



TETZAVEH

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN ISOLATED JEW

*You're an Integral Part of the Community, Whether You Like It or Not*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Tetzaveh*

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) *mitznasayim*—linen breeches; 3) a *mitznefet* or *migbaat*—a linen turban; and 4) an *avnet*—a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the *Kohen Gadol*

(High Priest) wore: 5) the *ephod*—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; and 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—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar—

into the priesthood, and for the making of the golden altar on which the *ketoret* (incense) was burned.



Is community  
objectively an  
essential  
component of  
a fulfilling  
Jewish life?

The Torah tells us that the *Kohanim* who served in the Mishkan, and later in the Beit Hamikdash, were required to wear a unique uniform. The regular *Kohanim* wore four garments, while the High Priest wore an additional four special garments.



# TEXT 1

*Exodus 28:1-3*

א. וְאַתָּה הַקָּרֵב אֵלֶיךָ אֶת אֶהֱרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאֶת בָּנָיו אִתּוֹ מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכַהֵנוּ לִי, אֶהֱרֹן נָדָב וְאַבִּיהוּא אֶלְעָזָר וְאִיתָמָר בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן.

ב. וְעָשִׂיתָ בְּגָדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת.

ג. וְאַתָּה תְּדַבֵּר אֶל כָּל חֲכָמֵי לֵב אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּאתִיו רוּחַ חָכְמָה, וְעָשׂוּ אֶת בְּגָדֵי אֶהֱרֹן לְקֹדֶשׁוֹ לְכַהֵנוּ לִי.

1. [G-d instructed Moses] “And you bring near to yourself your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among the Children of Israel to serve Me: Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.
2. “You shall make holy garments for your brother Aaron, for honor and glory.
3. “And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, and they shall make Aaron’s garments to sanctify him, so that he serves Me.”

# TEXT 2A

*Exodus 28:43*

וְהָיוּ עַל אֶהָרֹן וְעַל בָּנָיו בְּבָאָם אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, אוּ בְגִשְׁתָּם אֶל  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׁרֵת בַּקֹּדֶשׁ וְלֹא יָשְׂאוּ עֹון וָמִיתוּ, חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לּוֹ  
וּלְזֶרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו.

They shall be worn by Aaron and his sons when they enter the Tent of Meeting or when they approach the altar to serve in the Tabernacle, so they will not bear iniquity and die. It shall be a perpetual statute for him and for his descendants after him.

## TEXT 2B

*Rashi, Exodus 28:43*

"וַמָּתוּ". הָא לְמַדָּה שֶׁהַמְשִׁימִשׁ מַחֲסֵר בְּגָדִים - בְּמִיתָה.

The verse states that when the *Kohanim* serve in the Tabernacle clothed in the priestly garments, they will not die. This teaches us that a *Kohen* who serves in the Tabernacle without the priestly garments is punished by death.

