



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN
DIRECTOR,
OU WOMEN'S INITIATIVE



Clothed in Kedushah

EZEKIEL 44:19

The haftorah in Book of Ezekiel does not only describe *who* serves - it describes *how they carry themselves* when they do. *וְלֹא יִקְדְּשׁוּ אֶת הָעָם בְּבִגְדֵי יָהֶם*, *They shall not sanctify the people with their garments.* It is an unusual phrase. The Kohanim serve in sacred garments - garments that elevate, that distinguish, that signal a transition into avodah. And yet, they are instructed not to allow those garments themselves to become the source of sanctity. The clothing may elevate the moment, but it cannot define it. The sanctity is not in what is worn, rather in those enrobed in the priestly garments.

The Radak, building on the Targum Yonasan, explains that if the Kohen were to mingle with the people while wearing his sacred vestments, they might mistakenly believe they had attained a measure of holiness simply through contact. The concern is not transfer, but perception. The people may come to think that kedushah resides in what is visible - in clothing, in appearance, in form. The garments are removed, to make clear that holiness is not embedded in externals, but in the person. Seeing a kohen as a vehicle for kedusha outside the mikdash and his holy dress teaches that holiness transcends space and outside vestiges. There is a kedushah tied

to role, to place, to ritual - and there is a kedushah that must live within the אדם עצמו. The first can be donned and removed. The second must remain.

The Navi teaches us that holiness is not only found in holy places but in mundane locations as well. The Kohen changes his garments - but he does not change himself. He steps out of the formal avodah, but the awareness, the discipline, the inner posture remains. The holy clothing may be removed, but the identity endures.

The haftorah continues: *וְאֵת עַמִּי יוֹרֵי בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֵל*, *They shall teach My people the difference between sacred and ordinary.* The Kohen is not only a servant in the Mikdash; he is a guide in lived life. His role is to help others discern, to recognize, to carry the categories of kodesh and chol beyond the walls of the Mikdash.

In our own lives, we move constantly between spaces, between moments of tefillah and the rhythm of the day, between structured kedushah and lived experience. We enter spaces that elevate us, and we leave them. The question is not whether we leave the sacred space. We all do. The question is what we carry with us when we leave. ■