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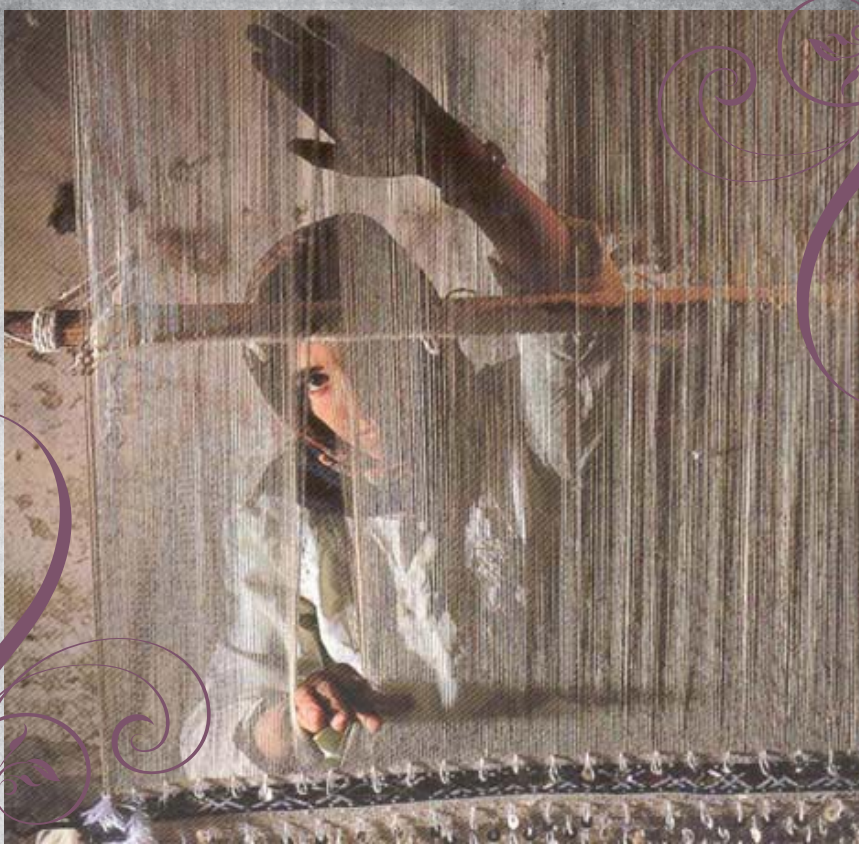
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BRIDGES FOR PEACE

Israel Teaching Letter

Vol. # 770409

April 2009



The Clothing
of the *Righteous*

The *Clothing* of the Righteous

Clothes make
the man?

In our present-day world, clothing pretty much defines us. It certainly did in the Elizabethan Era in England. Laws governed what kind of fabric and what color a person could wear. A person's dress immediately identified their status in society, who was royalty and nobility and who was not, and the consequences were severe if caught wearing something inappropriate.

Today, almost without thinking, we automatically size up a person by how he or she is dressed. A while back, one of my daughters was living away from home and mixing with the wrong crowd. Just before she came home, images raced across my mind of spiked, purple hair, tattoos, black nail polish, and piercings everywhere. But it wasn't those images that disturbed me as much as my reaction to them. I wondered if I could accept her if she showed up in that manner. That horrified me. Was I that hung up on outward appearance? Could it really change my heart toward my own daughter? Whether we want to admit it or not, clothing and appearance make a huge difference to us. It was Mark Twain that said, "Clothes make the man."

This used to be more important than it is today. Today's generation don't seem to care as much about how they look. They rather like to "shock" and challenge people to accept them regardless of how they look. Whereas 30-plus years ago, no one would have thought of entering a church without being dressed in their "Sunday best," now congregants come in all manner of casual dress. Some folks from the older generation feel such dress shows disrespect for God. Does it? While this is not the point of this article, and I'm not going to answer that question, you might be surprised to find how much God talks about clothing in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Although He definitely does not judge a person by the "outward appearance" but "looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7), He does have a special clothing for the righteous. In biblical terms, how we are "dressed" spiritually is just another way of describing how we "walk" or live. Our walk—how people see us live—is our outward appearance to the world, and that does matter.

First- to second-century Greek philosopher Epictetus once said, "Know, first, who you are; and then adorn yourself accordingly." God knows who we are as His followers and has "adorned" us accordingly. Because we are still too often beset by our sins, we don't see ourselves like He does. He sees us in our "new creation" clothing. If we pay attention to how He clothes us, we will know how He sees us, and He wants us to see ourselves that way too.

The Fabric

One fabric stands out in the Bible—linen. In fact, it is mentioned 105 times. It is first mentioned at the end of Genesis when Pharaoh dressed his new second-in-command, Joseph, in fine linen (Gen. 41:42). It must have been the fabric of the wealthy. The next time we see it is in Exodus, in the description of the tabernacle (chapters 25–27). The courtyard hangings, the “gate” to the courtyard, the “door” to the tabernacle, the curtains for walls inside the tabernacle, and the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were all made of “fine woven linen.” God chooses only the best for His house, so linen must have been the best.

Then, more importantly for us, most of the garments for the priests were made of linen (Exod. 28). The one exception was the blue robe for the high priest, which was made of wool. The child Samuel, who ministered in the tabernacle, and King David wore linen. After being promoted by the Persian king, Mordechai was dressed in linen, as well as the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. Ezekiel and Daniel both had visions of a “man clothed in linen” (possibly the pre-incarnate Yeshua/Jesus, representing His role as priest).

In Ezekiel 16, the prophet describes Israel as a baby left in a field and how God took her and raised her to be a beautiful woman. *“Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth...”* (v.13a). Our King loves to make us beautiful and lavish the best on us. (Men, you should follow His example and do the same for your women, as much as possible.) But we, like Israel in Ezekiel’s day, can get puffed up with our beauty, using His gifts and anointing (His “adornments”) for selfish purposes. We’ve seen this happen to many a God-gifted servant in our day.

Yeshua was wrapped in linen at His burial. The famous, controversial Shroud of Turin, which some have believed to be that wrapping, is linen. In the book of Revelation, we learn that angels (15:6), the bride of Messiah (19:8), and the armies of heaven (19:14) are all dressed in linen, which, for believers, represents *“the righteous acts of the saints.”*

Why did God choose linen? Only God knows, but He must have some kind of “fashion sense,” as fashion experts say that linen never goes out of style and is timelessly stylish! However, some characteristics of linen might give us a hint of why God may have chosen it as His apparel for His holy ones and the cloth to adorn some of His holiest earthly items:

- It originated in Egypt and was used to wrap Egyptian mummies in because it symbolized light and purity and displayed wealth. It was expensive because of the labor intensive method of producing it. The Israelites took a supply of it with them from Egypt, which was used for the tabernacle (Exod. 25:4), and some of them may have learned how to make it from the Egyptians (Exod. 35:35).
- It has the ability to absorb and lose water rapidly. Thus, it is popular in warm climates, as it allows the body to breathe and is exceptionally cool, making it superior to cotton in this regard. Priests must have found it most comfortable while working around the heat of the sacrificial altar and especially in the desert during Israel’s 40 years of wandering.
- It is less likely to cling to the body when wet than other fabrics.
- It is made of flax, the strongest of vegetable fibers and two to three times stronger than cotton. Fishing nets, twine, and rope are also made from flax fibers.
- It is resistant to moths and carpet beetles, and thus lasts a long time. When the tomb of the Pharaoh Ramesses II, who died 1213 BC, was discovered in 1881, the linen wrappings were perfectly preserved! Did the tabernacle’s curtains need replacing during the approximate 480 years it was used? Perhaps not!

Flax fibers in its different stages of preparation



*Linen,
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Possibly the greatest lesson for us in regards to linen comes from one of God's strangest laws: *"You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together"* (Deut. 22:11). This is quite discarded by Gentile Christians but not by strictly observant Jews. They call this a *chok*, a law that has no logical reason to it, and it is obeyed simply by faith. The practice of not mixing wool and linen is called *shatnez*. Jewish shoppers carefully check manufacturers' labels and send suspicious items to a *shatnez* laboratory, where they are checked under a microscope.

This sounds odd to most of us, but what might God be saying through it? The point may be a warning against mixture of a spiritual nature and God's desire for a pure, unadulterated lifestyle. Yeshua taught, *"You cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matt. 6:24). In the 1 Corinthians 6:15–20 passage, Paul admonishes us not to join our bodies, as members of Messiah, with a harlot. James warns us not to let both blessing and cursing come out of our mouths: *"Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?"* (3:11).

The Color

Students of the Bible, as well as dream interpreters, have come up with ideas of what colors symbolize, according to how they are used in the Bible. These symbolisms seem to be close to the same cross-culturally and throughout the centuries. What colors does God dress His people in? Though we may shop at thrift stores or wear used clothes handed down to us, we need to understand how God dresses us spiritually. It identifies who we are in Him. Gloriously and beautifully dressed, we can walk erect. We wear the colors of royalty! When the Hebrew slaves left Egypt, they plundered the Egyptians and walked out wearing gold, silver, and fine clothing, not the tattered rags of a slave (Exod. 3:22). They were God's royal sons and daughters!



