

# תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

**Rav Avigdor Miller on Parshas Tetzaveh**

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

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בת מרים

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## Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

### פרשת תצוה

#### THE BIGDEI KEHUNAH SAVE THE DAY

In Mesichta Yoma (72a) we find a Gemara that asks the following question: "מאי דכתיב "את בגדי השרד לשרת בקודש" - "What does the Torah mean when it refers to the *bigdei kehuna*, the priestly garments, as *bigdei ha'srad*?" Why does the Torah choose the word שרד as the name for the *begadim* that the Kohanim wear when serving in the Beis Hamikdash?

And Chazal provide us with a cryptic answer: אלמלא בגדי - "If it weren't for the priestly garments, there wouldn't be left even a small remnant from the Jewish people." The Am Yisroel has survived a long and sometimes difficult *golus* in the midst of our enemies. And yet we're still here. Not only are we here, but we're growing, *boruch Hashem*. The goyim are gnashing their teeth, but they can't help it; there's still a *sarid*, a remnant, of the Am Yisroel left. And Chazal are telling us here that it's because of the the בגדי שרד, that a remnant, a שריד of the Jewish nation, was able to survive. The Kohanim wore *bigdei kehuna* as they served in the Beis Hamikdash, and at that time in our history, they earned for our nation the right to live forever. Because of the בגדי שרד, there

would always be a שריד left from the Am Yisroel - no matter what. That's why the *bigdei kehunah* are called בגדי שרד. Because, as a second meaning, שרד means "a remnant." It's the בגדי השרד - the *begadim* that preserved a remnant.

So we're here today because there was once a time when the Kohanim served with *bigdei kehuna*. Now that's a very queer and puzzling statement. To say that at that time when there was a Beis Hamikdash and Kohanim wore their garments, they weren't merely serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu according to the laws of *kehunah* of that moment, but they were building up a reserve of *yeshua*, of preservation, of eternity for the Jewish nation forever and ever. אלמלא בגדי כהונה - if not for the *bigdei kehunah*, לא נשתירו מישראל שריד ופליט - nothing would have remained of us. That statement invites us to investigate it further. So we'll take it step by step.

#### THE KOHEN WHO IS NOT A KOHEN

In the Torah it says that the בני אהרן הכהנים should offer the *karbanos*. So the question is: What does the Torah mean with this superfluous word הכהנים? We already know that Aharon's sons are the Kohanim. So why the seemingly extra word "כהנים"? There's no extra word in the Torah, so what does הכהנים teach us? This question is asked in the Gemara (*Zvachim* 17b). And the Gemara answers as follows: בכהונם - the extra word "*kohanim*" is teaching us that they have to be in their *kehuna*, which means that they have to be dressed like Kohanim. If a Kohen performs the *avodah* missing even just one of his garments, his belt, let's say, then he's not a Kohen. He's a *zar*. He's like a stranger, a non-kohen, who is offering up offerings.

We're learning here that when a Kohen wants to do the *avodah*, he must be wearing four *begadim*. He needs a *kesones* - a tunic; *michnasaim* - something like trousers, pants; *migba'as* -

something on his head, and an *avneit* - a belt. He must be wearing all four *begadim*. If he's *mechusar begadim*, if any one of these articles of clothing are missing and he does the *avodah*, then it's *posul*. Why is it *posul*? So the Gemara says (ibid.) that it's the same as if a *zar*, a non-Kohen, did the *avodah*. **בזמן שבגדיהם עליהם כהונתם עליהם** - "When they have *bigadim* on them, that's when they're Kohanim." That's what the Gemara says. But without the *begadim*, they're not Kohanim.

Now, that's a remarkable thing. Because we know that he is a Kohen. He's from the seed of Aharon HaKohen. He's **בני אהרן**. He's descended from Aharon HaKohen - so he's a Kohen! And yet if he lacks one of the *begadim*, he's not considered a Kohen. And the *avodah* is thus profaned because it was performed by a non-Kohen. That's what the Chazal say. He's a non-Kohen! **בזמן שבגדיהם עליהם כהונתם עליהם**. He has to wear the garments of *kehunah* to be a Kohen.

This has to be understood. After all, the Kohen is serving Hashem. And he knows what it means to bring a *korban*. He studied, he prepared for a career of *kehunah*. And there's no doubt that he reviewed the details of the *avodah* before he came to the Beis Hamikdash for his week of work in the service of Hashem. And yet, just because he's lacking one small article from the *bigdei kehunah*, the Gemara declares that he's not a Kohen.

