**Dvar Torah – Parashat Tetzaveh**

The first half of Parashat Tetzaveh outlines the laws and requirements concerning the *bigdei kehuna*, the priestly garments, which Hashem commanded that *Bnei Yisrael* prepare for Aharon and his sons for the purpose of "*le-kadesho le-chahano li*" – "to sanctify him to serve Me" (28:3).

The *Lev Samei'ach* interprets these two terms – *le-kadesho* and *le-chahano li* – as references to two different but simultaneous functions served by the *bigdei kehuna*.  The term *le-chahano li* refers to these garments' role with respect to the Temple service.  The unique, sacred quality of these rituals requires that they be performed with special garments that reflect honour and grandeur ("*le-Chavod u-le-tif'aret*" – 28:2).  In this sense, the garments are necessary as a precondition for the performance of the *avoda*.  But in addition, the priestly vestments are intended for the purpose of *le-kadesho*, to give honour to the *kohanim* themselves.  According to the *Lev Samei'ach*, the obligation of *le-kadesho* corresponds to the *mitzva* of "*ve-kidashto*" (Vayikra 21:8), which requires *Benei Yisrael* to treat the *kohanim* with respect in recognition of their special status.  The notion of *le-kadesho* requires the *kohanim* to themselves reflect this status by wearing special garments as they carry out their priestly duties.

            On the basis of this theory, the *Lev Samei'ach* explains why the Rambam classified wearing the *bigdei kehuna* as one of the Torah's 248 positive commands.  As the Ramban noted, donning the priestly garments seems to be but a necessary prerequisite for the *avoda*, and thus should not be afforded the status of an independent obligation.  The *Lev Samei'ach* explains that beyond their role of preparing the *kohen* for the *avoda*, the priestly garments serve as well the role of *le-kadesho*, of reflecting the unique status and stature of the priestly tribe, and, as such, wearing the *bigdei kehuna* indeed constitutes an independent obligation.

            The *Shulchan Arukh* (O.C. 98:4) rules that it is proper for one to designate special garments for prayer "similar to the *bigdei kehuna*."  In light of this comparison and the *Lev Samei'ach*'s analysis of the *bigdei kehuna*, we may perhaps assign a corresponding, dual role to the special garments that one should designate for prayer.  **On one level**, of course, these garments are to serve the purpose of *le-Chahano li*, as a demonstration of respect to the act of prayer.  **But additionally**, wearing special garments for prayer has the effect of *le-kadesho*, showing honour and respect to oneself.  This requirement ensures that at least three times every day, the Jew is dressed respectfully and appears dignified – something which can have a profound effect on his self-image and sense of self-worth.  **It reminds us that we, like the *kohanim*, are designated for an important role and higher calling, that we are to conduct ourselves as Hashem's loyal servants and devote our lives to the fulfilment of this sacred mission.**