that the sin of *loshon hara*, improper speech, is so horrid that its stains go all the way to Hashem's Throne of Glory. The connection between the two is now obvious.

Another connection is evident in the way the garment was made. It's a tunic that the Kohen Gadol would put on by slipping it over his head, as opposed to buttoning it up. The hole for the head, expressed in Hebrew as פי ראשו (literally, the mouth of its head), was closed off. Meaning, it was surrounded on all sides by fabric. This alludes to what *Chazal* teach us⁶, that the universe continues to exist because of those who close off their mouth during quarrels. They hold back from letting any words out.

It has a lip sewed around its opening, to inform us to imagine as if our mouth is sewed shut. Its opening is described as being like the opening of scale armor. Just like armor protects the wearer from harm, so too those who seal their mouths are protected from those quarrelling against them. By remaining silent, the fight will die down, since their opposer has no one answering them.

Finally, we are told that the *Me'il* has golden bells and pomegranates on the bottom of it. This alludes to the teaching of our Sages⁷ that a person's job in this world is to make themselves like they're mute. However, this doesn't apply to learning Torah. When a person is learning Torah, they should speak out what they are learning. When they don't have the opportunity to learn, that's when they should make themselves mute. This is symbolized by the bells and pomegranates. Bells make noise, just like a person should when they're learning. Pomegranates obviously don't make noise. They represent how a person should use the rest of their time: in silence.

Following the description of the *Me'il*, the Torah tells us that the sound of the bells will be heard as the wearer enters the Holy Temple. This can be further understood as a promise, that whoever acts according to the lessons of the *Me'il*, will have their prayers and Torah study accepted in the Heavens. Good Shabbos

¹ Based on Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah to *parshas Tetzaveh*

² *Exodus* 28:4, 31 - 35

³ *Arachin* 16a

⁴ *Chullin* 89a. See <https://parshaponders.com/korach-5779> for more on this idea

⁵ *Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu* Chapter 18, based on *Psalms* 73:9

⁶ *Chullin* *loc. cit.*

⁷ *Ibid*