

“WHAT WILL THEY BURY YOU WITH?”

When Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk -- also known as the Ohr Sameach -- passed away, he was given a special tribute. The shtender, the podium on which he prayed and studied, was buried alongside him.

Perhaps we cannot stretch the comparison too far, but lately Los Angeles has been inundated with publicity attendant to the exhibition of the treasures of King Tut. What did the ancient Egyptians choose to bury alongside their King that would show his worth? Vast amounts of gold, jewels, sculpture. All of these things would presumably accompany him to the afterlife and attest to his importance, his worthiness.

I imagine King Tut passing by the Ohr Sameach clinging to his humble shtender. “That’s what they buried you with?” he asks. “Where are your crowns, your glitter, your gold?” The Ohr Sameach would explain that he was not wealthy, but even if he were, his community would never have buried his wealth with him. It was useful in the first realm, useless in the next.

Perhaps at this point Elijah would come by in his chariot. “Ah,” says King Tut, “now that is a tribute. They buried you with your chariot.” “No” Elijah would answer, “they didn’t bury me. I just rode it away...”

“The Israelites” murmurs Tut, “I didn’t get them then. I don’t get them now.”