

Kol Rina  
*An Independent Minyan*  
Parashat Tetzaveh  
February 27, 2021 \*\*\* 15 Adar, 5781

*Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We **welcome all** to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.*

[Tetzaveh in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1320/jewish/Tetzaveh-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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G-d tells Moses to receive from the children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the “everlasting flame” of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, “from evening till morning.” The priestly garments, to be worn by the kohanim (priests) while serving in the Sanctuary, are described. All kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet—a full-length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim—linen breeches; 3) mitznefet or migba’at—a linen turban; 4) avnet—a long sash wound above the waist. In addition, the kohen gadol (high priest) wore: 5) the efod—an apron-like garment made of blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen—a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) the me’il—a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz—a golden plate worn on the forehead, bearing the inscription “Holy to G-d.”

Tetzaveh also includes G-d’s detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons—Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar—into the priesthood, and for the making of the golden altar, on which the ketoret (incense) was burned.

[Haftarah in a Nutshell: Ezekiel 43:10-27](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/819846/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/819846/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/819846/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)  
In this week’s *haftarah*, the prophet Ezekiel describes a vision of the altar that will be built for the third Holy Temple and its dedication ceremony—paralleling this week’s Torah portion which discusses the dedication of the Tabernacle’s altar. Shortly after the destruction of the first Temple, Ezekiel experienced a vision of the third Holy Temple that will be built by the Messiah. G-d tells Ezekiel to recount to the Jewish people this vision, and this hopefully will bring them to be ashamed of the deeds they did that caused the destruction of the Temple. “And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, let them know the form of the House and its scheme, its exits and its entrances, and all its forms, and all its laws and all its teachings...” Ezekiel then goes on to describe in detail the third Temple’s altar, and also describes its seven-day inauguration ceremony and the offerings which will be brought on each day of that special week.

[FOOD FOR THOUGHT](https://rabbisacks.org/tetzaveh-5781/)

[The Counterpoint of Leadership \(Tetzaveh 5781\) By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks](https://rabbisacks.org/tetzaveh-5781/)

<https://rabbisacks.org/tetzaveh-5781/>

One of the most important Jewish contributions to our understanding of leadership is its early insistence of what, in the eighteenth century, Montesquieu called “the separation of

powers”[1]. Neither authority nor power was to be located in a single individual or office. Instead, leadership was divided between different kinds of roles.

One of the key divisions – anticipating by millennia the “separation of church and state” – was between the King, the head of state, on the one hand, and the High Priest, the most senior religious office, on the other.

This was revolutionary. The kings of Mesopotamian city states and the Pharaohs of Egypt were considered demigods or chief intermediary with the gods. They officiated at supreme religious festivals. They were regarded as the representatives of heaven on earth.

In Judaism, by stark contrast, monarchy had little or no religious function (other than the recital by the King of the book of the covenant every seven years in the ritual known as hakhel.) Indeed the chief objection to the Hasmonean Kings on the part of the Sages was that they broke this ancient rule, some of them declaring themselves High Priests also. The Talmud records the objection: “Let the crown of kingship be sufficient for you. Leave the crown of priesthood to the sons of Aaron.” (Kiddushin 66a) The effect of this principle was to secularise power.[2]

No less fundamental was the division of religious leadership itself into two distinct functions: that of the Prophet and the Priest. That is dramatised in this week’s parsha, focussing as it does on the role of the Priest to the exclusion of that of the Prophet. Tetzaveh is the first parsha since the beginning of the book of Exodus in which Moses’ name is missing. It is supremely the priestly, as opposed to prophetic, parsha.

Priests and Prophets were very different in their roles, despite the fact that some Prophets, most famously Ezekiel, were Priests also. The primary distinctions were:

- 1.The role of Priest was dynastic, that of Prophet was charismatic. Priests were the sons of Aaron. They were born into the role. Parenthood had no part in the role of the Prophet. Moses’ own children were not Prophets.
- 2.The Priest wore robes of office. There was no official uniform for a Prophet.
- 3.The priesthood was exclusively male; not so prophecy. The Talmud lists seven women who were Prophets: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther.
- 4.The role of the Priest did not change over time. There was a precise annual timetable of sacrifices that did not vary from year to year. The Prophet by contrast could not know what his mission would be until God revealed in to him. Prophecy was never a matter of routine.
- 5.As a result, Prophet and Priest had different senses of time. Time for the Priest was what it was for Plato: the “moving image of eternity,”[3] a matter of everlasting recurrence and return. The Prophet lived in historical time. His today was not the same as yesterday and tomorrow would be different again. One way of putting this is that the Priest heard the word of God for all The Prophet heard the word of God for this time.
- 6.The Priest was “holy” and therefore set apart from the people. He had to eat his food in a state of purity, and had to avoid contact with the dead. The Prophet by contrast often

lived among the people and spoke a language they understood. Prophets could come from any social class.

