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**הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל**

**Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha**  
Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

**Sefer Vayikra**  
The  
**Markovitz Family**  
Edition

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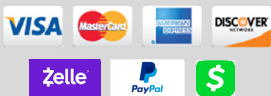
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————— This week's booklet based on Tapes: —————

#362 - Every Jew a Prince | #672 - Why Israel is Uppermost |  
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פרשת צו

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

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*A Life of Service*

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## Part I. Torah of Kohanim

### EVERYONE IS JEALOUS OF RABBI MILLER

In *Parshas Tzav* we continue our encounter with the *avodah* of the *kohanim*, the ones privileged to stand in the service of Hashem in the Beis Hamikdash. And we find ourselves inundated with the especial attention given to *kohanim*. Laws upon laws for the descendants of Aharon that place them on a pedestal; rules meant to regulate the behavior of the aristocracy. Now, I don't want to make you uncomfortable or jealous of me [*The Rav was a kohen*], but week after week, in *Vayikra*, *Tzav*, *Shmini*, and actually in most of *Sefer Vayikra*, we become more and more impressed with the great honor and privilege accorded to the *kohanim*.

I know that most of us here have already accepted the maxim of democracy, equality for everyone, so you don't want to think too much about it, but the truth is when the *Bnei Levi* were chosen to be the *Kohanei Hashem*, it was a great pride for them. The *kohen* walked with a swagger; he was on top of the world! It wasn't just a matter of being called to officiate at a *pidyon haben* or to benefit from the *terumos* and other *matnos kehunah*. It was a great prerogative, a great privilege, to be the servant of Hashem in His house. And I have no doubt that the rest of the *Am Yisroel* were disappointed and jealous. The *bechorim*, who had lost this

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privilege, surely were jealous, but I'm sure that *everyone* looked at the *kohanim* with envy.

### TRESPASSING ON HOLY GROUNDS

To be a *kohen* was an eternal privilege of closeness to Hashem. והיו לי הלויים - "And the Levites shall be Mine" (Bamidbar 3:12); and when Hashem says "Mine", you have to know, He means "Mine forever." The *medrash* says that. "Wherever it says לי, 'Mine', it's for all time; in this world and in the World to Come" (Vayikra Rabbah 2:2). And therefore, to be chosen as *kohanim* by Hashem "To be Mine" was the greatest of honors; an honor for eternity, that most of the Am Yisroel could only pine for.

And therefore, as we make our way through *Sefer Vayikra*, we understand that we are treading on holy ground. We are being taken on a tour of sorts through the Beis Hamikdash and the *avodas hakorbanos*, and we feel as if we don't belong. We have stepped over the boundary into a world of *kehunah*, a world of *kedushah*, and we tiptoe through *parshiyos Vayikra*, *Tzav* and *Shemini* as if trespassing on forbidden grounds.

And then, as we tiptoe through the Mikdash feeling out of place and alienated from all of these priestly laws, suddenly we bump our heads against something we weren't expecting. And it's a curious thing. Right in the middle of the laws of *kohanim* and their *korbanos*, we chance upon a *possuk* that veers from the topic, words that are directed at all of the *Am Yisroel*. כל הלב שור וכשב ועז - "Any fat of oxen, sheep, or goats, you shall not eat" (Tzav 7:23). It's a *possuk* that's telling us about *chullin*, ordinary meat, eaten in our own homes.

### MISPLACED PESSUKIM?

The Torah here, in a *parsha* dedicated to the *kohanim*, is talking to *Levi'im* and *Yisraelim* as well; men, women and children; anyone of the *Am Yisroel*. And we are told that we are forbidden to eat the *cheilev*, a certain type of fat, from these animals. And that's a question; what's *chullin*, ordinary meat, doing here in *Vayikra*, the *Toras Kohanim*? Why are we discussing our home kitchens in *Parshas Tzav*?

Now actually if we study the end of the *possuk*, we find that the Torah provides us with a clue: **כי כל אכל חלב מן הבהמה אשר יקריב ממנה אשה להשם ונכרתה הנפש האוכלת מעמיה** – “For anyone who eats the fat of an animal species *from which one may bring a fire-offering to Hashem*, the soul of the one that eats shall be cut off from its people” (Ibid. 7:23-25). So we see that the Torah adds a few words here: **אשר יקריב ממנה**, only the fats of animals that could be used as offerings are forbidden. A lamb, a calf, it *could* be brought on the *mizbeiach*, so its *cheilev* is *ossur*. But it's forbidden even if it's not a *korban*!

