

The Garment

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A certain tailor was sitting, working on a garment at the end of the day. The garment was intended for the minister and the weave was among the finest to be made in the minister's workshop. The tailor was old and his eyes no longer served him well. His hands, too, were weak. The sun was setting and the work still unfinished. While it was day and the sun shone, the tailor was bothered by things that seemed to him to be impossible to do without; as the day passed and the hour drew near to bring the garment to its owner, it became clear to him that he had no need of them. But there was a need to bring the garment to the minister.

Just as people usually realize too late what they should have realized initially, so the tailor finally realized what he should have known beforehand. This realization brings its owner no pleasure, but only grief and regret. The tailor began to think—if it weren't for those things that bothered me unnecessarily, I could have presented myself to the minister and collected my fee for the garment. Thinking about the minister and all the benefits he had derived from him, his thoughts returned to the garment. He took off his spectacles, wiped them. And, replacing them on his eyes, examined what was missing. The buttons were secured and even the items that lent extra beauty to the garment were in place. But the garment itself still lacked something. Only with it would the garment be complete; without it, it would remain incomplete.

Grief and regret for the lost day made his fingers careless and the needle shake in his hand. More difficult than grief and regret are thoughts. At another time thoughts could have helped. But now, with the evening falling – when the garment lay unfinished in front of him -- they could only be a hindrance.

He stood and poured himself a glass of wine and lit a light to brighten the darkness. The glass uplifted his spirit but the light revealed what was amiss with the garment. The hour, too, was pressing, since the time to bring the garment to the minister had already arrived. The tailor looked at the garment in his hand and looked at the window. The day was becoming dark and disappearing, and the night was about to fall, and if he didn't bring the garment to the minister the minister's people would fetch him and the garment. Fear descended upon him. Even the wine that had initially elevated him now filled his limbs with heaviness. His eyes felt sleepy, and inside his frail body even his old bones began to slumber. The tailor forgot the minister and the garment, and let his head drop on to his chest and he sat as one curled up in his mother's womb, with nothing before him and nothing behind him, and nothing at all.

How long was he curled up like this? How long are an old man's forty winks? He rested his head a short while and then awoke. He awoke and saw the unfinished garment. He was gripped by a fear that the minister's men had come, taken the garment from him,

and humiliated him. Unlike the minister, who was compassionate and kind to craftsmen, his servants were hard and cruel and showed no mercy to those who fell into their hands.

His strength returned and he picked up the needle and sewed – one stitch here, another there. If he had sewn during the day, when it was bright, every stitch would have been in the right place. Now, by the light of the candle, the tailor's fingers fumbled. If he hadn't spoiled that which he had mended, then neither had he mended that which needed to be mended. He put aside his needle and looked at the light and thought to himself: whose end will come first – that of the light or that of the man? The tailor finished with an "Oi" and said: Whatever has to happen, let it.

He didn't say this in so many words, since he knew how hard and cruel were the minister's servants, and if they arrived, he'd die of fright. When some time had passed and they had not arrived, he breathed more easily. He rubbed his hands and said – before they come, I'll mend something.

He picked up the needle again and threaded it anew. Since there was not enough time to mend the whole garment, he placed the garment in front of him, and examined which repair to do first, as each mend would reduce the amount that still had to be done.

He steadied his hand and commenced work. A noise was heard, the noise of feet and the cracking of whips. Even someone from whom nothing is demanded would be frightened by such a noise, how much more so someone who anticipates a visit.

There was a kick at the door and the minister's servants entered. Because of their voices, the candle trembled and went out, and the tailor was left in the dark, until he disappeared and nothing could be seen of him except for the needle between his fingers, which turned hither and thither sewing the wind. The servants cracked their whips and shouted: "Thread, son of a needle – are you ready?" Even though he had been summoned by the minister, they still made fun of him, as though it was inconceivable that the minister should commission work from such a man.

The tailor took the garment and stood with a heavy heart and a downcast face, aware that the garment was not of a standard befitting the minister. Even though he was ready to go, the minister's servants still hurried him along, prodding him with their whips and saying: "Get up and go, get up and go!" They hardly gave him time to put on his overcoat, though it was unbecoming that someone be brought before the minister in his work clothes.