7. The key words for the Priest were tahor, tamei, kodesh and chol: “pure”, “impure”, “sacred”, and “secular”. The key words for the Prophets were tzedek, mishpat, chessed and rachamim: “righteousness”, “justice”, “love”, and “compassion”. It is not that the Prophets were concerned with morality while the Priests were not. Some of the key moral imperatives, such as “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” come from priestly sections of the Torah. It is rather that Priests think in terms of a moral order embedded in the structure of reality, sometimes called a “sacred ontology.”[4] Prophets tended to think not of things or acts in themselves but in terms of relationships between persons or social classes.

8. The task of the Priest is boundary maintenance. The key priestly verbs are le-havdil and le-horot, to distinguish one thing from another and apply the appropriate rules. Priests gave rulings, Prophets gave warnings.

9. There is nothing personal about the role of a Priest. If one – even a High Priest – was unable to officiate at a given service, another could be substituted. Prophecy was essentially personal. The Sages said that “no two Prophets prophesied in the same style” (Sanhedrin 89a). Hosea was not Amos. Isaiah was not Jeremiah. Each Prophet had a distinctive voice.

10. Priests constituted a religious establishment. The Prophets, at least those whose messages have been eternalised in Tanach, were not an establishment but an anti-establishment, critical of the powers-that-be.

The roles of Priest and Prophet varied over time. The Priests always officiated at the sacrificial service of the Temple. But they were also Judges. The Torah says that if a case is too difficult to be dealt with by the local court, you should “Go to the Priests, the Levites, and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict” (Deut. 17:9). Moses blesses the tribe of Levi saying that “They will teach Your ordinances to Jacob and Your Torah to Israel” (Deut. 33:10), suggesting that they had a teaching role as well.

Malachi, a Prophet of the Second Temple period, says: “For the lips of a Priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth” (Mal. 2:7). The Priest was guardian of Israel’s sacred social order. Yet it is clear throughout Tanach that the priesthood was liable to corruption. There were times when Priests took bribes, others when they compromised Israel’s faith and performed idolatrous practices. Sometimes they became involved in politics. Some held themselves as an elite apart from and disdainful toward the people as a whole.

At such times the Prophet became the voice of God and the conscience of society, reminding the people of their spiritual and moral vocation, calling on them to return and repent, reminding the people of their duties to God and to their fellow humans and warning of the consequences if they did not heed the call.

The priesthood became massively politicised and corrupted during the Hellenistic era,

especially under the Seleucids in the second century BCE. Hellenised High Priests like Jason and Menelaus introduced idolatrous practises, even at one stage a statue of Zeus, into the Temple. This provoked the internal revolt that led to the events we recall on the festival of Chanukah.

Yet despite the fact that the initiator of the revolt, Mattityahu, was himself a righteous Priest, corruption re-emerged under the Hasmonean Kings. The Qumran sect known to us through the Dead Sea Scrolls was particularly critical of the priesthood in Jerusalem. It is striking that the Sages traced their spiritual ancestry to the Prophets, not the Priests (Avot 1:1).

The Kohanim were essential to ancient Israel. They gave the religious life its structure and continuity, its rituals and routines, its festivals and celebrations. Their task was to ensure that Israel remained a holy people with God in its midst. But they were an establishment, and like every establishment, at best they were the guardians of the nation's highest values, but at worst they became corrupt, using their position for power and engaging in internal politics for personal advantage. That is the fate of establishments, especially those whose membership is a matter of birth.

That is why the Prophets were essential. They were the world's first social critics, mandated by God to speak truth to power. Still today, for good or otherwise, religious establishments always resemble Israel's priesthood. Who, though, are Israel's prophets at the present time?

The essential lesson of the Torah is that leadership can never be confined to one class or role. It must always be distributed and divided. In ancient Israel, Kings dealt with power, Priests with holiness, and Prophets with the integrity and faithfulness of society as a whole. In Judaism, leadership is less a function than a field of tensions between different roles, each with its own perspective and voice.

