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Weekly Parsha

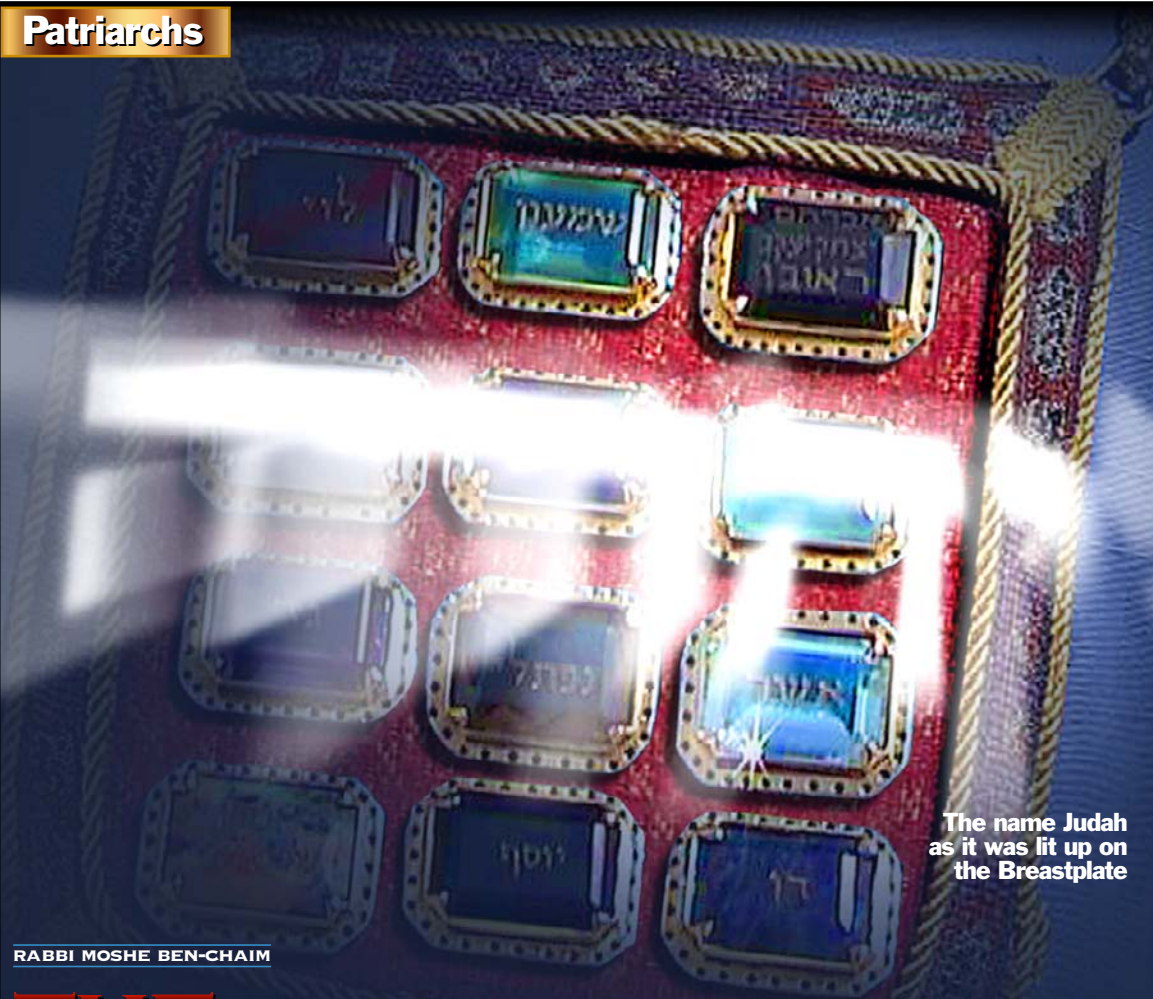
Tazria

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“Speak to Bnai Yisrael saying: If a woman conceives and gives birth to a male, she shall be unclean for seven days; as [in] the days of her menstrual flow, she shall be

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Patriarchs



The name Judah as it was lit up on the Breastplate

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

THE BREASTPLATE & GOD'S NAME ENIGMATIC MORALITY

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Weekly Parsha

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Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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unclean.” (VaYikra 12:2)

The parshiyot of Tazria and Metzora deal with various forms of spiritual impurity. In general, there are two means through which a person can acquire spiritual impurity: 1) through contact with an impure object, 2) through specific bodily functions or disease. Our parshiyot primarily deal with impurity acquired through bodily functions or disease. It should be noted that in this context “disease” does not refer to conventional disorders. This term refers to a skin affliction – tzaraat – that is contracted as a punishment for sinful behavior.

Most of the bodily functions that cause impurity are unique to women. These functions include menstruation and childbirth. The impurity that results from these events has two expressions. First, the woman is forbidden from entering the Mishcan or making contact with certain sacred items. Second, the woman and her husband may not be sexually intimate.

There is a variety of opinions regarding the reasons for associating these bodily functions with impurity. Many Sages contend that these instances of impurity reflect health considerations. In other words, these Sages contend that intimate relations during menstruation or immediately after childbirth carry health risks. Of course, these views are based on the medical knowledge and perspective of their times. We should not assume that if these Sages had access to modern science that they would come to the same conclusions.

