

תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on Parshas Tzav

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

נתנדב לזכות

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info@TorasAvigdor.org

347.556.7302

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פרשת צו

PARSHAS TZAV: JEALOUSY REIGNS SUPREME

In Parshas Tzav we continue our encounter with the *avodah* of the Kohanim that we began last week. We are inundated with the many specific instructions and details for the sons of Aharon who were privileged to spend their lives working in the House of Hashem. Now, I don't want to make you uncomfortable or jealous [The Rav was a *kohen*], but week after week, in Sefer Vayikra, we become more and more impressed with the great honor and privilege accorded to the Kohanim.

When the *Bnei Levi* were chosen at the time of the sin of the golden calf to be the Kohanei Hashem, it was a great happiness for them. They had proved their worth by their zealousness for the honor of Hashem, and they were therefore drafted into His service, and set aside to be devoted to Him. And it was a great privilege, and the Kohen walked with a swagger; he was on top of the world. There could be no greater pride than being chosen, consecrated, for the service of Hashem.

KEHUNAH: NOT JUST A MONEYMAKER

And it wasn't just a matter of being called to officiate at a *pidyon haben* or to benefit from the *terumos* and other *matnos kehunah*. No! It was a great prerogative, a great privilege, to be the servants of Hashem in His house. And I have no doubt that the

rest of the Am Yisroel were disappointed and jealous. The *bechorim*, who had now lost this privilege, surely were jealous, but I'm sure everyone was.

To be a Kohen Hashem meant an eternal privilege of closeness to Hashem. והיו לי הלויים - "And the Levites shall be Mine" (Bamidbar 3:12); and when Hashem says "Mine," He means forever. "Wherever it is stated לִי, Mine, it shall never cease in this world and in the World to Come" (Vayikra Rabbah 2:2). And therefore, to be chosen by Hashem לִי, "To be Mine" was the greatest of honors, and it was an honor for eternity.

TRESPASSING IN THE MIKDASH

And therefore, as we make our way through sefer Vayikra, we understand that we are treading on holy ground. We are being taken on a tour of sorts through the Beis Hamikdash and the *avodas hakorbanos*, and we almost feel as if we don't belong. We have stepped over the boundary into a world of *kehunah*, a world of *kedusha*, and we tiptoe through sefer Vayikra, as if trespassing on forbidden grounds.

And then, as we are tiptoeing through the Mikdash, we suddenly bump our heads into something that we weren't expecting. And it's a queer thing. Right in the middle of the laws of Kohanim and their *korbanos*, we chance upon a few *pesukim* that veer from the topic, words that deal with *chullin*, ordinary meat. כל חלב שור וכשב ועז לא תאכלו - "Any fat of oxen, sheep, or goats, you shall not eat." Here the Torah speaks to all of the Am Yisroel; Leviim and Yisroelim as well; men, women and children. And we are told that we are forbidden to eat the *cheilev*, a certain type of fat, from these animals.

MISPLACED PESUKIM

Now, I want you to understand this difficulty, what should puzzle you here, because that will be our topic for tonight. There's no ordinary meat in the Mikdash, only *kodshim*. And our parsha is speaking to the Kohanim, teaching them the details of the *korbanos* in the Mikdash. So what are these *pesukim* doing

here, inserted into Vayikra, the Toras Kohanim; *pesukim* that are discussing the preparing of meat in the kitchens of our homes?

Now, I'm not one who can tell you secrets of the Torah. The reasons of the Torah are infinitely deep and it is difficult to search out the true intentions of all its instructions. However, when a reason is proffered by Hakodosh Boruch Hu it behooves us to study this reason.

And what reason are we given? **כִּי כָל אֹכֵל חֶלֶב מִן הַבְּהֵמָה** - "For anyone who eats the fat of an animal species *from which one may bring a fire-offering to Hashem*, the soul of the one that eats shall be cut off from its people" (Ibid. 7:23-25). "*From which one may bring a fire-offering to Hashem!*" What the Torah is telling us, is that even when the Jew eats meat that is *not* of the offerings in the Mikdash, he must avoid partaking from those parts that *would have* been assigned to the *mizbayach*, *had* the animal been sanctified as an offering.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH FATTY MEAT?

Now, at first glance, this reasoning is difficult to understand. Just because the Kohen in the Mikdash must remove the fats and place them on the *mizbayach*, should that in any way affect the way I prepare my personal meat? You know that to remove the *cheilev* entails a laborious process called *treiberung*, and we pay good money for that. And for what? We're not talking here about a *korban*, where the *cheilev* is offered up on the *mizbayach*. We're speaking here of ordinary meat, of *chullin*. So why can't we eat the *cheilev* of ordinary meat?