#### CLOTHING VS. MESILLAS YESHARIM

It's difficult to understand. That the *begadim* should be so important?! Wearing the garments, after all, is a superficial thing. If you would say he has to learn for two hours *mussar*, all right. If there would be a condition that before the Kohen can do the *avodah*, he should learn *Mesilas Yesharim* for two hours, that would be easier to understand. Because his mind becomes elevated and he becomes impressed with the importance of the

mitzvah that he is going to do. Two hours of Chovos Halevavos surely will elevate the Kohen's mind in preparation for the great act of serving Hashem in the Beis Hamikdash. Allright; at least that we can understand.

But that's not what we're saying here. Here it's only the putting on of the garments that makes a difference. It's a superficial act! Even though he's not thinking at all. Suppose the Kohen wasn't thinking at all and he put on the garments. And then he did the *avodah*. It's a kosher *avodah*. So we see that it's just the superficial act of wearing the garments that matters. So why are the garments so important? What is it about the garments that make him a Kohen?

#### EMPTY HEAD SYNDROME

So we'll say like this. There's no question that a person wears certain types of garments in order to identify with those people that he admires and wants to be a part of. We see it all the time. Here you have a young man - a Jewish boy - walking down the avenue. And what does he have on his head? A baseball cap! Not *stam* a hat to cover his head. No, he's wearing his team's baseball hat. A cap that says the Yanks or Mets! There's a fashion nowadays in society to wear baseball caps in order to identify with certain teams. A *meshugas*! It's worse than a *meshugas*. Somebody asked me recently if he could wear the baseball cap of his team into a shul, a beis medrash. A *meshugena*! Whose talking about a shul here?! Even on the street you shouldn't wear such a thing. A baseball cap means that you identify yourself with people who have no heads. Underneath such a cap is an empty mind. People who go to see a baseball game and they see a fellow with a stick and he slams the ball and everybody goes wild about this tzadik. A homerun! Those people are *meshuga'im*! It's an empty world and you want to identify with that world?! And therefore, you should never wear a baseball cap with that logo on it - no

matter what. Because if you do, that's who you identify with. You might be a Mets-man. Or a Knicks-man. But you're not a man for Hashem.

### THE TWO-LEGGED HORSE

I'll give you another example. A person who dresses with dignity, he's identifying with the dignified. He keeps his body covered because he identifies with the dignity of *tzelem Elokim*. But a naked person is like a horse. You see all of his limbs, just like a horse trotting down the street. A horse is naked, and although you can see the difference between a human being and a horse, nevertheless the comparison is overwhelming. You see his muscles moving, his shoulders moving. Did you ever look at a policeman's horse in the street as it's walking? You see the muscles between the legs and the thighs working, pulsating. When people walk in the street today, women especially, and they try to display as much of the body as they can, they should remind you of a horse. That's all it is! It's horses walking down Kings Highway. To show off your body means that you're the same as a good police horse walking down the street flexing its muscles, showing off its big legs, its big behind. It's waving its tail. The horse is proud of herself. But what is it after all? It's a horse after all. It's nothing but a *beheimah*. If you walk half naked down Ocean Parkway, you're a horse waving its tail, and you're identifying with the horses that used to trot down Ocean Parkway naked. You're nothing more than a horse, that's all.

### CLOTHING MAKE THE MAN

But here Chazal are teaching us how a person can utilize his clothing in the opposite way. Using your clothing to identify yourself with the servants of Hashem, with the Am Yisrael, is one of the easiest ways to grow great in the eyes of Hashem. Now, when a Kohen puts on the *begadim*, he's taking the first step in the service of Hashem. He's dressing the part and identifying with the

*ovdei Hashem*. To look like an *eved Hashem* is important. And it's so important that it changes the nature of his avodah. He's wearing the *begadim* of a servant of Hashem, so he's a Kohen now; an *eved Hashem*. He's not a *zar*.

When a Kohen puts on his *bigadim*, what was he demonstrating? He was proclaiming "This is the house where Hashem dwells, and I am His servant!" The servant of a king, *l'havdil*, dresses in a certain way. It's an honor for the king when all of his *misharsim*, all of his servants, follow a certain protocol in dress and behavior. And the Kohanim did that. And we're learning here that this exterior protocol was of great importance.

