

They shall be on Aharon and on his sons when they enter the Ohel Moed... and they shall not bear a sin and die. (28:33)

The Torah emphasizes the significance of the *Bigdei Kehunah*, Priestly vestments, more so than any of the vessels of the *Mishkan*. The requirement to wear the *Begadim*, vestments, is such that, if any performance of the Priestly service is without the full complement of the vestments, the offending *Kohen* is subject to Heavenly death penalty. What more did these garments add to the *Kohen's* already exalted state of sanctity, so that without them his service would be considered to be defective?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, explains that character traits and abilities are of little to no consequence if one does not use them to express himself. A quality that remains concealed and internal remains but a potential that has yet to achieve fruition. For a *Kohen's avodah*, service, to the Almighty to achieve its potential, he must render honor and glory to Hashem to the best of his ability. Thus, his garments were to be constructed *l'kavod u'liferes*, for glory and splendor, so that even his garments were to contribute to expressing honor to Hashem. Without them, the service was invalid – because it had not reached its intended apex of sublimity.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* adds that this lesson is not limited exclusively to *Kohanim*, but to all of us, for the Torah (*Shemos* 19:6) exhorts us to be a *mamleches Kohanim*, “A kingdom of *Kohanim*.” Every act that we perform must be executed for the purpose of praising Hashem, and our *avodas HaKodesh* can achieve its potential only when it is expressed in every facet of our being. The Torah's perspective concerning our eternal garb is that it is far more than a medium for attaining honor and attention. Clothes are a form of expression through which our *avodas HaKodesh* can reach higher levels. It is for this reason that we dress appropriately – not in a flashy manner; immaculately and respectfully – not because it is in vogue, but because it is part and parcel of our *avodas HaKodesh*; an overall spotless demeanor plays an integral role in our *avodas Hashem*. (Calling attention to oneself bespeaks a lack of *tznius*, modesty),

To the public eye, the saintly *Rebbe* of Rizhin, presented an image of fabulous wealth and undreamed of treasures. All of his personal belongings, even his everyday cutlery, were fashioned from the most expensive materials. The buttons on his *bekeshe*, outer jacket, were made of solid gold inlaid with diamond; his pillowcase was woven from pure gold thread. While most people did not understand the reasons for the *Rebbe's* conduct, he was, nonetheless regarded as one of the *tzaddikim*, righteous persons, of his era.

Although according to all outward appearances, the *Rebbe* seemed to be enjoying the comforts of this world, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, the *Rebbe* afflicted himself terribly, denying his body even its most basic requirements. The following incident underscores this idea. The *Rebbe* would wear a magnificent pair of boots. Rumor had it that even the Russian Czar was envious of these boots. They were made of solid gold and studded with diamonds and other

precious stones. Is it any wonder that they were the envy of all who beheld them? On one bitterly frigid night, the *Rebbe* went out to be *Mekadesh levanah*, sanctify the New Moon. The *Rebbe* was outside in the snowy night for some time. When he left, the *chassidim* noticed blood on the ground where he had been standing.

An investigation of the *Rebbe's* boots revealed a shocking discovery – the *Rebbe's* boots had no soles. Whenever the *Rebbe* wore the boots, he was actually walking barefoot. Thus, when he stood on the freezing ground, his feet became stuck to the icy ground, causing them to bleed when he began walking. It was stories such as this one and so many others, that caused even those who had previously questioned the *Rebbe's* ostentatious lifestyle to bow their heads in deference, acknowledging that the *Rebbe's* every action was focused only *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven.

Prior to his *petirah*, passing, at the young age of fifty-four, the *Rebbe* declared, “Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi* testified about himself that he never derived any enjoyment from this world, not even the amount of a small finger. I testify about myself that I did not enjoy this world, not even the amount of *chut ha'saarah*, hairbreadth. The reason for my grand and royal conduct was purely *l'shem Shomayim*.”