- **Gold** has always been the color most identified with kings and queens. It is symbolic of divinity, majesty, wealth, and God's glory. In Psalm 45, the psalmist includes it in a description of a king's wedding. However, the psalm's language is very idealistic and seems fitting for more than just an earthly king. Some see it as a description of King Messiah. (The NKJV and NASB versions of the Bible capitalize the pronouns, indicating this interpretation.)

The psalm not only lauds the King, but His bride and His daughters: *"Kings' daughters are among Your honorable women; at Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir...The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold"* (vv. 9, 13). It is the color of the New Jerusalem, our final abode, a city of pure gold with a street of pure gold (Rev. 21:18, 21).

God desires a pure lifestyle from us.



- **White** is associated with purity, light, goodness, innocence, faith, virtue, holiness, cleanliness, and perfection. In the Dark Ages, only the wealthy wore white because only they had the means to keep them clean. Often, it is cleanliness that is emphasized when white is mentioned in the Bible.

In Revelation, Yeshua tells the church of Sardis, “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy” (3:4). He goes on to admonish the Laodiceans: “I counsel you to buy from Me...white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed...” (3:18). The armies of heaven are dressed in linen, “white and clean,” riding on white horses (19:14). The Apostle Paul says that Yeshua will “...sanctify and cleanse her [the Church] with the washing of water by the word that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:26–27).

*..they shall walk
with Me in white...*



- **Purple**, as well as “royal” blue, was the color for kings from Bible times (Judg. 8:26). Roman emperors wore it, and in Elizabethan times, only queens and kings and their family members were allowed to wear it. Thus, it symbolizes royalty, power, and wisdom. (It is interesting that almost 75% of pre-adolescent children prefer purple to all other colors!) In ancient times, it was expensive to make, so only the wealthy could afford it. Made from the Murex snail, some sources claim it took 60,000 snails to produce just one pound of dye. If exposed to the sun, it turned blue (which the high priest’s robe was made of), but in the shade, a purple color was produced. As a sign of his favor, Persian King Ahasuerus dressed Mordechai in blue and purple (Esther 8:15).



- **Scarlet** can also be described as crimson or red. Eliminating references to the “Red” Sea, “scarlet” is the word most often used in the Bible for this color. In the Middle Ages, red was made of a cheaper dye, so it was not as costly as the deeper shade of scarlet. It is a powerful, emotionally intense color. Designer Bill Blass advises, “When in doubt, wear red.” I was told years ago to always wear red on an interview or in a meeting where decisions are being made!

Historically, scarlet has been the chief color of the Church (particularly, to this day, the Catholic church), reminiscent of the blood of Yeshua and the blood of the martyrs. It is symbolic of power, fire, the presence of God, anointing, and atonement, as well as war, covenant, and life. Scarlet was a companion color to blue and purple for much of the tabernacle’s curtains and veil and the high priest’s clothing. The Proverbs 31-woman dresses her whole household in scarlet. It, too, was the color of royalty. That is why Yeshua was dressed mockingly in a scarlet robe, as the King of the Jews.



Soft

The Texture

All clothing has a texture, the quality of the fabric which tells us how it feels. Is it scratchy or soft? Is it silky or stiff? Does it “kiss” the skin or irritate it? Is it fuzzy, nubby, or smooth? So, what is the texture of the fabric of a godly life like?

- **Soft**—“*I...beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love...Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Eph. 4:1–2, 31–32). When we speak, we are to “...impart grace to the hearers” (v. 29). Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” All the underlined words in the above verses speak of a “soft” approach to those we respond to. Paul’s admonitions are in contrast to his description of unbelievers, who have a hard heart and have become callous (Eph. 4:18–19, NASB, NIV, NLT).

Sometimes when we deal with people, we have to decide whether to be tough or forgiving, dispensing love that “...will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). It’s not always easy to know, so we have to ask the Lord which way He wants us to respond, because we are often too apt to respond out of a spirit of “righteous” judgment. Yet, the Lord’s “...mercy reaches unto the heavens...” (Ps. 57:10). In this passage, the psalmist goes on to talk about God’s faithfulness and righteousness, listing His judgment last. David said of the Lord, “...Your gentleness has made me great” (Ps. 18:35).