Leadership in Judaism is counterpoint, a musical form defined as "the technique of combining two or more melodic lines in such a way that they establish a harmonic relationship while retaining their linear individuality." [5] It is this internal complexity that gives Jewish leadership its vigour, saving it from entropy, the loss of energy over time. Leadership must always, I believe, be like this. **Every team must be made up of people with different roles, strengths, temperaments and perspectives. They must always be open to criticism and they must always be on the alert against groupthink. The glory of Judaism is its insistence that only in heaven is there one commanding Voice. Down here on earth no individual may ever hold a monopoly of leadership. Out of the clash of perspectives – King, Priest and Prophet – comes something larger than any individual or role could achieve.**

[1] Charles-Louis Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952). [2] In Judaism, power, except that exercised by God, is not holy. [3] Plato, *Timaeus* 37d. [4] On this rather difficult idea, see Philip Rieff, *My Life Among the Deathworks* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2006). Rieff was an unusual and insightful critic of modernity. For an introduction to his work, see Antonius A.W. Zondervan, *Sociology and the Sacred: An Introduction to Philip Rieff's Theory of Culture*

(Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2005). [5] American Heritage Dictionary, 5th ed., s.v. "Counterpoint" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2011).

## On the Priesthood Or: Holiness is Living in the Fullness of Life: Parashat Tetzaveh by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg

[https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh\\_torah\\_source\\_sheets/GreenbergParashatTetzaveh5781.pdf?utm\\_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm\\_medium=email&\\_hsmi=112365755&\\_hsenc=p2ANqtz-\\_jt-JquxpBGpdblYbYuKE0yNqmfDySN267pK3UG1tdnFwP-M1TQrx7ePOUzlHOQGOazmQlct0Xyaes8xXk-fhQ9NA&utm\\_content=112365755&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatTetzaveh5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=112365755&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_jt-JquxpBGpdblYbYuKE0yNqmfDySN267pK3UG1tdnFwP-M1TQrx7ePOUzlHOQGOazmQlct0Xyaes8xXk-fhQ9NA&utm_content=112365755&utm_source=hs_email)

In the second of four weekly Torah portions that focus on the tabernacle and the realm of the sacred, Parashat Tetzaveh is primarily dedicated to the establishment and consecration of the priesthood, and the creation of the priestly vestments worn during the sanctuary services. To understand the nature and function of the priests, one must draw on the description of them in Parashat Emor (Leviticus 21-24). There we are told that the key concept associated with priests is holiness. "They shall be holy to their God... You shall sanctify him [the priest]... he shall be holy to you for I—the Lord who sanctifies you —am holy" (Leviticus 21:6, 8). Being holy has to do with being more like God, whose very nature is holy. What aspect of God are we to imitate to become holy? What does holiness actually mean?

The key to understanding holiness is found in the Torah's teaching of Creation, which includes the concept of multiple levels of existence. Genesis opens with the assertion that this world is not an accident or random outcome of a blind material process. Reality is formed, and its patterns and processes are shaped, by the Creator who has certain goals and outcomes in mind. "It was not made to be void; it was created to be filled with life" (Isaiah 42:18). Humans are called to fill Creation with life and to repair the world so it will support life to the maximum, in all its dignity and value. This mortal realm is real, not an illusion. This world is a precious creation and it is a religious calling to participate in it. However, the material level is only the surface of reality, like the tip of an iceberg. Physical reality is floating in a sea of spiritual matter, that is, God. The Lord is invisible, immeasurable, yet is the very source of existence. This means that there are unseen depths, realms of existence, that are just as real as the physical, visible, measurable surface. The key to living properly is to participate in the physical life affirmatively and purposefully, but not to absolutize it. One should know its limits and be able to go beyond it and experience other aspects of reality.

Human beings cannot access God via physical channels. Moreover, people can live entirely on the surface, physical level and never encounter God or the spiritual depths. However, if people live that way, they are missing whole segments of reality. The Torah rejects the reductionist psychology that treats the inner life as illusory, as nothing more than epiphenomena of physical matter in motion.<sup>1</sup> The Torah tells us to drill down to the depth dimension of life where we encounter God—through intuition, inner experience, and relationship. Likewise, the Torah blesses and commands going inward to receive and

give love and enter into relationships. These experiences are real, perhaps the most important and enriching aspects of life.

