**S.A.L.T. – PARASHAT PEKUDEI**

**By Rav David Silverberg**

Motzaei Shabbat

Parashat Pekudei begins with an accounting of the precious metals that were donated to the *Mishkan*. In introducing this accounting, the Torah refers to the *Mishkan* as “*Mishkan ha-eidut*” – noting the *Mishkan*’s role as a “testament.” Rashi, citing the *Midrash Tanchuma*, explains that the presence of the *Shekhina* in the *Mishkan* testified to God’s having forgiven *Benei Yisrael* for the sin of the golden calf, and this is why the *Mishkan* is called “*Mishkan ha-eidut*.”

Rav Chaim Aryeh Leib Panster, in [*Sha’ar Bat Rabim*](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=39552&st=&pgnum=238&hilite=), notes the significance of this quality of the *Mishkan* in the particular context of the accounting of the donated materials. One of the ways in which the *Mishkan* served to rectify the sin of the golden calf was through the donation of precious materials for the project. *Benei Yisrael* had given large amounts of gold for the calf, and they now corrected this mistake by donating large quantities of gold and other assets for the *Mishkan*. Significantly, in the context of the golden calf, the Torah does not give any details regarding the amount that was given. The implication, perhaps, is that the people gave recklessly and haphazardly. No accounting is given of the gold that was donated because no accounting was made by any of the people involved. The gold was donated without any thought or calculation, in a frenzied desire to create a graven image for worship. By contrast, the donations for the *Mishkan* had to be calculated, weighed and measured. Indeed, as we read in Parashat Vayakhel, when it became clear that too many materials were being donated, a call was issued ordering the people to stop donating. Whereas the donations for the golden calf were given mindlessly, the donations for the *Mishkan* were carefully calculated to ensure that the required materials were received.

To explain the significance of this distinction, Rav Panster draws an analogy to the difference between eating food for pleasure and taking medication. When we eat for enjoyment, we do not pay close attention to the quantities that we consume. When it comes to medication, however, or when we eat for health reasons, we carefully measure the quantities to ensure we consume the precise amount we need for our wellbeing. This, Rav Panster suggests, is the difference between the golden calf and the *Mishkan* noted by the Midrash. The golden calf was characterized by a mindless frenzy of activity, with the people freeing themselves of restraint and self-control. The *Mishkan*, by contrast, was characterized by discipline and obedience, carefully complying with God’s rules down to the last detail.

And thus the *Mishkan* is called “*Mishkan ha-eidut*” specifically here, as the Torah introduces its accounting of the materials donated for this project and how they were used. The very fact that such an accounting was made testifies to the fact that sin of the golden calf was corrected. The mindless, undisciplined worship of the calf was replaced with the careful, patient, calculated service of God in the *Mishkan*, which represents the patience and close attention to detail that is required in *avodat Hashem* generally. The “*pekudei ha-Mishkan*” is itself the antidote to the golden calf, modeling for us the need for discipline, precision and restraint in the service of the Almighty.

Sunday

The final verse of Parashat Pekudei tells that after God took residence, as it were, in the *Mishkan*, His presence was displayed in the form of a cloud that hovered over the *Mishkan* by day, and a pillar of fire that stood over the *Mishkan* at night. Many *darshanim* have sought to uncover the symbolic meaning and significance of the cloud and fire that represented the Divine Presence in the *Mishkan*.

Rav Chaim Aryeh Leib Panster, in his [*Sha’ar Bat Rabim*](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=39552&st=&pgnum=243), explains (citing the work *Yitev Leiv*)that these manifestations of the *Shekhina* reflect the private nature of spiritual expression. The pillar of fire, he explained, burned even during the daytime, but it was concealed by the thick cloud. The daytime in this instance symbolizes our public image, the way we conduct ourselves out in the open, among our peers. In public, the “fire” of religious fervor and passion is best kept “concealed,” rather than broadcast and put on display. We should not be looking for opportunities to show our “fire,” our spiritual yearnings, in public. The “fire” should be unveiled specifically at “night,” in private, within ourselves. Of course, we are to conduct ourselves appropriately in public and not act in a manner that raises suspicions about our religious commitment. However, the “fire” of spiritual drive should be mostly concealed and out of the public view.