Now, they were trained in this protocol; a certain manner - what to wear, how to dress, and how to behave. And it could be that they were thinking about other things at the time, could be. I'm not saying that all the Kohanim were thinking pure thoughts of Hashem all the time. But still, the mere fact that the Kohen acted like a servant of Hashem, he dressed like a servant of Hashem, was such a tremendous success for him.

#### GRAY HATS AND BLUE HATS

And so we're learning a tremendous lesson. We're learning how important it is, how much the **היצוניות** means; how much it means the outwardliness that a person displays. We're learning what it means to put on a black hat. So you'll say, "What difference does it make? I'm a frum Jew and my head is full of Torah. Who cares what I put on my head?! A gray hat? A blue hat? No hat? Who cares about the hat?"

#### THE MAN IN THE YELLOW HAT

No; a black hat makes a difference, all the difference in the world. It's not the color black that matters. If the Roshei Yeshivos wore yellow hats, then we'd wear yellow hats. If they wore sombreros, that's what we'd wear as well. Once a person

demonstrates outwardly that he belongs to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that man has succeeded in one of the biggest achievements in life. He has come close to Hashem in חיצוניות, in exteriority.

And you should know, that man is wearing *bigdei kehunah*. It's such an achievement, that the entire world should be jealous of him. When a Jew puts on a black hat, you should know that it's not just a minhag. A black hat means something. You're identifying with the Torah community. You're identifying with the roshei yeshivos, with the *mekomos HaTorah*, with all the people who are *shlomei emunai Yisroel*. And that's a tremendous demonstration.

#### THE GLORY OF THE MISSHAPEN HAT

It's a tremendous thing to put on a black hat. *Oter Yisrael b'sifara!* Hashem is crowning us with a crown of glory. It could be an old hat, not so well shaped anymore, but it's a glory. When you put a black hat on your head - of course the brocha you make on any hat - but a black hat is an *ateres tiferes*, it's a crown of glory. You have to realize that. And it's not only the hat. A yarmulkeh is also something. Your tzitzis hanging out of your pants. Your white shirt, your *peyos*. Whatever it is, you're identifying with the Am Hashem.

Now it doesn't mean you're already exceptional. Other people also have black hats. But compared to the outside world, you're an aristocrat, by wearing a black hat. I saw a little boy today wearing a black hat. He wanted to look like somebody important, and he'll be important someday. That's our people! We are a nation that is proud of who we are. Because who are we? We are Hashem's children.

#### THE SNOOD OF THE ARISTOCRATIC WOMAN

And what I'm telling you now applies to every Jewish woman as well. A woman who is wearing a sheitel, or a tichel or

snood - it doesn't matter what. She's walks down the street, and she's an aristocrat walking among among the *beheimos*- those who identify with the horses. Because a woman who covers her hair, she covers her arms and her legs, it's not merely a superficial act of following the rules. No; she's identifying with the Am Yisrael! She's demonstrating that she's an *eved Hashem*.

Now make no mistake about it. It's not **פנימיות**. You're not gaining all the greatness of the qualities and attitudes that are necessary for a true *eved Hashem*. These you achieve only by long years of study and thinking. It's so important to learn and to fill your mind with noble concepts. Learn *seforim*, *agadata*, *yiras shamayim*; there's no end to the thoughts that are necessary for you to fill your mind with. Learn *Chovos Halevavos*, *Mesillas Yesharim*, *Kuzari* also. All the great *seforim*; *Rabbeinu Yonah on Mishlei*, *Rabbeinu Yonah on Pirkei Avos*, *Rambam on Pirkei Avos*, *Rambam Hilchos Dei'os*, *Hilchos Teshuva*. There's so much to learn. No; you haven't achieved that yet. But by putting a black hat on your head, or a *tichel*, you have achieved the greatness of the nobility of exteriority. That itself is a tremendous achievement for the servant of Hashem, and it's a terrible mistake to begrudge that greatness.

#### **"I AM FOR HASHEM!"**

And suppose he does even more than that. He wears a *kapoteh*, he wears *payos*. Here's a *chassideshe* young man walking in Flatbush among naked people - people without hats on their head. He's walking among people with nothing in their hearts at all, not thinking about Hashem at all. And here's this one man walking down the street advertising, "I am for Hashem!"

And maybe he's not even thinking about that. He's just walking into stores trying to make some sales, trying to get customers to buy his kosher chocolates and his kosher cookies.

He's walking into stores doing his own business, but as he walks in and out of the stores, and down the street, we see a man who is advertising that there is a Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the world.

