

# חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

## Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

### Topics Covered

#### Parashas Tetzavah

#### I

- ▶ *Just as a Kohen wears priestly garments, so too Moshe, when he was in Heaven, was dressed like an angel*
- ▶ *The reason they took olive oil was to teach us that we must float on top and not mix with other substances*
- ▶ *That spirituality should not mix with physicality, and vice versa*
- ▶ *Explanations regarding several of the priestly garments*
- ▶ *The reason the Choshen (Breastplate) was attached to the Ephod (Apron)*
- ▶ *Three in each row, hinting that Hashem, the Torah, and Israel are one*
- ▶ *The Choshen and the Ephod are like the Priestly Blessing, which must be uninterrupted*



### Parashas Tetzaveh & Parshas Zachor

#### Parashas Tetzaveh

#### I

In our Torah portion (Shemos 28:2): **”וַעֲשֵׂיתָ בְגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אֶחָיֶדֶד לְכָבוֹד וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת.”**

**"And you shall make holy garments for Aharon your brother, for honor and for glory."**

#### Moshe Rabbeinu's "priestly garments"

The service of a Kohen is performed only in his **priestly garments**: an ordinary Kohen with four garments and the Kohen Gadol with eight. In the absence of one of these garments and without the addition of immersion in a *mikveh* ("ritual bath"), his service is not valid, because the holiness of the Kohen depends also on his garments and not just on his body.

We find in the words of our Sages (*Avodah Zarah* 34a), of blessed memory: "In what [type of clothes] did Moshe serve during the seven days of inauguration? [He served] in a white robe." Indeed, even though he served as a Kohen Gadol, he did not wear four or eight garments but only a simple white linen robe, without the fine linen, purple wool, gold, or the *shoham* ("onyx") stones of the *Choshen Mishpat* ("Breastplate of Judgment"). It was like a *kittel* on Yom Kippur or burial shrouds for the deceased. **This requires explanation.**

## II

- ▶ *This parasha alludes to the future redemption, which will come through the Torah*
- ▶ *The redemptions from past exiles occurred in the merit of the forefathers*
- ▶ *Just as oil provides light, so does the Torah illuminate the entire world*



### Parashas Zachor

- ▶ *The words of the Rambam regarding the commandment of remembering the deeds of Amalek*
- ▶ *The words of the Rambam regarding the negative commandment of forgetting the deeds of Amalek*
- ▶ *Remember with the mouth, do not forget in the heart*
- ▶ *The negative commandment of forgetting the deeds of Amalek is different from all negative commandments in the Torah*
- ▶ *Amalek is the root of heresy*
- ▶ *The Exodus from Egypt and Shabbos correspond to the first two commandments*
- ▶ *The husk of Amalek comes to undermine the faith of Israel*
- ▶ *Our father Jacob had already contended with the husk of Amalek*

### When Moshe Rabbeinu was in heaven, he dressed like an Angel

I would humbly suggest the straightforward explanation that since Moshe Rabbeinu was in Heaven for forty days and forty nights, speaking with Hashem face to face, not eating, not sleeping – he was like an angel and wore a kittel like an angel. As such, he did not need the priestly garments to achieve holiness, for he himself was holy – to the extent that he had to veil the radiance of his face due to the intensity of its holiness.

The garments of the Kohanim were made for honor and glory in order to sanctify the Kohanim, and in this sense, they function somewhat like royal garments. Just as Mordechai attained a royal status when he left the presence of Achashverosh dressed in royal attire, so too do the Kohanim wear their garments to attain holiness. When a person is crowned as a king or prince, he receives special garments and a crown as part of his transformation

into royalty. However, our teacher Moshe did not require this, due to the immensity of his inherent holiness. This is the uniqueness of Moshe Rabbeinu and the depth of the matter regarding his humility. He did not need an external factor to make him noble, because he was inherently noble.

(See Tosafos there, s.v. "Bameh shimesh Moshe kol shivas yemei hamilu'im"... and the difficulty according to the opinion in *Zevachim* (101b) that Moshe, peace be upon him, was a Kohen Gadol and served in this capacity for forty years. According to that opinion, this matter must be explained differently, as Tosafos writes there.)

