

"And you shall make sacred garments for Aharon your brother for glory and majesty." (28:2)

The *Torah* devotes an entire *parsha* to the preparation of the priestly vestments. Indeed, the *Torah* apportions more space to the "*Bigdei Kehunah*" than to the sacred vessels which were used in the *Mishkan*. Although the priestly vestments were not an inherent part of the actual service, the service could be performed only when the *Kohen* was wearing them. It seems apparent that the *Bigdei Kehunah* performed a sublime role.

The *Chizkuni* explains that *ase hsdc*, sacred garments, is the key phrase which defines the moral and spiritual striving represented by the priestly garb. The beauty manifested by these vestments was not of a mundane nature, but rather constituted a sanctified beauty. Clothing is a symbol of man's higher nature. By distinguishing between man and animals, clothing gives man special dignity. The *Kohanim* were, therefore, required to dress consistently with their exalted position, reflective of man's higher calling.

Horav M. Gifter, Shlita, suggests the following insight to be derived from the *Bigdei Kehunah*. Every virtue which man possesses is valued according to the individual's ability to "clothe" himself in this characteristic. Man's essence must mirror these qualities. The moral attributes, "*yiraas shomayim*," and character refinement manifested by the *Kohen* should be inherent throughout his entire essence. It should be reflected externally, as well. If these traits are not externally apparent, the *Kohen* is not suitable to entreat Hashem on behalf of *Am Yisrael*. The service of atonement demands one who personifies perfection.

Horav Gifter extends this idea to include all members of *Bnei Yisrael*. Every Jew is obligated to affirm himself as a member of a "*kingdom of priests and a holy nation*". This "appellation" is to be *Am Yisrael's* distinctive feature. To fulfill this noble goal we must invest ourselves with the "clothing" of a holy nation: *middos tovos* (pure moral characteristics), *Torah*, and *mitzvos*. Analogous to the *Kehunah*, our worthiness of the mantle "holy nation," is symbolized by our being "clothed" in our holy merit.