#### THE LITTLE YARMULKEH AND THE MODEH B'MIKTZAS

That's why it's so good to live in a frum Jewish neighborhood. Everybody takes his tzitzis out in a frum Jewish neighborhood. When people start walking from a frum neighborhood to a not frum neighborhood, little by little, the tzitzis start going into the pants. After a while, twenty blocks later, you can't see the tzitzis anymore. You pass a person, you have no idea that he's a Jew. He's dressed like all the goyim. Only that if you're tall enough, you can see a small yarmulkah perched on top of his head. And even that, at least it's something. It's a very small donation to the cause, he's a **מודה במקצת**, but at least it's something. But in a frum neighborhood everyone is wearing their tzitzis out. Little boys with big yarmulkahs and tzitzis. All the women are dressed *bi'tzniyus*. You don't see any uncovered arms. Everybody is dedicated in their *chitzoniyyus* to Hashem.

#### THE BIGDEI KEHUNAH OF THE BAIS YAAKOV GIRLS

There's nothing more beautiful than a Jewish frum neighborhood that's crowded with the Am Hashem. Crowded with people who are demonstrating through their dress, all day long, that they are proud of who they are. I was in the street yesterday and I saw thirty girls walking down the street - walking home from the Beis Yaakov. Thirty girls wearing long skirts. All wearing *tzniyusdige* uniforms. But I didn't see Beis Yaakov uniforms - I saw *bigdei kehuna*! Because that was the greatness of the garments that a Kohen wore. He was proudly identifying himself with those who understand that their purpose in this world is to serve Hashem.

And so, when you see a Jewish truck-driver come out of the delivery truck. A big kosher truck. **MEHADRIN**, it says on the side of the truck in big letters. And he jumps out of the truck with a beard and payos. A truck-driver - it's a *kiddush Hashem*. Instead of a bum walking out of the truck, a frum Jew walks out. He's driving a big truck bringing kosher food to the nation of Hashem. He's not embarrassed; he's proud to be stand out, to be different. He's not even thinking anything, but he's walking around all day, proclaiming, "I am for Hashem."

Hashem prizes all the external actions; how you dress, whom you identify with through your dress, what you proclaim with your clothing; it's all external, but it finds tremendous favor in the eyes of Hashem. And it's all written down in your record, that you have demonstrated that you are a servant of Hashem. And that makes all the difference in the world. Because when a person demonstrates outwardly that he belongs to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that person has succeeded in one of the biggest achievements that life offers. He has come close to Hashem in *chitzoniyyus*, in exteriority.

#### ONLY THE WEAKLINGS GO LOST

When we wear our clothing, it is not merely a superficial act that means nothing. You don't wear clothing the same way that Mr. Giavano, your Italian neighbor, wears clothing. Oh no! The clothes that we wear mean more than you ever imagined. When we walk among the gentiles, and even among ourselves, wearing our yarmulkehs, our hats, our *sheitelech*, our long sleeves, our long skirts, our *kapotehs* - whatever it is that you wear to show that you're an *eved Hashem* - you're a walking kiddush Hashem! Because what are we saying with our clothes? We're saying to the world, no matter how dark you get, no matter how much foolishness and apikorsis fill the world, we're still standing proud. And we're here to stay. We're a stubborn people - we're the **עם**

קשי עורף - and we're not going anywhere. And therefore, we dress the part. We're proudly showing that we belong to Hashem and it'll be that way forever and ever. Of course, some might go lost. It's a tragedy, but you'll always have some weaklings in a great nation - stragglers, the נחשלים אחרֵיךְ, who don't stand strong for their ideals, who get cut off from our people. But on a national scale, we're here forever. And we know that Hashem will keep us around forever, because we're here only for Him. And therefore, we dress for Him.

Identifying with the Am Hashem, with the servants of Hashem means that you're identifying with Hashem Himself. You're demonstrating that you're in this world for one purpose only - and that is, to serve Hashem. And that very important aspect of avodas Hashem is the lesson that we learn from the *bigdei kehunah* in this week's parsha. Despite the fact of the great virtue of being a man of interiority, of *pnimiyus*, the *bigdei kehunah* teach us that we must not underestimate the value of the superficial demonstration of being a frum Jew.

