

Take Aharon and Elazar his son...strip Aharon of his vestments and dress Elazar his son in them; Aharon shall be gathered in and die there. (20:25,26)

Aharon merited a unique and exalted departure from this world. The ritual of stripping him of his clothes, so that his son Elazar could don them seems a bit enigmatic. What really is the significance of removing Aharon's clothes prior to his death? If the underlying purpose had been that Aharon could see his son attired in the priestly vestments of the *Kohen Gadol*, it could have been accomplished without Aharon being dressed and then having his clothes removed. Apparently, the actual removing of Aharon's vestments plays an important role.

Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita, cites the *Talmud Shabbos*, 153A, wherein Rabbi Eliezer says one should repent one day prior to his death. Since no one really knows when his *yom ha'missah*, day of death, will occur, Rabbi Eliezer is really telling us to repent every day of our lives. If the purpose of this statement is to emphasize the importance of repenting every day, why not simply say, "Repent every day!"

The answer, claims *Horav* Epstein, lies in the apparent distinction between a person's emotions and his cognitive perception. Some people recite *Vidui* as often as twice a day. They daily say *Tachanun*, which is a prayer that focuses upon man's acknowledgement of sin and its devastating powers. This does not have much of an effect on them. Their submission to physical and material temptations preclude them from perceiving the truth. On the day of his death man confronts his own mortality. He is at the end of the rope, time when excuses are no longer valid. At that point, he becomes regretful and remorseful, so that he can truly repent.

This is the meaning of the statement, "Repent one day before you die!" One should always sense that his time is limited. He does not know when his sojourn on this earth will come to an end, so that his *teshuvah* will be more meaningful. When an individual confronts his mortality, he must respond with sobering seriousness.

The effect of *yom ha'missah* has a more profound impact upon someone of Aharon *Hakohen's* caliber than on the average person. He understands the meaning of life and what one can accomplish with the time allotted to him. His life is an acknowledgement of this fact. He lives every moment *l'shem Shomayim*, with a purpose, for the sake of Heaven. Thus, his *teshuvah* is effected by this reality.

For a *tzaddik*, the end creates an almost paradoxical feeling. On the one hand, he experiences the usual fear and anxiety that accompanies a person at this moment. On the other hand, he experiences another type of fear - one of awe and excitement, almost a feeling of joy, as the *tzaddik*, who has lived a life true to *Torah*, of purity, sanctity and virtue, realizes that he has achieved a form of perfection. He has attained the tiara of success for a life well-lived.

Aharon earned the *kesser Kehunah*, crown of Priesthood. He secured this crown of distinction by living a life of distinction. He totally devoted his life to Hashem and His *mitzvos*, never deviating, never cross-examining Hashem's Providence, never disputing His *mitzvos*. He reached the summit of *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty. Hashem notified him that today was the most auspicious day of his life. Today he had achieved perfection. It was the culmination of a life of perfection. Today, the *kesser Kehunah* that was his would be transferred to Elazar, his son. Today, he would don the sacred vestments that he exemplified and observe as they were given over to Elazar. Aharon saw how not only his position in life was consigned to his son, but even his achievements, symbolized by his crown of *Kehunah*, were transmitted to him.