And the next *posuk* is just as remarkable **וְכָל דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ** **בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם לְעוֹף וּלְבְּהֵמָה**. **כָּל נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל כָּל דָּם וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ** **הַהִיא מֵעַמִּיהָ** - "And all blood shall not be consumed by you, *in any of your dwelling places*, whether from fowls or from animals. Any person who consumes any blood, his soul shall be cut off from its people" (ibid. 26-27). *In any of your dwelling places!* Even outside of the Mikdash, wherever the Jew, even a non-Kohen, eats his

ordinary meat, he must make sure to remove the blood from the animal.

So the blood of an ordinary *beheima* is also *ossur* for us. We spend a lot of money on kosher meat and one of the reasons for that is because of the time and expense required to remove the blood. We're not eating korbanos. Why now, when being taught about the korbanos, are we being told about that the prohibition of *dam* applies to us as well?

THE BLOOD ATONES

And the answer is not a secret. The Torah tells us that the reason is because the blood is *li'chapeir*. **כי נפש הבשר בדם היא ואני נתתיו לכם על המזבח לכפר על נפשותיכם כי הדם הוא בנפש יכפר** - "For the life of a person is in the blood, and I have assigned it for you to be put on the *mizbayach* to atone for your lives, for it is the blood that atones for one's life" (ibid. 17:11). In the Beis Hamikdash the lifeblood of the korban is sprinkled on the sides of the *mizbayach* to atone for the lifeblood of the owner of the offering. The blood is vital to the *kaparah* of the owner.

Now, by a korban, I understand. Its blood can't be eaten, it's sacred. It must be thrown or sprinkled on the *mizbayach*. **וירקו את הדם על המזבח סביב** - "And [the Kohen] shall throw the blood on the altar all around" (ibid. 1:5). But here the Torah tells us that all of us, wherever we are, are forbidden from eating the blood of the animals we *shecht* because blood is *li'chapeir*. Hashem is extending the halachos of the blood of a korban to include even the blood of animals that are *not* offerings.

Now, by our ordinary food, our *chullin*, the blood is not *li'chapeir*. The blood of our food is not being brought to the *mizbayach* to be a *kapparah* for us. We don't sprinkle it on any *mizbayach*. However, **על הארץ תשפכנו כמים**, we must pour it onto the ground. And that's because *had* this animal been a korban, its blood would *have been* poured onto the *mizbayach*.

PLAYING "BEIS HAMIKDASH"

So we see again that our plain food is treated like *kodshim*, like the food of the Kohanim in the Beis Hamikdash. And that's a

question. Why are we patterning ourselves after something that has no connection to us? Just because by a *korban* it goes on the *mizbayach*, we can't eat it?! This is not a *korban* I'm eating! Why am I playing "Beis Hamikdash" in my kitchen? And what's even more remarkable is that it's not only regarding laws of the *korbanos* that we find this crossing of the boundaries. It permeates our daily lives as well.

THE GORGEOUS KOHEN

The Kohanim are commanded: אמר אל הכהנים...לא יקרחו - [The Kohanim] should not make a bald spot on their heads, and they shall not shave an edge of their beard, and in their flesh they shall not cut a gash" (Vayikra 21:5). And Hashem provides the reason: כי את אשי השם לחם אלוקיהם הם מקריבים והיו קודש - "Because the fire-offerings of Hashem, the food of their G-d, they offer, and so they must remain holy" (ibid. 21:6). They are servants of Hashem, and so they must look the part; their exterior appearance must be befitting of those who stand before Hashem in His service. The holy Kohanim must always appear to others as men of distinction.

THE KOHEN CLONE

And so it seems quite queer that we find these same laws repeated again, but this time as a command for all of the people, for the whole nation. The Am Yisroel is commanded: לא תקיפו פאת - ראשכם ולא תשחית את פאת זקניך ושרט לנפש לא תתנו בבשרכם - "You shall not round off the edges of your scalp, and you shall not destroy the edge of your beard. And you shall not make a cut in your flesh for the dead" (ibid. 19:27-28). בנים אתם להשם אלוקיכם לא - "You are children to Hashem your G-d, do not make gashes and do not make bald spots on your heads" (D'varim 14:1). It says openly the exact same commandment to us as was told to the Kohanim. And the reason given is: כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוקיך ובך בחר השם להיות לו לעם סגולה - "For you are a holy people to Hashem, and Hashem has chosen you to be His treasured people from all of the peoples on the face of the earth" (ibid 14:2). So what was said

first to the Kohanim, as an admonition because of **והיו קודש**, so that “they should be holy,” that same thing is subsequently told to the Klal Yisroel with the identical reason, **כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוֹקִיךָ**, because we are to be holy to Hashem.

It's a remarkable fact. That the same commandments for the Kohanim are repeated exactly for the Yisroel. Each one. **קרח**, baldness of the head. **שרט**, cutting yourself. **פאת זקנם לא יגלחו**, not to cut the corners of the beard. Now of course there are reasons why things are repeated - details that have to be taught. But right now we're talking about the *pshuto shel mikrah*. And the *pshuto shel mikrah* is telling us something here.