# TEXT 3A

*Maimonides, Sefer  
Hamitzvot, Mitzvat  
Aseh 33*

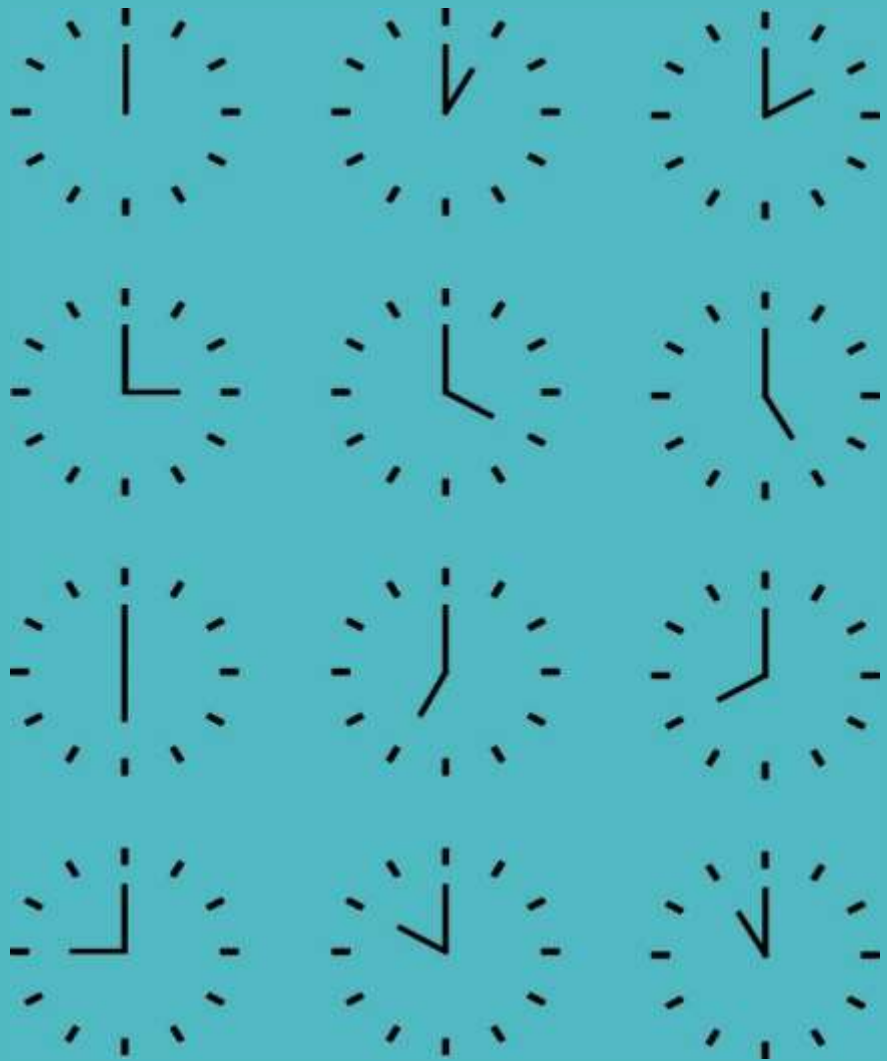
היא שצוה הכהנים ללבוש בגדים מיוחדים לכבוד ולתפארת ואז יעבדו במקדש, והוא אמרו: "ועשו בגדי קדש לאהרן", "ואת בניו תקריב והלבשתם כתנות".

וזאת היא מצות בגדי כהונה: שמונה בגדים לכהן גדול וארבעה לכהן הדיוט, וכל עת שישרת הכהן בפחות ממנין בגדיו המיוחדים לו באותה העבודה . . . עבודתו פסולה, ויתחייב על זה מיתה בידי שמים.

The thirty-third mitzvah is that *Kohanim* are commanded to wear special garments “for honor and glory” (Exodus 28:2), and only then can they serve in the Tabernacle, as stated in the Torah.

This is the mitzvah in detail: There are eight garments for the High Priest, and four for the regular *Kohen*. Any time a *Kohen* serves while missing even one of the garments, . . . his service is invalid and he incurs the penalty of death at the hands of Heaven.





Unlike the regular *Kohanim*, the High Priest had to wear his priestly garments at all times—even if he was not actually serving at that time.

# TEXT 3B

*Maimonides, Ibid.*

וכבר בארו בספרא שלבישת בגדים אלו מצוה, והוא אמרם: מנין שאין אהרן לובש בגדים אלו לגדולתו אלא כמו מקיים גזרת המלך? שנאמר: "ויעש כאשר צוה ה' את משה", כלומר לבישת הבגדים.

ואף על פי שהם בתכלית היופי, שהם מזהב שהם וישפה וזולתם מהאבנים הטובות והיפות, לא יכוין בהם היופי אלא לקיים הצווי שצוה ה' יתעלה למשה לבד, והוא שילבש בגדים אלו תמיד במקדש.

It is a mitzvah for the *Kohen Gadol* to wear these garments, as our sages in the *Sifra* derived from the verse, “Aaron did all that G-d commanded Moses” (Leviticus 16:34). This means that he wore the priestly garments.

Even though the garments were the pinnacle of beauty, as they were made out of gold and precious stones, the High Priest must not wear them with the intention of wearing beautiful garments. Rather, he must wear them because of G-d’s commandment to do so—namely, to always wear the garments in the Tabernacle.

# TEXT 4

*Rabbi Yosef Rosen,  
Tzafnat Paane'ach,  
Kilayim 10:2*

משמע שם דיש נפקא מינה בין בגדי כהן גדול לבגדי כהן הדיוט, דבגדי כהן גדול הלבישה היא מצוה, לא משום דבלא זה הוה מחוסר בגדים וכו'. מה שאין כן גבי בגדי כהן הדיוט, דזה הוה רק לצורך קרבן, שלא יהא מחוסר בגדים.

