

And you shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon, your brother, for glory and splendor. (28:2)

When the *Kohanim* performed the *avodah*, service, in the *Mishkan/Beis Hamikdash*, they had to wear special vestments; otherwise the service was considered to be invalid. The commentators explain that the special nature of these vestments served as a medium for setting the *Kohanim* apart from the people when they performed the service. They were *Kohanim* on a mission to act as agents of the people in performing the Temple service. As such, they had to be devout, maintaining an exalted spiritual level, replete with exemplary moral and ethical standards – as evinced by their total demeanor. The unique nature and appearance of the vestments brought this idea home to the minds of the people. They viewed the *Kohanim* from a different perspective. The people were impressed with the vestments, which reflected a deeper manifestation of the spiritual distinction of the *Kohanim*.

Impressions matter. When one person first encounters another person, he forms a mental impression based upon a wide variety of characteristics. Physical appearance and apparel play a definitive role in influencing the mind of the average person. This does not mean that it is a proper judgment. We often judge a person by how he appears to us. In the area of spirituality, it goes much deeper. One must believe in the person in order for that person to influence him. To a great extent, a great *tzadik*, righteous person, is as effective as the people's acceptance of and belief in him. One must believe in his *Rebbe* for the *Rebbe's* blessing to achieve maximum efficacy.

There is an oral tradition that *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, once transmitted concerning the *Gerrer Rebbe, zl*, the *Bais Yisrael*, "I am capable of performing the same *mofsim*, wonders, as the *Bais Yisrael*. He is successful, however, because his *chassidim* believe in him." Efficacy, to a great extent, depends on belief. *Emunas chachamim*, believing in our Torah leaders, is a prerequisite for accepting a blessing. The following short vignette underscores this idea, presenting a penetrating message.

Two *chassidim* would visit their *Rebbe* annually on *Succos*. Each year, on the way to the *Rebbe*, they stopped at the same inn. One year, the innkeeper, a religious Jew, humbly approached them. "You know that I am not a *chasid* of your *Rebbe*," he said, "but I have a great favor to ask of you. My wife and I have been married for over ten years, but, sadly, we have yet to be blessed with a child. Please ask the *Rebbe* to pray for us." The *chassidim* agreed to do so, as they prepared to leave the following morning.

That morning, the innkeeper's wife went to the store to purchase a baby carriage and promptly began parading with it through the streets of town. When her friends gathered to wish her *mazel tov*, she explained that, actually, she was not with child, but would soon be blessed with a child. The holy *Rebbe* was going to pray for her. The two *chassidim* who were in the process of pulling out of town heard this interchange and became embarrassed, because they knew only too well that

prayers do not always achieve the desired result. They kept quiet and quickly left town before they became more entangled in the evolving situation. When they arrived at the *Rebbe's* court, they faithfully carried out their mission, relaying the innkeeper's request.

A year went by, and the two *chassidim* returned to the inn once again on their annual trip. How shocked and delighted they were to discover they had arrived in time for the baby boy's *bris*. Yes, the innkeeper and his wife had been blessed with a healthy child! The innkeeper was effusive with his gratitude, treating them as guests of honor. The next day, they continued on their journey. On the day of their arrival, one of the *chassidim* asked to speak with the *Rebbe*. He walked in with his head bowed and asked, "*Rebbe*, you did not even know the innkeeper," he complained. "I, however, have been coming here for the last twenty years, as my father came before me. The *Rebbe* knows very well that I have been married this entire time and have no children. I have made the same request of you, and my wife has yet to conceive. *Rebbe*, is it fair? Do I not deserve better?"

The *Rebbe* took his *chassid's* hand in his, looked deeply into his eyes and asked, "During all of those years, did you ever buy a baby carriage? How great was your faith in comparison to that of the innkeeper's wife?"

The *Rebbe's* prayers on behalf of the innkeeper's wife had greater efficacy because she believed in him so much that she considered his successful prayer a "done deal." Apparently, the *chassid's* belief in his *Rebbe's* ability to act as an intercessor was not as unequivocal.