#### **BIGDEI KEHUNAH: THE FIRST STEP**

And that's why Kohen who wanted to work in the Beis Hamikdash without his *bigdei kehunah* was considered a *zar*, a man not fit, not qualified, to do the *avodah*. Because he disdained the great achievement of exteriority! I'm not saying that a Kohen wasn't expected to achieve greatness of the mind as well. Of course he had to do that. Of course, he must fill his mind with all the Torah attitudes and ideals that make a Jew great. But those qualities take years of study and thinking. And it's never ending. But one must never begrudge that seemingly unimportant step in the service of Hashem. The step of proudly identifying with those who want to serve Hashem in this world. When a Kohen puts on his *bigdei kehunah*, he's saying to everyone around him, "I am for Hashem!" And without that first step, he's not a Kohen - he's not a

servant of Hashem - no matter what great ideals he has in his mind.

And it's an accomplishment that is so precious that it was considered an accomplishment that would last forever and ever for the Am Yisroel. אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתיירו מישראל שריד ופליט. The merit of the *bigdei kehunah*, of wearing the uniform of the servant of Hashem, stands forever as a merit to protect the Am Yisroel. The fact that we are here today, is in no small part due to those days when the Kohanim stood in the Beis Hamikdash, wearing the *bigdei kehunah*. אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתייר שריד ופליט.

#### TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

But I must tell you that everything we spoke about tonight is really only the beginning of the *avodah* of wearing the *bigadim* of a servant of Hashem. Because even in this superficial *avodah*, that *avodah* of *chitzoniyus*, there are higher and higher levels of coming close to Hashem. So we'll take the time we have left to try to move off the first rung that we spoke about so far, and to continue climbing higher together.

When a Kohen puts on the garments, even though he's not thinking, he tries to be a Kohen. Besides for the greatness of displaying his loyalty to Hashem, he actually changes internally because of the superficial garments. He's putting on the uniform and now he knows he's a Kohen. And that is a change in his personality. It's a very subtle thing but it's absolutely true.

#### THE TROUBLE MAKER BECOMES A COP

I'll give you a *mashal*. Many policemen, when they were younger, they were troublemakers. They were low people. But then they entered the police force, they put on a uniform, and now they stand for law and order. They really do. After years of wearing a uniform these low people, these troublemakers, now

get angry when someone is breaking the law. How could that be? I'll tell you how it happens. The uniform changes them! It makes them feel that it's their responsibility. They stand for something. That outward demonstration means something and we shouldn't disdain it. Because any decent person is affected by a uniform.

The mere fact that a person is dressed respectfully, respectably, affects his character. The policeman in his uniform, as well as the doctor in his outfit and the manager of the bank in his suit, have a tremendous effect on the one who is wearing those *begadim*. And therefore, when the Kohen put on the *bigdei kehunah*, *l'havdil*, it changed him automatically and it filled him with a feeling of responsibility to behave like a Kohen.

#### A GARMENT CHANGES YOU

It's something that we have to know; it's actually a fact. People are changed by their garments. When people dress like bums, they are bums. It's a principle. Anybody who walks let's say only with cloth shoes, he doesn't put on any real shoes, just cloth shoes. Or he wears jeans or long hair, or whatever it is, anything that is *chitzoniyus*, is really *pnimiyus*. He becomes inwardly also a tramp.

And those who walk the streets like *beheimos*, it's not only who they're identifying with. It's not only that they look like horses. They become horses. Because it's how you behave on the outside, how you dress, and how you speak, that is the foundation of what's really important, and that's your *pnimiyus*.

#### THE EXTERIORITY AWAKENS THE INTERIORITY

The Mesilas Yesharim expresses this important principle with the following words: **החיצוניות מעוררת את הפנימיות** - "Your exteriority stimulates your interiority" (Perek 7). If you talk like a mentch and behave like a decent person - even though you're not - then in the course of time, you're going to change. You're going

to start becoming a decent person. It's going to have an effect on you. And the same applies to how you dress, what you wear. The policeman who puts on his uniform, begins to act like a policeman. And the bank manager who puts on his suit, internalizes that he's the bank manager, and begins to act so. It's subtle, but it's true.

Now, when a Kohen comes to the Beis Hamikdash, it's all *chitzoniyus*. There is a Beis Din of Kohanim and they supervise everything that goes on there. And they see to it that the Kohen has to behave, that he should wear the proper *bigadim*, be prepared for the *avodah*. They also make sure that he shouldn't talk too much. If you're standing in front of Hashem, you don't open your mouth. Kohanim have to keep their mouths closed. And also that he shouldn't be lazy. **בהנים זריזים הם**. And a Kohen walks as if he has *yiras Hashem*. Even if he doesn't, he has to walk slowly as if he's walking in front of a king.