### The Jewish people are compared to an olive

The *Sefas Emes* (Tetzaveh 5632) explains the words of the Midrash that compare the Jewish nation to an olive. Just as oil does not mix with other liquids and floats to the top, so is it with the Jewish nation. This is reflected in the verse (Shemos 27:20), "And they shall take to you pure olive oil," meaning: "The expectation from the Jewish people is that they

preserve their inner vitality –the Divine spark that exists within every Jew –so that it does not become mixed with physicality but rather remains elevated above it."

"And they shall take to you pure olive oil": The will of Hashem for the Jewish people is that they guard their inner spiritual vitality, ensuring that it remains pure. The Divine portion within a Jew must not mix with physicality, with the dregs of the physical world. One must protect the "pure olive oil," meaning the purity of the spiritual soul, and not allow physicality or impurity to intermingle with it. The spiritual part must hover above. Just as oil naturally floats above all other liquids, so too must spirituality remain elevated and separate. **Indeed, it seems to me that it goes even beyond that:** the spiritual aspect must be the dominant force and the guiding influence – it should hover above and lead even the physical aspects of a person's life.

**Protection is needed  
against impurity  
infiltrating one's  
spirituality**

I would furthermore suggest that when a person seeks to protect their inner

vitality, it is not enough to guard only against the physical aspects of the body; there must also be a barrier to shield it from the sediments – that is, to ensure that the contamination, the impurities surrounding us, do not infiltrate our spirituality. Our role is to "preserve the inner vitality," to safeguard our internal life, our Divine portion, our spiritual part, the holy portion that exists within each of us, **"in every Jewish person."**

We must ensure **"that it does not mix with physicality."** We must distance the physical, keep it separate, and guard the spiritual aspect so that it remains pure and clean and always capable of floating on top. **"Floating on top" means that the Divine spark should be the guiding force in our lives,** for that is our true essence, and it will elevate us.

**Hidden and sublime  
allusions in the Choshen  
and Ephod**

The Rishonim question how the Choshen Mishpat and the *Ephod* (Apron) were simultaneously united and separate. *Ibn Ezra* explains that the Choshen is a profound secret:

*And our teacher, Rabbeinu Shlomo (Rashi) said that the Urim and Tumim were inscriptions of the Ineffable Name. But had he seen the responsum of Rav Hai [Gaon], he would not have said so. The matter of the Ephod and Choshen is a deep secret... and the secret of the work of Heaven. There is no need to elaborate on the form of the Ephod, the Choshen, and the rings."*

I would humbly suggest that even when it comes to the *pshat* ("plain meaning") of the Torah's verses regarding the Choshen and Ephod, one can find much in the way of *drash* ("homiletics") and *sod* ("secret," "mystical") within the *pshat*. One example is the *Cheshev Ha'ephod* ("belt of the Ephod"). The belt must be tied twice in a permanent knot. The Torah first refers to the Choshen as the "Choshen Mishpat," and afterwards it is tied as "the Choshen Hamishpat."

**Hashem's will that the  
Choshen be bound to the  
Ephod**

"And you shall make two rings of gold, and you shall place them upon the two shoulder straps of the Ephod, on its lower part, opposite its front, near its connection, above the belt of the Ephod" (Shemos 28:27). The next verse: "And they shall

fasten the Choshen by its rings to the rings of the Ephod with a thread of blue, so that it will be upon the belt of the Ephod, and the Choshen shall not move off the Ephod." The Choshen must be securely attached or bound to the Ephod, and it should not be possible to move or remove it.

"And you shall place into the Choshen Hamishpat" – into the Choshen Hamishpat must be placed "the Urim and the Tumim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he comes before Hashem. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before Hashem continually."

**The allusion in the three stones per row – Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people**

Rashi writes that within the folds of the Choshen Mishpat lay the Ineffable Name of Hashem, and the stones of the Choshen rested upon this fold. Engraved on the stones were the names of the tribes of Israel, three per row. Three multiplied by four (there were four rows) equals twelve, representing the twelve tribes, which signifies the unity of the Jewish nation with Hashem, as in "the Jewish people,

the Torah, and Hashem, are one." This unity gives the Choshen Mishpat its power, and therefore, it must remain connected to the Ephod. Moreover, this connection must be as strong and eternal as the bond between the Jewish people, the Torah, and Hashem, which are one. This is the meaning of "And the Choshen shall not move off the Ephod."

