

# DIGNIFIED DRESS

*by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

"[After the Temple was destroyed] tefillah takes the place of sacrifices. Therefore one must ensure that his prayers correspond to the service of a kohen in the Beis Hamikdash... A person should have special clothing for prayer like those of the kohen gadol" (Shulchan Aruch 98,4).

"Ready yourself to daven before the G-d of Israel" (Amos 4,12). Rav Kahana would put on elegant clothing before tefillah (Shabbos 10a). As illustrated in the above incident, a special garment for tefillah enhances one's focus on the importance of the meeting he is about to engage in during prayer. Not everyone can afford or organize himself to have special clothing just for tefillah. However, one should ensure that the clothing he wears for prayer is clean and dignified. Moreover, a talmid chacham should make sure that his appearance is respectable, in order not to degrade the honor of the Torah (Mishnah Berurah 3,4).

Chazal warn us that wearing one's clothing inside-out causes him to forget his Torah learning. The Shulchan Aruch rules that one should ascertain that all of his clothing is on properly. If one is wearing an article of clothing inside-out, he must turn it right side up before reciting Shemoneh Esrei (Mishnah Berurah 2:3-4).

## **Dressed in a Jacket**

"During tefillah we are meant to view ourselves as if we are standing before a king" (Rashi, Berachos 25a). If we were granted an audience with a king, we would purchase the finest clothes in honor of this occasion. The halachah, however, obligates us to dress as we would when visiting a distinguished person, and not an actual king (Mishnah Berurah 91,12).

"Before Rav Kahana put on his tallis he would first don an elegant cloak" (Shabbos 10a). In most parts of the world, a suit is considered honorable garb. Thus in many Jewish circles, it is customary for men to wear a jacket for prayer.

At times, a person wearing tefillin is unable to fit his arm back into the sleeve and will leave his jacket hanging. Certainly no one would conduct a conversation with a dignified person in such a manner. Therefore one should make an effort to wear a jacket that is big enough for one's tefillin to fit in the sleeves (Kaf Hachaim 91,26).

On a hot day, a person might be tempted to drape his jacket over his shoulders during prayer. Most people would not feel comfortable meeting a distinguished person in such a fashion, and one

should make an effort to put his sleeves over his arms for the duration of his prayers (Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach as cited in Mevakshei Torah vol. 3, p. 468). In extremely hot climates, if a person will be very uncomfortable wearing a jacket in the acceptable manner, he may wear his jacket on his shoulders (Rav Chaim Kanievsky as cited in Nekius V'Kavod B'Tefillah 11[4] and heard from Rav Azriel Aurbach, shlita).

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