

## **You shall make vestments of sanctity for Aharon, your brother, for glory and for splendor. (28:2)**

Much of the *Parsha* is devoted to describing the *Bigdei Kehunah*, Holy Vestments worn by the *Kohanim*, their construction and materials. Clearly, great significance is attributed to the manner in which the *Kohen* presents himself. Veritably, it is not only the *Kohen* – indeed, every Jew must maintain a dress code in which his attire is modest and does not call attention to the person's body but rather to his personality and character. In order for one's personality to be noticed, he/she should not be detracting others by having them focus on his/hers clothes – or lack thereof. Jewish People also have a religious uniform: A *yarmulke/kippah*/head-covering, indicates our respect for Hashem. *Tzitzis* are the fringes that are attached to a four-cornered garment, and bespeak a Jew's affiliation with *mitzvah* observance. In addition, we are not permitted to wear clothing made of *shatnez*, a mixture of wool and linen.

Moreover, there is even a specific sequence to the manner in which one dresses, designating what one puts on first. The *Kohen Gadol* donned his Holy Vestments sequentially, with the clothing that covered the lower half of his body being put on first, then followed by the garments that covered his upper body. The final article of clothing that the *Kohen Gadol* put on was the *Tzitz HaKodesh*, Holy Golden Plate which bore on it the Name of Hashem. I once heard that this sequence teaches us an important lesson: One should not make use of Hashem's Name until after he has addressed the areas of physicality and the mundane, which are represented by the lower half of his body. Too many are ready to accept the mantle of G-dliness upon themselves, even though their personal "house", their private activities, are far from in order.

The *Tzitz* had the power to effect forgiveness for *Klal Yisrael's* public indiscretion. It could also return the *kedushah v'taharah*, holiness and purity, to the Sanctuary. Likewise, this is the function of those who represent the epitome of spiritual leadership – those who wear the spiritual *Tzitz*. They too, must be circumspect in keeping the ethical and moral discipline expected of a Jew. One who seeks to wear the mantle of the *Tzitz* must prepare himself for the personal and communal demands of this position.

While clothes certainly do not make the man, the concept of proper attire, in addition to the Jewish code of dress – attire that brings both honor and glory to the wearer and to Heaven – is central to Jewish life and values. The following "clothing" episodes each convey an important lesson, which I will leave for the readers to decide.

The first story takes place in Heathrow Airport as two Jews – one observant and one who was not – yet – observant, and who was sitting there having his donut and coffee. He was not wearing a *yarmulke* and made a point of informing his fellow traveler that his son in Yerushalayim was fully Torah-observant, studied in a *Kollel*, and had a large family all of whom were deeply committed to Hashem.

The observant Jew was obviously taken aback by this information. How did a *Kollel* fellow emerge from such a home, as represented by the father's unaffiliation with Torah observance? "It all happened because of clothes!" began the father. "My son was a top student in undergraduate school, where he excelled and seemed to gravitate to the study of law. He was wooed by a number of universities and in the end, settled on a prestigious school that granted him a hefty scholarship. Following graduation, he served a year of internship at the Justice Ministry.

"This was a wonderful experience. Our son excelled in all areas, and developed an impressive reputation. He seemed to have a very bright future ahead. Then *Rosh Hashanah* came along. You see, despite the fact that our family was unobservant, we did observe one tradition: our family got together *Rosh Hashanah* night for a festive meal. This event meant very much to our son. It was his family time. It was also his sole expression of a relationship with Judaism. When my son asked permission to take off from work, he was told, 'Listen, we have never had a Jew work here before. We will allow you to take the evening off, but please keep it to yourself!'

"When my son returned from his furlough, he discovered to his chagrin that his office had been moved. He was now in a small cubicle facing the alley, with no other view other than the garbage bins in the back. It was clearly a retaliation for "being" Jewish. He knew that they would never fire him because of religious reasons. They would just make his life miserable until he quit.

"Well, my son was not giving in, he would force the issue another way. He went to a store that sold *Chassidic* clothes and purchased the most attention-seeking garments he could find. You can imagine how his boss must have felt when he saw my son's refusal to bend and conform to his regulations. The next step was to grow a beard and *payos*, earlocks. Finally, at a certain point, the High Justice called him over and asked him to explain what it was that he was wearing. The response was that it was the garb of a Jew. 'What is a Jew – and why does he wear these specific garments?' was his immediate question. My son began to do research and learned the reason for, and significance of, every garment. His research led him to deeper introspection of his life, values and future aspirations. In short, he became observant, moved to the Holy Land, met a lovely girl from a similar background. Today, they are living happily ever after – all because of the Jewish clothes that he was compelled to wear."

The second story occurred at the Displaced Persons Camp where the **Klausenberger Rebbe, zl**, was interned following World War II. It was home to thousands of survivors of Hitler's diabolical assault on Judaism. The *Klausenberger* understood that even the staunchest believer would be hard-pressed to retain his heretofore unshakable belief. This was a cataclysmic destruction that not only took its toll on the physical body of the Jewish People; it had wreaked havoc with the spiritual/emotional compass of many survivors as well. Taking everything into consideration, the *Klausenberger* went about his business reaching out with love to all those who would listen.

One day, while walking in the camp, he chanced upon a young teenage girl who was walking barelegged. The *Klausenberger* made it his goal to minister to the spiritual as well as physical

needs of the survivors. He looked at the girl and, in a pleasant, soothing voice, asked her why she was not wearing stockings. The girl cried out that she had none. Therefore, she was relegated to walk around barelegged. The *Klausenberger* was of the opinion that this was a *tznius* issue that required immediate resolution. He immediately took off his shoes, then removed his long black socks – the only pair that he possessed – and gave his socks to the girl! He explained to her that for a man to walk around without socks was not an infringement on *tznius*. For a *bas Yisrael* to walk barelegged was unbecoming.

She never forgot this incident with the *Rebbe*. Indeed, she saved those socks for years. They represented to her the message: “Someone cares about my *neshamah*, soul.” As a result of this heartfelt act of caring, the girl remained observant, raising a beautiful family devoted to our Torah heritage.

More than half a century passed before she removed those socks from their special place. The *Klausenberger Rebbe* had passed away in *Eretz Yisrael*. No longer a teenager, and beset with health issues, she made the trip to the house of the *Rebbe*, where his family was sitting *shivah*, seven-day period of mourning. With tears streaming down her face, she presented the socks to the family – and related the story to them. They did not know who she was – but, now they would never forget her.