The servants of the minister brought the tailor to the minister's house and put him in the place where such people are kept until the minister decides that he has time to see them. The place was small and cramped to a degree that it would have amazed you to find in a house as wide, high and grand as the minister's, a room so narrow and cramped.

The tailor sat and thought: the minister's affairs are many and even though he ordered a garment from me and sent his servants for me, he could have given me a little extra time. Since he has now left me some time I'll check the garment and complete it.

The tailor stretched out his hand and fell around for the needle and thread, in the manner of tailors who are used to going about with their needles and threads. He searched in his clothes and found nothing. Don't be surprised if he found nothing since, when he left for the minister's house, he had changed his clothes.

The tailor sat and fretted, because now that he had time to do the mending, he could not do it, since he lacked the needle and thread. The suffering in the grave is nothing by comparison. Since no choice was left to him, he had to depend on the minister's beneficence.

The minister's mercies are many but his servants are hard and cruel. Mercenaries of a good minister, they carry out their duties in a rage. While the tailor was sitting, the servants entered and said to him: "Eye of a needle, thread your legs and move, the minister wishes to see you." The tailor was dragged along to the minister by the minister's servants, who pushed him and beat him and raged at him and called him Son-of-a-Needle, Thread-of-a-Spider, and other insulting and frivolous names.

Since the servants already knew that the minister would not be favorably disposed to the tailor, they allowed themselves the liberty of mocking him. The tailor thought to himself: "I'll tolerate this for a while, until they bring me face to face with the minister. His heart groaned. And what complaint will the minister make when he sees the garment? The strain of the journey and the insults of the minister's servants gave him no rest. Yet imagining bad thoughts is harder than the thoughts themselves. He felt pressured and followed the imaginings of his heart: Did I not wish to do something? But what it was he did not know.

They brought him to the place where such people are taken and left him standing there. He stood alone, not knowing why. Presently his thoughts left the garment, the minister, and himself. This seemed to be for the good, allowing his mind to rest. But the truth was it wasn't good, for what was the good of moving someone from place to place, without bringing him to the place he thought he was going to – even if it was where he would receive his punishment – since the threat of punishment is more dreadful than the punishment itself. The tailor was forced to see what was around him, and pricked up his ears to hear what was being said. The windows were sealed and he could see nothing so that, even when things reached him, he could not comprehend them.

After many hours, the minister commanded his servants to fetch the tailor. They went and brought him. The minister saw the tailor's fallen countenance, his lowly spring and lifelessness. But surely, a few days beforehand, when he gave him the material to make the garment, he had been happy, as though the whole world had fallen into his lap. He said to him: "Are you the tailor whom I requested to make me a garment? Show me what you've done." The tailor began to stammer: "My lord minister, the garment is

almost complete. But your servants came suddenly and snatched me from my workshop, just as I was sitting sewing the last stitch – took me away and brought me to you. If they would only have left me for a little while longer I would have completed it to your satisfaction.”

The minister stared at him in surprise. “How many days was the woven cloth with you, without your managing to finish the work?”

The tailor began to squirm before the minister, telling him about the many distractions he had had. He was a member of the “Society for Clothes-for-the-Indigent,” and second beadle at the tailor’s synagogue, and one of the worthies of the craftsmen’s guild. And sometimes, because of the needs of the community, he neglected those of his own. And thus he rambled on until the minister stopped him and said: “In short, you didn’t spend all your time on the garment.” The tailor turned to him and said: “If the minister would return me the garment for a short while I could complete what it lacks and return it whole and beautiful. The minister, who has many garments, can afford to give one up.” To this the minister replied: “Take the garment and do as you said.”

The tailor left the minister with the intention of returning immediately to his work. In truth, the garment lacked only one thing, and there was no need to make his eyes bad at night. Still he had obligated himself, he had to put his hand where his mouth is, and demonstrate to the minister that he was a person of his word.

