

"And these are the garments they shall make." (28:4)

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, Shlita, cites a story from the *Talmud Shabbos 31a* from which we can glean a significant lesson regarding the impact of *Torah* study on one's life. A gentile was once passing by a classroom where a *rebbe* was teaching *Parashas Tetzaveh* to a group of young students. The *rebbe* was describing the beauty and splendor manifested by the vestments of the *Kohen Gadol*. The students and the eavesdropper were totally captivated with the detailed descriptions of the impressive garments. The gentile thought to himself, "I will convert to Judaism, so that I can become a *Kohen Gadol*. One day I will be the proud owner of these vestments."

He went off to Hillel, the pre-eminent sage of that time, with a request that he convert him, so that he could become the *Kohen Gadol*. Hillel responded that the gentile first would have to study *Torah* and become proficient with the many intricate laws of the *avodah*, service, in the *Bais Ha'Mikdash*.

The gentile began studying *Torah* in earnest. He was diligent and zealous in his studies. All went well until he came across the *pasuk* in *Bamidbar 1:51*, "*And the stranger that approaches (the Sanctuary) shall surely die.*" He wondered who was this "stranger" to which the *Torah* was referring. He was subsequently told that this law applied to anyone who was not born a *Kohen*. Even a Jewish king was prohibited from entering the Sanctuary! When he heard this, he concluded that certainly one who was not born Jewish could never have a chance to enter the Sanctuary. So, how could he ever become a *Kohen Gadol*? Nonetheless, he continued studying *Torah*, eventually converting to Judaism.

Horav Leibowitz asks a compelling question. Since the driving force in the gentile's study was his desire to become the *Kohen Gadol*, why did he not turn back as soon as he became aware that his studies would not lead to his goal? What changed his attitude, so that he was now willing to convert despite his inability to ever wear the priestly vestments of the *Kohen Gadol*? Was he not aware of the hardship and sacrifice that he would endure as a Jew without reaping his intended benefits?

Only one change had transpired in this young man's life, only one new factor had made the difference. He had studied *Torah*! This study had such a profound impact on him that literally his whole perspective on life changed. It initiated a new outlook, a new understanding, an altogether different attitude from that which he had manifested previously. He was now content to share his fate with that of the Jewish people, despite the lack of the special incentive which had motivated him earlier.

Now let us think about this. If a gentile who studied *Torah* purely for personal reasons became inspired to the point that he desired to convert, how much more so should *Torah* leave a lasting impression upon us? After all, we study *Torah l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. How do we assess the impact *Torah* study has on us? Perhaps the easiest, and probably the most effective, manner would be to focus on our peers who do not study *Torah*. Sometimes we do not fully appreciate how full our lives are until we look around and note the emptiness of those who do

not live as we do. The more we study, the more we see to it that our children and those around us study, the better individuals we become, both as human beings in general and as Jews in particular.