Now, at first glance, this reasoning is a bit difficult to understand. Just because the *kohen* working in the Mikdash was once required to remove the fats from a calf and place them on the *mizbeiach* in service of Hashem, what does that have to do with how I prepare the steak in my kitchen today? It's not a *korban* after all! You know that to remove the *cheilev* entails a laborious process called *treiberung*. You can't do it on your own. Someone has to be hired, someone who knows what he's doing, and we pay good money for that. And for what? We're not talking here about a *korban*, where the *cheilev* is offered up on the *mizbeiach*. We're speaking of ordinary meat here, of *chullin*. Why can't we eat the *cheilev* of ordinary meat? I don't know if it bothers you, but I think it's a good question.

#### WHAT'S WRONG WITH EATING BLOOD?

And in the next *possuk* we find a similar idea: **וכל דם לא תאכלו בכל מושבותיכם לעוף ולבהמה כל נפש אשר תאכל כל דם ונכרתה הנפש** – “And all blood shall not be consumed by you, *in any of your dwelling places*, whether from fowl or from animals. Any person who consumes any blood, his soul shall be cut off from its people” (ibid. 26-27). *In any of your dwelling places!* Even outside of the Mikdash, wherever the Jew, a non-Kohen, eats his ordinary meat, he must make sure to remove the blood from the animal.

So the blood of an ordinary *beheimah* is *ossur* for us. That costs us too! We're spending a lot of money on kosher meat today and some of it is because of the *melichah*, the salting, because we

can't have blood in our meat. Why now, when being taught about the *korbanos*, are we being told that we can't have *dam* in our meat?

#### WHY ARE WE PLAYING "BEIS HAMIKDASH"?

And the answer is not a secret. The Torah tells us; it states openly that the reason is because *dam* belongs on the *mizbei'ach*: כִּי נֶפֶשׁ הַבֶּשֶׂר בְּדָם הִיא וְאֲנִי נֹתַתִּי לָכֶם עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי הַדָּם הוּא בְנֶפֶשׁ יִכְפֹּר – “For the life of a person is in the blood, and I have assigned it for you to be put on the *mizbeiach* to atone for your lives, for it is the blood that atones for one's life” (ibid. 17:11). That's why in the Beis Hamikdash the blood can't be eaten, it's sacred. It has to be thrown on the sides of the *mizbeiach*. That's how the one who brings the *korban* gets his *kapparah*.

Now, by a *korban*, I understand. Its blood can't be eaten, it's sacred. But we're not eating *korbanos*! It's our ordinary food, our *chullin*, and the blood is not *li'chapeir*! We're not pouring the *dam* onto the *mizbeiach* to be a *kapparah*. And yet, it's forbidden. And so instead of pouring it on the *mizbeiach*, we're commanded על הארץ תשפכנו כמים - “Pour it onto the ground” (Devarim 12:16). And that's because *had* this animal been a *korban*, its blood *would have been* poured onto the *mizbeiach*. So we see again that we approach our *chullin* food the same way the *kohanim* approached their *kodshim* in the Beis Hamikdash. חַקַּת עוֹלָם לְדוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם בְּכֹל - מוֹשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם כֹּל חֶלֶב וְכֹל דָּם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ - “It's an eternal decree for your generations *in all your dwelling places*; you may not consume any fat or any blood” (Vayikra 3:17). And that's a question. Why am I playing “Beis Hamikdash” in my kitchen?

#### A KOHEN HAS TO LOOK GOOD

And what's even more remarkable is that it's not only regarding laws of the *korbanos* that we find this crossing of the boundaries. It permeates our daily lives as well. The *Kohanim* are commanded: אִמַר אֶל הַכֹּהֲנִים... לֹא יִקְרְחוּ קִרְחָה בְּרֹאשָׁם וּפֹאֵת זָקָנָם לֹא יִגְלְחוּ - “They shouldn't make a bald spot on their heads, and they shouldn't shave the edges of their beard, and in their flesh they shall not cut a gash” (Vayikra 21:5). A *kohen* has to look like an aristocrat; like a prince. And Hashem tells us why: כִּי -אֵת אֲשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם לֶחֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הֵם מִקְרִיבִים וְהֵיוּ קוֹדֵשׁ - “Because the fire-

offerings of Hashem, the food of their G-d, they offer, and so they must remain holy” (ibid. 21:6). They are servants of Hashem, and so they must look the part; their exterior appearance must be befitting of those who stand before Hashem in His service. The holy *kohanim* must always appear to others as men of distinction.

