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PARSHAS PEKUDEI

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT" L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

CLOTHED IN DIGNITY

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Part I. Adam's Clothing

Dressing the Kohanim

One of the procedures that took place at the inauguration of the Mishkan in Parshas Pekudei was the dressing of the *kohanim* for their first service in the newly constructed Mishkan. **וְהִלְבַּשְׁתָּ אֶת אַהֲרֹן אֶת בְּגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ** – *And you should dress Aharon in the sacred garments...*, **וְיָבֵהוּ לִי** – *and then he will be fit to serve Me...*, **וְיָבֵהוּ לִי** – *and his children too you should bring near and dress them in tunics...*, **וְיָבֵהוּ לִי** – *and then they shall be fit to serve Me* (Shemos 40: 13-15).

It was the **וְהִלְבַּשְׁתָּ**, the act of being dressed in *bigdei kehunah*, that was one of the important preparations for the *avodas haMishkan*. And not only for that one time in history; putting on the *bigdei kehunah* was a prerequisite for serving Hashem in the Beis Hamikdash forever and ever.

The Non-Kohen Kohen

Now if you learned a little bit, you know that when it comes to the *avodas Beis Hamikdash* only a *kohen* is permitted to do it. If a *zar*, a non-*kohen*, approaches to do the *avodah* – even if he’s a big *talmid chochom* and he follows all the *halachos* – it’s nothing at all. The whole thing is profaned; it’s rendered *possul*.

But there’s something more that is not as well known and that is that even a *kohen*, a kosher *kohen*, loses his status as a *kohen* if he’s not wearing the *bigdei kehuna*. **בְּזִמְן שֶׁבִגְדֵיהֶם עָלִיָּהֶם כְּהֻנָּתָם עָלִיָּהֶם** – *When a kohen puts on his garments, that’s when he’s a kohen* (Zevachim 17b). But if he’s missing even one of the prescribed garments, so he’s not a *kohen*; he’s a *zar* now.

Vestis Virum Reddit

Now this seems simple to us – it’s the procedure of the *Beis Hamikdash*, one of the technicalities – but we have to understand there is some *sevara* to it too. And it’s a *sevara* based on the age-old principle of ‘*vestis virum reddit*’ – it’s Latin for ‘the clothes make the man’. But it’s not merely how the world understands it, that a person’s clothing causes others to perceive him in a certain way. That’s true too but we’re going to see now that clothing can actually change who a person is – they can transform him from a plain person into a servant of Hashem.

Imagine you take a plain man and you put on him an *itztela derabanan*; you put a garment of a *rav* on him and make him sit up front in the *shul*. So he becomes a new man! It’s *maasim b’chol yom*. He acquires a certain compassion for human beings, a certain responsibility for the community. Otherwise he’d walk his selfish way in life. But the clothes, the rabbinical garb, bring out his good character. It doesn’t mean that the clothes are the only thing, of course not, but absolutely, it has a big effect on his *neshama*.

From Bust to Best

I say *lehavdil* a *rav* but it’s true of everybody. Human beings are what their garments are. If you take a pair of ragged jeans and put it on a human being, he becomes a bum. And even though it’s only external clothing – “it’s just clothes,” he says – but the truth is that *inwardly* he becomes a bum too! The garment evokes a certain way of thinking, of behavior.

And if you’ll take that ragged bum off the street and put a uniform on him, he’ll be a changed man. That’s why when you’re walking on the street and you see a policeman in a blue uniform so to some extent you feel that this man is on the side of the law. It doesn’t mean that he’s going to withstand

big temptation if somebody offers him big money but ordinarily we feel confident that he is now on the side of law and order.

But the question is why should that be? We know that policemen are recruited from Bensonhurst and you can be quite certain that before they had a uniform they were on the other side. So what is that now all of a sudden he became an upholder of law and order?

The Outside-In Process

The answer is the great principle that we spoke about many times which the Mesillas Yesharim taught us: *אֵת הַפְּנִימִיּוּת – A man's outwardliness affects his inwardliness.* And merely by putting on a certain outfit, a uniform, he assumes a certain responsibility. The clothes make him a different person.