The Rambam's language implies that there is a difference between the regular *Kohen's* garments and the High Priest's garments. Whereas the regular *Kohen* must only wear the garments while performing services in the Tabernacle, when it comes to the High Priest, the very act of wearing the garments is itself a mitzvah.

# TEXT 5A

*Exodus 28:35*

וְהָיָה עַל אֶהֱרֹן לְשָׂרֵת, וְנִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל  
הַקֹּדֶשׁ לִפְנֵי ה' וּבִצֵּאתוֹ, וְלֹא יָמוּת.

The cloak shall be on Aaron when he performs the service, and its sound shall be heard when he enters the Tabernacle and when he leaves, so that he will not die.

## TEXT 5B

*Rashi, Exodus 28:35*

"ולא ימות". מכלל לאו אתה שומע הן - אם יהיו לו לא  
יתחייב מיתה, הא אם יכנס מחוסר אחד מן הבגדים  
הללו, חייב מיתה בידי שמים.

“So that he will not die.” This implies that if he enters the sanctuary missing even one of these garments, he shall be liable for the penalty of death at the hands of Heaven.

With all four unique garments of the High Priest, the verses emphasize that they were worn “before G-d.”



# TEXT 6

*Exodus 28:12*

וְשָׂמָה אֶת שְׁתֵּי הָאֲבָנִים עַל כְּתֹפֶת הָאֶפֶד, אֲבָנֵי זִכָּרוֹן  
לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנָשָׂא אֶהְרֹן אֶת שְׁמוֹתָם לִפְנֵי ה' עַל  
שְׁתֵּי כְתֻפָּיו לְזִכָּרוֹן.

And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulder straps of the *efod* as stones of remembrance for the Children of Israel, and Aaron shall carry their names *before* G-d upon his two shoulders as a remembrance.

# TEXT 7

*Exodus 28:29*

וְנָשָׂא אֶהָרֹן אֶת שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחֹשֶׁן הַמִּשְׁפָּט  
עַל לְבוֹ בָּבֹאוֹ אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ, לְזִכָּרוֹן לִפְנֵי ה' תָּמִיד.

Thus Aaron shall carry the names of the Children of Israel in the *choshen* of judgment over his heart when he enters the Holy, as a *remembrance before* G-d at all times.



# TEXT 8

*Exodus 28:35*

וְהָיָה עַל אֶהֱרֹן לְשָׁרֵת, וְנִשְׁמַע קוֹלוֹ בְּבֹאוֹ אֶל  
הַקֹּדֶשׁ לִפְנֵי ה' וּבִצְאתוֹ, וְלֹא יָמוּת.

It shall be on Aaron when he performs the service, and its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy *before* G-d and when he leaves, so that he will not die.

## QUESTION

With all four unique garments of the High Priest, the verses emphasize that they were worn “before G-d.” Why was the High Priest obligated to wear the garments “before G-d?”



Jews encompass a diverse range of backgrounds comprising the twelve tribes. To keep things simple, our sages named three general categories of Jews: *tzadikim*, *beinonim*, and *resha'im*.