And yet, these priestly laws are repeated again, this time as a command for the whole nation. The *possuk* says: **לא תקיפו פאת** – “You shall not round off the edges of your scalp, and you shall not destroy the edge of your beard. And you shall not make a cut in your flesh for the dead” (ibid. 19:27-28). **בנים אתם להשם אלוקים לא תתגודדו ולא** – “You are children to Hashem your G-d, do not make gashes and do not make bald spots on your heads” (Devarim 14:1).

Here the Torah is repeating to the Am Yisroel the same commandment that was told to the *kohanim*. And the reason given is: **כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוקים ובך בחר השם להיות לו לעם סגולה מכל העמים** – “For you are a holy people to Hashem, and Hashem has chosen you to be His treasured people from all of the peoples on the face of the earth” (ibid 14:2). So what was said first to the *kohanim*, as an admonition because of **קודש**, so that “they should be holy,” that same thing is subsequently told to the Klal Yisroel *with the identical reason*, **כי עם קדוש אתה להשם אלוקים**, because you are a holy nation set aside for the service of Hashem.

#### SOME SECRETS ARE EASILY REVEALED

Now, I’m not capable of revealing the secrets of the Torah, but certain things are apparent even to our minds. Because it’s remarkable! The same commandments given to the *kohen* because of his prestigious status are duplicated almost word for word, for the Yisroel, for the most “simple” Jew. Each commandment! *Korcha*, baldness of the head. *Sritah*, cutting yourself. *P'as zekanam lo yigaleichu*, not to cut the corners of the beard. The Am Yisroel walks lock step with the *kohanei Hashem*!

Now of course there are reasons why things are repeated – we learn details from the repetition, new *halachos*. But right now

we're talking about the *pshuto shel mikra*. And the *pshuto shel mikra* is telling us something here. The intention of Hashem is evident in these *pesukim*, and that is of an entire nation patterning their lives after the laws of the *kohanim*. And if we pay attention to the words of the Torah, we'll see that this intention of Hashem began already at *Mattan Torah*.

#### HASHEM'S TREASURE CHEST

Before the Torah was given, Hakodosh Boruch Hu made a declaration to the Am Yisroel. Now, even the people who know this *possuk*, usually understand it as a poetic expression; something beautiful and noble, but that's about it. However it's not merely poetic and so we should listen well to His words: "I'm going to do something now," said Hashem, "that's going to change the nature of the entire people. The whole *Klal Yisroel* will become different now. If you will stand at Har Sinai and you say, 'Na'aseh v'nishma; Yes, Hashem, we accept You forever and ever,' then I'm going to make you into an exceptional type of people." והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים - "You'll be for Me a special treasure from all the nations; the whole nation will be forever chosen as My prized possession" (Shemos 19:5).

Now, *Am Segulah*, doesn't merely mean "I'm going to give you *semichah*; I'm going to give you a rabbinical certificate to hang on the wall and you'll be honored just by the title." No; it's much more than that. *Segulah* means that your nature is going to change. Your character will be entirely metamorphosed and you'll become an entirely different type of people. At Har Sinai not only did we adopt certain attitudes and promise to remain faithful to them, but we became an entirely different people than we were before.

#### THE JEWS ARE NOT A NATION

What that means is that our status in this world, our place in the history of the world was now changed. That's what Hashem was letting us know. "From now on it's going to be different. I'm going to raise you up and make out of you an entirely new type of people - an *Am Segulah*." Not merely that we are a good nation; not merely that we are the best nation. *We are no longer one of the nations of the world!* We were chosen and

elevated to a status that is far above the status of Mankind. That's a tremendous concept! A Jew is more than human - no matter what you're going to say in objection. That's what the Torah is telling us.

And what is our function as Hashem's treasured nation? Here come the following words which I wish to speak about tonight, because they are really the answer to the questions we asked earlier: ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים - "You're going to be to Me a Nation of Kohanim, וגוי קדוש - And a Holy People." אלה הדברים אשר - תדבר אל בני ישראל - Take these words and tell it to the Bnei Yisroel" (Shemos 19:6). "Make sure the people understand what I'm saying now very well," Hashem said to Moshe Rabeinu.

What we're hearing now is that these words, that we were to become now a *Mamleches Kohanim*, are of the utmost importance. Everything is important in the Torah, but these words are especially outstanding. Now, I don't imagine myself capable of explaining them properly, but one aspect of these words we'll talk about now.