Many students may be tempted to dismiss consideration of these opinions. They reason that because these authorities base their interpretation of these mitzvot on outdated and discarded theories there is no need to consider their opinions. This is a mistake. It is true that these Sages base their interpretation of these mitzvot on discredited theories. However, it is important to note and acknowledge that these Sages believed that it is completely plausible for mitzvot to reflect health considerations – not moral or spiritual issues.

In order to fully appreciate the implications of this perspective, some additional discussion is helpful. Most mitzvot are clearly associated with moral or spiritual concerns. We are commanded to serve Hashem, observe Shabbat, accept Hashem's unity, to pray only to Him, to eat matzah, to dwell in the succah. All of these commandments, and many others, address spiritual issues. Other commandments deal with

moral or ethical issues: we are not permitted to steal or deal dishonestly with others, we must return lost property, and build appropriate barriers around any dangerous area of our property. These are all examples of commandments that reflect ethical concerns. We think of Torah as a system for spiritual and moral advancement. We do not typically view the Torah as a system that also promotes physical health. Yet, these Sages accept that among the Torah's objectives is the promotion of physical well-being.

Not all Sages accepted this perspective. Akeydat Yitzchak objects to the contention that the Torah contains mitzvot that address medical concerns. This discussion takes place in reference to last week's parasha. The Torah permits the consumption of certain species and prohibits others. For

example, we are permitted to eat the flesh of animals that have split hooves and chew their cud. A set of mitzvot in last week's parasha outlines those species that are permitted and those that are prohibited. Many Sages explain that these mitzvot reflect health concerns. Consumption of those species that are prohibited is unhealthy. However, Akeydat Yitzchak disagrees with this approach. Akeydat Yitzchak argues that it is inappropriate to explain that these species are prohibited because of health concerns. He offers a number of arguments:

- The Torah's objective is to provide us with spiritual and moral guidance. The Torah

should not be reduced to a medical work.

- If the prohibited species present a health threat, this concern could be countered through proper preparation.

- There are many other foods that, if prepared improperly, are harmful. Yet, these foods are not prohibited by the Torah.

- Our own observations confirm that the non-Jews who do not observe these prohibitions are healthy. If consumption of these prohibited species is unhealthy, then those who consume these species should experience health consequences.[1]

Sefer HaChinuch is one of the authorities who suggest that some of the commandments in our parshiyot regarding defilement are based on health concerns. In his comments he responds to Akeydat Yitzchak's objection to assuming that the Torah addresses health issues. He comments that the

(continued on next page)

(Tazria continued from page 2)

Weekly Parsha

body is the receptacle of the soul.[2] In order for the soul to function, the body must be healthy.

This response requires careful consideration. Sefer HaChinuch accepts Akeydat Yitzchak's assertion that the Torah's objective is to provide spiritual and ethical instruction. However, he argues that this objective does not preclude the inclusion of mitzvot that address health issues. Spiritual and ethical perfection cannot be separated from health. Our moods, energy, and attitudes are affected by our health. In turn, these factors influence our views and intellectual perceptions. A person who is depressed sees the world differently than a person who has a positive outlook. Different outlooks impact the manner in which individuals understand experiences – and even the manner in which they interpret information. In short, health is a valuable asset in the effort to advance oneself spiritually and ethically. Illness and poor health are obstacles in this endeavor.

Sefer HaChinuch's message is more important than his specific interpretation of the commandments in our parasha. His interpretation of some of these commandments is based upon discredited medical theories. However, his basic assumption remains true and tested. Today, we have even more evidence of the close association between one's health and one's outlook, cognition, and perceptions. Sefer HaChinuch suggests that

because this association is so important, the Torah actually legislates measures designed to assure health. Certainly, Sefer HaChinuch would insist that we give appropriate attention to our health and would admonish us against neglecting our health or engaging in habits that endanger our health.

It seems this view is not universally accepted in our era. It is notable that some individuals who are otherwise scrupulous in their observance of the Torah seem to feel that a healthy diet and regular exercise are unimportant. Some individuals seem to even express disdain for these concerns – apparently regarding these issues as unworthy distractions from more important spiritual endeavors. However, this does not correspond with the position of Sefer HaChinuch and many other Sages.

Sefer HaChinuch acknowledges that these mitzvot have other objectives in addition to the health benefits he identifies. He explains that the mitzvot prohibiting intimate relations with a niddah (a menstruating woman) and with a yoledet (a woman who has recently given birth) also foster closer ties between husband and wife. Let us focus on his comments regarding the prohibition of having relations with a niddah.

In order to fully understand his position an introduction is required. Conventional western

religions sometimes seem to adopt a prudish attitude towards sexual intimacy. In these religions, sexual intimacy is viewed as something that is, at best, a shameful necessity. Preferably, it should be avoided and should certainly not be cultivated. Sefer HaChinuch maintains that sexual intimacy is an essential element of marriage. A healthy attitude towards intimacy fosters a stronger marriage. Based on the assumption that sexual intimacy is an essential and natural part of a wholesome marriage, it follows that enhancing this intimacy is a worthy objective for a mitzvah. However, before we can appreciate the Torah's contribution to fostering strong marriages, we must recognize one of the most common obstacles faced by couples.

We tend to disdain – or at least take for granted – things that are readily and constantly available. We have all had the experience of deeply desiring some object. After finally securing the object of our desire, we become accustomed to it. