

The Kohen's Closet and You

Rabbi Maury Grebenau

The detail and regality of the priestly garments takes center stage in this week's parsha. The four vestments of the *kohen* and the eight of the *kohen gadol* are described in great detail. Materials such as woven gold and jewels were used in many of the garments. The Talmud (Zevachim 17b) tells us that if the *kohen* was not wearing his garments then he would be unable to perform the priestly duty. The garments were an essential part of the service of Hashem accomplished in the Temple. This service was in turn one of the three pillars that the world stands on (see Avos 1:2).

Rabbi Meir Simcha McDvinsk (Meshech Chochma) makes an important observation about the *bigdei kehunah*. He comments on the fact that the pasuk tells us that the garments were 'L'shem Ul'Tiferes' - for honor and glory. Normally, something can only produce honor if it is not necessary. A king is most honored by his crown since it is otherwise unnecessary. If something is entirely needed, then it normally can't give a sense of honor or prestige. The *Bigdei Kehunah* were an exception. They were needed, without them the service of the Temple could not be performed, and yet their function was to bring honor and glory to Hashem.

I think there is a general lesson here about our service of G-d. There is a duality present in our service of G-d that seems almost contradictory. We have 613 commandments, which are just that, commandments. We are not given a choice. They are not spontaneous acts of love from us to G-d. They are strictly regimented and controlled acts that are expected and demanded of us.

And yet, we find that when we perform the commandments, when we have a beautiful Shabbos with our families, when we are kind to those less fortunate, when we pray in a meaningful way, we feel close to G-d and spiritually alive. We feel that we are expressing a love for G-d and a willingness to sacrifice for our Creator. The very same acts which are absolutely necessary, are still acts which bring honor and glory to Hashem. There is a duality which exists in our life and our service of G-d which is reflected in the Temple service. We attain true fulfillment when we follow G-d's mater plan for each of us. We are really a source of glory only when we are doing that which is completely necessary and required. If we are able to take this perspective, I think we will have a chance at really committing ourselves to our Judaism while exuding joy and fulfillment for ourselves and our families.