As the *Sha’ar Bat Rabim* notes, the exception to this rule is Jewish leaders, who bear the obligation of leading primarily through the example of piety that they set. Their religious fervor must indeed be put on display in order to present a model for others to emulate. And thus when Moshe turned to God before his death to ask that He appoint a successor, he asked that He appoint a leader “who will go out before them and come before them” (Bamidbar 27:17), which may be understood as a reference to a public persona, the example the leader would have to set through his public display of piety. In response, God instructed Moshe to appoint Yehoshua, “*ish asher ru’ach bo*” – “a man within whom is the spirit [of God].” Specifically because the leader must present a public image of piety, it is imperative that he has “*ru’ach bo*,” that internally he is sincerely committed and devoted to the ideals which he outwardly represents. When a person is expected to put his “pillar of fire” on display, and publicly exhibit a model of piety, it is especially important for him to ensure that this “fire” also burns within him, internally, and that his public image is an accurate reflection of who he is really is.

Monday

One of the garments worn by the *kohanim* which are described in Parashat Pekudei is the *avneit* (belt). The Torah (39:29) tells that the belt was woven from several different materials, including *sheish* (flax) and *tekhelet* – dyed wool. As the Gemara notes in several places, the *avneit* was, fundamentally, forbidden to be worn because it contained *sha’atnez* – wool and linen woven together. The Torah, however, explicitly required wearing the *avneit* when performing the service in the *Mikdash*, and thus it is permissible for the *kohen* to wear it for this purpose.

The Gemara (Yoma 12a, Chulin 138a) raises the question of whether this was true of the *avneit* worn by all *kohanim*, or only of the belt worn by the *kohen gadol*. Although the Torah explicitly describes the *avneit* as containing *sha’atnez*, it is uncertain whether this refers specifically to the *avneit* worn by the *kohen gadol*, or even to those worn by the other *kohanim*, and this issue is subject to a debate among the Sages. The Rambam, in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash (8:11), writes explicitly that an ordinary *kohen* (“*kohen hedyot*”) may not wear his *avneit* when he is not performing the service, because he would then violate the prohibition of *sha’atnez*. Clearly, then, the Rambam followed the view that even the *avneit* worn by ordinary *kohanim* contained *sha’atnez*, and this feature was not unique to the *avneit* of the *kohen gadol*.

Rav Meir Simcha Ha-kohen of Dvinsk, in his *Or Samei’ach* (Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash 5:16), suggests that underlying this debate is a more fundamental question regarding the relationship between the high priesthood and the status of ordinary *kohanim*. Namely, do we view the status of the *kohen gadol* as something entirely different from that of ordinary *kohanim*, or do we view a *kohen gadol* as essentially an ordinary *kohen* with special obligations and laws? The *kohen gadol* wears the same four garments as ordinary *kohanim*, plus an additional four garments. As he wears the same four garments as all other *kohanim*, we might view him as fundamentally a regular *kohen* who given additional responsibilities and privileges. Alternatively, however, we might view the additional four garments as a reflection of a fundamentally different status.

The *Or Samei’ach* asserts that if the *kohen gadol* wears the same *avneit* as other *kohanim*, then it seems more likely that he is, essentially, a regular *kohen* who is bound by special laws. The fact that he shares the exact same garments as other *kohanim* likely indicates that he is like them, only with a heightened level of sanctity reflected by his additional four garments.If, however, the *kohen gadol* wears a different *avneit* than other *kohanim*, and thus he and they do not share the same garments, we might likely conclude that he is not an ordinary *kohen*, as his status fundamentally differs from that of other *kohanim*.

Tomorrow we will *iy”H* explore several possible implications of this question.