Now, when a man works in such an atmosphere, and all around him is *morah*, the greatest respect, it affects him. So in the course of time, he becomes different. And therefore, when the Kohen puts on the *bigdei kehunah*, and when he begins acting like a Kohen, he's actually changing himself. He's becoming someone different, no question about it. An old Kohen is someone who has been transformed in character.

Now, I'm not going to say that that's all you need to do. By no means! **רַחֲמַנָּא לִיבָא בְּעֵי** - Hashem wants your heart, your *pnimiyus*. Certainly. You become truly great only by filling your mind with Torah thoughts, Torah attitudes and ideals. But even by a superficial exterior demonstration that you're an *eved Hashem*, you should know that you have achieved something great for yourself because you have become a better person as a result. And

therefore, you've achieved something for yourself and for your nation forever and ever.

#### REVIEW OF THE THE TWO AVODAHS WE SPOKE ABOUT TONIGHT

So far we have spoken about two important aspects of the *bigdei kehunah*, and of our own *begadim* as well. First we said that the wearing of any garment that identifies you as an *eved Hashem* is on its own a great achievement - because you thereby demonstrate publicly that we are the people of Hashem and that we are here to stay. And the second thing was that the *begadim* of an *eved Hashem* will no doubt have an effect on the *pnimiyus* of a person. The *begadim* of an *eved Hashem* change the man and make him a better person.

#### THE THIRD, AND MUCH GREATER, AVODAH

But in the little time we have left I want to speak about a third aspect of the greatness of exteriority. And we'll start by quoting words from the Chovos Halevavos, words that I've said here many times before. **המחשבה נמשכת אחר הדיבור** - "Your thoughts, your *pnimiyus*, will patten itself after the words that you say." And that introduces to us another level of opportunity of growing great from the *chitzoniyus* of *begadim*.

#### SAY IT!!

The more a person is willing to loosen the shackles of laziness that prevent him from saying words that will make him great, the greater he will become. Every exterior action, every time you put on a hat , And like by the *begadim* of the Kohanim, it's so important even when it's done in the most superficial manner. It changes you! But how could we waste such an opportunity to use our exterior actions, ones that we're doing anyhow, and make them even greater. Why shouldn't you utilize the opportunity? Every time you cover your head with a hat, a snood, or a yarmulkeh, if you are willing to donate a few words to the cause -

to the great cause of true service of Hashem, you can become greater and greater. Do you know what it means to become more and more perfect every time you put on your hat?! At least one time a day you should do it! But if you do it always, then *ashreichem!* You're a head taller than everyone else.

#### THE SNOOD: A CROWN OF GLORY

Every morning we make a bracha, "*Oter yisroel b'sifarah.*" It's the bracha of putting something on your head, a head covering. He crowns Yisroel with glory. And to what glory are we really referring to? The glory of *yiras shamayim!* The glory of being a part of the most holy of nations. But we make the bracha on a hat; it's important to use this opportunity of an exterior act, the superficial act of putting a hat, a covering, on your head. Even if you're not putting on a hat right now, then at least you should be thinking about your hat or your *yarmulkeh*. You think, "I'm going to put on my hat soon, and I'm going to crown myself with glory." Don't just think the words. Say the words! "I'm so lucky that I have the good fortune to be part of the Am Yisroel and to wear this glory on my head. And what is the glory of a hat? The glory of demonstrating that I am an eved Hashem." And it doesn't have to be a hat. A woman is going to put on a sheitel or tichel, or even a snood - it doesn't matter; because when a woman covers her hair, that's what she's doing. She's demonstrating that she's an *eved Hashem*.

Now there's not much labor involved there. But it's still a tremendous achievement. Think these thoughts, and express them with your mouth. When you take the black hat and you put it on your head later - the bracha you already made earlier - now, when you put the black hat on your head later on, have in mind that you're doing an act of demonstration that you're a servant of Hashem. If during the day you take a nap, and you took off your hat, you're wearing something else, a yarmulka, and later you put

on your hat again, utilize that opportunity. "I am putting a crown on my head. Even if it would be a crown that is made of gold and diamonds, it would be nothing when compared to my eighty dollar or sixty dollar black hat." Your black hat is a crown that is more precious than the crown of the King of England. He keeps his crown in a special place, locked up in a safe, with guards around it. But it's nothing! It's a dunce cap compared to your hat. Your hat is an *ateres tiferes*, a crown of glory for you.

