

Parsha Ponders

Pekudei | March 28, 2025 | 28 Adar 5785

Bells, whistles, and pomegranates¹

ויעשו על-שולי המעיל רמוני תכלת וארגמן ותולעת שני משזר: ויעשו פעמני זהב טהור ויתנו בתוך הרמנים על-שולי המעיל סביב בתוך הרמנים: פעמן ורמן פעמן ורמן על-שולי המעיל סביב לשרת כאשר צוה יקוק את-משה

They shall make pomegranates of spun blue, crimson, and red wool on the bottom of the cloak. You shall also make pure gold bells, and place them within the pomegranates, on the bottom of the cloak, going around, within the pomegranates. A bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate, on the bottom of the cloak, going around. It's for Divine service, as Hashem commanded Moshe²

There's a dispute between Rashi and the Ramban³ how the pomegranates and bells were oriented on the bottom of the *Kohen Gadol's* cloak. Rashi says they were alternating, whereas the Ramban says the bells were *within* the pomegranates. Ramban has support from a verse in our *parsha*, where it says the bells were בתוך the pomegranates. While this could be translated as "amongst" the pomegranates, the more standard way to translate this would be "within" the pomegranates. However, the subsequent verse supports Rashi, as the verse seems to stress that they were alternating.

If one were to be so bold, perhaps it could be suggested that both approaches are correct. Indeed, there was a bell without a pomegranate, and then there was a pomegranate with a bell inside it, and then a bell without a pomegranate, and then there was a pomegranate with a bell inside it, etc. It went this way all around the cloak.

We are taught⁴ that the *Kohen Gadol's* cloak was an atonement for the sin of *loshon hara*, negative speech against another. However, we can suggest that it didn't exclusively atone for such an extreme sin. It also atoned for someone who boasts about themselves in public, bragging and advertising their spiritual accomplishments. Such conduct can cast negative attention on others who aren't as accomplished. We find⁵ that the righteous Nechemiah was punished for simply saying "Remember me, my G-d, for good!". All the more so someone whose sole intent is to show off.

The atonement of both sins is alluded to in the cloak itself. The bells that were on their own atoned for negative speech about others. At the same time, the pomegranates with bells inside them atoned for the above. Our Sages compare⁶ a Jew to a pomegranate. Just like a pomegranate has many seeds, so too Jews are filled with *mitzvos*. However, such a Jew who goes outside and advertises loudly their accomplishments like a bell, they too need atonement. The cloak had them covered, as symbolized by the bell inside the pomegranate.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on [Chasam Sofer al HaTorah](#) to [Exodus](#) 39:26

² [Exodus](#) 39:25-27

³ [Rashi](#) and [Ramban](#) to [Exodus](#) 28:33

⁴ [Arachin](#) 16a

⁵ [Sanhedrin](#) 93b

⁶ [Berachos](#) 57a; [Eruvin](#) 19a; [Chagigah](#) 27a; [Sanhedrin](#) 37a