

# תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

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**————— This week's booklet based on Tapes: —————**

**#71 - Gift of Clothing | #E-42 - Robes of Splendor |**  
**#E-73 - Nobility of Exteriority**

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בעזרה שיתית

## פרשת תצוה

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

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### Part I. The *Bigdei Kehuna*

#### THE KOHEN WHO IS NOT A KOHEN

Anyone who has learned even a little bit, knows that a *kohen* is the only one who is qualified to do the *avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*; and if somebody else, a *zar*, would attempt to do it, then no matter how well he would follow all the details of the *avodah*, it's profaned, it's rendered *possul*. But in this week's *parsha* we learn that even a *kohen* can sometimes be considered a *zar*, a stranger to the *kehunah*, and profane the *avodah* as well. A *kohen* must wear four *begadim* when he does the *avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. He needs a *kesones* – a tunic; *mitchnasaim* – something like trousers, pants; a *migba'as* – something on his head like a hat, and an *avneit* – a belt. Those are the four garments.

Now suppose a *kohen* was missing one of his *begadim*; he was missing his belt let's say. So he put on his regular belt, his leather belt from his home, and went into the *Beis Hamikdash* to do the *avodah*. What could he do already? He was stuck! And it's only a belt after all. So *chazal* tell us that if he's missing *even one* of the four garments, he's called a *mechusar begadim*, and the whole

*avodah* is *possul*; it's completely worthless. So not only are the *bigdei kehunah* ולתפארת לכבוד, garments "for honor and for beauty" (Tetzaveh 28:2), but they were a requirement of the *avodah* that could not be dispensed with at all.

### CLOTHES MAKE A MAN

How do we know this? Our *parsha* tells us: וחגרת אותם אבנט - אהרן ובניו וחבשת להם מגבעות והיתה להם כהונה לחקת עולם - "And gird them with belts, wrap their heads with turbans, and it should be for them the priesthood forever" (Tetzaveh 29:9). What does that mean, that a *kohen's* belt and turban should be for him his *kehunah*? And the *gemara* says (Zevachim 17b) as follows: בזמן שבגדיהם עליהם כהונתם עליהם, only when a *kohen* puts on his garments, that's when he's a *kohen*; but if he's missing his belt, or any of the other *bigdei kehunah*, then he's not a *kohen*; he's a *zar* now.

And the Torah makes this point again and again. In Parshas Vayikra (1:5) we're going to read that the בני אהרן הכהנים, the sons of Aharon, the *kohanim*, should offer the *korbanos*. So the question is: Why does Hashem write the superfluous word "*hakohanim*" in the Torah? The "sons of Aharon" would have described them sufficiently. We already know who Aharon was; that he was the *kohen gadol*, and that his sons are the *kohanim*. So what's this extra word הכהנים doing here? And the *gemara* (Zevachim 18a) says that הכהנים means: בכהונם - the extra word "*hakohanim*" is teaching us that they have to be in their *kehuna*, that they have to be dressed like *kohanim*. He has to be wearing his official garments. If a *kohen* performs the *avodah* missing even just one of his garments, then he's not a *kohen*. He's a *zar*. He's like a stranger, a non-*kohen*, who is offering up offerings, and he profanes the *avodah*.

Now that's a remarkable thing to say. Because we know that he *is* a *kohen*. He's from the seed of Aharon HaKohen. He's descended from Aharon HaKohen - so he's a *kohen*! And the *kohen* is serving Hashem. He knows what it means to bring a *korban*; he studied and prepared for a career of *kehuna*. 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 if he lacks one of the *begadim*, he's not considered a *kohen*. And the *avodah* is profaned because it was performed by a "non-kohen." That's what the *chazal* say. He's *not* a *kohen*! בִּזְמוֹן שִׁבְגָדֵיהֶם עֲלֵיהֶם כְּהוֹנָתָם עֲלֵיהֶם. He has to wear the garments of *kehunah* to be a *kohen*.

#### WEARING A GARTEL OR LEARNING MUSSAR?

It's a difficult thing 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 *Mesillas 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 *Mesillas Yesharim*, or another good *sefer* like *Chovos Halevavos* surely will elevate the *kohen's* mind in preparation for the great act of serving Hashem in the *Beis Hamikdash*. All right; 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. Even though he's not thinking at all! Suppose the *kohen* put on the garments and then he did the *avodah* without thinking at all. It's a kosher *avodah*! So we see that it's just the perfunctory and external act of wearing the garments that matters. And that's a big question: Why is the superficial act of putting on a uniform so important? Why do *the garments* make him a *kohen*?

#### THE SECRET OF THE POLICE ACADEMY

So we'll explain it like this. You know, when you see a policeman in a blue uniform, so to some extent you think that this man is standing on the right side of the law. That's what you believe instinctively. But really why should that be? We know that many times the policemen are recruited from the alleys of Bensonhurst; and if you would have known him back then, you would have seen that he was on the other side of the law. But today he puts on a blue vest, blue pants and a funny looking cap,

and now this former troublemaker becomes an upholder of law and order. He even gets angry when someone is breaking the law!

Now I'm not saying that he's going to be able to withstand big temptations; if someone offers him big money, he could easily do anything. But ordinarily we feel some level of confidence that this former lawbreaker is now on the side of law and order. And there's something behind that feeling; this man is something different than he once was.

### THE MONKEY COP

How could that be? I'll tell you how it happens. There's something to wearing clothing; there's something profound in a uniform. Because Mankind; black, white, brown, yellow, any color, it doesn't matter, all of Mankind is innately endowed with profound emotions. And very often, it's clothing that will bring them out to the fore. The uniform changes them! Because any decent person is affected by a uniform. It makes them feel that it's their responsibility; they stand for something important now.

Now that's a greatness of mankind; if you put a blue uniform on a baboon you wouldn't accomplish much. But these "baboons," you see them in front of a store wearing a badge and holding a stick, and now they're on the side of law and order. Yesterday he used to walk out of the store without paying, his pockets bulging, and now he's wearing his police uniform and you trust him to arrest the *other* fellow with bulging pockets. That's the efficacy of a uniform, the impression that clothing makes on the one who wears it.

## Part II. The Greatness of Exteriority

### A POLICEMAN OR A RAV

That outward demonstration means something and we shouldn't disdain it. And that's the great principle that we spoke about here many times. The *Mesillas Yescharim* expresses this important idea with the following words: החיצוניות מעוררת את הפנימיות – "Your exteriority stimulates your interiority" (Perek 7).

If you dress like a *frum* Jew, like a *mentch* – 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. Absolutely, it’s going to have an effect on you. Because by putting on the uniform you already assume in your mind a certain responsibility, certain attitudes. You identify with the uniform you wear, and your clothing elicits from deep in your soul the innate greatness; it evokes profound ideals and attitudes that are laying there dormant. It’s something that we have to know; it’s actually a fact that people are changed by their garments; clothes make the man.

There’s no question that it’s true. Take a man, and you put on him an *itztilah d’rabanan*, you give him the garments of a *rav*, and you make him sit up front in the shul, so he acquires a certain compassion for human beings. Otherwise he’ll just walk his selfish way in life; but because of what he wears, he instinctively tries to live up to what his garments are saying. *L’havdil*, a *rav*, and a policeman, but it’s true of everybody.

#### THE PNIMIYUSDIGEH BUM AND THE TWO-LEGGED HORSE

Now it’s important to take note of the fact that it works just as well the other way too. If you take a pair of ragged jeans and you put them on a human being, so he becomes a bum. I’m not saying only that he looks like a bum; inwardly he *becomes* a bum. When people dress like bums, they are bums. It’s a principle that human beings are what their garments are. Anybody who walks, let’s say with cloth shoes; he doesn’t put on any real shoes, just cloth shoes, so that’s what he becomes. Or he wears a painted shirt or long hair, whatever it is; anything that is *chitzoniyus*, is really *pnimiyus*. If he dresses like a tramp, he thereby becomes inwardly also a tramp.

I’ll give you another example. A person who dresses with dignity, he’s identifying himself with the self-respecting element of society. He keeps his body covered because he identifies with the dignity of *tzelem Elokim*. Because a half-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. And when people walk in the street today, and they try to display as much of the body as they can, it should remind you of a horse. A donkey also has shoulders like that, and thighs that move like that.