You have to understand that, because it's the *emes*. And suppose you don't own a black hat, just a yarmulkeh, that also is a crown of glory. A yarmulkeh is worth more than all the crowns of all the emperors that ever reigned, and all their garments. All together they're like paper when compared to your head covering. It's not merely exaggeration what I'm telling you now. I'm telling you now how to think the way Hashem thinks. You're wearing a crown of glory. You're covering your head with a crown of diamonds, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "These diamonds are shining with a radiance that is more brilliant than all the jewelry in the world." And if Hakodosh Boruch Hu says it, then you should be saying it as well!

And by the way, it's not only **your** hat. When you see any Jewish man with a black hat, you should understand that he is a king wearing a crown. You should practice that on the street. You should say it with your mouth, out loud. "That man is crowned with *ateres tiferes* - a crown of glory - that is more important than the most expensive crown."

#### THE DIAMOND DUNCE CAP

Let's say somebody walked in here tonight and sat down and on his head was a diadem, a crown made of gold with diamonds and rubies and emeralds set into it. We wouldn't be able to take our eyes off of it. We'd stare at him. But it's a waste of time. It's a dunce cap. It's a piece of paper, it's nothing. Look for a

Jewish man with a black hat, a frum woman with a tichel, and you'll see a person who is crowned with what Hashem considers a crown! A crown of *tiferes* - of beauty and glory - the crown of proud dedication to Hashem and His service. That's what a Jewish head covering is. And that's what all the clothing of an *eved Hashem* is as well.

If that's the case, then all of your *begadim* can be used in this manner.

Isn't it a pity that you put on the *arba kanfos* in the morning and then you just forget about them? And even though you may take them out like some do when they make a bracha, and some might even keep them hanging out of the pants all day long, but you're wasting a glorious opportunity *וראיתם אותו* - "And you will see them," *וזכרתם את כל מצוות השם* - "And you will remember all of the mitzvos." You're wearing them anyhow, so can't you donate once in a while a glance at your tzitzis and think that the tzitzis has to remind me of the mitzvos Hashem? And the more you express it with words, the more you'll become greater and greater in your *pnimiyus*. What a tremendous achievement that is - and it's so easy. By living a life of utilizing the *chitzoniyus*, even a superficial Jew can become a great man.

#### BECOMING GREAT AT THE UPSHEREN

Imagine a little boy who is three years old. And you make an *upsheren*, like many do. You put tzitzis on him. He doesn't know what the tzitzis are, but you do. You look at the little boy and you're so proud of him. He's wearing his tzitzis. But what is it really? What it really means is that he is now being clothed in the *bigdei sha'res* of a servant of Hashem. Tzitzis are a *bigdei sha'res*. It's our garment of serving Hashem. And by looking at it, you are reminded of all the mitzvos. And if possible, you can think of specific mitzvos. Today you can look and be reminded of *shatnes*.

Tomorrow you can think of *shmiras halashon*. Every day you can use it for something else. But even if you don't do that, you can look at the tzitzis once in a while and think it's for the purpose of remembering the mitzvos Hashem. And the more you say it, the more you are using the *chitzoniyus*, to become an *eved Hashem*.

And it's not only your tzitzis. שאני ציצית דיש לו בראייה אצל אחרים. The gemara says that tzitzis have the great value that other people's tzitzis are there for you to see. So the women who see the tzitzis of their children, of their brothers, of their husbands, have the same opportunity for perfection of the mind. And it's a great opportunity for them, to be reminded of the mitzvos, of service of Hashem, by looking at the tzitzis.

#### THE DANGER OF GOOD HABITS

And therefore, we begin to understand what a great loss it is to live our lives unthinkingly, מצות אנשים מלומדה, doing things only out of habit. Of course it's very good to be externally a frum Jew. Of course it's a merit - it's a great *zechus* to look like a frum Jew. We learned tonight that אלמלא בגדי כהונה, if not for the *bigdei kehunah*, we wouldn't be around anymore. And it's true. But when you live a life of understanding how to utilize the *chitzoniyus*, you'll see that there is no end of opportunities for greatness.

