



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Tetzaveh / פרשת תצוה

The Beauty of Yerushalayim

It is possible to assume that there should be a complete disconnect between a person's authentic internal state and their outer appearance. In other words, a person can dress as a vagabond, wear filthy clothing and the like, as long as the inner soul is thriving and glowing. This approach would see clothing as a false facade, not a true indicator of a person's real identity.

While this approach has truth to it, our parsha certainly strikes a different chord. At great length, the Torah meticulously outlines the clothing of the Kohen Gadol - one of the holiest people in the community. And the Torah itself defines the goals of the clothing: "You shall make holy garments for your brother Aaron, for honor and glory."¹ What is the meaning of this notion of "honor and glory?"

Perhaps the Torah is asserting that people should be viewed as holistic beings. As such, the Torah treats a person's spiritual, physical, internal and external elements as being intertwined in some way. Therefore, the clothing of a holy man cannot be chosen haphazardly. Rather, the external beauty – the projection of "honor and glory" to the outside world - is supposed to be a way of channeling what is present in the inner recesses of the Kohen Gadol's soul.

This principle is also prominently displayed regarding Yerushalayim. We realize that the soul-essence of Yerushalayim is the presence of God in the Beit HaMikdash. That is the "heart of Yerushalayim" and the source of its unique status. However, simultaneously, we find that Chazal were heavily invested in the physical aesthetic elements of the city.

For example, the Talmud teaches that there was a special enactment not to have kilns in Yerushalayim. It explains that these kilns create an abundance of smoke which will blacken the walls of the city which is considered disgraceful.² Similarly, the Talmud teaches that the marketplaces of

¹ Shemot 28:2. Translation adapted from Chabad.org.

² Bava Kamma 82b with Rashi.



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Yerushalayim would be swept daily in order to ensure their cleanliness and beauty.³ These practices are meant to maintain the city's unique beauty as recorded elsewhere by the Talmud: "Ten portions of beauty descended into the world, Yerushalayim took nine of them."⁴

Why this focus on the external layer of the city? Why not suffice with the city's inner spiritual beauty? From here too we see the Torah's unique perspective of the intertwinement of body and soul, of the internal and the external. Every element of a being must be taken into account and marshalled to further God's glory in this world. While many might downplay or denigrate the importance of aesthetics, we see from this week's parsha and from the city of Yerushalayim how holistic and comprehensive the Torah's approach is.

³ Pesachim 7b with Rashi.

⁴ Kiddushin 49b.