THE BIBLE CRITICS AND FAKE NEWS

Now the Bible critics, the foolish *resha'im*, understood these repetitions of the priestly laws, in one place for the Kohanim and somewhere else for the rest of the people, as a sign that there were different authors here. Simple-minded people look for simplistic answers. And foolish people look for foolish answers.

So let's take it step by step as we try to understand what the intention of Hashem is here in these *pesukim* that we have mentioned, these queer parallels between the Kohanim and the rest of the Bnei Yisroel.

Before the Torah was given, Hakodosh Boruch Hu made a declaration to the Am Yisroel. And even the people who know this *posuk*, take it as a poetic expression, a beautiful, noble expression. Something maybe that makes a nice *drasha*, but that's about it. However, it's not merely poetic; it's a foundation of how we are supposed to lead our lives.

HASHEM'S TREASURE TROVE

Let's listen to what Hashem said. “I'm going to do something now; I'm going to change the nature of the entire people.” **ועתה אם שמעו תשמעו בקולי** - And now, if you will listen to My voice.” It means, “I'm going to give you the Torah now, and you have to listen to My words.” That means you're going to have to learn Torah, of course. Not merely listen to *kriyas hatorah*,

that's not enough. You have to internalize the Torah attitudes. ושמרתם את בריתי - "And you will keep My covenant." That means that you're going to keep that promise that you will make, נעשה ונשמע, to accept My Torah." And if you accept that promise, then והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים - "You'll be for Me a special treasure from all the nations." If you will stand at Har Sinai and you say, "Yes Hashem, we accept You forever and ever," then I'm going to make you into an exceptional type of people. You will be forever chosen as My especial and unequalled treasure."

MORE THAN JUST A SMICHA CERTIFICATE

Now when Hakodosh Boruch Hu said that He's going to make us His *am segulah*, that doesn't merely mean "I'm going to give you *smicha*; that I'm going to give you a rabbinical certificate to hang on the wall and you'll be honored just by the title." No; it's much more than that. It means that your whole function in this world, your purpose in life is going to change.

That's what Hashem was letting us know. "From now on it's going to be different. I'm going to raise you up and make out of you an entirely new type of people - an *Am Segulah*." And what is our function as Hashem's treasured nation? So here come the following words on which I wish to speak tonight: ואתם תהיו לי - ממלכת כהנים - "You're going to be for Me a 'Nation of Kohanim,'" וגוי קדוש - "And a Holy People." (Shemos 19:6).

Now these words, that we were to become now a *Mamleches Kohanim*, are of the utmost importance. Everything is important in the Torah, but these words are especially outstanding because Hashem was introducing to us our function, our purpose. Now I don't imagine myself capable of explaining them properly, but one aspect of these words we'll talk about now.

THE KOHEN'S SECOND JOB: PLUMBING

What does it mean that we are a *Mamleches Kohanim*, a Nation of Kohanim? It's an expression of who we are, our potential in this world, and what Hashem wants from us. And so

first we'll have to understand the word Kohen. Like we said earlier, a Kohen is one who is privileged to have been chosen for the most remarkable profession possible. And that profession is the service of Hashem. That's who he is, he's a Kohen. He might be a plumber as well, a shoemaker, or a doctor. But that's all *tafel* to his primary function, to his true purpose in life, which is the service of Hashem. A Kohen knows that his life is dedicated to Hashem. He was born a Kohen, he lives his life a Kohen, and he takes his last breath as a Kohen. The days of his life are a lifelong experience of standing before Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And therefore when Hashem declared that He had chosen us to be His *Mamleches Kohanim*, His "Kingdom of Priests," He was charging us with the responsibility of Kohanim. And that means that we, as a nation, were to become a nation of *משרתי השם*, servants of Hashem, who were to live lives, just like a Kohen serving in the Beis Hamikdash, focused on the service of Hashem.

THE NATION OF PRIESTS

All of us, every single individual, is given that charge by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to live lives in His service. *Mamleches Kohanim* does not mean "a kingdom ruled by priests" or "a kingdom with a priestly class." What it means is "a kingdom consisting of priests" - a nation in which every individual stands perpetually before Hashem in His service.

וְיֵאָמְרוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְיֵאָמְרוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְיֵאָמְרוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל. What that means to tell us is that when you're going to hear about the Kohanim in Sefer Vayikra - the whole Vayikra is called Toras Kohanim because it deal with the laws of Kohanim - don't think that it's only for Kohanim. Don't sit back and wait for Bamidbar and Devarim, for the parts that you think relate to you. No, no; Vayikra is for you! The sefer Vayikra, the Toras Kohanim, should be utilized as a model for every person in the Am Yisroel. Now, I want that to sink in because these words are not a mashal, not poetic words.

WE ARE NOT LIKE THE MISHPACHOS HA'ADAMAH

It is a great truth of the Torah, that we are being taught here again and again, and that is the great lesson of *Mamleches*

Kohanim - that we are the Kohanei Hashem of this world. The rest of the world, all the nations of the world, make their way through the mundane days of life, fulfilling their purpose of being the *משפחות האדמה*, nations whose purpose is *this* world. And we, the Kohanei Hashem, spend our days standing before Hashem in the “Beis Hamikdash” living for the World to Come.

NOW IT ALL MAKES SENSE

And that great lesson, that we are all Kohanim, is the reason for all of these halachos that we have mentioned. Our lives are echos of the avodah of the Kohanim. Hakodosh Boruch Hu is telling you: If this animal would have been offered up to Hashem, the *cheilev* would have to be removed and brought up on the fire, and the *dam* sprinkled on the sides of the *mizbayach*, before partaking of the meat. And so too, even when it's chullin, ordinary meat that you're eating in Flatbush or Boro Park or Williamsburg, you must also remove the *cheilev* and the *dam*. Even though your own personal shechita is not an avodah of a korban - you're merely standing in the kitchen preparing supper for your family - Hashem tells you that you are to treat it like an avodah, because the *Mamleches Kohanim* is always standing before Hashem in His service.

And therefore, just like the Kohen who was working alongside the *mizbayach*, we also can't eat the *cheilev* of the *beheimos* that we eat. And we have to let the blood, the blood that would have been sprinkled on the *mizbayach* had this animal been a korban, we let it spill out to the ground.

So we begin to see, from the laws of *cheilev* and *dam*, that the preparation of our food, that our shechita is not merely *shechitas chullin* - it's an echo of the *shechitas kodshim* that took place in the Beis Hamikdash. Our model, for the ordinary meat that we eat, is the kodshim. We, the *Mamleches Kohanim*, are going through the motions of Kohanim in the Beis Hamikdash.

MIMICKING THE KOHANIM

And just like Hashem commanded the Kohanim, we can't abuse our bodies with gashes, and are forbidden from making

bald spots on our heads and from cutting the corners of our beards. The Kohanim were given these laws because of their special status - and then, to emphasize our status as Kohanei Hashem, Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to all of us as well, "You too, all of you, are my *Mamleches Kohanim*, and are to act in the same manner as my Kohanim. And all this because we are acting out in our own lives, in our own homes, the same function that the Kohanim act out in the Beis Hamikdash. The Kohanim have one function and that is to serve Hashem. And we the *Mamleches Kohanim* have that same exact function.

We find an evident system in Hashem's words of the entire nation patterning their lives after the laws of the Kohanim. And if one opens his eyes, the list of ways that the Torah patterns the lives of the Am Yisroel after the lives of the Kohanim is remarkable. I have a long list here, and I'll give you another few examples.

AVOIDING THE FUNERAL HOME

You know that a Kohein is forbidden to be in the same room, the same ohel, as a dead body. And he is commanded from other forms of contact as well. אמר אל הכהנים בני אהרן ואמרת אליהם - לנפש לא יטמא בעמיו - "Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and tell them: Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a dead person" (Vayikra 21:1).

Now, other people, non-Kohanim, are not forbidden from coming in contact with the dead. But they do become *tamei*. It's not forbidden, but they become *tamei* and they can purify themselves according to the law of the Torah, with the *parah adumah in* and all of its details.

So you see here that a Kohein is admonished against contact with the dead - he's *oiver* an עשה and a לא תעשה. And so it's quite clear that Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants to keep a Kohein away from a *meis*. Now, we're not going to discuss now the reason for this. We've spoken on it before and that's not our subject now. But what we are seeing here is an echo of the laws of the Kohanim that reverberates by the rest of the Am Yisroel, the *Mamleches*

Kohanim. For the Yisroel, although it's not forbidden, we find an echo of this admonition. He becomes tamei. And as I explained here many times already, tumah is decreed by Hashem on whatever He wants us to avoid. And so we see that just like the Kohen has to avoid the *ohel ha'meis*, so too, the rest of the nation, follow the footsteps of the Kohanim, and avoid contact with the dead. And that's because the whole nation is a nation of Kohanim.

BIGDEI SHABBOS

And we find that this great ideal, the remarkable attitude that we are the *Mamleches Kohanim*, and that our lives, our behavior, and our thoughts, are to be patterned after the Kohanim in the Mikdash, is something that our Chachomim understood and applied as well.

Our parsha tells us that when the Kohen must remove the excess ash from the top of the Mizbayach, he is to change his garments: **וּפָשַׁט אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְלָבַשׁ בְּגָדִים אֲחֵרִים** - "And he shall remove his garments and don other garments..." (ibid. 7:4). And the Gemara (Yoma 23b) explains: "What is meant by other garments? Garments of lesser importance." That is, that the clothing that the Kohen wears when serving with the korbanos, should be of more importance than the clothing that he wears when doing the more mundane and dirty work of removing the ashes.