#### THE MOST REMARKABLE PROFESSION

First we'll have to understand the word *kohen*. Like we said earlier, a *kohen* is one who is privileged to have been chosen for the most remarkable profession possible. And that profession is the service of Hashem. That's who he is, a *kohen*. He might be let's say a plumber as well, or maybe a shoemaker. But that's all *tafel*, it's tangential to his primary function in this world which is the service of Hashem. A *kohen* knows that his life is dedicated to Hashem. He was born a *kohen*, he lives his life a *kohen*, and he will take his last breath as a *kohen*. All the days of his life are a lifelong career standing ready to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And therefore when Hashem declared that He had chosen us to be His *Mamleches Kohanim*, His "Kingdom of Priests," He was charging us with the responsibility of *kohanim*. What it means is "a kingdom consisting of priests" - a nation in which every individual, man woman and child, is a *kohen* living a life of holiness in the service of Hashem.

And so, while we imagined that all of these laws for the Am Yisroel don't belong here in *Vayikra*, what we're learning now is that they *do* belong! The *kohanim* were given these laws because of their special status – and then, to emphasize our status as *Kohanei Hashem*, Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to all of us as well, “You too, all of you, are my *Mamleches Kohanim*, and are to act in the same manner as my *kohanim*.”

#### DON'T WAIT FOR BAMIDBAR

And so we come back to *Sefer Vayikra*, and we see the laws of the *kohanim* in a different light altogether. Because we understand that whatever is said about *kohanim* is a hint for what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants *us* to be. Now maybe you never heard this before, but you should take it seriously – it's not just talk. **וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְּלַכַת כְּהֹנִים** means that whatever you're going to hear about the *kohanim* in *Sefer Vayikra* – the whole *Vayikra* is called *Toras Kohanim* because it deal with the laws of *kohanim* – don't think that it's only for *kohanim*. Don't sit back during *kriyas hatorah* and wait for *Bamidbar* and *Devarim*, for the parts that you think are more suited to you. No, no; *Vayikra* is for you! It's there to be utilized as a lesson, as model for every person in the *Am Yisroel*. When Hashem said, “You'll be a *mamleches kohanim*,” it means, “I'm telling you how *kohanim* have to behave, what duties they have and what privileges they have, and you should know that I intend that you should study them and emulate these principles.

Now, I want that to sink in because these words are not a *mashal*, not mere words. You're hearing here a fundamental truth of the Torah and if you didn't know it before, now is the time. And that is the great lesson of *Mamleches Kohanim* – that we are the *Kohanei Hashem* of this world. The rest of the world, all the nations of the world, make their way through the days of life, fulfilling their purpose of being the **משפחות האדמה**, nations whose purpose is *this* world. And we appreciate that; we don't hold it against them. We need the Italians and the Irishmen. We need the construction workers and garbage men; we *want* them to be busy with the *adamah*.

Yet, while the *umos haolam* are engaged in living in this world, solely for this world, we the *Kohanei Hashem*, spend our days living in this world - we have plumbers and truck drivers too - but we do it all while standing in the service of Hakodosh Boruch Hu as if we were *kohanim* standing in the Beis Hamikdash.

#### IT'S NOT POETRY

And in order that it should be clear that the expression “a kingdom of priests” is not merely a poetic declaration but an actual status, Hakodosh Boruch Hu commanded the Am Yisroel in the same priestly laws as the *kohanim*. Just like the *kohanim* are commanded to zealously guard their dignity, so too are we commanded not to abuse our bodies with gashes; we are forbidden from making bald spots on our heads and from cutting the corners of our beards. And all this because we are acting out in our own lives, in our own homes, the same function that the *kohanim* act out in the Beis Hamikdash. The *kohanim* have one function and that is to serve Hashem. And we the *Mamleches Kohanim* have that same exact function.

And because we are *kohanim* too, Hakodosh Boruch Hu tells us: “If this animal would have been offered up to Hashem, the *cheilev* would have to be removed and brought up on the fire, and the *dam* sprinkled on the sides of the *mizbeiach*, before partaking of the meat. And so, even when it's *chullin*, ordinary meat that you're eating you must also remove the *cheilev* and the *dam*.” Even though your own personal *shechitah* is not an *avodah* of a *korban* - you're merely standing in the kitchen preparing supper for your family - Hashem tells you that you are to treat it like an *avodah*, because the *Mamleches Kohanim* is always standing before Hashem in His service.

