

Moshe stripped Aharon's garments from him and dressed Elazar his son in them; then Aharon died. (20:28)

Ramban explains that the garments which Aharon *HaKohen* wore were the *begadim*, vestments, of the *Kohen Gadol*. Elazar, his son, was now being inducted into *Kehunah Gedolah*, High Priesthood, by wearing these vestments. Apparently, he had just concluded his Priestly service by: offering the *Korban Tamid shel bein ha'arbaim*, afternoon continued offering; burning the Incense; and kindling the *menorah*. Moshe brought Aharon up to *Har Hohor*, while he was still wearing the vestments. He then stripped him of them and dressed Elazar.

According to the simple *p'shat*, plain understanding, Moshe dressed Aharon in *tachrichim*, burial shrouds. He then removed Elazar's secular garments and dressed him in sacred vestments. Moshe basically acted as Elazar's valet, similar to what he did in honor of his original induction into the Priesthood, when he dressed Elazar in the ordinary vestments of the *Kohen*. The *Midrash*, however, presents us with a different take on the proceedings. Apparently, Hashem performed miracles for Aharon and Elazar. This is in response to the question: How was Moshe able to strip Aharon of his garments in the proper order, such that they could be put on Elazar? Are not the upper garments always on top, while the under garments remain undergarments? Hashem performed a miracle (indeed, Aharon was the beneficiary of greater miracles in death than in his life) for Aharon, whereby Moshe stripped him of his Priestly garments, and he donned "garments of the *Shechinah*" (miraculous, supernatural garments) in place of his original garments. Elazar was then dressed in Aharon's garments. Why did this all take place in such a miraculous manner? It was so that Aharon could be dressed in the *Shechinah's* garments, thus allowing for Elazar to be dressed in the regular manner of the *Kohen*.

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, takes this scenario a drop further. Can one imagine the overwhelming *nachas* that Aharon experienced when he observed his son dressed in his Priestly vestments? He merited to see his son fill his shoes (so to speak) and ascend to his position as *Kohen Gadol*. True, it was only for a few moments, just as Aharon was about to take leave of this world. Do we have any idea, however, of the value of a few moments? It was worth it if only to grant Aharon the unique *nachas* of seeing his son become *Kohen Gadol*. Knowing that one's legacy is being adhered to and continued is an invaluable, enviable gift.

We may not forget, says *Rav Zaitchik*, that just as there is overwhelming value to good, so, too, every minute of pain and suffering, regardless of its nature and intensity, is reckoned in Heaven. Indeed, when someone is experiencing unbearable pain, even a few moments seem like hours. The entire quality of one's life changes with pain. It makes sense that even a few moments catalyze incredible reward and expiate infractions that would otherwise be much more than we could handle.

Why was Aharon *zocheh*, warranted, such miraculous Heavenly intervention? What did he do that

was so unusual, so special? Furthermore, wherein lies the *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, which is the barometer for Heavenly reward and punishment? I think in keeping with what was previously postulated, whereby a few moments of extreme pain have a different perspective when viewed through the Heavenly lens, we might better understand Aharon's experience as he lay prepared to leave his mortal self. Aharon's merit, which rendered him worthy of the extraordinary *nachas* of seeing his son inducted as *Kohen Gadol*, wearing the very same vestments that he wore as he served in the *Mishkan*, was the same manner in which he accepted Hashem's decree that his two sons, Nadav and Avihu, die an untimely death in a conflagration before Hashem. Aharon just stood there – mute – not uttering a word, not expressing his feelings on his face. It was these few moments of intense pain that engendered the few moments of unsurpassed *nachas* and joy. *Middah k'neged middah*.