## TEXT 9

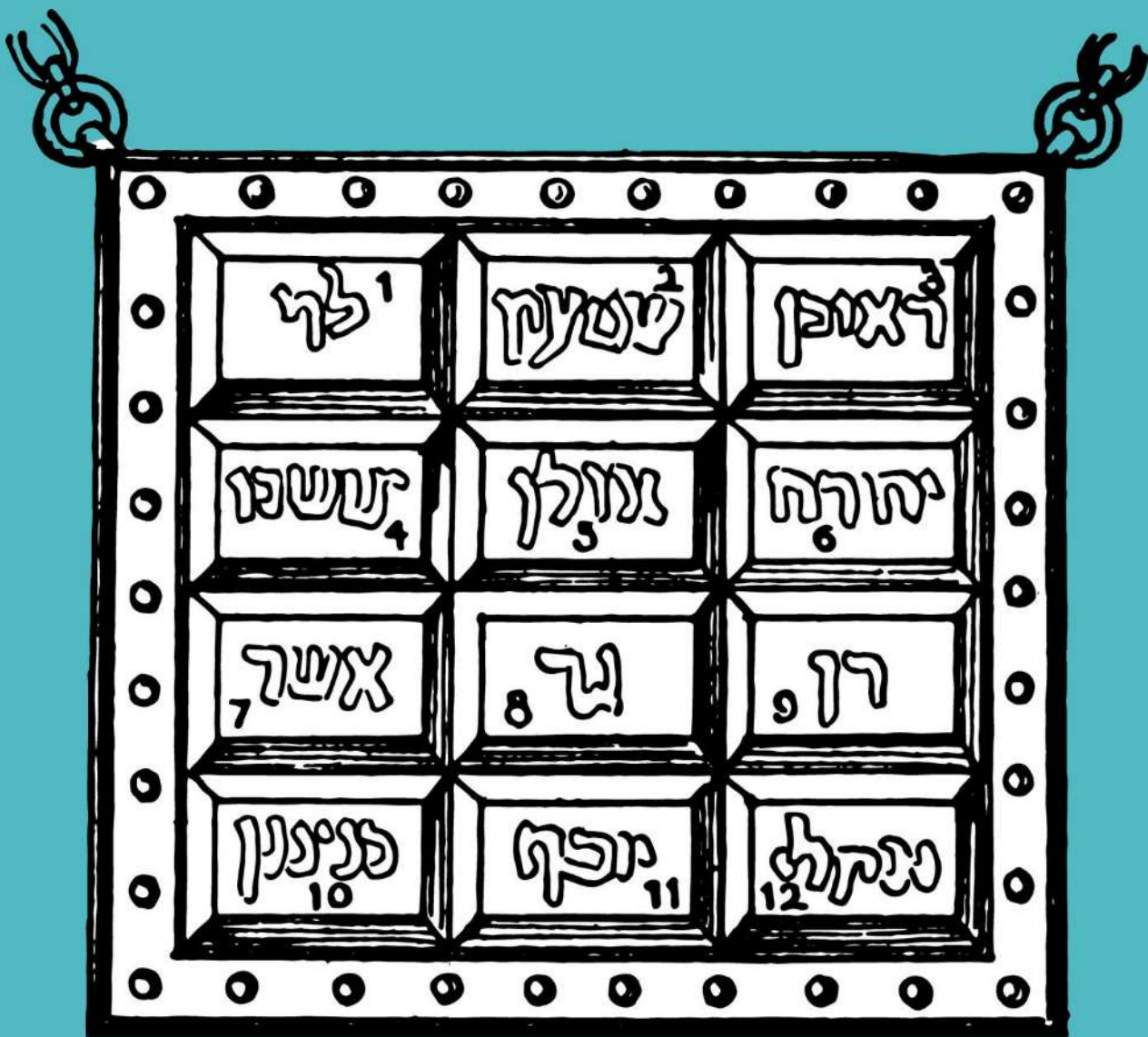
*Talmud, Berachot 61b*

תניא, רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר: צדיקים יצר טוב  
שופטן . . . רשעים יצר רע שופטן . . . בינונים  
זה וזה שופטן.

Rabbi Yosi Hagelili taught, “The righteous are ruled by their good inclination; . . . the wicked are ruled by their evil inclination. Average people are ruled by both.”

Our outer appearance  
may be different, but  
deep down, we're all  
the same: a Jewish  
soul, pure and holy.





The High Priest was the representative of all Jewry before G-d. Each garment he wore symbolized a different type of Jew. A missing garment was a complete absence of representation of a certain Jew.

# TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, pp. 188–189*

און בשעת דער כהן גדול גייט אריין  
מיט אלע סוגים פון אידן, ווערט דער  
"זכרון לפני ה'" , כנזכר לעיל.

און אויף דעם זאגט מען "אם יכנס  
מחוסר אחד מן הבגדים הללו חייב  
מיתה" — כדי צו אויפטאן דעם  
"זכרון לפני ה'" פון בני ישראל, מוז  
מען האבן אלע סוגים פון אידן, און  
ווען עס פעלט ביי דער כניסה איין  
סוג פון אידן — פעלט די (אדער —  
אין דער) פעולה פון דער כניסה.

ווייל דער זכרון והתאחדות פון אידן  
מיטן אויבערשטן איז ניטא קיין  
התחלקות, זי נעמט ארום אלע אידן  
כאחד. ובמילא, ווען מען טיילט אויס  
א אידן, פעלט דער ענין.