Holiness is arrived at when one lives life in its fullest dimensions, when one experiences the physical and the spiritual in interaction with each other. When I meet another person and interact casually, even if I treat them honestly and respectfully, I am living properly. But when I deepen the exchange into a relationship, into caring and loving the other, then I get to know them in depth as an image of God. I experience them not just as another person, but as a wondrous creature that is of infinite value, equal and unique. This is a moment of holy encounter. Then, if I go deeper, on and through and beyond meeting the other, I encounter the divine medium, the God in which the image is rooted. This too is the experience of holiness.

Leviticus (19:2) tells us that, as God is holy, so are all people to become more like God—that is, be holy. God represents life in its most intense form with all of its capabilities. God possesses consciousness—Infinite Consciousness—as well as Power in omnipotent form on the side of life. God has the capacity for Relationship, i.e. Infinite Love. God has Freedom—that is, total, uncontrolled, non-manipulatable free will. Humans are instructed to become more like God. They become more holy by developing their consciousness, by creating and applying more power for life and good, by deepening their capacity for love and relationship, by exercising free will to choose life and do good. In all these areas, living a life of Torah and mitzvot really means embracing the fullness of life: savoring life, loving more, and nurturing more. Living in the fullest dimensions of life is attaining holiness and holiness is found in the fullness of life.

Actions of living life deeply bring one to holiness. The Talmud (Sotah 17a) says that in a moment of committed partners making love, the Shekhinah (Divine Presence) is present and this is a holy occasion. Similarly, when guests are welcomed with friendship and treated with genuine hospitality, this is a holy moment equivalent to greeting the Shekhinah (Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 35b). In a moment when two (or more) people come together and immerse in the meaning of a Torah text, minds and hearts are intertwined and all aspects of existence and reality are woven together—the Shekhinah is present and this is a holy moment.<sup>2</sup>

In most of life, these experiences are real but they are of fleeting duration; in much of the rest, God is present but we are oblivious. We meet the others in the present but we are engaged only at the surface level. The ideal is to treat the life before us, in all its forms, with the fullest dignity and value which it deserves. The Torah projects that in the Messianic age, where the world and society is fully repaired, people will be honored at the level of value and dignity to which—in their fully rounded existence—they are entitled. In the current world, we reach that state of holiness only occasionally, and only when we live life to its fullest depth.

Living in a state of holiness is what priesthood is about. To anticipate the future and to model how to behave to get there, a section of the population is set aside—sanctified—as priests. They live life in its fullest dimensions, i.e. in a state of holiness. The environment

around the priests (the tabernacle) is structured so that there is no presence of human death is permitted. Ethical integrity and genuine affection is standard operating procedure. Here, God is manifestly present all the time.<sup>3</sup> The priests accept the task of living in this setting and meeting its standards all the time: they accept more limitations on behavior than the average person; they strive for physical excellence and emotional and ethical perfection; they serve God all the time. They turn themselves into a conduit to lovingly<sup>4</sup> channel God's blessings—the blessing of vitality and depth in life—to the rest of the population living in the not yet fully repaired society.

In a way, this is an artificial existence, living a filtered life in a controlled environment. Priests are able to live this way because they are relieved of the burden of making a living, or running the general policy and repairing the ordinary messes in society. Still, they function as an avant garde, living now at a depth level and at an emotional and ethical excellence that is meant to inspire all the people. The priests and the sanctuary are created to engage the rest of society to visit, view, and imitate.

That is why the Torah moves to assure that priesthood is not seen simply as a genetic hierarchy. Priests are living examples, who earn their distinction by their behaviors and role models. To allow others to join in uplifting society, the Torah provides a model of joining a kind of priesthood for a temporary period—the Nazirite.<sup>5</sup>

Maimonides writes that every person in the world (including non-Jews) who is inspired to stand before God and who gives up the preoccupations and distractions of daily life to serve God all the time, i.e. lives like a priest, a life of full-time holiness, will be “sanctified as kodesh kodashim (holy of holies).”<sup>6</sup> I believe that this is Maimonides' application of Isaiah's prophecy, that in the end of days, God “will also take of others [Gentiles] to the priests and Levites” (Isaiah 66:21). At that time, every Jew will be a priest, fulfilling the divine promise of Israel becoming a “kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). Then the whole earth will be like the tabernacle (or Temple) and all will live a holy existence: life to its fullest, in ethical and physical wholeness, in a permanent state of holiness.

Shabbat Shalom.