Now all of you here are careful to set aside special clothing for Shabbos. Of course you do - it's the most important day of a Jew's life. But why do we do so? Because it's self-understood, you'll say. A special day deserves special garments. No, it's much more profound than that.

DRESSING UP LIKE A KOHEN ONCE A WEEK

Let me explain. "Your Shabbos garments should not be like your ordinary garments," Chazal (Shabbos 113a) tell us. "And Rabbi Yochanan asked: From where in the Torah do we learn the necessity to change our garments for the Shabbos? And the possuk that it's learned from is in our parsha about the Kohanim. "And [the Kohen] shall remove his garments and put on other

garments" (ibid.) Our *Chachomim* saw in the behavior of the Kohanim a model for our own behavior because our wise men understood that we, the "ordinary" men, women and children of the Am Yisroel, are a *Mamleches Kohanim*, always standing in the service of Hashem. Thus when the nation of Kohanim enter the Sanctuary of Shabbos (see *Toras Avigdor Al Haparsha on Parshas Ki-Sisa*) they don especial vestments, as do the Kohanim who enter the Beis Hamikdash. And that's because we are a *Mamleches Kohanim*. And the laws of the avodah of the Kohanim are taken as a model for the "nation of Kohanim."

THE TREE GROWING IN YOUR HEAD

Now, this ideal, that we are all Kohanei Hashem, part of Hashem's *Mamleches Kohanim*, is a beautiful idea. But if it remains just that, an ephemeral ideal, merely a poetic expression, then it is almost worthless. The examples that we brought, as well as many others that we haven't spoken about, must be for us a seed that is planted in our minds, a seed that you must water and nurture all the days of your life.

And so we'll discuss for a few minutes some practical ideas, what we call *uvdahs*, for us to work on, so that we can at least begin the process of internalizing this great principle of the function of the Am Yisroel as a *Mamleches Kohanim*. And the more thought that you put into this *avodah*, the more this seed of *Mamleches Kohanim* will grow in your mind into beautiful and delicious fruit. The more you water this ideal, by thinking about what we're speaking about tonight, the more you will understand that everything that you do in your life, Hashem looks at it as if it is the *avodas hakohanim* serving in the Beis Hamikdash.

WAKING UP AS A KOHEN

A yeshiva bochur once asked a question here. Is it a good thing to wash my hands in the morning, *negel vasser* right next to my bed? That's what he wanted to know. And the answer, what I told him, is that he should do it as close to the bed as possible. And let me tell you why. Because the Rashba (Teshuvos HaRashba 1-191) says that *negel vasser* is for the purpose of

showing that we are Kohanei Hashem. That's why, says the Rashba, when you wash your hands in the morning, you use a *kli*, a vessel, just like the Kohanim used in the Mikdash when they prepared themselves for the avodah. By the Kohanim it says, ורחצו ידיהם ורגליהם בגשתם לשרת. The Kohanim washed their hands before coming in to serve Hashem, as a preparation for tremendous opportunity. And we, the nation of Kohanim, do the same in our homes. ככהן המקדש ידיו מן הכיור קודם עבודתו - "You are like a Kohen who purifies his hands from the *kiyor* before his service." Those are the words of the Rashba. The first thing you must do when you wake up, is to remind yourself that you're a Kohen, that you're a member of the *Mamleches Kohanim*.

When you wake up in the morning, what are you getting up for? To go to work? To go to school? To be an accountant? No, you're getting up in order to serve Hashem all day long. Yes, that's why you woke up. *Negel vasser* means, you're getting yourself ready to serve Hashem. You are a Kohen Hashem all day long. And so, as soon as you get up, at your earliest opportunity, you wash your hands to prepare for His service.

NEGEL VASSER BEFORE CLEANING DIAPERS

And therefore, as you wash your hands, don't just pour the water without thinking. What a waste! Think, better yet say, "I am doing this now because I am a Kohen. Hashem has appointed me to be part of His ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש." Our entire lives are dedicated to serving Hashem. Whether you're in your office working, in the kitchen cooking, or cleaning diapers in the laundry room, you're serving Hashem. Besides for your davening and learning, you should know that whatever else you do is all part of serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You're an *eved ne'eman* and you're a Kohen, and therefore the washing of the hands - the preparation for a day of serving Hashem is a very important symbol. And it should be utilized by you to make yourself aware of your status. It's a shame to waste that glorious opportunity that you have every morning. And most people are missing it altogether. And that first act of the day, if done with thought, sets

the tone for the rest of the day - that everything you will do, you'll be doing as a servant of Hashem.

WEARING A TURBAN AT HOME

We read a few weeks ago about the *bigdei kehuna*. And the one garment that is especially described as being worn “for honor and for beauty” was the *migba'as*, the headgear, of the Kohen. ומגבעות תעשה להם לכבוד ולתפארת - “And the headgear you shall make for them, for honor and for beauty” (Shemos 28:40).