That's the greatness of mankind, by the way. It doesn't matter who – brown, white, black, yellow, any color; mankind alone is innately endowed with noble emotions, with greatness of character. And a uniform is one of the ways of bringing man's greatness to the surface. Because if you put a blue uniform on a baboon it wouldn't accomplish much. But you see here a bum wearing a blue uniform on the street corner twirling his baton and now he's on the side of law and order. Yesterday he was on the same street corner breaking windows! Yesterday he used to walk out of the corner store with his pockets bulging! And now he put on a blue uniform and you trust him.

The Sugya of Clothes

And this brings us to the very important subject of clothing. Now, it doesn't mean 'important' in the way it's spoken about today. You know, sometimes when you're sitting in your home and you hear the lady of the house talking on the telephone and she's explaining to one friend after another how she is knocked out from running all over the city. She was looking for a coat but she just couldn't find the right thing. Of course in Brooklyn she didn't even try because she had to go to Macy's in Manhattan. "And there wasn't a thing there!" That's what she says. And you lose patience when you hear that because when you want to buy a suit you just walk around the corner and buy whatever they have there. At least I hope you do.

But the truth is that whether or not you should actually spend much time on choosing a garment, the *subject* of clothing, understanding the significance of the clothing we wear, deserves a great deal of time. It deserves a great deal of attention because it's an important and wide-

ranging subject. And so we'll begin by going back all the way to the beginning, to the first time that clothing is mentioned in the Torah.

Adam's Clothing

Everybody remembers the story of the first couple in Gan Eden, how **וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עֲרִמָם הֵם** – *when Adam realized that he and his wife were naked, so they sewed up fig leaves for themselves* (Bereishis 3:7). Adam and his wife understood that there has to be a certain amount of tzniyus, a certain amount of decency in the world. After all, without clothing you can't have a civilized society. It's impossible to function otherwise because mankind would always be distracted.

That's why all over the world nobody preaches nudity. Except the editors of The New York Times; they're the only ones. But among the sane people, there's no such thing. And so Adam and Chava, once they recognized their nakedness, they took leaves from a fig tree and they sewed them together into little belts, short skirts. Now a fig leaf is not a very fancy outfit but for Adam and his wife it was considered sufficient because it was enough to cover up their nakedness.

And that's how the styles would have been from then on. You would have gone to the department store to buy something the size of a few fig leaves. That would have been sufficient and it would have been included in the great legacy of Adam and Chava; the great ideal of tzniyus, of decency.

Hashem's Clothing

But Hakadosh Baruch Hu disagreed. "My children," He said, "that's not enough." **וַיַּעַשׂ ה' מַלְאָקִים לְאַדָּם וּלְחַוָּה בְּתָנוּת עוֹר וְיַלְבָּשֵׁם** – *And Hashem made for Adam and his wife tunics – it means long gowns of leather – and He clothed them* (ibid. 21).

And now Adam and his wife are walking around with tunics, long tunics, and maybe they were thinking, "Who needs it? What was wrong with our fig leaves? After all, decency is fulfilled by covering what has to be covered. And it's not cold. The weather is perfect so we don't need it to protect us from the elements. So why is Hashem insisting that we have to have full garments, full robes?"

Now, I'm sure they didn't leave this question unanswered because they had good heads and they understood that there was a lesson here. But we have to ask the question ourselves because we *don't* know. Why was Hakadosh Baruch Hu displeased with fig leaves? Because it wasn't enough tzniyus? You can be sure Adam and Chava understood tzniyus perfectly. Whatever was required for modesty, to conceal their bodies, they fulfilled.

A Higher Level of Dressing

But Hakadosh Baruch Hu came and taught them a lesson. “You’re making a big mistake,” He said. “You have to understand that clothing has a much more important purpose than just to cover up. I approve of what you did, but there’s a much more important purpose. The purpose of a garment is not merely to conceal the body. The purpose of a garment is to reveal!”