But not only is it that they *look* like horses to us; they're actually identifying with horses, they become *beheimos*. 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 really? It's a horse after all. It's nothing but a *beheimah*. If you walk half naked down Ocean Parkway, what you are is a horse waving its tail; you're identifying with the horses that used to trot down Ocean Parkway naked. Because it's how you behave on the outside, how you dress, that becomes the foundation of what's really important, your *pnimiyus*.

#### THE CRAZY YESHIVA BACHUR

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 on the sidewalk. And what does he have on his head? A baseball cap! I'm not talking now about a cap to keep his head covered; it's not *stam* a hat. No, he's wearing the cap of *his* baseball team. Yanks, 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*.

A *yeshiva bochur* stopped me on the street last week to ask me if he could wear the baseball cap of his team into a shul, a *beis medrash*. I was thinking, "*Meshugena*! Into shul?! Even on the street you shouldn't wear such a thing. A cap of the Yankees 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 a world of foolish things and you want to identify with that world?! And therefore, you should never wear a baseball cap like that. Because if you do, that's who you identify with. You might become a Yankees-man, or a Mets-man. But you're not going to be a man for Hashem.

### IDENTIFYING WITH YOUR CLOTHING

But what we learn from the *bigdei kehunah* is that person can utilize his clothing in the opposite way. Using your clothing to identify yourself with the servants of Hashem, with the *Am Yisroel*, is one of the easiest ways to grow great in the eyes of Hashem. Because when a *kohen* puts on the *begadim*, he's taking a very important step in the service of Hashem; he's dressing the part and identifying with the *ovdei Hashem*. 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*.

So you might say, "Is that the sole incentive? You mean a *kohen* doesn't have anything to inspire him except some outward garments?! The *kohen* has to study for years, and he has to understand the importance of the *avodah*. So what could clothing add to that?!" And the answer is that it *does* add something; it adds the *chitzoniyus*. And we're going to see now that this exteriority, the *chitzoniyus* of wearing garments, is much more important than you could have ever imagined.

### THE SECRET TO JEWISH SURVIVAL

You know that the Torah describes the *bigdei kehunah* as *bigdei s'rad*, which in its most simple understanding means "garments of officiating" (Vayikra 1:5). But the words *bigdei s'rad* are not common in the Torah, and our *chachomim* (Yoma 72a) took note of that: 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 *s'rad* as the description of the *begadim* that the *kohanim* wear when serving in the *Beis Hamikdash*?

And the cryptic answer that is given reads as follows: אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתייר מישראל שריד ופליט – “If it weren’t for the priestly garments, there wouldn’t be left even a small remnant, a *s’rad*, from the Jewish people; nothing at all would remain.” That’s why they’re called *bigdei s’rad*; because in another meaning the word *s’rad* means a remnant. And it’s because of the *bigdei kehuna* that the Jewish nation was able to survive! We’re around today because of the four *begadim* that a *kohen* wore in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Now that’s a very queer and puzzling statement. 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* just at that moment; they were building up a reserve of *yeshua*, preservation and eternity for the Jewish nation forever and ever. אלמלא בגדי כהונה – “If not for the *bigdei kehunah*, לא נשתייר מישראל שריד ופליט – nothing would have remained of us.”

#### LET THEM GNASH!

The *Am Yisroel* has survived a long *golus* in the midst of our enemies. And even in good times, when they’re not making trouble for us, not trying to kill us, but they’re always degrading our ideals, our attitudes, our way of life. 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. Let them gnash! There’s still a *sarid*, a remnant, of the *Am Yisroel* left. And *chazal* are telling us here that it’s because of the *bigdei s’rad*, because there was a time when *kohanim* wore *bigdei kehuna* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, at that time in our history they earned for our nation the right to exist *forever*.

Now, it was a habit for many of them I’m sure, what to wear, how to dress. And it could be that they were thinking about other things at the time, could be. But what we’re learning here is that the mere fact that the *kohen* dressed like a servant of Hashem, was such a tremendous success for him, that he accomplished something that would last forever and ever for the *Am Yisroel*.