And therefore, just like the *kohen* who was working alongside the *mizbeiach*, we can't eat the *cheilev* of our *beheimos*. And the blood that would have been sprinkled on the *mizbeiach* had this animal been a *korban*, we spill it out to the ground. The preparation of our food, reminds us that we don't have the same function as the *mishpachos ha'adamah*! Our *shechita* is not merely

*shechitas chullin* – it’s an echo of the *shechitas kodshim* that took place in the Beis Hamikdash.

### NO ROMPING ON TABLES

And that’s why the Am Yisroel always understood that when you sit around the Jewish table it’s like sitting around the *mizbeiach*. זה השולחן אשר לפני השם. The Jewish table is called a *mizbeiach* (Chagigah 27a). It sounds like a queer thing to say, but it’s not just words. In the Jewish home if the children were playing in the house, romping around, and a boy sat on the table for a moment, the mother would shoo him away; “Off the table! You can’t sit on a *mizbeiach*!” That’s how it used to be. A man told me that; he said his mother used to drive him off the table. “A Jewish table is holy,” she told him.

The table in a frum home is holy, it’s a *mizbeiach*. Not only because you eat *kosher* food, and feed *aniyim* at your table. It’s not only because you say some *divrei Torah* at the *seudah*. Of course we do that too, all that is important; but understanding that your table in the kitchen is a *mizbeiach* is much more than that. It’s a reminder that as much as possible, all of what you do in the home is to be done in the service of Hashem. So when you sit at the table, you’re thinking of ways, opportunities to speak about Hashem; to praise Hashem, to praise frum Jews, to praise the Torah, to praise the Torah communities. Not just that you make a token donation to the cause by saying *Boruch atah Hashem*. That too is good but a nation of *kohanim* does much more than that. As much as possible you’re thinking about Hashem while you’re eating, and you’re serving Hashem like a *kohen* thinking about Hashem while serving at the *mizbeiach*.

## Part II. Every Jew a Kohen

### THE KIYOR AT THE SIDE OF YOUR BED

And so the person who recognizes his place in this world understands that he is really living his entire life in emulation of the *kohanim*. As much as possible, from morning till night, you keep in mind that you’re a *kohen* making your way through life as

a servant of Hashem. And that's why in the morning as soon as you get up you pour water over your hands. What's the point, what's so important about *neggel vasser*? Listen to this carefully. The Rashba (Teshuvos HaRashba 1:191) says that *negel vasser* is for the purpose of showing that we are *Kohanei Hashem*. That's why when you wash your hands in the morning, you use a *kli*, a vessel, just like the *kohanim* used in the Mikdash when they prepared themselves for the *avodah*. עבודתו קודם הכיור ידיו מן הכיור - "You are like a *kohen* who purifies his hands from the *kiyor* before his service." Those are the words of the Rashba.

By the *kohanim* it says, ורחצו ידיהם ורגליהם בגשתם לשרת. The *kohanim* have to wash their hands as a preparation for tremendous opportunity to work in the Mikdash. But what does that have to do with us? Because we are emulating the *kohanim*. We are serving Hashem; that's our business in life. You get up in the morning and what do you do? You're a *kohen* washing your hands getting ready for *avodas Hashem*. And so the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning, before anything else, you prepare for the day with the most important information that you need. You remind yourself that you're a *kohen*, that you're a member of the *Mamleches Kohanim*. When you wake up in the morning, what are you getting up for? To go to work? To go to school? To be an accountant? No, you're getting up in order to serve Hashem all day long.

And therefore, as you wash your hands, don't just pour the water without thinking. What a waste! Think, better yet say, "I am doing this now because I am a *kohen*. Hashem has appointed me to be part of His קדוש וגוי קדוש וממלכת כהנים." Our entire lives are dedicated to serving Hashem. Whether you're in your office working, in the kitchen cooking, or cleaning diapers in the laundry room, you're serving Hashem. Besides for your *davening* and learning, you should know that whatever else you do is all part of serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You're an *eved ne'eman* and you're a *kohen*, and therefore the washing of the hands - the preparation for a day of serving Hashem is a very important symbol. And it should be utilized by you to make yourself aware

of your status. It's a shame to waste that glorious opportunity that you have every morning. And most people are missing it altogether. That first act of the day, if done with thought, sets the tone for the rest of the day - that everything you will do, you'll be doing as a servant of Hashem.