When the High Priest would enter the Tabernacle representing all different types of Jews, he would create that “remembrance before G-d.”

This is why the law states that if he even entered the Tabernacle missing one of the garments, he was liable to the death penalty. To create this “remembrance before G-d,” one must represent every kind of Jew! If the High Priest would even enter the Tabernacle missing the representation of even one category of Jew, his very act of entering was problematic.

The “remembrance,” and resulting union of the Jewish people with G-d, is absolute. It contains no subdivisions whatsoever. It includes all Jews as one. Consequently, if even one type of Jew was not represented, the entire representation was absent.

Every type of  
Jew is needed to  
complete the  
Jewish nation.





# TEXT 11

*Rabbi Chaim Yosef  
David Azulai, Kikar  
Laaden, Avot 2:4*

אל תפרוש מן הצבור — כי צבו"ר ראשי תיבות:  
צדיקים בינונים ורשעים, ואתה תחתבר עמהם  
שיהיה תיקון לכל ישראל.

The Mishnah (Avot 2:4) states, “Do not separate from the *tzibur* (community).” The word *tzibur* (צבו"ר) is an acronym for ***tzadikim*** (righteous individuals/צדיקים), ***beinonim*** (average strugglers/בינונים), and ***resha'im*** (completely disassociated individuals/רשעים). Each person must join the community so as to complete the Jewish people.



The *ketoret* teaches us a profound lesson about unity: everyone and everything is included, even the less pleasant components.

# TEXT 12

*Exodus 30:7*

וְהִקְטִיר עָלָיו אֶהָרֹן קְטֹרֶת סַמִּים בַּבֹּקֶר  
בַּבֹּקֶר, בְּהִיטִיבוֹ אֶת הַנִּירֹת יִקְטִירָנָה.

Aaron shall make incense of spices go  
up in smoke upon it; every morning  
when he sets the lamps in order, he  
shall make it go up in smoke.

# TEXT 13

*Talmud, Keritot 6b*

אמר רבי חנא בר בזנא, אמר רבי שמעון חסידא:  
כל תענית שאין בה מפושעי ישראל אינה תענית,  
שהרי חלבנה ריחה רע, ומנאה הכתוב עם סממני  
הקטורת.

Rabbi Chana bar Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Chasida, “Any fast that does not include the participation of the sinners of Israel is not a fast. We learn this from the *chelbenah*, which had a foul odor, and yet is listed among the *ketoret* incense.”

# TEXT 14

*Rabbi Nisim of Gerona,*  
Derashot HaRan,  
Derush Rishon

וכבר רמזו לנו בחלבנה שהושמה עם סמני הקטורת, והיה מן הנראה שתפסיד אותם להפסד הריח הזה, ואם כל זה אמתה לנו הנבואה שאין להם שלמות זולתה, כי כן הענין בהצטרף עמנו בעבודתנו לה' יתברך החוטאים והפושעים, שלא יפסידו עבודתנו, אבל תהיה בזה יותר שלימה.

The *chelbenah* was included among the *ketoret* spices, even though it seems like it would ruin them with its foul odor. Nevertheless, the Torah asserts that the *ketoret* is incomplete without it. The same is true in our service of G-d: when the sinners and the miscreants join our community so that we may all serve G-d together, it does not only not ruin our service, it perfects it, and we would be incomplete without it.