There is great evidence for this from "Birchas Kohanim" (the "Priestly Blessing"). A Kohen has no power of blessing on his own; rather, he serves as a vessel to transmit Hashem's blessing. As it says at the end of "Birchas Kohanim": "And they shall place My Name upon the Children of Israel, and I will bless them." "And they shall place My Name" – this alludes to the Ineffable Name within the Choshen Mishpat. "Upon the Children of Israel" – this refers to the names of the tribes engraved upon the stones of the Choshen. Thus – i.e., through this connection – "I will bless them."

**The Choshen is like a continuous "Birchas Kohanim" for the Jewish people.**

The Choshen Mishpat is there so that the

Jewish nation may be blessed without interruption, with Aaron ever present to bring the Jewish people to the *Azarah* (Temple courtyard) and to the *Kodesh* (Holy). And wherever Aaron goes, he carries with him the names of the tribes of Hashem upon his heart, thereby bestowing blessings upon us and praying on our behalf. Aharon, being the first Kohen Gadol, was "a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace." He is the one who unites the Jewish nation and puts his heart and soul into the Choshen Mishpat so that the Urim and Tumim are available at every time and hour of distress and war, and its judgment would result in mercy upon the Jewish nation in their time of need. And it serves as a precedent for all future Kohanim Gedolim.



**II**

**Redemption from the exiles through the Patriarchs, and the future Redemption through Torah**

The holy *Oh r Hachaim* writes in our Parasha in the name of the *Zoh ar* that in each redemption, one of the Patriarchs succeeded in bringing that redemption

about—Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. And Moshe Rabbeinu will redeem us from the final exile, speedily in our days. **But Hashem wants us to redeem ourselves through Torah study.**

**"And they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for illumination, to kindle a lamp continually."** Again citing the Zohar, the *Ohr Hachaim* explains that **Torah is olive oil.** The verse specifies "pure," indicating that **Torah must be studied lishmah** ("for its own sake")—that is, **without "sediments,"** which are symbolic of Torah study done with ulterior motives, such as to challenge others or for self-aggrandizement, G-d forbid. Additionally, the verse states "crushed," meaning that **we must toil in Torah to the point of crushing our bodies and our energy,** as expressed in the verse, "This is the Torah: when a man dies [in the tent]."

**"And they shall take to you pure olive oil"**—the Torah is **compared to oil. Just as oil illuminates the world, so does the Torah.** The Torah is the light of the world.

### **All the activities are in memory of the forefathers and foremothers.**

Our "Fathers and Sons" program is dedicated to spreading the Torah of the Maharal Tzintz, whose teachings illuminate the world, to the future generations, in the spirit of **"You shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them,"** for his Torah is pure olive oil.

We launched the **"ברוך ה' לעולם אמן," "Baruch Hashem L'olam Amen"** ("Blessed is Hashem forever, Amen") project in memory of my mother, **Baila Liba bas Avraham Manis,** of blessed memory, a Holocaust survivor from the city of Piotrków, Poland. When she was orphaned at the age of twelve, she left Beis Yaakov to help support her family so that her only brother, Yosef Simcha, may Hashem avenge his blood, could remain in yeshiva. She lived in the home of the Radoshitzer Rebbe, R' Yitzchak Finkler, of saintly and blessed memory, and she always felt that Hashem was guiding her at every step along the way. Hence the name of the project, **ברוך ה' לעולם אמן,** acronym for Baila [ביליא].

Our intent in all of this is to fulfill anew **"You**

**shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them"** with pure olive oil—namely, the pure Torah of infants and sucklings who are without sediment, without troubles—to magnify and glorify the Torah.

We want to bring forth the splendid light of the Torah and enable it to shine like pure oil, free of sediments. Moshe Rabbeinu will be our redeemer and will bring us out of this terrible exile, *im yirtzeh Hashem.*



### **Parashas Zachor**

#### **From the words of the Rambam on the Mitzvah of Remembering the deeds of Amalek**

In *Sefer HaMitzvos* by the Rambam - Positive Commandments - Commandment 189: "Commandment 189 is that we are commanded to **remember** what Amalek did to us, how they hastened to harm us, and we are to say this at all times, arousing the souls with words to fight against them and urging the people to hate them, so that the commandment is not forgotten, and their hatred will not weaken or diminish in the souls over time. This is His statement, may He be exalted, **'Remember** what Amalek did to you.' The

language of the Sifri is: 'Remember what Amalek did to you'—with the mouth; 'do not forget'—in the heart, meaning, say words with your mouth that obligate people so that their hatred [for Amalek] does not depart from their hearts. The language of the Sifri is: 'Remember what Amalek did to you'—perhaps in your heart? When it says 'do not forget,' it already addresses forgetting in the heart. So how do I fulfill 'Remember'? That you should repeat it with your mouth. Behold, you see that Shmuel the prophet, when he began to perform this commandment, first remembered their evil deeds and then commanded to kill them, as it is stated [by Hashem], may He be exalted, 'I have remembered what Amalek did to Israel.'"

