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# The Torah's “New Clothes”

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I am having a very hard time deciding upon a topic on which to write. While religious topics are numerous, I have grown rather bored and tired with the mindless dribble being produced these days and marketed as religious teachings. For the most part, I find nothing religious and almost nothing of interest in the majority of them. All I read is the blah blah blah of supposedly profound and significant religious insights and revelations. However, I find nothing insightful or revelatory in most of what I read. I confess, looking for good Torah on the internet is becoming, for me at least, a rather tedious, repetitive and unexciting chore.

Let me summarize what I am saying with a story that is familiar to many.

*“An Emperor who cares for nothing but his appearance and attire hires two tailors who promise him the finest suit of clothes from a fabric invisible to anyone who is unfit for his position or “just hopelessly stupid”. The Emperor cannot see the cloth himself, but pretends that he can for fear of appearing unfit for his position or stupid; his ministers do the same. When the swindlers report that the suit is finished, they mime dressing him and the Emperor then marches in procession before his subjects, who play along with the pretense. Suddenly, a child in the crowd, too young to understand the desirability of keeping up the pretense, blurts out that the Emperor is wearing nothing at all and the cry is taken up by others. The Emperor cringes, suspecting the assertion is true, but holds himself up proudly and continues the procession.”* **Wikipedia plot summary of the Emperors New Clothes**

Centuries ago, the Sages of Israel introduced to us a concept that is today well known. This is that the Torah and religion itself is to be understood in two radically different ways. There is the superficial, platonic level called in Hebrew *Pshat*. Then there is the deeper truths, detached from and significantly more sublime than the literal surface understanding, this is called in Hebrew *Sod*. *Pshat* tells us stories, not too different from any other fairy-tale. *Sod* tells us the true deeper meanings and morals underlying the stories.

Today most religious teachings are of the fairy-tale variety. Religion is portrayed in such a superficial light that most intelligent people observe it and consider its claims to be ridiculous and outrageous. In response the religious decide to isolate and distance themselves from their challengers, all the while heaping down insults and scorn upon their heads for being unbelieving infidels. In this respects, many Jews, Noahides and Christians share the same fundamentalism and narrow world view of their Islamic extremist counterparts.

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Much of what today is presented as religion can be rightfully compared to the fairy-tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes." Everyone is told that the modern religious teachings are terrific and great, and that if you do not see this then, like in the fairy-tale, you are unfit and hopelessly stupid. Not wanting to stand out and so desperately wanting to fit in, most go along with the naked Emperor and proclaim just how good he looks, in spite of the fact that he is walking around buck naked.

The Emperor today is the religion, and the nakedness is today's religious teachings. They are naked, absent and empty. They are not there and all the while everyone is praising them, fearing to tell the truth!

The fairy-tale relates that it was a young child that spoke out the truth, not knowing how to lie or to practice deception. And today, we believe ourselves to be so mature and sophisticated that we have lost the innocence of youth. We have forgotten how to recognize the truth and to "tell it like it is."

Yes, there is so much religious talk today with so very little actually being said. It seems that everyone has something to say, each one louder than the next, each one trying to prove himself the intellectual superior over the other guy. Yet, with all the talk, nothing of true value gets said and even worse, nothing at all of any real significance ever gets done. Talk is cheap and cheap talk is ever cheaper.

Only actions speak for real. In this physical world, only physical deeds talk! Words lack wings, they fly out of the mouth and fall to the ground! Deeds are the true talk. Wisely did the American President Theodore Roosevelt say, "*Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far.*"

All the religious babble has degenerated into being entertainment. Learning has become so perverted form of intellectual pride in one being able to memorize and appear smarter than another. This is not what religion is supposed to be about. We are not supposed to be impressing others with our words. We should instead shut up, and carry and use our big sticks, breaking all the cherished modern idols of intellectual pride and financial superiority.

When we remember what it is truly like to be children of G-d, I am sure that G-d too will "remember" what it is like for us to be His children.

Here is another wise quote from Theodore Roosevelt, "*Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.*" And here is another one, "*There is not in all America a more dangerous trait than the deification of mere smartness unaccompanied by any sense of moral responsibility.*"

It is time that the Emperor realizes that he is butt naked. It is time for him to put on some real clothes. It is time for the courtiers to speak up and advise their beloved leader of the truth of his condition. When we carry our big sticks and use them, we will indeed go far. But if we put down the stick and instead open our big mouths, all that come out are words of false flattery. It is time to go beyond superficial (Pshat) and to penetrate to the essence (Sod). Shammai said, "*talk little and do much*" (Pirkei Avot 1:15).