- **Smooth**—“*Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies*” (Ps. 27:11). “*You enlarged my path under me, so my feet did not slip*” (Ps. 18:36). “*When you walk, your steps will not be hindered and when you run, you will not stumble*” (Prov. 4:12). Life is definitely not always smooth, but neither do we need to believe that the “right” way or God’s way is always the hardest route to take. His ultimate goal for His children is a smooth path: “...the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth” (Isa. 40:4b). Like our Father, we are to make the way smooth for others, so they don’t stumble (Mark 9:42; 1 Cor. 8:13). Over and over throughout the Bible, stumbling is most often ascribed to the life of the unbeliever.
- **Unwrinkled**—Unlike linen that easily wrinkles, the fabric of our faith is to be without wrinkle (Eph. 5:27, previously quoted). We don’t like creases, whether in our fresh-pressed clothes or on our faces. God doesn’t like to see those worry wrinkles on us either. Often He will use “Gethsemane” (meaning “oil press”) experiences—those God-ordained times of suffering—to “press” us till our faith becomes one of trust and anxiety-free. His formula for our worry wrinkles is Philippians 4:6–7: “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*”

Unwrinkled



What Shall I Wear Today?



For many, choosing what to wear in the morning is the first decision of the day. For a believer, it is a constant choice throughout the day. Choosing our spiritual clothing is a mental discipline. Though we are a new creation in Yeshua, we still have to choose what to wear: the old “filthy” clothing or the clothing of the righteous.

I love Zechariah’s vision of Joshua, the high priest, when he sees God remove Joshua’s filthy clothes and dress him in “rich robes” (3:4). Joshua was part of the remnant that came out of the Babylonian exile. Priests and prophets had both been corrupted prior to the exile (Jer. 23:11). Now, back in Jerusalem, the king and Joshua were commissioned with the task of rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 5:1–2). To do so, God had to first cleanse the priestly office. Thus, He dressed him with clean garments suited for the assigned task.

God has done the same for every believer. Is it possible to be seated “in heavenly places” with Yeshua (Eph. 2:6) in filthy garments? No! Throughout Scripture, it is the wicked who are

“clothed” in shame, dishonor, confusion, disgrace, etc. When we feel these attitudes influencing us, we should realize that we have slipped into apparel unbecoming a saint of God. The clothing of the righteous is righteousness, justice, gladness, power, majesty, strength, salvation, and humility. Paul calls it putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Eph. 4:22–24). In Ephesians 6, He admonishes us to put on the whole armor of God (salvation, truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and the Word of God), as well as tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, and love (Col. 3:12–14).

But here is where we can so easily slip into deception. This clothing is not made of the fabric of our own good deeds. We will not obtain the righteous lifestyle by our own efforts to be kind, patient, or loving. The Lord illustrated this for me in a dream. Superman was “training” me to be Superwoman. I was trying to put on my spandex outfit and really struggling with it and getting frustrated. I practiced flying but wasn’t doing very well. Then the Lord touched me, and I shot up like a rocket! His words to my heart were: “You can’t do it without My touch.” Just as Yeshua, as a man, depended totally on the Holy Spirit (John 6:19, 8:28), so must we, or the clothing does us no good, and we are just children playing dress-up.

When we are tempted to “put on” the old filthy garments we used to wear all the time, we have to ask: Why would a “clean” person do that? One reason is because we have a hard time seeing ourselves the way God

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sees us. Christian author Graham Cooke explains it this way: "In the matter of our ongoing transformation into becoming Christlike, there are two extremes at work. Firstly, there is how the Father sees us in Christ, as a finished work. Secondly, there is how we see ourselves as we go through the process of change...The Father deals with us through the context of eternity. The Holy Spirit works with us in the context of the here and now." While we are in "the process of change," we get discouraged, but we need to keep our eyes on God's perspective. In earth-time, we aren't dressed as His bride yet, but in God's eternal perspective, it's already a reality! Cooke explains further: "In the Father's eyes (seen through the lens of Jesus), we are complete in Christ and welcome in the throne room of His presence...He treats us as complete while we are still a work in progress."

How we see ourselves dressed makes a huge difference in our behavior. If I'm dressed in shame, I will limp and cower and won't be able to fulfill all the exploits God has planned for me to do (Dan. 11:32). But if I see myself dressed in the full armor of God, I will not be intimidated by the fear of man or any other enemy; instead, I will be able to run against a troop and leap over a wall (Ps. 18:29-30)!

So, the question remains: What shall I wear today?

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All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding "yes"! It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