You know that the word *migba'as*, headgear, is related to the word *giv'ah*, a hill, an elevation. And that's because the Kohen appears taller because of his *migba'as*. It added to his height, which was intended to denote his superiority as a servant of Hashem. He wore this crown of “honor and beauty” to demonstrate to everyone the importance of his service and his pride in being able to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

But this crown, as well as the other priestly garments that were worn during the service, are not only a demonstration to others. More crucial than the added height, the added elevation, is that the importance of being a servant of Hashem should become elevated in his own mind. The *bigdei kehuna* are intended to teach the Kohen himself that he is elevated. And the more a Kohen understands this purpose, he thereby becomes more impressed by his function as a servant of Hashem. And that is the great principle of בזמן שבגדי כהונה עליהם כהונתם עליהם - “At the time when their garments are upon them, their Kehunah is upon them” (Zevachim 17b). The garments that a person wears affects his attitude, and only when a Kohen recognizes, when he tangibly feels his elevated position as a servant of Hashem, only then does he achieve the status of a true Kohen.

THE IRISHMAN IS BETTER THAN YOU

Similarly, everyone of us, in no less of a manner, can fulfill this achievement of *bigdei kehuna*. When a man puts on his yarmulkeh or his hat, or a woman puts on her sheitel or snood, why should it remain a hollow act, devoid of all thought? It's a

remarkable opportunity, and most people are wasting it every day. To put on a black hat or a snood with the exact same *kavanah* that your Irish neighbor puts on his Yankees cap?! Maybe even less! The stupid goy is proud to put on his hat; it's his team! He feels intimately connected to the team of meshuga'im who are hitting balls with a stick. And what about you?!

Every time you put on your hat, your yarmulke, or your sheitel, you should be reminding yourself - and say it with your mouth, it's even better to say it - that you're identifying with the *Mamleches Kohanim*. You're reminding yourself that even though you are not a Kohen serving Hashem at the *mizbayach*, but you are serving Hashem no less in your home, in your kitchen, at your place of work, or on the street outside. You are a part of the *Mamleches Kohanim*, and that means that wherever you are, and whatever you're doing, you're standing in front of Hashem in His service. Don't listen to the people who tell you that *שויתי השם לנגדי תמיד* means that you should be picturing the *letters* of Hashem's name in front of your eyes all day long. Nothing doing! You don't need the letters - you are *actually* standing before Him. And the wise man and woman will use his or her head covering as a reminder of that always.

VI'KIDASHTO

And now we'll take it another step. Kohanim you know are called a holy group of people. *ויקדשתו* - "And you should make him *kadosh*" (Vayikra 21:8). That's a commandment, that we have to appreciate the holiness of a kohen, that he is a servant of Hashem. And we therefore give him a certain deference, a special respect. But these distinctions and privileges are not because of the Kohen himself, but because of his functions. *כי את לחם אלוֹקִים הוא מקריב*. He's serving Hashem, and for that we accord him honor above all others.

For example, you're sitting at a *seudah*, and there's a waiter there. So he's not going to serve just one, two, three, whatever the seating order is. No, he knows the *din* that *כהן נוטל* - "The Kohen is served first." That's a *din* in the

Gemara, the Kohen comes first. The Kohen gets the first aliyah, that you know already. But not only when it comes to an aliyah; even when it comes to eating, he's also first. In every matter, we give respect to the one who has been chosen as an *eved Hashem*. וקדשתו. Because he's kadosh; he's holy to Hashem.

KEDOSHIM TI'HIYU - YOU ARE HOLY TOO

And now, when we think about these words, we hear an echo of the words קדושים תהיו - "And you, the Am Yisroel, should be kadosh" (ibid. 19:2). Just like a Kohen has to be careful with his kedusha, and everybody else has to honor him because he is holy to Hashem, so too we have to honor our fellow Jews. Every Jew is kadosh. It says openly in the Torah that every Jew is a *kadosh*. We're a ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש. Those aren't just words; it's not just talk.

And therefore, although this commandment of וקדשתו refers specifically to the Kohanim, we learn from this model the principle of rendering honor to all those who are engaged in the service of Hashem. And who is more holy than a frum Jew, whose daily life is replete with duties of service in fulfillment of Hashem's laws.

THE SNOOD AND THE TICHEL

And so when you see another Jew in the street, he's a holy man, from the *Mamleches Kohanim*. And that's why he's wearing his hat, or his yarmulkeh - and if you're a woman and you see another woman, she's wearing her sheitel or her tichel, whatever it is, it's a *migba'as*. It's the vestments of "honor and beauty" of the גוי קדוש - the holy nation. And that's how you have to look at your fellow Jew.

I know that right now it sounds like just fake ideas, just talk, but it's very far from being just talk. Everything else you hear on the street, that's just talk; but here you're hearing the truth about life. So you have to practice up on these truths. You see a fellow Jew, and you say under your breath, "There goes a holy person, from the ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש."