Now, that’s a big *chiddush*. וְיִלְבָּשׁוּ – When Hashem clothed man for the first time it wasn’t to cover up; that was done already. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants much more than that. When Hashem tells us we have to be dressed, it means that clothing is for the purpose of demonstrating the importance of the wearer.

Clothing is to let yourselves know that you are unique in the universe, that you’re not just another creation, another animal. Imagine a man is walking almost naked in the fields. His *ervah* is covered but he’s almost naked. And he sees in the fields a donkey. Now, a donkey also has shoulders; a donkey has feet too. If a man would get on his front hands and legs, he could walk like a donkey too. So there’s a big danger, there’s a peril he might think that he is connected with a donkey in some way. It’s true he’s better than they are at surviving; he has a better head than a donkey. But still, he’s one of them. Today many people are saying that the donkey is our second cousin. What does the college man think after all? That we’re just a better edition of the gorilla. You’re just a more successful chimpanzee – those poor chimps didn’t make it.

The Tragic Error

And that’s a tremendous danger for the human race, to say we have any connection with animals. It’s the most tragic error in the world because it’s a degradation of the honor of mankind. The greatness of mankind becomes lost if there’s even the slightest idea of man being an animal. You see what happens. Animals have no principles, so why should men have principles? Those who follow Darwin have become animals. They behave like chimpanzees in the colleges. Today the colleges are places of jungles. Only I’m afraid it’s an insult to the jungle to say the colleges are like jungles. Animals behave better.

So how could Hashem demonstrate that man is the grand purpose of all creation? By very many demonstrations. But the most basic one, the most fundamental one, is by putting garments on him. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says that in order to demonstrate the superiority of mankind, you must be clothed. And that’s the way a human being must dress every day, with the

knowledge that his clothing is intended to demonstrate his greatness, his *gadlus haadam*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, “Don’t underestimate the importance of clothing. Don’t scorn what garments can do to transform a person who wants to understand the lesson they’re trying to teach.”

Part II. Man’s Clothing

Dovid in Hiding

Everyone remembers the story of how Dovid Hamelech was being pursued by Shaul Hamelech. Shaul suspected Dovid of being a usurper who wanted to take the throne, and so he was chasing him in order to execute him. And Dovid had to flee for his life into the wilderness and conceal himself in forests and in caves. **מְשֻׁכֵּל לְדָוִד בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בַּמְעָרָה תְּפִלָּה** – That’s a prayer he said in the cave (Tehillim 142). **לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוּל בַּמְעָרָה**, that one too (Tehillim 57).

So one day, Dovid was hiding in the cave and it happened that his pursuer, Shaul, also entered that same cave. He didn’t know Dovid was hiding there; he came in because he wanted to perform some bodily function and he was seeking a private place. And so he went deep into the cave all by himself and now he was right near Dovid – only that in the darkness he didn’t notice.

Good Intentions

At that time Dovid decided to take a certain step. He came close to Shaul and with his sword he cut off a corner of Shaul’s garment, a little snip of cloth, without saying a word. His intention was that after Shaul would depart, Dovid would show him how close he had been to falling into his hands and he didn’t harm him.

And that’s what happened. After Shaul had left and he was already quite a distance away Dovid stood on the top of a hill and he called out to Shaul and he showed them the edge of the garment that he had cut off: “See that Hashem delivered you into my hands and I didn’t harm you. I had you in my power and I did nothing. So you see that I’m loyal to you, that I’m not a usurper who intends to take your life and your crown.”

And Shaul said, “Now I see Dovid that you really are a righteous man, that you’re loyal to me. And I regret my hostility toward you and no longer will I pursue you.”

Now, Dovid didn't rely on that. He continued to remain in hiding but that's not important for us now. As far as we're concerned, that's the end of that story.