**Sefer HaMitzvos by the Rambam - Negative Commandments - Commandment 59:**

"Commandment 59 is that we are warned against forgetting what the seed of Amalek did to us and how they hastened to harm us. We have already explained in Commandment 189 of the positive commandments to **remember** what Amalek did to us and to renew hatred toward them as a positive commandment. Similarly, we are warned against casting this

*out of our hearts and forgetting it, and this is a negative commandment. This is Hashem's statement, may He be exalted, 'do not forget.' In the Sifri: 'Remember with the mouth, do not forget in the heart,' meaning, do not cast out their hatred or remove it from your soul."*

**Rambam, Yad HaChazakah, Hilchos Melachim, Chapter 5, Halacha 5:**

*"Similarly, it is a positive commandment to eradicate the memory of Amalek, as it is stated, 'You shall wipe out the memory of Amalek,' and it is a positive commandment to constantly **remember** their evil deeds and their ambush [in order] to arouse enmity toward them, as it is stated, 'Remember what Amalek did to you.' From the oral tradition, they learned: 'Remember with the mouth, do not forget in the heart,' meaning it is forbidden to forget their enmity and hatred."*

From the words of the Rambam, we see several important points: Regarding the positive commandments, it is not enough to merely recount the story of Amalek; one must arouse enmity and hatred toward them, which is the complete opposite of the merciful and forgiving nature of the compassionate and kind-hearted people of

Yisrael, who are quick to forgive, as the Rambam writes: "It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and unyielding, but rather, they should be easy to appease and slow to anger. When the sinner asks for forgiveness, they should forgive wholeheartedly and willingly, even if the person caused them distress and sinned against them greatly; they should not seek vengeance or bear a grudge. **This is the way of the seed of Yisrael and their upright heart.** However, idolaters with uncircumcised hearts are not like this; rather, 'their anger endures forever.' Similarly, it is said about the Gibeonites, because they did not forgive or reconcile, 'And the Gibeonites were not from the children of Israel'" (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah, Chapter 2, Halacha 10).

But the greater wonder is that the negative commandment of "do not forget" is not like other negative commandments in the Torah, where a person suppresses their inclination so as to refrain from an action. In the negative commandment of "do not forget," it is almost the opposite: a person must resist forgetting (!) in order to sustain enmity and hatred toward Amalek. This is almost akin to a positive commandment. The

negative commandment supports the positive commandment to maintain enmity; the positive commandment sustains enmity, while the negative commandment is to overcome forgetting, ensuring that hatred toward Amalek is not removed from the heart. In total, it supports the positive commandment. We must understand why there is both a positive commandment and a negative commandment for the same matter?

### **Amalek – the root of heresy**

It is known that Amalek is the root of coldness toward faith and attempts to instill doubts in us, even to the point of leading us to complete **heresy**, G-d forbid. Therefore, we must certainly oppose this with full force, in the spirit of "Do I not hate those who hate You, O L-rd, and loathe those who rise against You?" (Tehillim 139:21). When we examine the matter, we see that Amalek arrived in Parashas Beshalach after the completion of the Exodus from Egypt, when it is written, "And they believed in the L-rd and in Moshe His servant," and after the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the Shabbos, which is faith in creation ex nihilo.

### **The Exodus from Egypt and Shabbos correspond to the commandments of "I am Hashem" and "You shall have no other deity" that we heard from the mouth of the Almighty**

The Exodus from Egypt teaches that Hashem, blessed be He, is the sole Master who rules over all the worlds, but this is not enough; one must believe that there is none besides Him, meaning there is no pre-existing entity or pre-existing matter, only Hashem alone, blessed be He, is pre-existent to everything that was created. This is the faith that Shabbos teaches, that Hashem created everything from absolute nothingness, and there is nothing pre-existent except Hashem may He be exalted. It seems to me that these correspond to the two commandments we heard from the mouth of the Almighty Himself to strengthen faith in the Holy One, blessed be He. "**I am Hashem your L-rd who brought you out of the land of Egypt,**" which corresponds to the message of **Pesach** that Hashem, blessed be He, alone rules and governs. "**You shall have no other gods before Me,**" that there is no necessary existence except Hashem, blessed be He,

corresponds to the message of **Shabbos**.

