



MESIBOS SHEL SHABBOS

WITH RABBI MORDECHAI Z. HECHT

WHITE CLOTHING ON SHABBOS • לבן בשבת

Shabbos is that day we go out of our way to make special and unique - after all it's Shabbos. It is the culmination of our whole week and as we always learn, "it is the day that blesses our upcoming week." Of course this includes preparing special foods, preparing our homes and cleaning up and wearing nice clothing, but is there a source for wearing particularly *different* clothing or particularly *white* garments on Shabbos?

Anyone who has traveled the world will see that in most communities & synagogues around the world Jews dress extra special on Shabbos & Yom Tov and often enough men wear white on Shabbos and some even wear entirely white clothing. What is the source for this practice?

TALMUD

The Talmud in Tractate *Shabbos 113a* expounds on the verse in the book of *Yeshaya 58,13* that honoring Shabbos ["*VeChibadito*"] includes that the "garments of Shabbos should be different than all week". The Talmud tells various tales of different sages who would prepare themselves in a special manner in honor of Shabbos and would particularly wear certain white garments. [Further sources for this practice include Tractate *Bava Kamma 37, Tosfos*. Talmud Yerushalmi, *Bava Kamma* ch.4]

SHULCHAN ARUCH

In the code of Jewish Law O"C 301 we bring this concept into law, where we further expound that being that garments "make a person", when one wears unique clothing for Shabbos one will also remember that today is Shabbos and keep it holy and special.

ARIZAL

The Arizal, Rabbi Isaac Luria, (1534-1572) one of the greatest Kabbalists in Jewish history teaches (*Siddur Yaakov Emden 333,b*) that dressing beautiful on Shabbos is because

we stand before a King, the Master of the world, and in such a state we dress extra special. The Arizal also expounds that we dress particularly in white. In addition to the Talmudic sources mentioned earlier, this is also based on the Zohar that on Shabbos we are compared to angels, and angels are white. White also represents purity, and being that Shabbos is such a holy day, this is reflected practically in our clothing that we wear.

MALBIM

The Malbim, (1809-1879) in his commentary on the Torah shares a fascinating insight (*Shemos, Beshalach 16,4 & 31*): *In one place in the Torah we are taught that the Manna was white and in other it says it was clear? How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction? Says the Malbim: all week long the manna was clear like crystal, but on Shabbos it was white, and why was it white because on Shabbos there exists in the world a special energy and revelation of Rachamim-mercy.* The commentaries expound that this can also serve as a source for why we wear white on Shabbos, to remind us of the Manna in the dessert which fell on Friday for Shabbos as well, two portions, and to remind us of the mercy that G-d shines into the world on Shabbos. Furthermore, this is also a source for why we particularly use white table cloths as well on Shabbos, like the white manna which covered the earth like a table cloth Friday mornings - in honor of Shabbos. (see S"A O"C 271)

[Ironically, people may be concerned to wear white because it'll get dirty, so let us say, "have a little faith" :) like the Jews in the dessert with regard to their basic daily sustenance in receiving the manna each day and no earlier.]

Actionable lesson: Wear white clothing on Shabbos. Use a white table cloth on Shabbos and invite guests and celebrate Shabbos and thank Hashem for all his mercy he showers upon us throughout this past week and pray for the additional mercy and blessings for the coming week.