### THE HILL ON YOUR HEAD

And therefore we can carry the comparison still further. We read a few weeks ago about the *bigdei kehuna*. And the one garment that is especially described as being worn "for honor and for beauty" was the *migba'as*, the headgear, of the Kohen. ומגבעות ומגבעות - "And the headgear you shall make for them, for honor and for beauty" (Shemos 28:40). You know that the word *migba'as*, headgear, is related to the word *giv'ah*, a hill, an elevation. And that's because the Kohen appears taller because of his *migba'as*. It added to his height, to denote his superiority as a servant of Hashem. He wore this crown of "honor and beauty" to demonstrate to everyone the importance of his service and his pride in being able to serve Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

You know, once upon a time the whole Klal Yisroel didn't wear hats. But everyone knew that the *kohen* wore a *mitznefes*. They knew that, and it meant something to them; there was a tinge of kosher jealousy there. And so the Am Yisroel said, "If the *kohanim* wear a *mitznefes* why shouldn't we?!" And so little by little the *mamleches kohanim*, the whole Am Yisroel, began to cover up their heads *because they understood that as much as we can emulate the kohanim*.

### THE REAL PSHAT IN "SHIVISI"

And so when you cover your head today; when you put on your hat, your *yarmulke*, what you're doing is walking in the footsteps of the Jews of ancient times who knew that they were *kohanim* too. And if you wear a *sheitel* or *tichel* you can add that thought as well. As often as you can you should be reminding yourself - if nobody is listening say it with your mouth - that you're identifying with the *Mamleches Kohanim*. Even though you are not a *kohen* serving Hashem at the *mizbeiach*, but you are serving Hashem *no less* in your home, in your kitchen, at your

place of work, or on the street outside. You are a part of the *Mamleches Kohanim*, and that means that wherever you are, and whatever you're doing, you're standing in front of Hashem in His service. That's the real *pshat* in תמיד השם לנגדי תמיד. Don't tell me that you're picturing the letters of Hashem's name all the time. You don't need the letters - you are *actually* standing before Him.

When we study the fact that *kohanim* wear special garments, we understand that *every Jew* is expected to look different in his garments. Now I'm not saying right now what you have to wear. If you're from a certain neighborhood or from a certain group that wears let's say long cloaks or you wear black hats very good, very good. Black hats by the way is a very good thing; if you're able to emulate that practice in order to identify with the Torah community, it's a greatness. But that's not my subject right now. Because whatever it is, the point is that a decent Jew must be distinctive in the way he dresses; he has to be dignified in his dress. A *Yisroel* cannot wear jeans for instance. Like it says by the *bigdei kehuna, l'chavod u'li'siferes*, he has to dress conventionally, in an honorable way. If he'll wear jeans let's say, or patched or torn clothing for the purpose of looking like a bum so he's ignoring the model of the *mamleches kohanim*.

#### A PROFESSOR ACCOSTS RAV MILLER

So you'll say what's the sin? And I'll tell you - it's the lack of understanding of our status in this world! I met an Orthodox Jew in the street one day. I was walking in the street and a man accosted me - I was frightened. He looked like a bum! He was wearing a cap, a queer kind of cap, and queer clothing. And then I recognized him as an Orthodox college professor. I can't blame him really; he's among bums all day long so he has to camouflage himself so they should think he's one of them. But that's not how Hashem wants us to be! He wants us to look different because we are the *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh* - we're a holy people like the *kohanim*.

*Kohanim* you know are called a holy group of people. ויקדשתו - "And you should make him *kadosh*" (Vayikra 21:8). It's a commandment that we have to give a certain deference to a *kohen*.

We recognize that he is holy because he is a servant of Hashem and we therefore accord him a special respect. So you're sitting at a *seudah*, and there's a waiter there. So he's can't just serve one, two, three, whatever the seating order is. No, he knows the *din* that *כהן נוטל חלק בראש* - "The *kohen* is served first." That's a *din* in the *gemara*, the *kohen* comes first. The *kohen* gets the first aliyah at *kriyas hatorah*, that you know already. But not only when it comes to an aliyah; even when it comes to eating, he's also first.

In every matter, we give respect to the one who has been chosen as an *eved Hashem*. *V'kidashto*, we treat him with respect because he's holy to Hashem. Because of his status, his function in this world as the servant of Hashem we accord him privileges and distinctions of honor. *כי את לחם אלוֹקִיךָ הוּא מְקַרֵיב* - He's serving Hashem, and that's why *v'kidashto*, that's why you honor him above all others.

#### YOUR HOLY SPOUSE

And now, when we think about these words we hear an echo of the words *קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיֶיךָ* - "And you, the *Am Yisroel*, should be *kadosh*" (ibid. 19:2). Not only is a *kohen* a *kadosh*, but every frum Jew is *kadosh*. What does the word *kadosh* mean? It means set aside, set apart for Hashem, something that's connected to Hashem.

