

## Spotlight on.....Shatnez

### Background:

Parashat Tetzaveh contains God's instructions to Moshe for planning the Kohen Gadol's garments. The Kohen Gadol wore multiple layered garments and elaborate accessories. In 28:6 the ephod (apron) is introduced:

וַעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הָאֵפֹד זָהָב תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְנִשְׁשׁ מִשְׁזָר מַעֲשֵׂה חֹשֶׁב:

*They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson wool, and of fine twisted linen, worked into designs.*

As this verse tells us, the ephod contained both wool and linen. This is quite surprising, because in Devarim the Torah prohibits wearing wool and linen together! This combination is referred to as shatnez.

The prohibition against shatnez is a *chok*, which means a law from God that does not have a rational explanation. A midrash from Tanchuma offers one insight: Both Kayin and Hevel brought offerings to God. Hevel offered the finest of his wooly sheep, and Kayin offered flax seeds, the poorest of all his crops. God accepted Hevel's offering and turned away from Kayin's. Kayin sought to avenge what he felt was an injustice and killed his brother Hevel. Therefore, the midrash explains, God teaches us that it is not fitting to join the offering of Kayin, the sinner, with the offering of Hevel, the gracious one. And that is why we have the prohibition of shatnez.

### Questions:

1. Imagine that you are an Israelite during the time of the Beit HaMikdash. You know that wearing shatnez is prohibited, and so you make sure that none of your clothes are ever designed to include them. One day you go to the Beit HaMikdash, and you see the Kohen Gadol wearing a garment with shatnez. What reactions might you have to this? How would this make you feel about the Kohen Gadol?
2. The midrash teaches us that we do not mix shatnez because it represents mixing sin with righteousness. According to this midrash, why might the Kohen Gadol be wearing the shatnez? What could the symbolism be?