He returned home and entered his work room. He lit a light and spread out the garment. Again he noticed what he had seen beforehand – that it lacked something. If only the servants of the minister had not come he would have been able to complete it, without having to suffer embarrassment. He could have made the minister happy and would not have had to return to work on the garment. But what was past was past and what needed to be done was still undone. At that moment, his wife was standing in the kitchen preparing supper. The smell of the cooking wafted to him. He raised his head and thought to himself, I will not be far from the truth if I declare that my better half - may she be worthy of life – is cooking kashipani. [Footnote in original Hebrew text: A combination of millet and beans with onions cooked in oil.] Kashi is a tasty dish as is pani, how much more so when they are cooked together! Were it not for the garment I would go and eat immediately.

Though his sadness prevented him from eating, it seemed to him that it was only because of his craving for kashipani that he imagined that his wife was cooking it. And even if she were, it was necessary to clarify for which meal she was preparing the kashipani – supper or lunch. This was his wife’s custom: on laundry day she would prepare lunch the night before, in order to be free to do the laundry. And for supper, radishes and onions would suffice. If what had happened had not happened, he would have been satisfied with a small repast; after what had happened, it was only right to comfort himself with the choicest foods.

He stopped thinking about the garment and thought about food. The fragrance of the pot, which has neither body nor – it goes without saying – hands, grips your nostrils and pulls you after it. He refrained from going to the kitchen immediately, since he wished to give his wife the satisfaction of showing him the pot and saying to him: See what I've cooked for you. This old lady – the Good Lord should be her help – still had youthful ways. Truly one could say of her that she was a woman of valour. With one hand she prepared supper and with the other lunch, not like him who had not even managed to do the one thing that he was obliged to do.

Hunger began to trouble him, and the enticing smell of the food drew him away from his work. He realized that as long as he had inspected the food, he would have no peace. He lay out the garment and stuck a needle in the place which needed mending, so that his return to the garment would be ready, and he stood up so as to go to the kitchen. As he stood, the garment caught in his clothes and dragged after him, and fell. He bent down, lifted it up and scolded himself; not enough that it wouldn't be ready, I'll also have to go back and check which place needs mending! I won't tarry now because of it, but I'll go and see what's being cooked. It would have been better if man were created without a need for food and drink. But since he was created thus, it was just as well that his food stands ready before him. If it were not for food and drink you wouldn't have enough strength to hold a needle and thread. The word thread here stands for work, which is to say that if man did not eat and drink he'd have no strength to work. Work! Man works in order that he'll be able to eat and eats so that he'll have strength to work. Thus it is every day until a day comes when he has no food, no drink, no work and nothing at all.

What makes me think these thoughts? Since the day I emerged from my mother's womb, has it ever happened that I had so many? I am amazed by researchers whose every minute is filled with thoughts: what use to us are thoughts? Not only are they a waste of time, they also divert your mind from the essential thing. Just as I, for example, by being so absorbed in my thoughts, forgot about the garment. While you are not hungry, the world says: Don't eat. While I, on the contrary, say: anticipate hunger with food. Because if you eat because you are hungry you can't appreciate fully the taste of the food. Now let us pour a small glass before starting the meal, so that we don't begin eating because we are famished. There is a great advantage in strong wine; it lessens the hunger, yet increases the appetite.

The tailor went to a box of bottles in a corner. He found the box but not the key, as it was in his clothes while he was working. 'What's this?' thought the surprised tailor to himself. Have I sat working in the Sabbath clothes in which I went to the minister? Now, my dear friend, let's take off those clothes and wear something else, otherwise tomorrow when you need respectable clothes, you'll find them creased. How will you be able to present yourself to the minister in creased clothes?

He took off the Sabbath garb, hung it on a nail, put on his work clothes and took the key to the box. His wife's voice was heard saying: "Yisrael, come and wash your hands for your meal." The tailor smiled and said in an affectionate manner: This bad woman feels that I want to pour myself a glass of strong wine and has called me to eat. I know

that she hasn't yet set the table nor served the food. It's right that I teach her a lesson and that I drink first and let her wait, so that she knows that she cannot make a laughing stock of me. And just in case she did lay the table and has served the main dish, I shall set aside the wine and go to the kitchen. If the table is laid that will be all for the good, and if not I will take my revenge by drinking a double quantity.

