

The Kohen shall don his fitted linen tunic, and he shall don linen breeches on his flesh. (6:3)

The *Kohen* was to wear vestments made of "*bad*" - linen. Linen grows from the ground in individual stalks, similar to human hair. *Rabbeinu Bachya* explains that the individualistic nature of each grain signifies the concept of *achdus*, unity. They reflect an inner harmony, a unified essence. As the grandson of Aharon, the *Kohen* serves as the paradigm of unity. Aharon *HaKohen* was the "*oheiv shalom v'rodef shalom*," one who loved peace and pursued peace." He reached out to his fellow man to generate inner peace by bringing him closer to *Torah*.

Horav Mordechai Miller, Shlita, notes that the Torah also refers to these vestments as "*Bigdei Lavan*," white vestments. Other than the fact that the natural color of flax/linen is white, is there any other significance to the "color" of these vestments? He cites the first *pasuk* in *Sefer Devarim*, in which the *Torah* refers to the geographical location at which Moshe rebuked *Klal Yisrael*. "*These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the wilderness, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan...*" *Rashi* says that there is no place that is named Tofel or Lavan. He contends that both words are references to the complaints about the *manna*: *Tofel* is a derivative of *tiflus*, deprecation or slander; and *Lavan*, white, is the color of the *manna*. Moshe reproached them for their complaints about the "white" bread from Heaven. In his commentary on *Chumash*, the *Avnei Nezer* offers a profound rationale for the *manna*'s white color. White is the color that contains within it all of the colors of the spectrum. It is missing nothing. One was able to experience every taste within the *manna*. Thus, the *manna* was white, reflecting its unified character.

White is the color of unity, representing total harmony. It is the color of peace, worn by the *Kohen*, the representative of *Klal Yisrael*, when he performs the service in the *Bais Hamikdash*. *Teshuvah*, repentance, is a journey into oneself, into one's inner being. *Teshuvah* is the search for the *chelek Elokai Mimaal*, the component which is a part of Hashem Above, the *neshamah*, soul. One attains the apex of *teshuvah* when he reaches the point at which he is in total harmony with himself. The *Navi Yeshaya* says, "*If your sins will be like crimson, they will become white as snow.*" *Teshuvah* is a process in which one "whitens" himself as he achieves total inner unity and peace.

White symbolizes simplicity because it includes all colors. It needs nothing else, because it has everything. One who has found that inner light, that white light, needs nothing. He is in perfect harmony with himself and with the Almighty. *Horav Miller* cites the *Talmud* in *Kesubos 17a* in which it states that when Rabbi Dimi came from Bavel to Yerushalayim he said, "Thus they sing before the bride in the west, no powder and no paint, and no waving of the hair, and still a graceful gazelle." The greatest beauty is that which does not need outer enhancements. True beauty shines forth from within.

The *Kohen Gadol* would enter the Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day of the year,

clothed in simple *Bigdei Bad - Bigdei Lavan*, white linen vestments. This was the zenith of his service, the most sublime moment of his year - and he was dressed in simple white garments. He represented the entire Jewish people - unified together in *teshuvah* and *tefillah*, prayer. All focused together on this one day towards one goal, one G-d. This was his *avodas Yom Ha'Kippurim*, a goal to which we should all aspire all year.