Every Jew is *kadosh*; it says that openly in the Torah that we're a *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh*. And so, when you deal with your fellow Jew, you have to watch out what you say. Of course, when you deal with a *goy* you have to watch what you say as well, but it's not the same at all. Your wife is *kadosh*, your husband is *kadosh*. You cannot just hurl words against each other recklessly. Be careful what you say! You have to know who you're talking to. Would you talk like that to a *kohen* in the Beis Hamikdash?! You have to respect a *kohen*, and you have to respect the *Am Kadosh*. And just like a *kohen* is treated with an especial dignity because he is holy to Hashem, that same respect and honor should be given to our fellow Jews.

## ENCOUNTER WITH GREATNESS

So you have to practice up on these truths. You see a fellow Jew, and you say under your breath, “There goes a holy person, one of the *goy kadosh*.” That’s how to think when you pass a Jew in the street. It’s an encounter with greatness, with *kedusha*, and it’s important to get that into your head. And it will only happen if you train yourself to think these thoughts; “That man is holy; he’s from the *Mamleches Kohanim*.”

But not only do we have to consider our fellow Jew a *kadosh*, but we have to consider ourselves as *kedoshim*. Just like a *kohen* has to be careful with his *kedusha*, you’re always reminding yourself, “I’m part of the *goy kadosh* of Hashem; I’m set aside for *avodas Hashem*.”

And so, since you’re always standing in front of Hashem, you must begin to train yourself to do as much as you can *l’sheim shamayim*. Little by little you train yourself to think about Hashem in whatever you are doing. And so, when you serve supper to your husband, to your family, why not? You’re a good frum wife, a loyal woman; you’ll say, “Certainly I serve my husband supper. What else should I do? He’s my husband. Any loyal wife would do this.” But now we’re seeing that that is not enough. Your job in this world is to be more than a wife who is loyal to her husband, and to her family. Because while you are doing all of these “mundane” activities, you are doing them with the intention that you are from the *mamleches kohanim* and that you are serving Hashem.

## FLIPPING THE PANCAKES

And that’s what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants from you. That you should become more and more *kadosh*; more and more set aside for Him *in your thoughts*. And that means that as much as you can you try to do things *lisheim shamayim*, which means that you’re aware that you’re serving Hashem. So you stand at your stove just like a *kohen* stands at the *mizbeiach*, putting onto the fire things to burn up to Hashem. And he’s *מהפך בעינורא*, he’s turning over the fats and pieces of the *korban* for Hashem. And you’re standing there at *your mizbeiach*, your stove, turning over

the pancakes, and you're serving Hashem no less than a *kohen*. You're thinking these thoughts; that you're serving Hashem right now in your kitchen like the *kohen* serves Hashem in the Mikdash and the status of your home is elevated to a place of the service of Hashem.

Now people will say, "Certainly I'm an *oived Hashem*, certainly. But that's only part of my life; I have to do other things too. I have a job, I have a family." And the answer is, no. **וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ לִי מִמְּלַכַת כְּהֹנִים** tells you that whatever you are doing in life, you're still a *kohen Hashem*. Look, a *kohen* can also get a job; he also has a family. But he's still a *kohen*! So you have to go to your office, to your store, whatever it is, to make a living. But you're still a *kohen Hashem*. You have to take care of your children, feed them, bathe them. But that doesn't in any way affect your status. You're part of the *Mamleches Kohanim* and you must keep that in mind always. Hashem took you out of Mitzrayim to be His servant and nothing can change that fundamental truth of your purpose in this world. A *Yisroel* can never change his function in life.

#### BANGING NAILS L'SHEIM SHAMAYIM

And so, even if you're a plumber or a carpenter, and you're busy all day long, you should know how important it is for you to keep this in mind. Every time you bang in a nail - of course you have to concentrate on doing a good job too; you might bang in a nail incorrectly and then you're being paid for nothing, you're a *ganav* - but in addition to doing your best on the job, you have to add the thought, "I'm doing this because it's the will of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. I have to work, I have to make a living, I have to get married, I have to support a wife, I have to support my children." Of course if you have a rich father-in-law who's willing to support you, then you could sit in a *kollel* all your life; and even the *kollel* man has to be reminded to keep Hashem in his thoughts always. That's exactly how we have to think and that is the motivation that is chiefly prized by Hashem.