He went to the kitchen and found the table laid, but not yet with the food. His wife had already brought out the pot from the oven and as she stirred it the fragrance arose. The tailor went next to the pitcher of water, rinsed his hands and made the appropriate blessing. Sitting down, he cut a slice of bread and made the blessing, dipping the slice into the salt, eating it and declaring: "I'd like to know what my dearest has cooked for me. Tasty morsels for kings she has certainly not prepared, nor has she stirred herself to make my favourite dish."

Said his wife. "What, for example, are your favourite foods?"

Said he to her. "It seems to me that it's about time you knew."

His wife humbled herself before him and said: "How could I know? A man enters the world of ministers where he smells the fragrance of good foods that I am incapable of preparing."

Said he: "Am I to be suspected of lusting after the tables of ministers? It is enough for a person like me whatever my mistress cooks for me."

Said she: "If that is so then behold the kashipani is all ready for you."

Said he: "You cooked kashipani for me but I didn't smell it."

Said she: "How insensitive is this man to smell; he cannot distinguish the fragrance of cooked kashipani. This comes from your use of tobacco, which destroys the sense of smell."

Said he: "And am I alone in my habit of inhaling the smell of tobacco? The whole world does it."

Said she: "I would do nothing to prevent you from inhaling the smell of tobacco; I merely pointed out the dire consequences. Now go and eat."

He took the spoon and said: "Yes I will, for I'm dying of hunger, but can one eat your food if it is boiling hot?"

Said she: "For this reason the Holy One Blessed Be He, created the mouth so that a person might blow on his food."

Said he: “It’s easy for you to speak, for you have nothing to do. Whereas I took a break in the middle of my work in order not to make you wait, while you sit me down and talk philosophy!”

His wife answered him thus: “While you’ve been talking the food has cooled.”

Again he stuck his spoon in the pot and, as it reached his mouth, he pointed it towards his wife with an angry look and said: “You say cool and I say freezing.”

Said his wife: “Wait and I shall warm it.”

Said he to her: “And what shall I do in the meantime---sing hymns? I can see that it was decreed that I should not enjoy a hot meal.”

Said his wife: “Eat a small amount and I will add to it from what is on the oven.” Again he inserted his spoon and ate rapidly, in order to leave more space in the pot.

His wife said: “Easy, easy. Before you begin, the pot is already empty. I’ll fill your plate now, on condition that you don’t gulp your food.”

After two full plates of kashipani, his belly began to expand. He took a pinch of salt and placed it on his tongue, took a piece of bread and kneaded it. A doubt came to him: Did he or did he not say the grace after meals? He said to himself: if you ask me what food you ate, I could tell you exactly. If you asked me whether or not I said grace I don’t know what I’d say. What should be done now – to recite grace or not? If I do, and I had already done so, I would have made an unnecessary blessing, and if I don’t say the blessing – but how could a Jew fill his stomach and not say the grace after his meal?

He decided to ask his wife whether she heard him say him grace. His eyes began to shut sleepily. He rubbed his eyes and thought to himself; if I drank a glass of wine I’d blame the glass, or if I hadn’t drunk I wouldn’t be falling asleep, since strong wine opens the guts and stays in the stomach. Wonder of wonders—that both wine and bread are made from grain: you eat too much bread and your limbs feel heavy, you drink strong wine and your limbs feel heavy. But this heaviness is not because of the wine, this drowsiness comes from ...what did I want to say? My mind is fatigued from too many thoughts. Nevertheless this thought that I just had, I’ll pursue to the end, or perhaps I’ll leave it till tomorrow and return to the garment.

He lifted his head and was surprised that he had spent time at the dining table when he should have been doing his work. He heard the noise of running water and realized that his wife was washing the dishes, showing that little time had elapsed since he caught himself napping. Meantime he again put his head on the table and drowsed until his wife awoke him and brought him to bed.

