



# What is the UNIQUE CHALLENGE of our Generation?

RABBI MORDECHAI LIPSKIER



**I**N THE MID-1800S, Tsar Nicholas the *rasha* made many *gezeiros* against the Yidden. For example, he decreed that all Yidden must shave their *payos*. Policemen roamed the streets freely cutting off the *payos* of anyone disobeying the law.

The illustrious *chossid* Reb Hillel Paritcher was adamant about keeping his *payos* at all costs.

While walking on the street one day he was caught by a policeman who began wrestling with him to forcibly cut off his *payos*. Reb Hillel made it clear that the only way they would get to his *payos* was if they cut off his hands, *R"l*. A Jewish tailor saw the commotion and managed to convince the police to release the saintly old man. In gratitude, Reb Hillel promised the man “*imi bimechitzosi*,” that he would be together with him in the World to Come.

Several years later, Reb Hillel Paritcher moved to Cherson, passed away, and was buried there. A few years after that, an old man came to visit his

daughter in Cherson and suddenly fell ill and passed away. He was a simple man so the *chevra kadisha* buried him in what they thought was an ordinary plot, but when the snow melted several months later, they were shocked to see that he was buried right next to the *tzadik* Reb Hillel! They asked the local *rov* what to do and after some inquiring discovered that this man was none other than the tailor. Reb Hillel had made good on his promise.<sup>1</sup>

Another *gezeirah* was that all Jews had to wear hats with visors. Here, too, Reb Hillel had *mesiras nefesh* not to wear this hat. Even in the scorching heat, he always wore his traditional fur hat.<sup>2</sup>

Also in his teachings, we can see Reb Hillel’s passion for maintaining the *Yiddishe levush*—the uniquely Jewish way of dress.

“How can it be,” he once asked, “that Yaakov Avinu, the embodiment of *middas ha’emes*, should mislead his father into thinking that he is Eisav?! For someone like him it should have

been impossible to utter anything but the complete truth!”

The answer, he explained, is that clothing has a very powerful impact on a person; since he was wearing Eisav’s clothing, it had a negative effect on him.

Reb Hillel Paritcher’s passion and *mesiras nefesh* were so unique that it prompted *chassidim* to ask him where he got his strength from. He answered: “I have a manuscript written by the *tzadik* Reb Pinchas of Koritz, and if you would have this in your possession, you would also be as strong as I am!”

What was written in that note?

Today we are fortunate to have it printed in a *sefer* called *Imrei Pinchas*:<sup>3</sup>

After the Yidden left Mitzrayim, they merited to enter the 49 gates of *kedushah*, but the 50<sup>th</sup> gate was not attainable for them.

Why not?

While in Mitzrayim, they refined all 49 gates of *tumah*, and this made them capable of receiving the corresponding gates of *kedushah*. But the 50<sup>th</sup> gate

1 *Shemuos V’sipurim* Vol. 1 pg. 268.

2 See *sichah* of Simchas Beis Hashoeivah 5714 (1952) and sources cited there.

3 Section entitled Parshas Bo.

of *tumah* was beyond their ability to refine—had they entered that gate they would have remained stuck there *R”l*! And since they didn’t refine the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of *tumah*, they didn’t have the ability to enter the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of *kedushah*.

What is the nature of the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of *tumah*? Reb Pinchas explains that it’s the *kelipah* that fights against maintaining our *Yiddishe* name, *Yiddishe levush*, and *Yiddishe* language. True, the Yidden in Mitzrayim were able to maintain these things, but they didn’t have the power to really fight for them and overcome the essence of the *kelipah*.

Then he brings a shocking statement: In the times before Moshiach, however, Yidden will have the power to elevate even the 50<sup>th</sup> level of *tumah* and thus merit the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of *kedushah*!

Before Moshiach’s arrival, Reb Pinchas explains, the temptation to change from the *Yiddishe levush* will be extremely strong and many Yidden won’t be able to withstand the test, *R”l*. And in the merit of the Yidden who *will* stay strong in the face of this great test, the 50<sup>th</sup> gate will be overcome, Moshiach will come and we will merit the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of *kedushah*!

This, Reb Hillel told the *chassidim*, is *the* challenge of our times, and *we* have the unique ability to overcome it!

Fast forward to 5786 (2026) and it’s plain to see that the *kelipah* against the *Yiddishe levush* is stronger than ever.

### IS DRESSING PROPERLY ONLY OR MAINLY FOR WOMEN?

Naturally, the first thing we think about when it comes to this topic is the *tznius*

in women’s and girls’ dress. The truth, however, is that it’s also about men and boys. In fact, Reb Hillel spoke about the men’s dress!

The Rebbe once spoke about the idea that men must keep the *halachos* of *tznius* and not walk around in the “country” during the summertime in short pants. “A reduction in clothing indicates a reduction in *sechel*!” the Rebbe quipped.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it can be said that when a man keeps his shirt buttons adequately closed it’s an *eidelkeit* that breaks today’s *kelipah*.

Furthermore, Chabad men always wore hats and jackets, wherever they went, and especially during *davening*. This is based on *halachah* and on *minhag*. Today, there’s a lot of ignorance, leading to indifference, regarding this age-old practice. Many *yungeleit* are even under the impression that once they get married and start wearing a *tallis*, they no longer have to wear a jacket during *davening*.

### CONVERSATION AT A KIDDUSH

While sitting at a Shabbos *kiddush* in shul recently, I had a *geshmake* conversation with a *yungerman* sitting next to me about the fact that he walked from his shul to ours without his *kapata*. We discussed the importance of dressing appropriately in general, and that the concept of dressing for *davening* in the clothing you’d wear when going to the Rebbe is actually a *halachah*!<sup>5</sup> He was appalled that he had never been told this in yeshivah. He resolved to wear a hat and jacket for *davening*.

### RABBI ROSENFELD

One of my most memorable moments in yeshivah was when Rabbi Yossel Rosenfeld, *a”h*, Executive Director of Oholei Torah, came to the *beis medrash* on Troy Avenue to give us a talk. One of his simple, straightforward messages was that a *bachur* should already now prepare for the time that he’ll leave yeshivah.

“If you get a job in Manhattan and you need to ride the subway every morning,” he thundered in his inimitable style, “make sure to dress like a *chossid*! This will keep you in line and protect you from outside influences. By dressing differently you’ll be reminded that you *are* different!”

It’s absolutely imperative that *mashpi’im* talk and *farbreng* about these “simple” values. *Yiddishe* dress is the unique challenge of our generation and therefore the unique strength available to us. And the beautiful fact is: Our generation is not only receptive but also yearning, thirsting to hear all about it—as that *yungerman* at the *kiddush* demonstrated!

May all our efforts in this regard bring Moshiach *b’karov mamash*! ❧



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4 *Sichah* of Parshas Shelach 5723 (1963).

5 See Achronim to *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* siman 91.