YOUR WIFE, THE KOHEN

And your wife at home, your husband at home, same thing. Your wife is *kadosh*, your husband is *kadosh*. You cannot just hurl words against each other recklessly. Be careful what you say! You have to know who you're talking to. Would you talk like that to a Kohen like that in the Beis Hamikdash?!

But like I said earlier, the most important function of the *bigdei kehuna* is not the demonstration for others, but the effect that it has on you! So not only do we have to consider our fellow Jew *kadosh*, but we have to consider ourselves as *kedoshim*. "I'm part of the *גוי קדוש* of Hashem." And the word *kadosh* means set aside for Hashem. That's why we are *kadosh*, because we are the *Mamleches Kohanim* - set aside for the service of Hashem. *ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש*.

And so, since you're always standing in front of Hashem, you must begin to train yourself to do as much as you can *l'sheim shamayim*. Little by little you train yourself to think about Hashem in whatever you are doing. And therefore, when you serve supper to your husband, to your family, you're a good frum wife, a loyal woman. And so you say, "Certainly I serve my husband supper. What else should I do? Certainly; he's my husband. Any good woman would do this." But now we're seeing that that is not enough. Your job in this world is to be more than a wife who is loyal to her husband, and to her family. Because while you are doing all of these "mundane" activities, you are doing them with the intention that you are from the *ממלכת כהנים* and that you are serving Hashem.

YOUR HOLY FRYING PAN

And that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from you. That you should become more and more *kadosh*; more and more set aside for Him. So you stand at your stove just like a kohen stands at the *mizbayach*, putting onto the fire things to burn up to Hashem. And he's *מהפך בעינורא*, he's turning over the fats and pieces of the korban for Hashem. And you're standing there at *your mizbayach*, your stove, turning over the pancakes, and you're

serving Hashem no less than a Kohen. You're thinking these thoughts; that you're serving Hashem right now in your kitchen like the Kohen serves Hashem in the Mikdash. And those are the thoughts that are chiefly prized by Hashem.

MATZAH SECRETS

And now we come to Pesach. On Pesach we have a chiyuv to eat matzah. Now everyone knows that the matzah is there to remind ourselves of a number of things. And the Torah says it openly: לחם עוני – לחם שעונין עליו דברים הרבה. So surely there are things you have to think about while chewing the matzah. And it's a good idea to think about them when you're not eating as well. All of Pesach is made for thinking these thoughts, not just at the seder.

First of all the matzah reminds us that for 210 years we couldn't leave Mitzrayim. Even Yosef Hatzadik was not able to leave. When he wanted to bury his father, Yaakov, he sent somebody to Pharaoh to be *mishtadel* for him, to press Pharaoh on his behalf. He said, "What can I do? My father made me swear." So we see that if Yosef wouldn't have sworn, Pharaoh would have said, "Send somebody else; we can send Egyptians to bury your father." Even Yosef wouldn't be able to leave! א משנה למלך היינט, א משנה למלך מארגן, you can't go out, that's all. It says that openly in the Torah. I'm not darshening to you.

PHARAOH IN PAJAMAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

So for 210 years there was nothing to talk about. Pharaoh didn't even dream about sending them out. It was לא עלה על דעתו כלל that the Bnei Yisroel should leave. And all of a sudden, Pharaoh gets up in the middle of the night and says קומו צאו מתוך עמי - "Get up now and leave my country"

What's this? Pharaoh, a king, gets up in the middle of the night? Kings don't get up in the middle of the night! And now Pharaoh is running to Moshe and he says, "Hurry up, get your people together and leave."

So that's Yad Hashem. It's as open a miracle as you can ever see. And that's one of the great ideals that the matzah memorializes. That לא הספיק בצקם של אבותינו להחמיץ - They didn't have time to cause their bread to leaven; they had to bake it before it had time to rise. So the matzah is a sign of the *chipazon*, the haste; when Pharaoh said, קומו צאו, get out. An open miracle!

REMEMBERING THE CHILDREN SNATCHERS

Another reason is *lechem oni*, to remember the affliction we suffered in Egypt. They ate a bitter matzah in Mitzrayim. We enjoy the matzah. It's a pleasure to eat; whether it's machine-made 18 minute matzah or the hand made matzah, it's always enjoyable to eat matzah. The change from bread to matzah is always welcome. But as your teeth are crunching into the matzah, don't waste the opportunity, and try to gain, even in a small measure, a feeling of the *lechem oni* that our forefathers ate in Mitzrayim. They were eating a matzah that was bitter, a simple food that was sometimes their staple food. And they ate with tears in their eyes as their children were snatched from them, taken away to be destroyed. Jewish fathers and mothers wept. They broke down. I don't doubt that some went insane from *tzoros*.