After an hour or so he awoke. He saw where he was. He said to himself: what a way to start! I went to sleep without saying *Shema* [The first word of the Jewish creed: *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Elohaynu, Adonai Echad*, “Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One”]

and stood up after my meal not knowing whether or not I'd recited grace. And what about the garment? In any case, now is not the time for work. I will thus sleep and gather my strength for work tomorrow. But I need to wash my hands and recite *Shema*. How amazed I am by those righteous ones who rise every night to mourn for the destruction of Jerusalem. Still, if they are righteous, why is Jerusalem still rubble – for the Holy One Blessed Be He loves the prayers of the righteous and does their will. Again I dozed off, or perhaps I'm still awake. While analysing whether or not he was awake or asleep, sleep overcame him and he fell into a deep slumber.

In the morning he went to the synagogue. His prayers did not come easy to him, because of his wandering thoughts, and because of the prayer leader who was in a rush and swallowed his words. The tailor's thoughts were about nothing in particular and not worth dwelling upon, but still they disturbed him. In truth, even righteous individuals struggle with their thoughts but, precisely because they are righteous, God has pity on them and saves them, which is not the case of a simple tailor when the Holy One Blessed Be He appears to turn His eyes from him.

The tailor stood in prayer and thought: Now that I'm free from the whips of the minister's servants, if I wish I can raise my voice, and if I wish, I can pray quietly, but is my prayer a prayer? Even a minor servant of the minister holds a greater fear for me than I have for the Holy One Blessed Be He. It would appear that the bigger something is, the smaller the fear. This I saw yesterday: I was more afraid of the minister's servants than of the minister himself. The tailor was suddenly fearful of these thoughts which were certainly heretic.

He enfolded himself in his talit [prayer shawl] and tightened the straps of his tefillin [phylacteries] until they hurt. But neither the bodily pain nor hiding his face in the talit helped, and were as nothing compared to his alien thoughts.

He returned to his prayer and meditated: Oh, that I would finish my prayer and be free of such thoughts! How strange. When I'm working no such thoughts come to me. Yet here, in a holy place, a person has to be free of such thoughts – how much more so when he is wrapped in his talit and tefillin, and has his prayer book in his hand. However, He who gives thoughts to my heart, makes within me all that He desires. When did I fall under this spell? From when I left the minister in order to mend the garment. Yet, the garment I have still to mend. Why have I not mended it? -- again because of thoughts – at first about the mending, and then, regrets over my not doing anything. Man's thoughts are many, but the most important thought he never reaches.

Now, the service is ending and the mourners are reciting the mourner's *kaddish* after the concluding *aleinu* prayer. Yet it is as if I hadn't started praying. The mouth moves, but if you asked me whether or not I had prayed, I couldn't say yes. It's just like yesterday with the grace after meals. Now all I have to do is take off my talit and tefillin and return to my house and my work. That which I didn't complete during the morning prayers, I shall finish at the afternoon prayers. The Holy One Blessed Be He did

righteously with His creatures in not sending them His servants after each prayer to examine how good it was.

Who knows where his thoughts would have reached if his neighbor had not stopped him to say that it was time to tell the head of the Craftsmen's Guild to resign. It was a similar story with the senior beadle at the Tailor's Synagogue, except that the former could be thrown out immediately, while for the latter it was necessary to wait until *Simchat Torah* [The Festival of the Rejoicing of the Law]. Either way, there is a need to begin to deal with it. The tailor was drawn by his companion and amazed that he knew how to connect one thing with another until a third thing emerged. Between this one talking and that one listening they left the synagogue. It was a pleasant day. It's possible that the day before was also pleasant but yesterday he had been involved with his work and had not noticed whether or not it was pleasant. Among other things, the tailor felt a certain weakness in his heart. He wasn't hungry. Nevertheless, a taste of something would be the right thing at the right time. Thus it was here that he came upon an inn.

They found a number of people there. This surprised the tailor. The sun had not yet wiped its eye from sleep and people were already sitting in an inn. Was there nothing for them to do? But, by the same token I could ask myself – what am I doing here so early in the morning? Still, my own behavior I can explain; for them there is clearly no excuse. What are they drinking? From the shape of their glasses they're downing mead. He turned to his neighbor and asked: "What is your opinion of this drink?" His neighbor said to him: "If you want mead, let it be mead. No one need insist on a certain food or drink, whereas regarding this good-for-nothing—the beadle of the Craftsmen's Guild—who holds the needle and pricks with it—it is necessary to remain obstinate until he is ejected. I don't wish him harm – he should live as long as he wishes, even a million years – as long as he gives up his position for someone more suitable. As for the mead, it's necessary to examine at the outset which to choose, one which is sweet or one which is sharp. To me both are fine, except that the sweet one needs to be supplemented by onion and the pepper-flavored crackers, and the sharp variety with honey droplets. Either way the choice is in your hands. What's good for you is good for me."

