

# A HOLY MAN

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

*...be to Me men of holiness...* (Shemos 23:30)

About this verse the Kotzker Rebbe emphasized the notion that The Almighty has plenty of holy angels, and we are asked to be holy men. What is that peculiar task of being a holy person?

At a lecture for beginners on Jewish philosophy a brilliant Rabbi - professor was wowing his audience with his erudition. Everyone was amazed by the depth and clarity of his logic and the sophistication of his language. In the middle of his presentation someone approached the lectern from the side and placed a glass of water there for him. He paused and acknowledged with a "thank you" before making a blessing and drinking. A certain individual admitted to being so impressed with what he had heard that he was willing to commit himself to take a great step forward in observance. When quizzed about what in particular he found so convincing, he said that what had struck him was the "thank you" he offered at the height of his highly intellectual diatribe. He hadn't forgotten the common touch of respect and decency.

Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl. told me that in Europe he visited Telshe where his older brother Shimon was learning in Yeshiva. He said that they were sitting one evening together at an inn and there were glasses of hot tea on the table. Clumsily he knocked his boiling tea onto the lap of the fellow seated next him. He said and demonstrated how that fellow was rubbing his leg to ease the pain and was calling out to the waiter repeatedly, "Please bring my friend another tea!" When he saw how developed the character of this young man was that he was more concerned about replacing the tea of the fellow that had just accidentally burnt his leg rather than being angry, he realized that he too had better venture to learn in Yeshiva.

Simcha Raz writes about Reb Aryeh Levin ztl. that when he passed away it was Friday and he needed to be buried that day since as a rule no lifeless body should be left overnight in Jerusalem. Friday morning the family asked the members of the burial society to hurry please with the digging of the grave so the burial could be completed in the hours before noon, leaving enough time for the multitude of friends and admirers who lived outside Jerusalem to return home before the Holy Shabbos! The burial society wished to delay the funeral for several hours so they would have enough time to dig the grave since the ground was hard and stony.

"As they stood at the entrance of the cemetery debating the matter, the watchman of the graveyard came over, to tell a strange tale: A few years earlier Reb Aryeh came to him in privacy and asked him

to prepare a grave next to the burial plot of his wife, to dig up the earth and turn it over, so that it would be all broken up and soft, "Why would you want me to do a peculiar thing like that?" the watchman asked him. And the good Rabbi had replied, "Who ever knows the time table of a man's life? Perhaps I may depart the world on a Friday, and they will find difficulty in digging the grave, since the ground is so rocky and stony; and the people attending the funeral will be unable to reach their homes before the Shabbos has begun. I pray you: do me this favor, and dig the grave as I have asked you... Let it be ready..." Discreetly, without letting anyone catch sight of it, the watchman had fulfilled the good Rabbi's request."

So appropriately sensitive is the one called "a holy man". DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).