Ineffective Warmers

But actually it's not the end. Because there's another incident related at the end of Dovid's life that our Sages connect to this one. When Dovid was an old man – not very old; he was seventy – he became inordinately weak, unusually cold. **וַיְכַסּוּהוּ בְּבִגְדֵימָם וְהָמְלֵךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים** – *Dovid Hamelech became old, וַיְכַסּוּהוּ בְּבִגְדֵימָם – they covered him with blankets, וְהָמְלֵךְ דָּוִד זָקֵן בָּא בַיָּמִים – but he couldn't become warm.*

You know, blankets don't make you warm. Your body produces warmth, only that the blanket insulates; it keeps in your own warmth. But if you don't produce any warmth, blankets won't help; if you put blankets over ice, the ice won't melt because of the blankets. The blanket keeps in the heat the body produces. And Dovid, for some reason that nobody understood, his body wasn't capable of producing any heat.

It's true, he was already at the end of his life and therefore the vigor of his body was extinguished but it was still a queer thing. Even an old man has some body warmth, so why did it happen that these blankets didn't do their job of keeping Dovid warm? It's a question.

The Revenge of the Clothing

So the Gemara says in Mesichta Brachos (62b) that Dovid was being punished in his old age to remind him of an error he had committed many years ago when he cut off the corner of Shaul's *beged*. **כָּל הַמְבִיָּה אֶת הַבְּגָדִים סוֹף אֵינוֹ יִתְּנֶה מִהֶם** – *If somebody scorns garments he is going to be punished not to have use of garments.* That's the *psak* of Chazal: Because Dovid displayed scorn for a garment, therefore when he was old and weak and cold, he was punished so that the garments shouldn't help.

Now we have to study this statement of the Gemara because we're certainly not dealing with a simple case of disrespect for garments. After all, Dovid considered it *pikuach nefesh*; it was a question of saving his life. Because here was an opportunity to demonstrate to his arch enemy that he had no intentions against him; and so it seems to us that he was eminently justified even in doing more extreme things than cutting off a piece of the garment.

And the fact is that Dovid felt regret right away. It states after Dovid had done this that his heart smote him because he had demonstrated disrespect to the *mashiach Hashem*, to the one anointed by Hashem. Dovid was loyal,

after all; he was loyal to the king because that's the will of Hashem. And so his heart smote him that he had treated the one chosen by Hashem with disrespect.

The Surprising Verdict

But what's the verdict of Hashem? Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "You have to know Dovid, at the time when you did that your heart smote you for stretching out your hand on the *mashiach Hashem*, but you have to know there's something more important than *mashiach Hashem*. And that's the greatness of mankind. And when you cut off the corner of that garment, you showed disrespect for this great principle. By disrespecting clothing you scorned the great ideal that demonstrates the sublimity of mankind.

Now, if you ask me, I think that Dovid Hamelech when he was about to cut off the corner of Shaul's garment, he knew all about this. If the Gemara says it, so don't think that Dovid didn't; he knew it beforehand. And he was debating it in his mind: "Should I go ahead and spoil a garment and thereby show a lack of awareness for this great gift of Hashem that separates man from all of the rest of creation? On the other hand maybe it's worth surrendering this principle in order to show Shaul his error because he thinks I'm his deadly enemy."

It was a big question in his mind. But finally Dovid came to a *psak* that for *pikuach nefesh* – and to save Shaul from a fatal error he was making – it had to be done. And so with great temerity, with great bashfulness, he cut into the garment.

Perfection of the Mind

And yet, even though it was done for such an important consideration, Hakadosh Baruch Hu passed sentence on Dovid and many years later when he was lying on his deathbed and he was deathly cold, they covered him with garments but the garments didn't provide warmth. That was his punishment for disrespecting clothing.

But it's not *stam* a punishment the way people think. There was a certain purpose in that; it was a process of perfection of the mind that Dovid had to undergo. In order to erase the sacrilege from his mind – after all there's a sacrilege to cut that *beged* – he needed a *kaparah*.