The tailor thought to himself: see, he says the choice is in my hands. If it were up to me, I'd sit at home and mend the minister's garment. Since he reminded himself of the garment and his desire to mend it, he became morose. His companion looked at him and asked: "Why are you so sad?" He replied: "Who said I'm sad? I'm not sad." He said to him: "I have a good sense of smell and I can smell your sadness. Still, whether or not you're sad, let's have a toast. To life, my friend! To life! May it be His will that we be joyful, just as it says 'And you shall surely be joyful.' A Jew has to be joyful, both because he's a Jew, and also because he's not a non-Jew, and also the opposite, which is to say because he's not a non-Jew and because he's a Jew. 'Who can compare with your people, Israel?' See, my friend, even after a thimbleful I'm already happy. Is it because of this drink that I'm joyful? No, I'm happy because of the essential thing, which is sitting together. Now my friend – my beloved – let's return to the main item, which is the reason we came here. So what then is your opinion? I can see that your ears are in another place. Where did you leave them? By the way, what's with the garment that the

minister left with you? The minister has many garments, and if he's short of one he won't go naked. You're sad again. To life! To life!"

Two friends mulling over public events. Sometimes it seemed to the tailor that he was wasting his time, and sometimes he felt that he was engaged in something that could not be bettered. In the meantime, his sadness did not leave him, in the way that people who have it within their grasp to do something and don't do it, and most of the day had passed. When the tailor had stood up to go to his house, he was ashamed to find himself in the road with his talit and tefillin under his arm – for what reason, people would ask. But to leave his talit and tefillin in the inn would be the way of drunkards, who leave them there as a pledge.

When the tailor left the inn, it was already time for afternoon prayers. He thought about returning to the synagogue and joining the *minyan* [the ten men required for Jewish congregational prayer] at the afternoon service, and to make up for what he had missed in the morning prayers. Another idea came to him, to return home and pray by himself, since people can sometimes focus their prayers precisely because they pray alone, while in the synagogue people talk and confuse a person in his prayer.

He walked in the direction of his house, thinking to himself, I shall recite the afternoon and evening prayers and then take the garment to mend. As he continued on his way, his heart began to worry him – how he had wasted a day's work. It is true that he had engaged in work for the public good, but his heart was not satisfied. He was amazed – he had busied himself with a religious duty and should by rights have been happy, but in the end he was filled with grievances. So absorbed was he that he became confused and strayed from his path.

In the meantime the sun had set and the time for the afternoon prayer had passed. He stood where he was and prayed, filled with all sorts of thoughts – among them calculations regarding money – how much has he spent on mead and onion and pepper-flavored crackers? These thoughts began to disturb his prayer since he felt that the inn-keeper had made a mistake and had taken more than his due.

He stood and thought about how many drinks he and his companions had drunk and how many crackers they had eaten. He realized that the inn-keeper had indeed been at fault, but by making an error, not in his own favor, but in favor of his guests. The tailor was upset that he had suspected the man, but there was some satisfaction in his sorrow. Yet, when he felt the joy at the profit he had made unjustifiedly he was again saddened. In order not to yield to temptation he made up his mind to return to the inn-keeper and pay him the excess. He quickened his prayers, swallowing a number of words, to the point where the evil inclination was unable to come and talk him into reaping a benefit from the ill-gotten gain.

He had in the meantime prayed in the afternoon service, when it was quite definitely night. He glanced at the moon and the stars that were preparing to come out. Couldn't they wait? Couldn't they stay in the firmament, even for a short while longer? On a fast

day when everyone yearned for them, they stayed put until the soul expired, while today, when you didn't need them, they were suddenly hasty. In order to placate the Creator the tailor thought of commencing the evening prayer immediately and to mend what ever went awry in his afternoon prayers, just as he had asked beforehand to make up in the afternoon prayer what he had skimped in the morning prayer. He remembered his wife who had been waiting for him since breakfast, and now it was time for supper. Uprooting himself he went to his house.