#### DRESSING FOR THE REBBA AND THE KEHILLA

Let's say you're putting on a *chassideshe levush*, and you're putting on certain *begadim* that you're accustomed to in your *kehilla*, you should do it with a great sense of achievement. What a great *zechus* it is to demonstrate, "I'm an *eved Hashem*" because that's what you're doing it for. You don't want to show that you belong to this and this rebbe. That's not the purpose. That you belong to this *kehilah*? That's not the purpose! You belong to Hashem!

And you shouldn't waste any opportunity. You have nice *peyos*, and you want to hang them around the front of your face. Of course, it makes you look good; there's no question about it. But you should utilize them to think and to say, "I'm doing this to show that I belong to Hashem." Each time you say it, you're impressing on your mind more and more, the perfection of character that you're in this world to achieve.

And when people live that way, when they train themselves to react to the external stimuli, that's a life of great success. Even for those who never filled their minds with any thoughts of copious Torah knowledge. Even if you didn't get the *pnimiyus* that you can get from *seforim*, you can utilize all of your externalities to live a rich and successful life.

#### THE WOMEN WHO WEAR *BIGDEI KEHUNAH*

Even the women who wear their hair covered at all times, and their arms covered at all times and they wear dresses that are proper lengths, you have to know that they're doing a service to Hashem. Hakodosh Baruch Hu considers them like Kohanim wearing the *bigdei kehunah*. It's a tremendous thing when people behave according to the protocol of the Torah. It's a tremendous achievement for you. Don't think it's a small thing, *agav urcha*, that it's just one of the requirements. No, no, its glorious! It's more than the ermine cloaks and the golden necklaces of the emperors. They are nothing - absolutely worthless - when compared to the garments of a plain frum man or woman who are dressed in the way that the Torah requires.

Now, that's an attitude that we have to labor to gain. Because it is not easy to become devoted internally. It's not easy to fill your mind with great Torah thoughts. But it's not difficult at all for those who wish to become devoted to Hashem, at least externally, in the *chitzonius*. And to use that *chitzonius* to recognize that "I am an *eved Hashem* in all the things that I am

doing.” No effort is involved. You’re putting on a hat anyhow. You’re putting on tzitzis anyhow. And you’re wearing your sheitel and dress anyhow. And therefore you should think these thoughts - and more importantly say these words - while you are wearing these garments. And Hakodosh Baruch Hu is saying, “This is a person who is working to advertise me in this world, and I need him for that. And that's why I'll keep the Am Yisroel around forever; so that they can continue practicing this great principle of פירסום שם שמים בעולם.”

#### WE DRESS FOR ETERNITY

And therefore, the more the frum Jews show their frumkeit, even externally, the more of a *zechus* we have to remain around forever. Frum men, frum women, frum boys and girls. The more they demonstrate they belong to Hashem, the greater a *kavod shamayim* there is in this world, and Hakodosh Boruch Hu accepts them as His servants. And He gives them, just for that alone, the merit of continuing to exist in this world forever and ever. אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתייר מישראל שריר ופליט. It's the great achievement of demonstrating our loyalty to Hashem with our clothing, our externalities, that has given the Am Yisroel the merit to continue to exist. And therefore, the more we use our clothing and externalities to serve Hashem, the more we preserve the existence of the Am Yisroel forever and ever.

**Have a wonderful Shabbos.**

# תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



## Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

**Q:**

**When you say, "Break your middos," what do you mean by that?**

**A:**

To break your middos means to not allow your instincts or the characteristics of your mind to control you. You must learn to control your reactions, instead of your instincts and your middos controlling you.

I'll give you one example. There's a desire to talk; everyone has that desire. But yielding to that desire causes a great deal of harm. First of all, it makes you dishonored in the eyes of people. When people see you for the first time, they suspect that that you are a wise man. They see your face and they think that you're full of wisdom. Until you give it away by talking. Like it says in Mishlei: לו מחתה כסיל פי - "A mouth of a fool is his ruination" (18:7). As you walk into a new place, everybody looks at you, they respect you. And then you ruin it by opening your mouth. You say something dumb and it's finished.

And therefore, you have to break your instinct, your characteristic, of opening your mouth all the time. We have to learn how to keep our mouths closed. Even if someone says something to us, it's not always necessary to reply. And even if you have to reply, the Rambam says לא ימהר - "Don't be hasty to reply and don't speak many words" (Hilchos De'os 2:4). Think before you answer. And if you start with that, then you're on your way to *shviras hamiddos*, you're on your way towards being in full control of your reactions to everything in this world.

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