And so it doesn't matter what you do, who you are. You could be a dentist, a shoemaker or an errand boy - whatever it is, that's all incidental to what you really are. Because your chief

profession is that of being part of the *Mamleches Kohanim*. Now don't think it's just a *mashal* and a pious *drasha*. No, Hakodosh Boruch Hu expects us to take all the hints in *Vayikra*, the *Toras Kohanim*, and expand on it with your own mind in many other directions.

That's your business in life. And therefore as much as possible, in everything you do, you should keep in mind that you are serving Hashem. And everything you do, at home, at work, on the street should be motivated by this awareness. Now it doesn't mean that everything must be done that way or else you don't do it. We are human beings and we try our best. We aspire to be *kohanim* as much as possible and therefore if we could add an additional intent to the things we do, and even say something to that effect, we train ourselves to be more and more *kadosh* and we fulfill our function in life as a *kohen*, a *kadosh* who is set aside for Hashem.

When you allow this thought to enter your mind and you gradually continue to practice it, so it begins to take a part in all of your actions, as a share in your thoughts. And after a while you'll find that part of your intentions in whatever you do is *lisheim shamayim*. You start by thinking and speaking about *lisheim shamayim* and about being from the *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh* and it's all not real, you're a hypocrite. But that's the best hypocrite in the world because after a while it begins to penetrate and it becomes a genuine intention that participates in all of your motivations.

#### THE DELICIOUS FRUIT OF PARSHAS TZAV

The great ideal, the important attitude that we are the *Mamleches Kohanim*, and that our lives, our behavior, and our thoughts, are to be patterned after the *kohanim* in the Mikdash, must be for us a seed that is planted in our minds, a seed that you must water and nurture all the days of your life. And the more thought that you put into this *avodah*, the more this seed of *Mamleches Kohanim* will grow in your mind into beautiful and delicious fruit. The more you water this ideal, by thinking about what we're speaking about tonight, the more you will understand

that everything that you do in your life, Hashem looks at it as if it is the *avodas hakohanim* serving in the Beis Hamikdash.

And as the years pass by, the ideal of being from the *mamleches kohanim* grows upon you and it becomes a stronger and stronger part of your personality until finally, before you realize it, it occupies a very big part in all of your motivations, and you actually begin to live life as one of the *mamleches kohanim*. And just like when the *kohanim* were chosen by Hashem it is written: והיו לי הלויים - "To be Mine," it meant to be especially Mine forever, so too the nation as a whole was chosen to be the *Mamleches Kohanim* with that same word. ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים - "And you shall be for Me a Kingdom of Priests," is the mark of eternal honor. "Wherever it says לי, "For Me," it shall never cease in this world and in the World to Come" (Vayikra Rabbah 2:2). It's a mark of distinction that we must live up to, to be always aware that all of our actions must be for the purpose of serving Hashem. And if we keep that in mind always, then we become the *goy kadosh*, the nation set aside for Hashem in eternity.

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## Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ttz"l

Q:

The gemara states that it's a mitzvah to speak *leitzanus* against *avodah zarah*. But isn't there a danger for a person who engages in *leitzanus* that it will become ingrained in his character?

A:

Every good thing has negative sides. Let's say you buy power tools, so you have to be very careful with them. If you have just a hammer and a screwdriver, it's not so dangerous. But if it's an electric screwdriver, you have to be more careful; sometimes you're not thinking, and it might go through your hand. Certainly, any big function that a person undertakes in life creates a bigger responsibility.

Now, *leitzanus* against evil is a very important mitzvah. Let's look at *ובעת הרעה מקרבך*, a mitzvah to destroy evil doers. So here is the *shamash* of Beis Din and his job now is to give *malkus*. It's a mitzvah in the Torah to give *malkus*. Isn't there a *sakana* that once he gets into the habit of hitting people, he might practice outside of Beis Din too? The answer is that they choose a man who is responsible, a *yarei shamayim*, and he'll do it only when it's a mitzvah to do.

And so, if Hakodosh Boruch Hu told us to use the *ko'ach* of *leitzanus* to ridicule the *sheker* of the outside world, it has to be limited only to that. That's our responsibility. The truth is, the more a person learns, the more he is in danger. Because learning can be utilized to do wrong things. Like a *chochom* once said: *אי לי אם אומר ואוי לי אם לא אומר* - is "Woe is to me if I say it, and woe is to me if I don't speak up." To say it may be dangerous, but not to say it may be even worse. And therefore we have to do what's right and make up our minds we're going to utilize it only in the proper way.

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