<sup>1</sup> See my essay on Parashat Bereishit, “Creation,” available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/creation>. <sup>2</sup> See Mishnah Avot 3:16. <sup>3</sup> “Lord, who shall abide in your tent? Who will dwell in your holy mountain? One who walked uprightly, acts justly, speaks the truth in his heart. He never slanders with his tongue or does evil to his fellow...” (Psalm 15:1-3). <sup>4</sup> See the Priestly blessing in Numbers 6:22-27. It ends with the words: “To bless God's people, Israel, with love.” <sup>5</sup> See Numbers 6:1-21. <sup>6</sup> Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Shemittah ve-Yovel 13:13.

### [Dress and Redress by Ilana Kurshan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SnZNI9ZjwBW9T_snFri1rZhzCpTWyxt/view)

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Parshat Tetzaveh describes the sacred vestments worn by the priests while serving in the Temple. The regular priests wore four garments – linen breeches, a fringed tunic, a sash, and a turban. These are the basic items, described sparingly in the Torah. But then there are the four additional garments worn by the high priest, which are described in the Torah

in great ornamental detail: a linen vest with a decorated band, a breastplate with mounted stones, a long robe trimmed with pomegranates and bells, and a golden frontlet. The various biblical and rabbinic associations with these items of clothing are a reminder not just of the distinctiveness of the priestly class, but of the transformative power of all the clothing we wear.

Our parsha offers various explanations for the purpose of the priestly garments. The breeches served to “cover the nakedness” (28:42) of the priests, while the tunic, sash, and turban were “for dignity and adornment” (28:40). As the Torah reminds us, clothes are both functional and ornamental, natural and sociocultural. They protect us from the elements and cover what would be indecorous to bare, but they also dignify us, enabling us to feel presentable and attractive and identifying us as part of a community of those with similar sartorial standards and styles.

Several of the priestly garments, though, served an additional function, as the Talmud teaches (Zevachim 88b). Rabbi Inni bar Sasson explains that just as sacrifices atone for sin, so too did the various priestly garments serve to effect atonement. For instance, the tunic atoned for bloodshed, since Joseph’s brothers dipped his colorful striped tunic in blood to trick their father into thinking he’d been killed. The linen breeches atoned for forbidden sexual relations, since they covered the sexual organs. The sash over the chest atoned for inappropriate stirrings of the heart, the robe hemmed with ringing bells atoned for the sounds of evil speech, and the frontlet worn on the forehead atoned for the haughtiness of a head held high.

These associations between clothing and atonement recall the associations between sin and the parts of the physical body in the Al Chet prayer recited on Yom Kippur: “For the sin which we have committed before you with the prattle of the lips, for the sin which we have committed before you with a glance of the eye, for the sin which we have committed before you by confusion of the heart.” The Torah’s term for atonement, Kapparah, also means covering. If our sins are inscribed on our physical body, then atonement is achieved by covering those body parts. Like the clothing God made for Adam and Eve after their sin and punishment in the garden, our clothing is a way of covering it all up and moving on.

Clothing, then, is not just functional and ornamental; it also plays a spiritual role, reconciling between humanity and God. During Temple times, the priests served to atone for the sins of the people: they slaughtered sin offerings brought to the Temple on a regular basis, and once a year on Yom Kippur, the high priest would confess the people’s sins. The Talmud (Zevachim 17b) teaches that the priest is not a priest unless he is wearing his sacred vestments, based on a verse from our parsha: “And you shall gird Aaron and his son with sashes, and so they shall have the priesthood on them at all time” (29:9). The rabbis conclude that “when their vestments are upon them, the priesthood is upon them; but if their vestments are not on them, the priesthood is not on them.” A priest could not just roll out of bed and serve in the Temple; the act of getting dressed transformed him from an ordinary person into a functionary engaged in divine service.

I have been thinking about the priestly garments because my son recently started sleeping in the clothes he will wear the next day, so as to save time in the morning. Instead of pajamas, he goes to bed in his school uniform—long pants and a solid-colored t-shirt imprinted with the school symbol. These are like the basic four items worn by all the priests, but they are not the entirety of his wardrobe. Every evening he places on his nightstand his tzitzit, kippah, and glasses, and sets his sneakers by the door – these are the additional items he must put on in the morning, like the four additional garments worn by the high priest. And yet even putting on these items is a struggle – he runs into the kitchen for breakfast without his glasses, or without his tzitzit, or with sneakers untied, and I have to remind him quite a few times before he gets it all right. “What’s the matter?” he tells me, “It’s not like I’m naked.” He’s right, but as our parsha reminds us, that’s not the point.

