

## **Now you shall command the Bnei Yisrael. (27:20)**

Hashem commanded Moshe to have direct personal involvement regarding the next three *mitzvos*: the preparation of the oil; the designation of the *Kohanim*; the selection of those wise and talented people who would make the *Bigdei Kehunah*, Priestly vestments, and build the *Mishkan*. *Horav Shabsai Yudelevitz, zl*, interprets this *pasuk* homiletically. He cites an incident in which a student of *Rav Yisrael Salanter* came to the famous founder of the *Mussar* movement, stating that he would like to go to Germany to give *Mussar*, lectures in character refinement and *Torah* observance, to the people therein the hope that he would catalyze them to repent and mend their ways. *Rav Yisrael* responded by saying that the student's undertaking was admirable. He said, however, "I think what you are doing is truly noble, but have you finished Russia, that you are so bent upon going to Germany?" The student thought a moment and responded, "The *rebbe* is right. I will first focus on Russia." *Rav Yisrael* said to his student, "Have you completed inspiring Poland to repent, that you are prepared to undertake Russia?" "No, *rebbe*, you are right. I will concentrate on Poland before I go on to distant countries."

*Rav Yisrael* was not yet finished with his student. He turned to him and asked, "Have you addressed the lack of observance in your own community? Furthermore, what about your family? Are you so sure that all is well at home? Also, since we are getting close to home, have you introspected and confirmed that there are no areas to correct in your own personal behavior? Before you attempt to save the world, first verify that you have developed spiritually."

This is the meaning of the *pasuk*. "*Veatah*," and you. First and foremost, one must mend his own areas of observance. His total demeanor should be paradigmatic, setting an example for others. Only then can he "*tetzave es Bnei Yisrael*," command others, reproaching them, showing them the way to a *Torah* life; marked by sincerity and sensitivity. If he follows this prescription, he may hope for success in his endeavor.

*Horav Ovadia Yosef, Shlita*, makes a similar observation regarding the *Eiphod*, apron. The *Torah* teaches us that the *Kohen Gadol* wore a garment that was similar to an apron. This was called the *Eiphod*. The *Eiphod* was attached by the *Cheishav Ha'Eiphod*, belt. The *Torah* says in *pasuk* 28:8, "*The belt with which it is attached which is on it, shall be of the same workmanship.*"

*Horav Yosef* explains that the *Torah* refers to children as the *begadim*, garments, of their parents. We find this analogy in the *Talmud Sanhedrin, 93*, as *Chazal* interpret the rebuke to *Yehoshua Kohen Gadol*, "*Take off the soiled garments from him.*" Does the *Kohen Gadol* wear soiled vestments? This must be a reference to the behavior of his sons, who married women who were unbecoming to the stature and lineage of the *Kehunah*, and *Yehoshua* did not protest. He was, therefore, held in contempt.

This analogy presents the idea that, just as one is proud of and dignifies himself with the clothes he wears, so, too, are children reared with proper *derech erez*, who are G-d fearing and *Torah*

erudite, a credit to their parents. Thus, the *Eiphod*, which was a special vestment, implies a lesson regarding one's children. There is one caveat, however: Children are, for the most part, a product of the parents who serve as a standard for children to emulate. Regrettably, the converse is also true. The character refinement, virtues and observances of children are reinforced by the exemplification of the goals and aspirations of their parents.

The story is told of a father who was about to punish his son physically for eating bread without washing his hands. The father grasped his son's two legs in one hand while he held a stick which he was about to "use" on the boy's legs in the other hand. As the father was about to strike his son, the stick "slipped," and he instead hit himself on the hand that was holding the boy. The somewhat insolent son remarked to his father, "It is Heavenly justice that you struck yourself instead of me. For had I observed you washing your hands/*netillas yadaim* before meals, I would have followed suit. You are being reprimanded for what you have neglected to do."

This is the meaning of the *pasuk*. The "*belt*" refers to children; "*with which it is emplaced, which is on it*" who are dependent upon their parents for physical and spiritual sustenance; "*shall be of the same workmanship*," as the parents set the standard, so that they can expect their children to emulate them. The actions of parents serve as a foreshadowing of what they might expect from their children.