Tuesday

Yesterday, we noted the question posed by the *Or Samei’ach* (Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash 5:16) regarding the special status of the *kohen gadol*. As we read in Parashat Tetzaveh and Parashat Pekudei, there were four special garments worn by all *kohanim* – including the *kohen gadol* – and then an additional four garments worn exclusively by the *kohen gadol*. Seemingly, this indicates that the *kohen gadol* is, fundamentally, the same as ordinary *kohanim*, though he is given additional responsibilities and privileges. According to this perspective, the status of the *kohen gadol* is merely an expansion of the status of ordinary *kohanim*. Alternatively, however, we might view the *kohen gadol* as something else entirely. His status is not an extension of the status of standard *kohanim*, but rather a fundamentally different status of *kedusha*. As we saw, the *Or Samei’ach* suggested that this question underlies the debate recorded in the Gemara (Yoma 12a, Chulin 138a) as to whether the *kohen gadol* wears the same kind of belt as the belt worn by other *kohanim*. If the *kohen gadol* wears a different kind of belt, and thus even his four basic garments are not the same as those worn by ordinary *kohanim*, then we would be more inclined to view his status as something fundamentally different than that of the other *kohanim*.

The *Or Samei’ach* discusses this issue in the context of the Rambam’s ruling (there in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash) concerning the case of a *kohen* who was appointed *kohen gadol* before he had ever performed the service in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. As the Rambam rules in the previous *halakha*, a *kohen* who performs the *avoda* (service in the Temple) for the first time must first offer a special *mincha* offering. Likewise, a *kohen* who is appointed *kohen gadol* must offer this *mincha* offering before he begins functioning as *kohen gadol*. In a case where a *kohen* is appointed *kohen gadol* before having ever performed the *avoda*, the Rambam rules that the *kohen* must offer two *mincha* offerings – one as his consecration to serve as an ordinary *kohen*, and a second as his consecration to serve as *kohen gadol*. Significantly, the *kohen* must first be consecrated as an ordinary *kohen* before he can be consecrated as a *kohen gadol*. This would certainly seem to suggest that the *kohen gadol*’s status is an extension of that of ordinary *kohanim*. If we viewed the *kohen gadol*’s status as something completely different from that of an ordinary *kohen*, then, seemingly, there would be no need for the newly-appointed *kohen gadol* in this case to offer the first *mincha* sacrifice. His ascent to the position of *kohen gadol* would not depend on his previous consecration as an ordinary *kohen*, and thus it should suffice to offer only the *mincha* whereby he is consecrated for the position of *kohen gadol*.

Another possible ramification of this question, as noted by Rav Asher Weiss (*Minchat Asher*, Parashat Pekudei, p. 458), relates to an issue raised by the *Panim Yafot* (Parashat Tetzaveh) concerning the intent required when making the priestly garments. The Rambam, in Hilkhot Beit Ha-bechira (1:20), rules that all the utensils and articles involved in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* must be made “*li-shmah*” – specifically for their purpose in the *Mikdash*. If a given article was made for some other purpose, then even if it meets all the precise specifications outlined by the Torah, it may not be used. The *Panim Yafot* thus raised the question of whether the *kohen gadol*’s garments must be made specifically with the *kohen gadol* in mind, or whether it suffices that they were made for the purpose of being worn by *kohanim* generally. For example, if a *ketonet* (tunic) was made with the intention that it would be used by a regular *kohen*, is it suitable for the *kohen gadol*? This may likely hinge on the question raised by the *Or Samei’ach*. If we view the *kohen gadol*’s status of sanctity as an extension of that of ordinary *kohanim*, then it stands to reason that a *ketonet* made for an ordinary *kohen* would be suitable for the *kohen gadol*, since he wears it as a regular *kohen*. If, however, we view the *kohen gadol*’s status as something separate and apart from that of regular *kohanim*, then we would likely require that all his garments – including the four basic garments which are also worn by regular *kohanim* – be made specifically for the purpose of the *kohen gadol*.

Wednesday

Earlier this week, we noted the ruling of the Rambam, in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash (8:11), that a *kohen* may not wear his *avneit* – the special belt worn by *kohanim* – at times when he does not perform the *avoda* (service) in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. Since the *avneit* contained both wool and linen, it constituted *sha’atnez* and was thus forbidden to wear it except in the situations when the Torah requires wearing it, namely, while performing the *avoda*.