I want my son to understand all these roles that clothing can play. Yes, clothes are about not being naked. But they are also about the care we take to transform ourselves in the morning from a creature asleep to a human being engaged in divine service. When we sleep we are like animals – our souls, that part of the divine that sets us apart from other creatures, are entrusted to God. When we wake, our souls are restored to our bodies and we become once again not just creatures of nature, but also individuals with culture and inner spiritual lives. By getting dressed, we symbolize that transformation. Our clothing attests to the divine soul placed within us, and reminds us of the responsibilities incumbent upon us as beings created in the image of God.

### [D'var Haftarah: Picking Priests by Bex Stern Rosenblatt](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SnZNI9ZjwBW9T_snFri1rZhzCpTWyxt/view)

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In our parasha, Aaron and his descendants are granted the responsibility of serving as kohanim forever. In great detail we are told of rituals to be enacted in order to secure this status for them, to set them apart from the rest of the nation as those who can work in the tabernacle. Every time we encounter chosenness in the Tanakh, there is a question of why the person or people are chosen, of what makes them deserving of this special attention. Our haftarah, Ezekiel 43:10-27, explores what it is that makes people worthy of the priesthood.

Ezekiel sets up a contrast between the general population of Levitical kohanim and the descendants of Zadok. Whereas all Levites are permitted to be guards and keepers of the Temple, only those who descend from Zadok can approach the *mikdash*, the sanctuary. This honor is withheld from the majority of the Levites in Ezekiel 44 because of the sins they have committed.

So who is this Zadok and what makes him and his descendants special? We first meet Zadok as part of King David’s administration in 2 Samuel 8. Zadok and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar from the line of Eli, both serve David as kohanim, along with the military men and the scribes in his administration. Zadok and Abiathar appear again in 2 Samuel 15, when David is forced to flee from Jerusalem, from his son, Absalom, who is leading a

rebellion against him. Zadok brings the ark of God with him, determined to keep it with David. However, David makes him bring it back to Jerusalem, confident that he will be returned to it if God wants him to be. Abiathar's role in this story is unclear. He seems to be included in the actions of Zadok, but we are also told that he 'went up,' which Zadok did not do. In the Talmud, Tractate Sotah 48B, this is interpreted as Abiathar losing the ability to interpret God's will from the urim and thummim, and thus losing his status as the high kohen. Zadok, however, retains his abilities and is perfectly loyal to God and to David.

The competition between Zadok and Abiathar comes to a head when another of David's sons rebels against him. Abiathar chooses to join Adonijah, David's son, in trying to overthrow David. Zadok continues to support David and advances the cause of David's son, Solomon. As a reward for his loyalty, Zadok is made the only high kohen. And as a result of his betrayal, Abiathar is banished back to his hometown and stripped of his position.

When the line of Zadok appears again in our haftarah, hundreds of years have passed. This portion is usually understood as having been written in exile after the destruction of the Temple, with an eye towards the world we would construct when we re-entered the land. In the ideal world we chose to build, we chose the line of Zadok to carry on the duties of the kohanim. We chose the descendants of someone who had proved his reliability and his loyalty, to God, to king and to service rather than to personal gain. May we continue to hold up those who serve as those worthy of being placed in positions of responsibility.

### [What is Holy to God? Each of Us by Rabbi Mary Zamore](https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/what-holy-god-each-us)

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In the second century, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yosei, traveled from the Galilee to Rome to plead for the repeal of a royal edict forbidding Shabbat, circumcision, and the laws of ritual purity. While there, the rabbis gained the emperor's trust by curing his daughter's illness and were invited into the royal treasury to select a reward. They came upon the actual written edict, requested it as their reward, and promptly ripped it up, thus nullifying it (BT, Me'ila 17a-b). The Talmud records that while in the treasury, Rabbi Eliezer also saw the solid gold headplate, tzitz, once worn by the High Priest: "I saw it [in the treasury] in the city of Rome and "Kadosh L'Adonai, Holy to God," was written on one line" (BT, Shabbat 63b).

How disheartened the two rabbis must have been witnessing the spoils of Jerusalem amassed in the emperor's treasury! When the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, its accoutrements were pillaged. The Romans treasured the headplate and other vestments and ceremonial objects for their value as precious metals and gems; Jews valued them as priceless instruments for the performance of sacrifices by Temple priests as commanded by God as the path to a holy life.