So while you eat the matzah, every bite is another reminder of the gratitude that we feel to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for taking us out of that bitter bondage. We sit down to eat the matzah and we remember to be grateful to Hashem for our present state. When a man is now happy, and he has plenty to eat and he has freedom, he has to look back on the olden days when he was enslaved and he was suffering. And he has to be grateful to Hashem for transforming him from his old state of being a slave, to his present state. That's a second reason for the matzah, to remind ourselves of הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתנא בארעא דמצרים, this poor bread of affliction.

MATZAH ALL YEAR LONG

But there is still another reason for why we eat matzah. And it's a reason that most people never think of. Matzah is an especial type of food. It's the food of the Kohanim when they eat

the korban mincha. **לֹא מִצֵּה תֹאפֶה** - It has to be baked matzah” **תֹאפֶה חֵמֵץ** - It's forbidden to make a mincha chametz. Matzah is the food of the Kohanim.

Why do Kohanim eat matzah? That's a question. It's not Pesach; it's all year round. Why are they eating only matzah? Maybe it's to remind them about *yetzias Mitzraim*. Whatever it is, we see that the matzah is an especial type of food that is set aside for the Kohanim. It's the food of the Kohanei Hashem.

A ZAR EATS THE KORBAN MINCHA

Now when we eat matzah on Pesach we are demonstrating the great principle of *Mamleches Kohanim* that we have been speaking about. We eat the food of the Kohanim because we have been chosen as a nation of Kohanim. All of us - the men, the women, the children, the Kohanim, the Leviim, the Yisroelim - we sit around our table, in the *mikdash me'at* of our homes, and we make a public demonstration of recognizing that we understand our role in this world. We are a nation of Kohanim. And just like the Kohanim eat the mincha of only matzah, we, the *Mamleches Kohanim* also sit down to eat a “*korban mincha*.” We were chosen on Pesach to come out of Mitzrayim for one purpose only - to become Kohanei Hashem. And so as we eat the matzah on Chag Hamatzos, we demonstrate that.

I'M AN ACCOUNTANT, NOT A KOHEN

Now people will say, “Certainly I'm an *oived Hashem*, certainly. But that's only part of my life. I have a lot on my plate, I have to do other things too. I have a job, I have a family.” And the answer is, no. **וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ לִי מִמְלַכַת כֹּהֲנִים** tells you that whatever you are doing in life, you're still a kohein Hashem. Look, a Kohen can also get a job; he also has a family. But he's still a Kohen!

So you have to go to your office, to your store, whatever it is, to make a living. But you're still a Kohen Hashem. You have to take care of your children, feed them, bathe them. But that doesn't in any way affect your status. You're part of the *Mamleches Kohanim* and you must keep that in mind always. Hashem took

you out of Mitzrayim to be His servant. There are no options. Nothing can change that fundamental truth of your purpose in this world. A Yisroel can never change his function in life.

THE SHOEMAKER AND THE DENTIST: PART TIME JOBS

And so it doesn't matter what you do, who you are. A dentist, a shoemaker, a kollel man, a street cleaner or a lawyer - whatever it is, that's all incidental to what you really are. You must know that your chief profession is that of being part of the *Mamleches Kohanim*. That's your business in life. In everything that you do, you must keep in mind that you are serving Hashem.

HASHEM'S HOLY PEOPLE FOREVER

And just as we learned that when the Kohanim were chosen with the word לִי by Hashem: וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּים - "To be Mine," it meant to be especially Mine forever, so too when the Nation on a whole was chosen to be the *Mamleches Kohanim* with that same word. וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מַמְלַכְת כֹּהֲנִים - "And you shall be for Me a Kingdim of Priests," it's the mark of eternal honor. "Wherever it says לִי, "For Me," it shall never cease in this world and in the World to Come" (Vayikra Rabbah 2:2). It's a mark of distinction that we must live up to, to be always aware that all of our actions must be for the purpose of serving Hashem, and if we keep that in mind always, then we become the גּוֹי קְדוֹשׁ, the nation set aside for forever to Hashem.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SHABBOS!

תורת אביגדור
"שאל אביד ויגדד זקניד ויאמרו לך"



Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

May a yeshiva bochur listen to sports on the radio?

A:

I'll ask you a different question: May a yeshiva bochur stand on his head? Yes, if he wants to. But he's a *meshugenah* if he does it.

What is Sports? It's so silly! The Yanks and the Mets, hitting the baseball. It's so *meshugah*. It's an American *goyishe meshugenah velt*. It's the headlines! Yanks, Mets! It's so silly.

What sports does for us, is the following. The headlines show us how empty the Gentile world is. And therefore, we take a lesson from that. These foolish people who can make headlines from the silliest things - we have to say, "Can they be an example for us?! In anything at all?!"

"*Boruch Elokeinu she'hivdilanu min ha'toi'im.*" Boruch Hashem that he has separated us from these lost souls.

TAPE #E-210

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