## FOLLOWING THE ROYAL PROTOCOL

Now, once we understand this, that dressing like a servant Hashem, is actually an eternal preservation for the *Am Yisroel*, that should cause us to appreciate the importance of our dress much more than we ever did before. If the fact that we're here today is due to the demonstration of the *kohanim* in those years when they served in the *Beis Hamikdash* wearing their *bigdei kehunah*, so we begin to realize the importance of the *begadim* that *we* wear. אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתייר מִישראל שריד – “If not for the *bigdei kehunah*, nothing would have remained of us.”

Because when a *kohen* put on his *begadim*, what was he demonstrating after all? He was saying “This is the house where Hashem dwells, and I am His servant!” The servant of a mortal 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 their dress. And the way the servant dresses, affects his behavior, and in the course of time, he becomes different. And therefore, when the *kohen* puts on the *bigdei kehunah*, when he dresses like a *kohen*, he's actually changing himself. It's very important that he should know that he's dressed *l'kavod u'lisiferes*. He has to be dressed in these glorious garments because they make him feel like he is a servant of Hashem. And therefore a *kohen* can only rise to the heights required of him when he is dressed in the *bigdei s'rad*. By wearing the *bigdei avodah*, he becomes a servant of Hashem. An old *kohen* is someone who has been transformed in character. He's becoming someone different, no question about it.

## Part III. Modern Day Bigdei Kehuna

### TAILORED ITALIAN SUITS

And don't think that *bigdei kehuna* are only for *kohanim*. Because we're learning here that even by a superficial exterior demonstration that you're an *eved Hashem*, you have already achieved something for yourself *and for your nation forever and ever*. אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתיירו מִישראל שריד – “If not for the *bigdei kehunah*, nothing would have remained of us.” When we wear

our clothing, it's not merely a superficial act that means nothing; it's the preservation of the *Am Yisroel*. 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 *tzitzis*, our long jackets or short jackets, our white shirts, 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 it gets, no matter how much foolishness and *apikorsis* fill the world, and no matter how much you try to entice us, we're still standing proud and we're here to stay. We're a stubborn people – we're the עמ קשי עורף – and we're not going anywhere.

And therefore, we dress the part of the stubborn nation. We're proudly showing that we belong to Hashem and that it will be that way forever and ever. We're stubborn about it too! We're proud of our dress; we're demonstrating strength of character and loyalty, and that's what preserves us forever. Of course, some might go lost. It's a tragedy, but you'll always have some weaklings in a great nation – stragglers, the נחשלים אחרים, 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 that's why we're dressing for Him!

#### THE MAN IN THE YELLOW HAT

We're learning here a tremendous lesson, the lesson of *chitzoniyyus*, how important the outwardliness that a person displays is. Let's say we're talking about 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? It's just superficialities! I'm not that way; I'm *real*!"

"Oh no!" we tell you. A black hat makes a difference, all the difference in the world. It's not the color black that matters, it's

who you are identifying with. If the *roshei yeshiva* wore yellow hats, then we'd wear yellow hats. If they wore *sombreros*, so that's what we'd wear as well. When a Jew puts on a black hat, you have to know that it's *not* just a *minhag*. A black hat means something; you're identifying with the Torah community; it's an *ateres tiferes*, a crown of glory. 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.

#### A BLACK HAT IS NOT EVERYTHING...

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. It's such an achievement, that the entire world should be jealous of you. And once a person demonstrates outwardly that he belongs to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that man has succeeded in one of the biggest achievements in life. That man is wearing *bigdei kehunah* and he has come close to Hashem in *chitzoniyus*, in exteriority. And in this function he is succeeding as much as the *kohanim* did in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

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 *will* be important someday. But even right now, he is already important because of his hat. 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 TZITZIS GO INTO HIDING

That's why it's so good to live in a *frum* Jewish neighborhood. Everybody takes his *tzitzis* out in a *frum* Jewish neighborhood. You know, when people start walking from a *frum* neighborhood to a not so *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. Now, even that is something. Even a small *yarmulkeh* is something *mi'ein* the *bigdei kehuna*, and we're not going to begrudge that small donation to the cause. He's a *moideh b'miktzas*, and even that is an opportunity for greatness.