He couldn't leave this world with a perfect record until this sacrilege was erased from his mind and so as he was lying on his bed, shivering under the blankets, he reminded himself, "Oh, Dovid! You remember what you once did! It's true it was necessary to cut that *beged* to save your life but you have to know that in your mind you cheapened the value of a garment.

Because it's not just a garment that you scorned by cutting off a corner; you scorned the symbol of mankind's greatness! That's what it means to be disrespectful of garments."

More Than Bal Tashchis

Did you ever realize that? To tear a garment wantonly, everyone knows it's *bal tashchis*; we criticize such a person. But that's nothing yet. The Torah wants us to understand that to disrespect a garment is considered trampling on man's soul!

Of course, we don't think so; to us it seems like exaggerated words. But that's only because we don't even begin to dream how important man is. And therefore this story from our nation's history teaches that this attitude is a perfection of the mind that Hakadosh Baruch Hu expects from us; to understand how important is the clothing that sets him apart from the rest of creation.

Learning to Get Dressed

We're learning now an entirely new way of understanding the subject of *begadim*, of what it means to wear clothing. Because according to what we're saying here, when we get dressed in the morning, when you put on your shirt and pants, or your dress, whatever it is, we're demonstrating that man is not just another animal. You're announcing to the world – at least to yourself – that man is capable of infinite greatness.

That's how to put on clothes: "I'm making a protest against all the universities of the world, all the professors, all the evolutionists. You are all blind maniacs! Shame on the world of academicians! Shame on all the colleges! You should close down and go to work. Go out and make an honest living instead of deceiving the world by your falsehood, that we're just animals. אָדָם יָצִיר בְּפִי שֶׁל הַקֹּב"ה. Man is great! Man is fashioned by Hashem's Hand. Every one of us is a masterpiece capable of greatness, of eternity.

And the most available expression, the easiest and most accessible manifestation of this principle is in our closets! Our clothing! Clothing is your dignity at all times! Like Rabbi Yochanan said קְדָאנִי מְכַבְּדוּתָא – *Garments are my honor!* (Bava Kama 91b). Garments declare who I am! I am a man! A human being! A man or a woman, human beings! It's a tremendous honor to be a human being! Clothing means that you have a *neshama*, that you have a soul in you. It demonstrates to ourselves that you and a horse are two different worlds.

The Cover Up

That's why you must wear full garments. People that show their bodies are nothing but human horses. 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 thigh, are walking. When people walk in the street today and they try to display as much of their bodies as they can, they should remind you of a horse. Even though you see a difference nevertheless the comparison is overwhelming. And so to show off your body means you're like a good police horse that's walking down the street flexing his muscles; his big legs, his big behind, and waving his tail.

And so the people who parade down the avenue in summer time with very little clothing on them, with short pants or short dresses, they're demonstrating how ignorant they are of man's role in this world. They have lost sight of one of the most important facts in the universe, the greatness of mankind.

Oh no! Cover up! That's the greatness of mankind. There's nothing like you. Even angels cannot compare to you. That's our tradition. Clothing is to show who you are. You have a *neshama* in you. You have greatness. You're a *tzelem Elokim*. You are so unique that there's nothing in the entire universe that compares to you.

Identifying as a Man

Now I know it's a new idea to most people but actually it's one of the oldest ideas of all. וְיִלְבִּישֶׁם – That's what Adam was told. "Clothing is not merely for *tznius* like you thought originally. And it's not merely to protect you from the cold or from the heat. Clothing is a demonstration, "I am great!"

When you get dressed, when you wear clothing, it's like saying, "I now declare that I am the choicest of all creation. Hashem has chosen me. I have unlimited potential, unlimited greatness within me!" הַקֵּיב אָדָם – *How beloved a man is by Hashem*, שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְצַלְמֵם – *that he was made in the image of Hashem* (Avos 3:14). How beloved a man is to Hashem that He gave us garments!