He reached his house. His wife saw him and greeted him with a sour look and began to scold him with harsh words, that because of him her face was black from standing next to the oven so that the food did not grow cold. He realized that she was right. His evil inclination however would not relent. He said to her: "You sit in your house like a real madam and everything is given to you while, in order to support you, I wander around like a stupid dog. And when I return home tired, worn out and depressed, you put on a show! You want to know where I was?" And immediately he began to invent lies in order to justify himself until he worked himself into a state and entered his room.

He saw the garment and began to scream: "You caused all the troubles that have befallen me!" His anger got the better of him and he threw the garment to the ground. Dust fell on the garment and it became dirty.

On the following day, he remembered what he had done. He picked up the garment, shook it and brushed it. As he was busying himself with the garment, he crossed in front of the window, where one of the minister's servants was passing. The tailor had a shock and was gripped by fear. He took the garment and hid it without looking where he hid it, concerned only to remove it from the sight of the minister's servant. By hiding it and not looking where he hid it, no improvement was made to the garment and the dirt on it was left uncleaned.

After the servant left, the tailor took out the garment and again cleaned it and shook it until he forgot it was lunchtime. His wife came and said to him: "Go and wash your hands and eat." But he didn't listen. She went and brought his food to his work room. He sat and ate, with his eyes on the garment. He didn't pay attention to his food or see how good it was, how much fat was in it, since his wife had given him all the meat he had not eaten the day before and added it to today's portion, which she made fat and good.

While he was eating, a drop of sauce fell on the garment. The tailor jumped as though he had been pricked by a needle. The table shook and the entire plate spilt. And where did it spill? On the minister's garment! The tailor slapped himself in the face, hit his head against the wall and cried: "Woe is me! Prepare me a grave and shrouds!" His wife heard and came running. She tried to calm him down and said: "Everything is not yet lost. I'll take the garment to the river and wash it."

The tailor cried in his anger: "Who asked you? If it's still washable, I'll clean it myself. Bring me soap and I will go to the river."

The tailor took the garment and went to the river. He laundered the garment in pure water and left it on the river bank to dry, saying to himself: It is good that the minister did not set me a time. The garment will dry and I shall return with it to my house and take an iron and iron it extremely carefully.

A fish came and swallowed the garment. The tailor jumped into the water and chased after the fish. He pursued him. The fish waited in the water and then vanished. Now no one could ask about its whereabouts, because it is the nature of fish not to speak.

As long as he was not far out in the river the tailor was able to keep above the waves, but as he went further, the waves overcame him. Moreover he got tangled in the water weeds. In the water he struggled hard, either to save himself or the garment. In the meantime, clumps of weed surrounded him. Some grasped him and others pricked him. As he pulled himself away from the weeds so the waves slapped his head. He was overcome by panic. One thing remained stubbornly inside his head – that the minister had given him a garment and it was lost. This knowledge sustained him, but not for long. On the contrary. On dry land one's strength is not great, how much less so then, in the midst of a rushing river with strong and powerful waves – many and cold – which had cut his flesh like a knife.

Due to his great grief he forgot about the garment, and something else began to engage him – this was the calculation that he had made concerning the inn-keeper, during the afternoon prayers, when he realized that he owed him money. Eventually he lost his clarity and lost all his strength. He had plunged deep into the mighty waters and found no way for his hands and feet to exit. After many days the water vomited him out on the dry land. After many days his body was found. They wrapped him in his shrouds and brought him to his grave.

What he found in his grave, we don't know, but it's possible to guess that a lot of good he didn't find. It's true that the Holy One Blessed Be He is compassionate, but his servants who are destructive angels are evil, hard, bitter and violent – in the upper world as in the lower.

As regards the garment which the tailor did not finish and moreover made dirty, and even lost – the minister has many garments and is able to give up one, whereas the tailor who lost the garment which was made from the cloth of the looms of the minister's work shop, what will he answer, and what will he say when they ask him, "Where is the garment?"