Curiously, in formulating this *halakha*, the Rambam mentions specifically that this is forbidden for a *kohen hedyot* – an ordinary *kohen*, as opposed to the *kohen gadol*. Seemingly, it is permissible for a *kohen gadol* to wear his *avneit* even when he does not perform the *avoda* – despite the fact that the *kohen gadol*’s belt also contained *sha’atnez*. In fact, as we noted earlier this week, the Gemara in a number of places cites a debate as to whether the belts of the ordinary *kohanim* contained *sha’atnez* like the belt of the *kohen gadol*. According to all views, it seems, the *kohen gadol*’s belt contained *sha’atnez*, and thus should be forbidden to be worn outside the context of the *avoda*. The question thus arises as to why the Rambam chose to mention specifically the ordinary *kohanim* in presenting this *halakha*. (It should be noted that the *Mishneh Le-melekh* (8:2) cites a version of the text of the Rambam’s ruling according to which the *kohen gadol*’s belt did not, in fact, contain *sha’atnez*. The *Mishneh Le-melekh* dismisses this version, however, noting that, as mentioned it seems clear from the Gemara that the *kohen gadol*’s *avneit* contained wool and linen.)

The Radbaz (Hilkhot Kilayim 10:32) explains that in the Rambam’s view, the *kohen gadol* is allowed to wear his *avneit* at any time because he has the right to insist on performing the sacrificial rituals in the *Mikdash* whenever he so desired. The other *kohanim* were divided into shifts, and members of each shift were selected for the various rituals based on a lottery system. However, the *kohen gadol* reserves the right to perform any of the rituals whenever he wishes, as the Rambam explicitly rules in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash (5:12). The Radbaz thus suggests that since the *kohen gadol* can at any moment decide to perform the *avoda*, he is always permitted to wear his *avneit*.

A different theory is advanced by Rav Baruch Teomim-Frankel (author of the famous work *Barukh Ta’am*), in his *Ateret Chakhamim* (Y.D. 23). He cites the Rambam’s formulation in *Sefer Ha-mitzvot* (*asei* 33) in describing the *mitzva* upon the *kohen gadol* to wear his special garments, where the Rambam writes that the *kohen gadol* is commanded “to always wear these garments in the Temple.” The implication of this phrase is that unlike other *kohanim*, who are required to wear their special garments only when they perform the *avoda*, the *kohen gadol* is commanded to wear his special garments at all times when he is in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, and not just when he performs the *avoda*. As such, the Rambam’s ruling that a *kohen* may not wear his *avneit* when he is not performing the *avoda* is not relevant to the *kohen gadol*, who is to wear his garments at all times.

It should be noted that the Rambam mentions this *halakha* also in Hilkhot Kilayim (10:32), where he writes simply that it is forbidden for *kohanim* to wear the *avneit* when they are not performing the *avoda*. In this context, the Rambam does not note a distinction between the *kohen gadol* and other *kohanim*, as he does in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash. Regardless of how we explain the implied distinction drawn by the Rambam in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash, his comments there appear to contradict his ruling in Hilkhot Kilayim, where no such distinction is drawn. We might speculate that in Hilkhot Kilayim the Rambam wrote “*kohanim*” as a reference to specifically the ordinary *kohanim*, but the question still remains why he made this distinction clear in one context but not in the other.

(See Rav Asher Weiss’ *Minchat Asher*, Parashat Pekudei, chapter 69)

Thursday

As we’ve discussed earlier this week, the Rambam rules in Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash (8:11) that a *kohen* may not wear his *avneit* (special belt) when he is not performing the *avoda* in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. The *avneit* consisted of both wool and linen, and was thus generally forbidden to be worn due to the prohibition of *sha’atnez*. The Torah requires wearing the *avneit* while performing the *avoda*, essentially suspending the *sha’atnez* prohibition for this purpose, but at other times, it is forbidden for a *kohen* to wear the *avneit* due to the prohibition of *sha’atnez*.