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 *chitzoniyus* to Hashem. That's why I say that the best place to live is Williamsburg. If you go to Boro Park that's also good. You walk in the streets, everybody is wearing *peyos*. Everyone is showing that he's a *frum* Jew, an *eved Hashem*. Everybody!

#### THE BIGDEI KEHUNAH OF BAIS YAAKOV GIRLS

You don't know what a tremendous achievement that is for them. It's a great *hatzlacha*, even if they're not thinking about anything except for business. Maybe they're thinking about *machlokes* too - who cares what they're thinking about! At least he's looking like a *frum* Jew and he wouldn't change his *chitzoniyus* for anything! You have to know what it means, how much of a *kiddush Hashem* it is when the Jewish nation shows an allegiance to Hashem in their *chitzoniyus*. And that's why I say that the more *frum* the neighborhood is, the better are your chances in attaining this easy achievement of *hachitzoniyus m'oireres es hapnimiyus*.

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 that they are proud of who they are. I was in the street yesterday and I saw a pack of twenty, maybe 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.

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

Today I was walking on Kings Highway and it was very hot. And a *chossid* is walking past me with a long *kapoteh*. He was trying to get business from the stores, that they should buy his merchandise. Now, he didn't take off his *kapoteh* as he walked down the street. He was sweating, but he wouldn't think of taking it off. That's his uniform, that's his *bigdei shareis*. And he's happy with it. He wears a *kapoteh*, he wears *payos*. He's a *chassideshe* man walking in Flatbush among naked people – people without hats, people who have nothing in their heads, they don't think 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 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. So you should know that this man is wearing *bigdei kehunah*. It's such an achievement that the entire world should be jealous of him.

And what I'm telling you now applies to every Jewish woman as well. She's wearing a *sheitel*, or a *tichel* or *snood*, it doesn't matter what it is, because as she walks down the street she's an aristocrat walking among among the *beheimos* – those who identify with the horses. A woman who covers her hair, she covers her arms and her legs, it's not merely a superficial act of following some "rules" of modesty. No; it's much much more than that. She's identifying with the *Am Yisroel*! She's demonstrating that she's an *eved Hashem*.

### **HASHEM WANTS YOUR MIND!**

We're talking now about the person who demonstrates that he belongs to Hashem, that's the point. You show you belong to Hashem. And even though it's superficial it's a tremendous achievement. Externalities are also prized by Hashem. And it's written down to your record that you are a servant of Hashem, that you have achieved the greatness of the nobility of exteriority. You're not embarrassed; you're proud to stand out, to be

different, and you're walking around all day proclaiming, "I am for 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 *chitzoniyus*, in exteriority.

Now, make no mistake. It's not *pnimiyus*. You're not gaining all the greatness of the qualities and attitudes that you earn only by years of study and thinking. And I'm not going to say that this is all you need to do; by no means. רחמנא ליבא בעי, Hashem wants your *pnimiyus*, your mind; certainly that's what He wants from you. Hashem puts a great emphasis on the mind, no question about it. How valuable it is 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 Yeshtarim*, *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. And it's all necessary! Don't think that it's just a luxury. It's a lifetime of filling your mind with great ideals. And Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants that.

But despite the great virtue of becoming a man of interiority, of *pnimiyus*, we should not underestimate the value of the superficial demonstration of being a *frum* Jew. It's so precious! Even though you're not thinking about anything, no philosophy, no *amkus*; you're not thinking about the *Mesillas Yeshtarim* or the *Chovos Halevavos*. You're just thinking, "I'm a *frum* Jew; I'm proud, I'm happy that I can demonstrate my loyalty to Hashem by means of my *bigdei kehunah*." The man who is happy that he is a *frum* Jew, and he dresses like a *frum* Jew, that itself is a tremendous achievement for the servant of Hashem, and it's a terrible mistake to begrudge that greatness. Because even by a superficial exterior demonstration that you're an *eved Hashem*, you should know that you have achieved something great for yourself.



