



**SHOSHANA JUDELMAN**

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

## Beyond the Costumes

I fight a battle every day. The battle for self-knowledge, personal growth and relationship. Do you fight this battle too?

It is a hard but essential fight because most of us don't see ourselves clearly.

As children, we take on roles that help us find safety and relationship. For example, if people smiled when you made a joke, then you learned that being funny was something that could enable you to receive love.

But at some point, this identity can become a stranglehold if you aren't aware of it and working with it. You become locked into that label, unable to change or grow- stuck reacting to life from the vantage point of the little kid looking for love. Instead of from a deeper essential self.

This is connected to the concept of *kelipah*, meaning a shell or a peel.

In the physical world we see that the shell

of an almond protects but also hides the almond. In the early stages of growth, the shell was necessary in order for the almond to grow. Once the almond is ripe, however, the *kelipah* becomes a hindrance.

Another example is the embryonic sac. For a baby in the womb, the embryonic sac is a life-giving device. It provides a nurturing environment for the fetus to grow and receive nourishment. After the baby is born, however, the sac becomes an impediment and even a danger if not removed.

In the spiritual realm, *kelipah* is anything that hides G-dliness. Anything that "thinks" it has an identity other than the G-dliness it holds.

On some level, we live lives of *kelipah*. Lives coded by the beliefs we formed as children. Beliefs that protected me, but now box me in and strangle me emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. And cause me to live from a superficial sense of self that craves outside validation rather than from my essential self that knows its own value.

The Midrash Shir HaShirim presents a mashal of a princess who doesn't know her identity. Her poverty and hunger have brought her to glean in the fields with the other poor girls. The king rides by in his beautiful carriage, and lo and behold! It is his daughter! He sends an officer to rescue her and bring her into the royal carriage. Her friends express astonishment at this turn of events- yesterday she was just a beggar in the fields like them and now she is a princess! She is just as surprised as they are and admits, "I also didn't

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realize that I was a princess!?"

But she was. Even in the fields. Even as she was gleaned. Inside she was always a princess.

Reb Leibele Eiger uses this midrash to explain a deeper meaning behind wearing costumes on Purim. We change our outer appearance, but we remain the same inside.

Wearing the costume of a fire-fighter doesn't make you a fire-fighter, just like wearing a label you created as a child doesn't define who you really are inside.

We are too often fooled by our self-characterizations and limiting beliefs.

Living from the superficial identity of a poor gleaner rather than from your inner princess.

Go deeper. See your G-dly Soul.

Your Royalty.

And then put on a costume so you can remind yourself that there is something vast and Eternal inside of you. That this life in Galus is one big mask, a costume hiding Hashem's Oneness. And your Infinite potential. ■

**Shoshana Judelman** is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.



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