Focusing on the equipment needed for the Mishkan, the portable tabernacle,

Parashat T'tzaveh includes the detailed instructions for making the priestly vestments. This portion describes the pure gold plate the High Priest, first Aaron and then his successors, wore hanging from their turbans. The words "Holy to God" were engraved on the headplates adorning their foreheads (Exodus 28:36). God commanded, "Suspend it on a cord of blue, so that it may remain on the headdress; it shall remain on the front of the headdress. It shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may take away sin arising from the holy things that the Israelites consecrate, from any of their sacred donations; it shall be on his forehead at all times, to win acceptance for them before the Eternal" (Exodus 28:37-38).

Addressing the removal of sin, Rashi (France, 11thc.) explains that the headplate was worn to atone for impurities which may have otherwise rendered sacrifices unacceptable (Rashi on Exodus 28:38). Rashbam (France, 12thc.) further clarifies this verse: "The specific sins referred to are inadvertent violations..." These comments explain the function of the headplate, but its words "Holy to God" are still perplexing.

It is easy to assume that "Holy to God" signifies the High Priest's elevated status. However, he was not intrinsically holier than anyone else. Certainly, the priestly class had an auspicious role in the community with the High Priest at the top of this societal and religious structure. Yet, his function was to expedite holy actions, not to personally gain from his position. Speaking of the tzitz on Aaron's forehead "at all times" (Exodus 28:38), Rashi clarifies that this means when wearing it, the High Priest had to be focused on it and the holiness required of his work. Modern commentator Aviva Zornberg teaches: "... to be a kohen is both to act out a role of service, to submit to a superior force, and to be an aristocrat, aware of power in oneself (The Particulars of Rapture, 363). Zornberg cites this teaching as a reflection of the grave responsibility of thought and action: "The High Priest's vestments invest him in anxiety, no less than in glory. Ultimately, it is not only the diadem [tzitz] that is to be 'Holy to God,' but its wearer" (369). Therefore, the phrase is instructive, not descriptive.

Offering a different interpretation of "Holy to God," the Zohar (Kabbalistic text, 13thc.) describes the object of the phrase as the person who has come to offer a sacrifice. According to the Zohar, the phrase would be reflected from the High Priest's headpiece onto the face of the person standing before him. When this occurred, it indicated that the person was righteous. If there were no reflection of "Holy to God," then the High Priest knew that the one offering the sacrifice was arrogant, not ready to submit to God's will and in need of his intervention. Then, the High Priest would pray for God to have mercy and forgive the person, accepting the sacrifice as pure (Zohar, 2:217). The Zohar's teaching is based on Rabbi Hanina's remark in the Talmud, "the headplate of the High Priest atones for arrogance" (BT, Zevachim 88b). This negative trait is associated with the High Priest's headplate, because in Hebrew the term for arrogance is the idiom "azut panim," or literally "strength of the face," which conjures the forehead (Vayikra Rabbah 10:6).

Today, there is no Temple, no High Priest, no need of the golden headplate to strive for

holiness. Instead, let us imagine that the words "Holy to God" shine forth from each of our foreheads. These words are far more valuable than pure gold or precious gems, for they reflect God's light, challenging us to behave in ways that honor the holiness in ourselves and in others. (*Rabbi Mary L. Zamore is the executive director of the [Women's Rabbinic Network](#).*)

### Finding Satisfaction in Others' Success by Rabbi Peter S. Knobel

<https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/finding-satisfaction-others-success>

Parashat T'tzaveh opens with the following words. "You shall further instruct (V'atah t'tzaveh) the Israelites to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly" (Exodus 27:20). Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, in her commentary, *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus*, points out the unusual use of the pronoun V'atah, which she translates as, "And as for you," as we read in this excerpt:

**With unusual emphasis, God turns to Moses: Ve-atta tetzaveh – "And as for you, you shall instruct . . ." The redundant pronoun in ve-atta, "and as for you," substitutes for the more usual imperative form, tzav – "Instruct . . ." or the simple future form, tetzaveh – "You shall instruct . . ." Such an insistent, abrupt focus on Moses has aroused much discussion among the traditional commentators on the Torah. . . . What shift in focus requires the sudden use of ve-atta, in a context where Moses is everywhere the subject of God's address?1**

Zornberg's commentary continues with an important discussion about the relationship between Moses and Aaron that appears in *Midrash Tanchuma*. 2 The midrash relates how in seven days at the Burning Bush, Moses repeatedly declined God's instruction to go before Pharaoh as the people's representative, saying "Please send by the hand of another." Finally, God had enough. He told Moses "I will pay you back, when the Mishkan is built and you expect to serve as High Priest, and I say to you, 'Call Aaron that he will serve.'" Therefore, Moses called Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 9:1). The midrash continues:

**Moses said to Aaron, "Thus said the Eternal to anoint you High Priest." Aaron said to him, "You have labored on the Mishkan and I am to become the High Priest!" [Moses] said to him, "By your life, even though you become High Priest, it is as if I have become [High Priest]. Just the same as you rejoiced when I rose to greatness, so I am happy at your rising."**

**And when was [Aaron] happy for him [Moses]? At the time that the Eternal said to him [Moses] "And I will send you to Pharaoh" (Exodus 3:10). The Eternal said to him [Moses], "The role is reserved for you." Moses said to him, "Please God send by another's hand. You are putting me over my older brother, and I will go to Pharaoh!" The Eternal said to him, "By your life, when you said it is fitting [that Aaron be chosen] because he is older than you are, in spite of this he rejoiced for you in his heart."**

**Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai said the Eternal said, "The one who rejoiced in his heart for the success of his brother, place precious stones upon it [his**

**heart]. As it is said, and Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel upon the breastpiece of decision on his heart" (Exodus 28:29).**

**Therefore, all seven days that Moses was busy with the Mishkan, he was dashing the blood and turning the fat parts into smoke. Then the Eternal said to him, "What are you thinking, that you will be anointed High Priest? Call Aaron and his sons to be anointed."**

Moses expects to become High Priest, but his brother Aaron receives that role. Aaron, who is the older brother, might expect to be God's agent in liberating the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, but instead Moses is called to do it. We might expect this to cause a rift in their relationship. But instead of this causing greater sibling rivalry, the midrash states that they rejoice in each other's success. This a remarkable and important midrash. How do we deal with disappointment? How do we resolve our feelings of loss at another's success?

My wife Elaine, who is a very wise woman, taught me a long time ago to ban the word "jealous" from my vocabulary. Even though she has never read this midrash, she intuitively understands its lesson. She rejoices in others' successes. Pirkei Avot 4:1 offers a similar view: Ben Zoma taught: Eizehu ashir? Hasamei-ach b'chelko, "Who is rich? One who is content with his [or her] lot." On Yom Kippur we read in Leviticus 19:18: v'lo titor . . . v'ahavata l'rei-acha kamocho, "and do not bear a grudge . . . love your neighbor as yourself"; but understanding this last phrase to mean "as if your neighbor were yourself" offers a similar sentiment. Imagine if we could make this our way of living. While we can admire these sentiments and even assent to their wisdom they can be difficult to follow. We feel a real sense of loss when another gets a position or acknowledgment that we believe is rightfully ours, and it is often difficult to put into practice the principle of setting jealousy aside and rejoicing in our own lot. One helpful strategy is to reframe our perspective. For example, if you seek a job or a promotion that goes to someone else, one way to understand that loss is that God intends something different for you. Obviously, this reframing requires a religious consciousness, but for those who are comfortable with that aspect, as I am, it can be a helpful technique. It is a way to remove the bitter taste of the loss, allowing you to move forward and--especially if the individual who received the position or acknowledgment is a friend or colleague--to rejoice in his or her success or accomplishment. Moses and Aaron offer us a paradigm for understanding gain and loss in our lives. I am grateful to Dr. Zornberg for her commentary, which gave me a new sense of the meaning of this parashah.

1. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus* (New York: Schocken Books, 2001) pp. 351-352; see also, Kindle edition

2. Tanchuma Sh'mini 3

*(Rabbi Peter S. Knobel serves as interim rabbi at Temple Judea in Coral Gables, Florida. He is rabbi emeritus at Beth Emet the Free Synagogue in Evanston, Illinois, and past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.)*

## Yahrzeits

Amy Cooper remembers her father Norman Pearlman (Nathan Zvi ben Abraham) on Sunday February 28th (Adar 16).

David Horn remembers Alice's father Emanuel Pfeiffer (Mendel ben Yonah) on Wednesday March 3rd (Adar 19).

Bob Woog remembers his uncle Ralph David Fertig (David ben Joseph va Lottie) on Friday March 5th (Adar II 21).

*Our regular weekday evening minyan will take place on Monday, March 1, beginning at 8:00. Your presence allows mourners and those observing yahrzeits to say Kaddish. Please support your Kol Rina friends by attending.*

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/97663987468?pwd=NjFhaVZUZkpSZ3pxQWJjOU5UWFR4QT09>