The Mabit (Rav Moshe di Trani), in his *Kiryat Sefer* commentary to the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*, advances the surprising theory that the Rambam refers here to a rabbinic prohibition. On the level of Torah law, the Mabit claims, the Rambam concedes that a *kohen* is permitted to wear the *avneit* even when does not perform the *avoda*. The Mabit explains that clearly a *kohen* does not violate the prohibition of *sha’atnez* during those moments after he completes the *avoda* before he has an opportunity to remove the *avneit*. Once the Torah commands the *kohen* to wear the *avneit* while performing the *avoda*, it must, necessarily, also permit him to wear the *avneit* for a few minutes after performing the *avoda*, as a human being cannot possibly avoid wearing the *avneit* during those moments. It stands to reason, the Mabit contends, that just as the Torah does not forbid wearing the *avneit* during those moments, it permits wearing the *avneit* at any time when the *kohen* is in the *Mikdash*. And thus when the Rambam codifies a prohibition against wearing the *avneit* outside the framework of the *avoda*, he must necessarily refer to a prohibition enacted by *Chazal* as a safeguard against violations of *sha’atnez*.

Rav Asher Weiss (*Minchat Asher*, Parashat Pekudei, p. 460) noted the difficulty with the Mabit’s theory, as it seems to be contradicted by the Rambam’s formulation in Hilkhot Kilayim (10:32). There the Rambam writes explicitly that a *kohen* who wears the *avneit* when he does not perform the *avoda*, even if he is in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, is liable to corporal punishment. This clearly indicates that the prohibition applies on the level of Torah law, as one is not liable to court-administered punishment for transgressing a prohibition enacted by *Chazal*.

In defense of the Mabit’s position, Rav Weiss suggests a distinction between a *kohen* who puts on the priestly garments when not performing the *avoda*, and a *kohen* who leaves his garments on after performing the *avoda*. Possibly, the Mabit speaks specifically of the latter case, when a *kohen* performed the *avoda* and did not then immediately remove the *avneit*. In such a case, according to the Mabit, the *kohen* does not violate the Torah prohibition of *sha’atnez*, which had been suspended for the purpose of the *avoda* and thus does not forbid wearing the *avneit* even after completing the service. In Hilkhot Kilayim, the Rambam addresses the situation of a *kohen* who puts on the *avneit* when he is not performing the *avoda*. In such a case, the *sha’atnez* prohibition was never suspended, and so the *kohen* violates the Torah prohibition of *sha’atnez*, even according to the Mabit.

Friday

The Gemara in Masekhet Arakhin (16) comments that the *me’il*, the robe worn by the *kohen*, serves to atone for the sin of *lashon ha-ra* – negative and offensive speech about other people. The basis of this connection is the bells which ran along the bottom of the *me’il* and produced a ringing sound as the *kohen gadol* walked. The Gemara comments that the sound produced by the *me’il* serves to atone for the sin which is violated through sound – namely, *lashon ha-ra*.

Based on the Gemara’s remark, the *Chafetz Chayim*, in his famous [work on the topic of *lashon ha-ra* (2:15)](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=15142&st=&pgnum=449), associates various aspects of the *me’il* with the vitally important obligation of *shemirat ha-lashon* – refraining from negative speech about others. One such aspect is the *safa*, or binding, which was stitched onto the *me’il* around the neck. The Torah (Shemot 28:32, 39:23) instructs that the binding should resemble that of a “*tachra*,” which Rashi explains to mean an armored coat. Surprisingly, the Torah commanded that the *me’il*, one of the garments worn by the *kohen gadol* in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, should have the appearance of armor worn by warriors in battle. The *Chafetz Chayim* explained that symbolically, this association between the *me’il* and armor signifies the protective effect of avoiding *lashon ha-ra*. The more a person speaks negatively and offensively to and about other people, the more resentment he evokes and the more hostility he invites upon himself. The *me’il*, which represents the antidote, as it were, to *lashon ha-ra*, thus resembles a coat of armor, as avoiding *lashon ha-ra* helps shield us from other people’s hostility.

The *Chafetz Chayim* speaks in this context specifically of one who finds himself in a quarrel or disagreement with another person. The way to protect himself from the other person’s hostility, the *Chafetz Chayim* writes, is through silence. The natural instinct is to launch verbal attacks against one’s adversary and try and knock him down, but more often than not, this only backfires and further fuels the flames of acrimony. The *Chafetz Chayim* urges us to protect ourselves from unnecessary conflicts and tension through *shemirat ha-lashon*, by exercising restraint and keeping silent even when our instincts tell us to speak negatively and disdainfully about others.