Part III. Our Clothing

The Pnyimus of a Priest

And so we come back now to the *bigdei kehunah* and we begin to understand how important they really were. Because it makes sense now

that they made the *kohen*! בְּזִמְן שֶׁבִגְדֵיהֶם עָלִיָּהֶם כְּהֻנָּתָם עָלִיָּהֶם – *If he's not wearing his clothing of kehunah, he's not a kohen.* When he puts on his *begadim* and he understands what they demand of him, that makes him most capable of being a *kohen*.

Of course it's not the sole incentive. Nobody is going to say that a *kohen* doesn't need anything to inspire him except the outward garments. He has to study the *halachos* of the *avodah* for years and years. And he has to spend a lot of time also thinking about the importance of the *avodah*, about what it means to be a servant of Hashem, what it requires of him. Absolutely, there's a lot of *pnimiyus* required to be a *kohen*. But the garments are capable of bringing out, of inspiring, of accentuating all of that *pnimiyus*, all of the greatness that's hidden inside of a him.

The Kohen's Demonstration

Because when the *kohen* put on his *begadim*, he understood what we're learning here that clothing is a demonstration. He was announcing, "This is the house where Hashem dwells and I am His servant." You know, a servant of the king *lehavdil* dresses in a certain way and that reminds him that he must be more careful than someone else. And so when the *kohen* put on his *begadim*, and all day long too, he tried to be inspired by them.

Now, it could be he was thinking of other things too. He's not a *malach* after all; he's a human being. But still, the mere fact that he was dressed like a servant of Hashem, was already a tremendous success for him. The awareness that he is dressed *lechovod ulesiferes*, in glorious garments, makes him feel that he is a servant of Hashem. *And he actually becomes more of a servant of Hashem just because of that!*

That's a very important point: A *kohen* can rise to the heights required of him only when he is dressed in the *bigdei kehunah*. And it's an especially important point because it's an ideal that applies to all of us, *kohanim*, non-*kohanim*, all the time. After all, we are the *mamleches kohanim*, the nation of servants of Hashem; and just like the *kohanim* utilize their *bigdei kehunah* to achieve all the greatness expected of them, every ben Yisroel and bas Yisroel also can only live truly successfully if they utilize their clothing to bring out the greatness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave them.

Remnants of Garments

You know the Gemara in one place makes note that the *bigdei kehuna* are in one place called *bigdei serad*. Now *al pi pashtus*, we understand that name: *Bigdei serad* – garments of officiating. They were the special garments that a *kohen* had to wear in order to officiate in the Beis Hamikdash. But the

Gemara there gives us a deeper insight into these words: אֶלְמָלָא בְּגָרֵי כְהֵנָּה לֹא – If not for the *bigdei kehunah* nothing would have remained of us (Yoma 72b). That's why they're called *bigdei serad*; because *serad* also means 'a remnant'. It's only because of the *bigdei kehunah* the Jewish nation was able to survive; a remnant survived.

That's a very queer and puzzling statement. If not for the *bigdei kehunah* nothing would have remained of us? What's so great about the garments of the *kohen* that gives us the right to continue to exist as a nation?

Garments Forever

And the answer is what we're talking about here tonight. Because that ideal, that principle that we learn from the *bigdei kehunah*, that the clothing makes the man, was an eternal salvation for the Jewish nation. And it's especially for us because everything we said till now about the clothing of mankind – that it is intended to elicit an awareness of man's infinite greatness – that's only an introduction to the subject of a Jew's clothing.

Because it's true that חֲבִיב אָדָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְצַלְמֵם – Mankind must be aware always of that special gift, the special responsibility, that we are created in the image of Hashem (Avos 3:14). It's a great skyscraper of greatness! But when we come to Am Yisroel it's another much greater skyscraper on top of that one. Because the *mishnah* doesn't stop there; it goes on and concludes: Yes, man is beloved because he's created in Hashem's image, but חֲבִיבֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Yisroel are more beloved, much more than Adam*, – שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ בְּנֵי לְמַקּוֹם – *because they are called the children of Hashem (ibid.)*. And that means the Am Yisroel have a much greater obligation to listen to what their garments are trying to tell them.

