

**"And the Kohain that is the greatest of his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and whom has been empowered to wear the sacred garments, his hair he shall not let grow wild, and his clothes he shall not rend."
(21:10)**

The *Kohen Gadol*, who is exalted above the rest of the *Kohanim*, characterizes the most distinguished aspect of the *Kehuna* (priesthood). He receives his personal dedication through the anointing oil at the hands of the highest representation of the nation, the Sanhedrin. He has the authority to wear the sacred vestments. These vestments comprise the symbolic expression of the highest principles of life which should be mirrored by every Jew. He is no longer merely an individual Jew.

The *Kohen Gadol* must view his own sensitivities primarily from the vantage point of the "national" ideals which he represents. These standards must so dominate his life that expression of his personal emotions must be repressed if his feelings do not conform to the central ideology.

In the ideal of the nation there is no knowledge of death, as *Chazal* state "*a tzibbur does not die*". Reflecting the immortality of the community, the community member likewise has no relationship to death. Thus, the individual Jew is bound up with the undying nature of the community through his spiritually faithful mortal life. This special sphere of his life is not to be blemished, its quintessence may not to be shattered by the vicissitudes of life. He is to travel on a cheerful path of life which does not lead from existence to nonexistence, but rather from life to life, from immortality to immortality.

The *Kohen Gadol* is the ideal role model. Consequently, he may not allow his head even temporarily to bear the signs of neglect caused by grief and mourning. He may not show himself "rent" in his "garments," even at his most bitter loss. At the death of his dearest loved ones, he may not approach the body. When he is an *onen*, during the heightened period of mourning prior to the funeral, he must continue to perform the service in the *Bais Hamikdash*. He must always represent the joy inherent in life. The *Kohen Gadol* fosters the relationship with Hashem as the source of this joy through His presence in the *Bais Hamikdash*.

The *Kohen Gadol*, however, should not become so detached as to experience the loss of his closest relatives without allowing it to touch his heart. Therefore, although he may not publicly express symbolic grief at the gap left in his personal world by tearing his garments in the ascribed conspicuous place, he shall nevertheless tear it at the hem. Likewise, despite being permitted to perform the priestly service, he is not privileged to partake of the offerings. Despite the pain in his heart and the death on his mind, he has an enhanced obligation to transmit the joy which emanates from Hasheem.