

# TAKING THE RIGHT APPROACH

*by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig*

"Take Aharon..." (8:2)

The verse states that Hashem instructed Moshe to "take" Aharon and his sons to prepare them for consecration. Rashi comments that the "taking" was verbal rather than physical; Hashem was telling Moshe to convince them.<sup>[1]</sup> Rashi is explaining that when the term "lekicha" - "taking" is used in reference to a human being it indicates persuasion. When it is used in reference to an animal or object it refers to physically transferring the item. Why does the Torah use the term "kach" which required Moshe to persuade Aharon, and not simply "daber" - "speak" or "tzav" - "instruct"?

Hashem wanted Moshe to instill Aharon with the feeling that he was being appointed to this prestigious position because of his elevated status. If Moshe would have commanded Aharon to fulfill his Priestly obligation without persuading him to take the position, the honor and prestige of the position would have been adversely affected. The message Moshe conveyed would have been that the position was purely ministerial in nature, not possessing its own innate sense of importance. An honor can only be conferred upon a person with his acquiescence. Forcing him to accept it diminishes the importance of the person and consequently the prestige of the position.

18:2

## A Revealing Insight

Moshe brought Aharon and his sons forward and he immersed them in water" (8:6)

The Rambam in his Magnum Opus, the Yad Hachazaka, records the laws of the Kohanim in the section of Klei Hamikdash - Vessels of the Sanctuary. The sheer brilliance of his work is not limited to the content alone; his classifying and codifying of the precepts are unparalleled. Why does the Rambam see fit to include the laws of the Priesthood under the penumbra of the Vessels of the Sanctuary?

The Torah relates that Moshe immersed Aharon and his sons in a Mikveh. He then dressed Aharon with his Priestly vestments. Moshe anointed the Tabernacle and all of its vessels. Only then did Moshe dress Aharon's sons.<sup>[1]</sup> Apparently, they were waiting unclothed until Moshe completed anointing the Mishkan. Why did Moshe not clothe the Kohanim prior to anointing the Mishkan?

The Kohanim were a function of the Mishkan, akin to the vessels of the Mishkan. They drew their sanctity and sense of purpose from it. Therefore, prior to donning them with their vestments, thereby

completing their consecration, Moshe first consecrated the Mishkan. It is this message, that the Kohanim were vessels of the Mishkan, which the Rambam is conveying by including the laws of the Kohanim in the section of Klei Hamikdash.

1.8:6-13

## Royal Grooming

"...This is the thing that Hashem commanded to be done" (8:5)

Prior to fulfilling Hashem's instructions to consecrate Aharon and his sons, Moshe stated to Bnei Yisroel "zeh hadavar asher tziva Hashem la'asos" - "this is the thing that Hashem has commanded to do". He then proceeded to bathe and dress Aharon. Rashi comments that Moshe was informing Bnei Yisroel not to misconstrue his actions as self-glorification since they were ordained entirely by Hashem.[1] How could bathing and dressing another person be viewed as self-glorification?

The Rambam rules that it is prohibited for a Jewish king to serve as a bath-house attendant.[2] Moshe Rabbeinu had monarchical status; why did Hashem require Moshe to perform such acts?[3]

In the Purim story Achashveirosh asked Haman, "What shall be done to the man whom the king especially wants to honor?" Assuming that the king was referring to him, Haman proceeded to describe an elaborate reward that should be performed. Haman was mistaken and the honor was conferred upon Mordechai.[4] Why did Achashveirosh require Haman to degrade himself by serving as Mordechai's attendant? Compounding the difficulty is the Talmudic statement that Haman was required to serve as Mordechai's barber and bath-attendant.[5] Why would Achashveirosh demean his highest ranking officer in this manner?

Serving as the barber or bath-attendant of a person who requires grooming or bathing is demeaning to an individual of greater stature. Therefore it is prohibited to the monarch. If however, these acts are part of a service which confers honor upon or invests greatness to the recipient, the individual performing the service is perceived to be bestowing the honor or investiture. Consequently, the service is not demeaning.

Achashveirosh did not intend to demean Haman. Allowing him to be perceived as the individual conferring the honor upon Mordechai was meant to honor Haman as well.

Moshe was afraid that Bnei Yisroel would view his performance of this service as his unilateral decision to consecrate Aharon. He therefore informed Bnei Yisroel that the instructions were Divinely ordained. Moshe's performance of this service was not a contradiction to his monarchical status for he was being honored with the right to perform the investiture.

1.8:5

2.Hilchos Melachim 1:6 See Or Hachaim

3.Devarim 33:5

4.Esther 6:6-11

5.Megilla 16a