Let's Get Practical

Now, right away, I would tell you a practical suggestion. Every morning when you put on your clothing, first of all think, "Hashem made me great. ׀וּלְבִישָׁם – He clothed me in the garments of *adam*, of a human being. Baruch Hashem, I'm not a cat or a monkey. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מִלְבִּישׁ עֲרוּמִים – *You clothed the naked*. You make us great, Hashem, by giving us the gift of clothes.

"But not only that! He also has clothed me with the garments of the greatness of the Jewish people. Ah ha! That's already something else, something much, much higher. Jewish pants are not gentile pants. Jewish dresses are not gentile dresses. And therefore my clothes have to remind me not only about my greatness as an *adam*, but also as a Jew."

It means that everybody, men and women, boys and girls, should at all times use their garments as a symbol to remind themselves that they are

kohanei Hashem. As much as possible, think about your clothing, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu put them on you as a sign to remind you that you are the greatest in creation, and that you have to live up to your *begadim*.

Black Hats and Tichels

So here's a man who says, "What does it matter to put on a black hat? I'm a *frum* Jew. My head is full of Torah. Who cares if I put on my head a gray hat or a yellow hat or even no hat? What difference does it make?"

The answer is that a black hat makes all the difference in the world because what a person demonstrates outwardly elicits from him a greatness that wasn't so forthcoming. A black hat means you identify with the best ones! Now make no mistake. It's not *penimiyus*. A black hat doesn't mean you gained all the greatness of the qualities that you earn only by years of study and thinking. And still, by putting a black hat on his head he has gained for himself a perfection, a glory, that would have otherwise been stifled.

A woman who wears her hair covered, same thing. It's the greatest glory for her and it elicits from her a wealth of perfection, of character, of glory. That's why every morning we make a *brachah* יְשׁוּעָה בְּתַפְאֵרָה – *He crowns Yisroel with glory*. The *bracha* is on putting on something on your head, a head covering, and it's important to utilize this opportunity of an exterior act. Have in mind now you're doing an act of demonstration that you're a servant of Hashem: "I belong to Hashem and therefore I crown myself with glory." What is the glory? The glory of demonstrating that I am an *eved Hashem*.

Crowns of Glory

If during the day you take a nap or you took off your hat, you're wearing something else, a *yarmulke*, and later you put on your hat again, utilize the opportunity: "I am putting a crown on my head. Even if I had a crown made of gold and diamonds it would be nothing compared to my \$80 black hat!"

Suppose somebody walked in here today and sat down and on his head was a diadem, a crown made of gold with diamonds set into it. We wouldn't take our eyes off of it. It's so beautiful, so glorious. Could be. But it's a dunce cap compared to your black hat or your *tichel*. A Jewish hat or *yarmulke* or *sheitel* is a crown of *tiferes*, of beauty and glory. עֲטֹרַת תִּפְאֵרֶת – it's a crown of glory for you.

Now, suppose you don't possess a black hat, just a *yarmulke*. Even a *yarmulke* alone is worth more than all the crowns of all the emperors that ever reigned with all their diamonds. All together, they're like paper hats

compared to your *yarmulke*. Even a small *yarmulke* is something. A *modeh b'miktzas* is also something. It's also glorious.

Royal Clothing

And that's the way to approach all of our dress. The women who have their arms covered at all times and they wear dresses that are a proper length, they should know they're doing a service to Hashem. Hakadosh Baruch Hu considers them like *kohanim* in their way. Don't think it's a small thing, that it's *agav orcha*, just one of the requirements of *derech eretz*. No! It's glorious! It's more than the ermine cloaks of sovereigns. The golden necklaces of the emperors are nothing compared to the garments of a plain *frum* woman who's dressed in a way that the Torah requires of them.

