



Clothing Fit for Royalty

By Rebbetzin Shira Smiles (Shiur E4)

Why do we have special clothing for Shabbos? There is more to those garments than meets the eye.

The plain understanding of Shabbos clothing

The Navi Yeshayahu¹ instructs us in the proper observance of Shabbos. He includes the word וְקִבְדָתוֹ which חז"ל understand as an instruction to designate special clothing for Shabbos.

This makes sense since we are being 'beamed up' to the lofty palace of the King on Shabbos.

Specially designated clothing reminds us that we are in Hashem's palace. The impact of an action on the one performing that action is well known. If you dress the part, you will feel, act and think the part.

Beyond the basics – clothing of the spirit

An additional dimension can be drawn from חז"ל. In Megillas Rus we read that Naomi sent Rus at night to the fateful encounter with Boaz. This encounter will ultimately determine the future of Klal Yisroel and the Melech HaMoshiach. Naomi gives Rus detailed instructions as to how to prepare for the meeting. She tells her:

וְרָחֲצִיתְךָ וְסָכַתְךָ וְשָׁמַתְךָ שְׂמֹלֹתֶיךָ עָלֶיךָ (רות ג: ג)

Bathe, anoint yourself and put your garment on.

On the plain level of the text, Naomi was giving her very mundane instructions. The ספר תכלית אור directs our attention to the way that Rashi interprets these three instructions. וְרָחֲצִיתְךָ – purify/cleanse yourself from any transgressions; וְשָׁמַתְךָ – anoint yourself with Mitzvos; וְסָכַתְךָ – put on your Shabbos clothing.

It seems clear that Naomi was not giving mundane instructions. She was giving spiritual direction to Rus in preparation for the meeting. And just as the first two are spiritual in nature (purification from עֲבִירוֹת and anointing with מִצְוֹת), so, too, is the third instruction a spiritual instruction. She was not simply telling her to wear something nice; she was telling her to wear Shabbos clothing; the garments of קְדוּשָׁה. She was to make a spiritual transformation.

If Shabbos preparation is seen as a spiritual undertaking, there would be an added 'appeal' to 'peeling' the potatoes.

Shabbos preparation is spiritual

The מהר"ל points out that bathing before Shabbos is part of the transformation from the impurity of the week to the sanctity of Shabbos. Indeed, the משנה ברורה advises that we should engage in תשובה – repentance – on Erev Shabbos to be able to receive its קְדוּשָׁה.

¹ ישעיהו נח: יג



KI HEIM
CHAYEINU
כי הם חיינו



Discover the Joy
of Shabbos

If we could recognize the preparation for Shabbos as a transformative spiritual undertaking, then there would be an added 'appeal' to 'peeling' the potatoes. We would see ourselves on a road to an elevated state of sanctity.

The רמ"א indicates that right after bathing one should don Shabbos clothing. This reflects a steady stream of transition from the impurity of the week to the new self – the sanctity of Shabbos.

R' Tzvi Rotberg in his ספר מודע לבניה cites a מדרש that identifies the כתנות עור with which Hashem clothed אדם and חוה as the garments with which they entered Shabbos. And these were the same garments which אדם הראשון wore when he would perform an act of service before Hashem – they were his בגדי כהונה.

The significance of pointing out that, immediately after sinning, אדם הראשון was given Shabbos clothing was to send him a message. Albeit you have sinned, but on Shabbos your Neshama can glow in its glory. The light of Shabbos can shine through you still.

Shabbos clothing reveals the Neshama

We typically associate clothing with covering or concealing. Here we see that clothing can also be a vehicle for drawing out and revealing that which is hidden. When אדם הראשון put on his

Shabbos clothing his now-hidden Neshama was able to radiate. That is the real message behind the requirement to designate Shabbos clothing. We are not just dressing up for the King; we are opening a channel for our Neshamos to shine forth.

Clothing as a light

The Gemara relates that the Sefer Torah of R' Meir had the word אור instead of our word עור. Hashem did not just give אדם and חוה garments of leather; He gave them garments of light. Our Shabbos garments illuminate our Neshama. That is what they did for אדם הראשון and for רות, and that is what they can do for us.

Additional dimension of preparation

It is certainly true that we must appear appropriately before the King. And that requires bathing and donning clothing befitting of such an encounter. But the internal bathing, anointing, and dressing take on a greater meaning in light of what we have learned.

Include the children in the light

It would be lovely if we could internalize this message to the point that it spills over into our interactions with our children. That would lead us to have a special joy when we put on their Shabbos clothing which would communicate to them that their Neshamos are shining through those clothing.

Takeaway: I will try to pay attention to the internal process involved when I am preparing for Shabbos and to see my Shabbos clothing as a way for my Neshama to radiate קרושה