Amalek came after the Exodus from Egypt and the commandment regarding Shabbos that we received at Marah to undermine these two beliefs, which reflect the essence of "**I am Hashem**" and "**You shall have no other god**" that we heard from the mouth of the Almighty. "**I am Hashem**" is a positive commandment, "**You shall have no other god**" is a negative commandment, and therefore, the negation of Amalek, the root of **heresy**, is through both a positive and a negative commandment, in the essence of the completion of the positive commandment of "**I am Hashem**" and the negative commandment of "**You shall have no other gods before Me.**"

### **The deeds of the forefathers are a sign for the children in maintaining enmity toward Amalek**

Clearly, we must maintain enmity toward Amalek from generation to generation because it is the root of **heresy**, and therefore, "Hashem will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." It seems to me that all of this is hinted at when Yaakov wrestled with the "angel of

Edom," as Amalek is the very essence of the impurity of Edom. The angel of Edom says to Yaakov, "Let me go, for the dawn has risen." Why did Yaakov hold onto him and not want to let him go, and what is the connection to the rising of the dawn? It seems to me, by way of homiletical interpretation, that Yaakov "**holding** onto the angel of Edom" hints that Yaakov **maintains** enmity

toward Amalek; **he holds onto** his enmity and hatred. The angel of Edom says to him, "for the dawn has risen," meaning the time of redemption, likened to the light of morning, has arrived, and there is no longer a need to maintain enmity and hatred toward me—the game is over! But Yaakov says, "I will not let you go unless you bless me," meaning the game is not

over until you bless me and acknowledge that Yisrael is the chosen people (the essence of Pesach) and that Hashem is L-rd (the positive commandment of "**I am** Hashem your L-rd") and there is none besides Him (the essence of the negative commandment of "**You shall have no other god**", which is reflected in the essence of Shabbos), may it be speedily in our days, amen!

## Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

In his sefer, *Melo Ha'Omer*, on the verse "**And I shall dwell among the children of Israel and be their G-d,**" which appears in our parasha (Shemos 29:45), the **Maharal Tzintz**, of saintly memory, explains that the ultimate purpose of building the Mishkan is "**among the children of Israel,**" meaning Hashem's dwelling is specifically within the Jewish people themselves, rather than merely within the Mishkan.

The Mishkan, its vessels, and all the holiness involved in the service performed by the Kohanim—the sanctification of the vessels—in the end returns to the Kohanim themselves. Through these vessels and the korbanos (animal sacrifices) they bring, the Kohanim themselves become sanctified.

Similarly, the ultimate goal is that we become holy and grow closer to Hashem. This can only happen if we build the Mishkan or Beis Ha'Mikdash and bring the korbanos. But these are only mediums toward achieving the goal. The goal itself is our becoming holy and closer to Hashem.

Similarly, the Maharal Tzintz interpreted the verse "**And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant**" to mean that Moshe is the medium—faith in Hashem comes through Moshe. We need a tzaddik to pave the way for us. Like a Rebbe to his chassidim, or a rosh yeshiva to his students, the medium for coming closer to Hashem is the building of the Mishkan.

This is precisely what the Parashiyos of Terumah and Tetzaveh are all about: "**And I will dwell among the children of Israel.**" The Kohanim are holier

than us and they elevate us; through their holiness, the entire Jewish people are brought closer to Hashem. The Maharal of Tzintz concludes with, "The main dwelling of the Shechinah will be within them (the people themselves). And why is this so? Because I am Hashem, your G-d."

And it is understood that this is also the intention in, "**And they shall know that I am Hashem their G-d, who took them out of the land of Egypt to dwell among them; I am Hashem their G-d.**" Not to dwell in the Mishkan, but to dwell "**among them**" – to dwell within the children of Israel. That is the main thing. The Mishkan is merely the means to achieve that goal. "Mishkan" means "Shechinah," "dwelling." It is the dwelling place of the Shechinah. But **where is the Mishkan truly found? Within the children of Israel.**



**For more information on the Chamudei Shai series, and to purchase copies in either Hebrew or English, go to [rlgfoundation.org/publications](http://rlgfoundation.org/publications) And in Israel available at stores of**



ספרי  
**אור החיים**  
מרכז הספר היהודי הגדול בעולם