## Part IV. Putting It Into Practice

### WE'RE JUST AT THE BEGINNING

But I must tell you that everything we spoke about tonight is actually only the beginning of the *avodah* of wearing the *begadim* of a servant of Hashem. Because even in this superficial *avodah*, the *avodah* of *chitzoniyus*, there are higher and higher levels on the ladder of coming close to Hashem. And so we'll take the little time we have left to try to step off the first rung, and to continue climbing higher. 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 pattern themselves after the words that you say". And that idea introduces us to another level of opportunity in growing great from the *chitzoniyus* of *begadim*.

Because when we consider these two aspects, the *chitzoniyus* and the *pnimiyus*; as much as possible let us combine them, and endeavor to use our *chitzoniyus* as a building block for *pnimiyus*. The exteriority of dressing like a *frum* Jew can be utilized to achieve even greater perfection when it is amalgamated with thinking and speaking.

Now, I'll give you a practical suggestion. Every morning when you put on your clothing, don't go through the motions like you've been doing for so many years. Don't spend the rest of your life putting on clothing without thinking anything at all. You know that many people, when they get dressed in the morning, they put in as much thought to their clothes as a horse would if he was getting dressed. Putting on clothing in the morning is a demonstration - a demonstration to others, and more importantly to yourself. And what you should be telling yourself as you put on your clothes is *how important you are*. I know that this is a new idea to most people and that's why I'm stressing it: When you put on your shirt, your skirt, your hat, whatever it is, it's like saying, "I now declare that I am the choicest of all creation. Hashem has chosen me and therefore I am great! Garments declare who I am!" The main gift of garments is the honor they give you. A great man

once said, **מאני מכבודתא**, “Garments are my honor” (Shabbos 113b).

#### **YOU BELONG TO SOMEONE VERY IMPORTANT!**

You should practice thinking, “Hashem has made me great. Not only has He clothed me with the garments of a human being, but He has clothed me with garments that signify the greatness of the Jewish people.” Let’s say you’re putting on a *chassideshe levush*; you’re putting on certain *begadim* that you’re accustomed to wear in your *kehilla*. So you should do it with a great sense of achievement. It’s an opportunity, a *zechus* to demonstrate to yourself “I’m an *eved Hashem*.” That’s what you’re doing it for. Are you putting on these *begadim* because you want to show that you belong to a certain *kehilah*? No, that’s not what you’re demonstrating. You want to show that you belong to this and this *rebbe*? That’s not the purpose! You belong to Someone much more important than that; you belong to Hashem! And the more thought you add to your *kapoteh*, to your round hat, and to whatever else you wear to demonstrate that you belong to Him, the greater you become.

You shouldn’t let any opportunity go to waste. You have nice *peyos*, and you want to hang them around the front of your face. All right, that’s beautiful. Of course, it makes you look good; there’s no question about it. But you should utilize them as a catalyst to think and to say with your mouth, “I’m doing this to show that I belong to Hashem.” Don’t be ashamed; as much as possible, when nobody’s listening say it. And each time you say it, you’re impressing into your mind more and more the perfection of character that you came into this world to achieve.

#### **THE KING OF ENGLAND’S DUNCE CAP**

Now there’s not much labor involved there. But it’s still a tremendous achievement just to think these thoughts. If during the day you take a nap or you took off your hat for some other reason, you’re wearing something else, a *yarmulkeh*, 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

sixty or eighty 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.

And suppose you don’t own a black hat. But you have 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. 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 set into it. We wouldn’t 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 at Jew with a *yarmulkeh*, or with a black hat, 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 someone who is proud to belong to the *Am Yisroel*, proud to belong to Hashem. That’s what a Jewish head covering is.

#### THE GLORIOUS TICHEL

And it doesn’t have to be a hat. A woman who is going to put on a *sheitel* or *tichel*, or even a snood – it doesn’t matter; whatever she’s wearing that’s what she’s doing; she’s demonstrating that she’s an *eved Hashem*. The holy women who wear their hair covered at all times; their arms are covered, 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*. And they should be thinking that. And if you want to be really great, then don’t just think the words. When nobody is listening you can say, “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, the glory of demonstrating that I am an *eved Hashem*.”