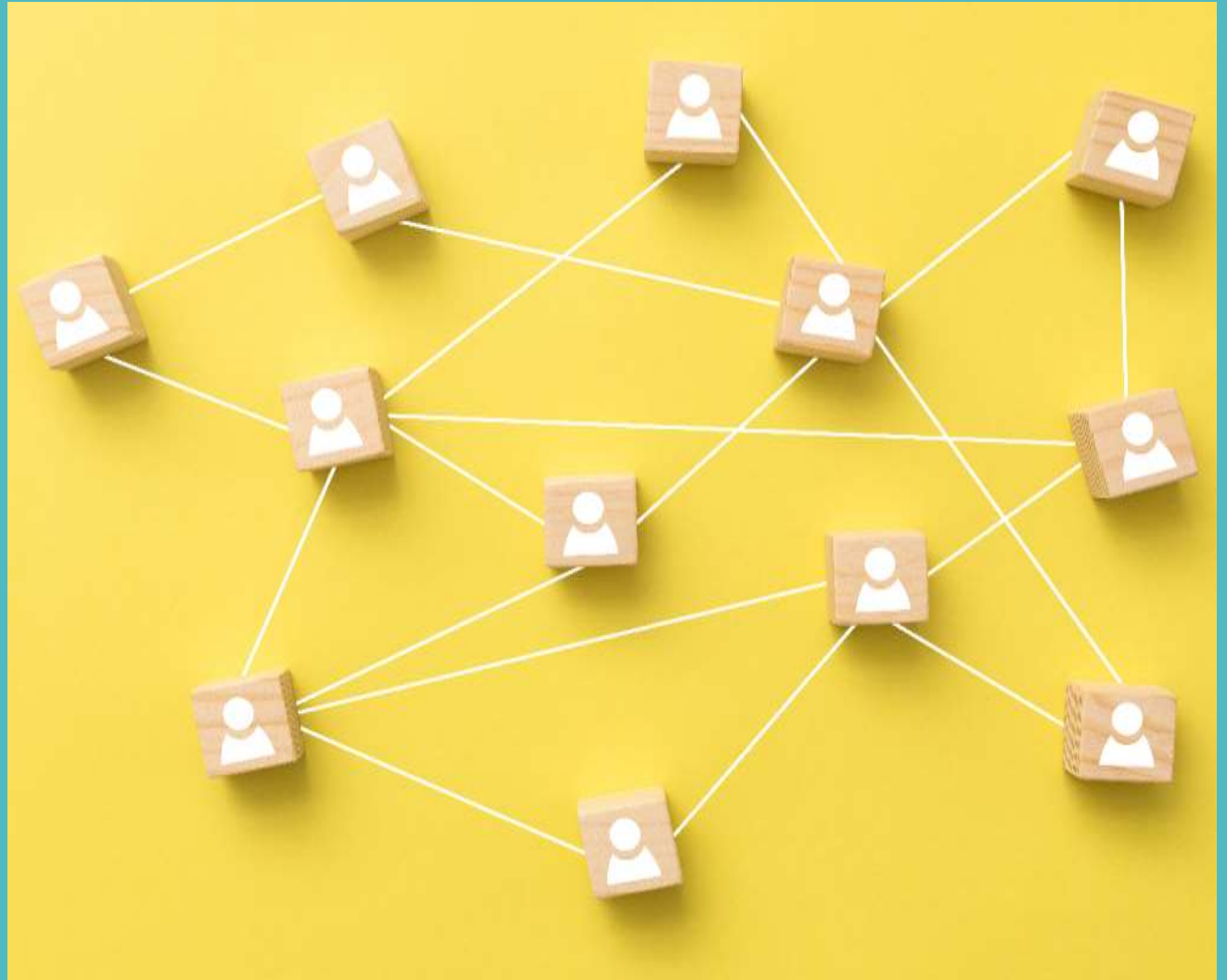
## QUESTION

With all four unique garments of the High Priest, the verses emphasize that they were worn “before G-d.” Why was the High Priest obligated to wear the garments “before G-d?”

## ANSWER

The High Priest was obligated to wear his special garments “before G-d” at all times, for they represent all types of Jews. As the representative of the entire Jewish nation, if any type of Jew—regardless of their level of observance or commitment—were to be missing, the High Priest would have failed at his job.

If you're a Jew,  
you're already  
part of the  
community. It's  
time to embrace  
that reality and  
revel in it.



## KEY POINTS

1. The *Kohanim* in the Temple were commanded to wear special priestly garments while doing the service. Regular *Kohanim* wore four garments, while the High Priest wore an additional four special garments.
2. While the regular *Kohen* was only required to wear the priestly garments while conducting the service, the High Priest had to wear them at all times—even if he was not actually serving.
3. With all four unique garments of the High Priest, the verses emphasize that they were worn “before G-d.”
4. The High Priest was the representative of all Jewry before G-d.



## KEY POINTS

5. As the representative of the entire Jewish nation, if any type of Jew—regardless of their level of observance or commitment—were to be missing, the High Priest would have failed at his job.
6. The reality is that, as a Jew, every Jew is already part of the community—whether they're aware of it or not, and whether they like it or not.