Suppose you do more? Here's a man who wears a *kapote*. He wears *peyos*. Very good! But utilize it! If you're wearing a *chassidische levush* and you're putting on certain *begadim* that you're accustomed to in your *kehillah*, you should do it with a great sense of achievement. What a great *zechus* it is to demonstrate, "I'm an *eved Hashem*." That's what you're doing it for. You don't want to show you belong to this and this *rebbe*; that's not the purpose, that you belong to this and this *kehillah*. No. *You belong to Hashem!* You should know that such a man is wearing *bigdei kehunah*. It's such an achievement that the entire world should be jealous of him.

But it's true for everyone. Every boy or girl who covers himself like loyal Jews, they're serving Hashem. The clothing is intended to make us *kohanei Hashem* and so why should we waste such an opportunity? Isn't it a shame if we don't utilize that? Every time you put on your clothes, every time you cover your head, even during the day to think about it. At least you should do it at once. If you do it always then *ashreichem*.

The Wake-Up Call

I'll end now by quoting a verse from Yeshaya Hanavi. I'm not saying that's what he means but I'm going to use this for my purposes. Yeshaya Hanavi is speaking to the nation and he says, עוּרִי עוּרִי – *Awake! Awake!* (Yeshaya 52:1). Everybody's sleepwalking through life. They put on their clothes in the morning and they're still sleeping. They don't know what they're doing.

So the *navi* says, "Please! Awake! You have a life to live! You have a greatness to live up to!"

But how are you going to wake up, that's the question. What's the catalyst to wake you up and keep you awake?

So the navi says, לְבָשִׁי עֹז צִיּוֹן – Put on your strength, O' Tzion, תַּפְאֲרֹתֶיךָ – put on the garments of your splendor. The navi is saying we have to put on clothing the way Hashem intended. You have to know who you are. First of all, you're a human being. A human being is very great! Appreciate the greatness of a man. Tzelem Elokim! Your garments remind you!

Wake Up, My People

But then keep on thinking more. “Wake up you sleepyhead! Because for the Am Yisroel, our clothing means even more than the rest of Mankind.” Our clothing must remind us who we are. We put on garments in order not only to protect our bodies from the heat and cold. We wear clothing to protect our minds from the outside world that comes into our minds; from all the foolishness that makes us forget our purpose in this world as *kohanei Hashem*.

And therefore we have to remind ourselves at all times, that whatever we wear, these are garments of glory for us. We are wearing garments of splendor, garments of self awareness. When we put on a shirt and pants, a dress, a sheitel, whatever it is, we do it with the pride and awareness that these clothes should elicit from us a greatness of the mind, of character. And that's לְבָשִׁי בְּגָדֵי תַפְאֲרֹתֶיךָ – that's how we wear the garments of our glory.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

Let's Get Practical

Growing Through Clothing

In this week's *parsha* we learn that clothes truly make the man, and that without *bigdei kehumah*, the *avodah* is invalidated! We learned about the greatness of clothing, how it teaches human dignity, but moreover, how it reminds us of our special status as servants of Hashem. This week, I will *bli neder* spend 30 seconds reflecting on this every morning as I get dressed.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

71 – The Gift of Clothing | **435** – Your Deeds are Forever | **E-42** – Robes of Splendor | **E-73** – Nobility of Exteriority | **E-117** – Garments of Glory

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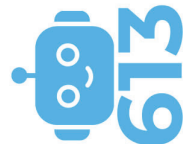
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QUESTION

There's a fashion in society now to wear baseball caps. I was wondering if you think someone should be allowed in the *beis hamedrash* wearing a baseball cap and davening in a baseball cap?

ANSWER

Should you be allowed in a *beis hamedrash* with a baseball cap? I'm not gonna say anything. It depends on the *beis hamedrash*.

But I'll say this. He shouldn't wear a baseball cap in the street either. A baseball cap with a team on it, the Yanks or the Mets, means you identify yourself with people who have no heads, people who underneath such a cap have empty minds. You're identifying with people who go to baseball because they want to see a fellow with a bat, and he slams the ball, and everybody goes wild on this 'tzaddik'. A home run! Such *meshugaim!* It's an empty world. You want to identify with that world?

And therefore, you should never wear a team's baseball cap, even outdoors, no matter what.

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