So how could we waste such an opportunity? Why shouldn’t we utilize that? When you cover your head, when you put on your *tzitzis*, your belt, your jacket, your white shirt, you can combine these two great principles, the *avodah* of the mind, and the *avodah* of *chitzoniyus*, of *malbushim*. And if you do that

every time, you should know that you're living a rich and successful life. I say "every time;" even once in a while is a tremendous achievement! And if you do it always then *ashreichem*!

### CITY OF EMPERORS

And once you understand what *bigdei kehunah* mean, so it's not only *your* clothing that becomes an opportunity for greatness. When you see any Jewish man with a black hat, you understand that he is a prince wearing a crown. You should practice that on the street. "That man is crowned with *ateres tiferes* – a crown of glory – a crown that is more important than the most expensive diadem." Imagine you decide right now, you're thinking, "From now on whenever I put on my black hat, or I see my children, my little boys putting on their *bar mitzvah* black hats, or if I'll see people wearing black hats in the street, so I'll teach myself to understand that they are crowns of gold and diamonds." It's 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. And once you've learned this lesson, you can do the same when you see the Satmerer *chossid* wearing his hat, your neighbor wearing *tzitzis*, or your wife wearing her *sheitel*. Now you're already living a life of success! You're combining the greatness of *chitzoniyus* with the perfection of *pnimiyus*, and achieving the true greatness of the *bigdei kehunah* even without the *Beis Hamikdash*.

And therefore, we begin to understand what a great loss it is to live our lives without thought, *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 that tonight: *אלמלא בגדי כהונה*, if not for the *bigdei kehunah*, *לא נשתייר מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שְׂרִיד וּפְלִיט*, we wouldn't be around anymore. And it's true; we're only around because of our dedication to Hashem in *chitzoniyus*. But when you live a life of understanding how to utilize the *chitzoniyus*, you'll see that there's no end of opportunities for greatness. 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 stimulate your mind to live a rich and successful life.

#### WE WALK THE SAME PATH AS THE KOHANIM

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 נשתייר מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שְׂרִיד וּפְלִיט. 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*, *because we're doing the same today*. 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*, teaching us the important lesson of utilizing the exteriority to dedicate ourselves to Hashem.

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 who by means of their dress, demonstrate that they belong to Hashem, are participating in the great *k'vod shamayim* of teaching ourselves and proclaiming to the world as well, that there is one Hashem and that we are forever dedicated to Him. And He gives us, just for that alone, the merit of continuing to exist in this world forever and ever. אלמלא בגדי כהונה לא נשתייר מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שְׂרִיד וּפְלִיט. 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, and to become profoundly influenced by the lessons of the *bigdei kehunah*, the more we preserve the existence of the *Am Yisroel* forever and ever.

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

**Q:**

**In *kiddush* on Friday night we say that Shabbos is *zeicher l'yitzias Mitzrayim*, a remembrance of our going out of Egypt. In what way is Shabbos supposed to remind us of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*?**

**A:**

Shabbos shows that Hashem chose *us* to be His people. We, the *Am Yisroel*, were chosen to be the people who testify to the truth of *ma'aseh bereishis* by keeping Shabbos. "*Atem Eidai*," Hashem said. We are His witnesses in this world who testify to the truth of His existence and to His creation of the world from nothing. That's our job in this world, to never back down from testifying to Hashem's creation of this world from nothing. And the most fundamental way we testify to that truth is by keeping Shabbos.

Now *when* were we chosen for this job? We were chosen in *Mitzrayim*. At *Yetzias Mitzrayim* Hashem chose us. שלח את בני – "Send out My son," Hashem said. That's the first time Hashem said that. It was at *Yetzias Mitzrayim* that Hashem called the *Am Yisroel* "My son." He chose us in *Mitzrayim*. And he chose us for what? שלח את בני ויעבדוני – "Send out my nation so that they should serve me." So it was at *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, that Hashem chose us to serve Him. It says that openly. "Send them out to serve Me." So it was at the time of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* that we were chosen for this job – to celebrate Shabbos and thereby testify to the *briyah yesh mei'ayin* and to the *chesed Hashem* and *chochmas Hashem* that is so evident in the *ma'aseh bereishis*. And that's one of the reasons why we mention *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in *kiddush* Friday night.

TAPE # E-229 (October 2000)

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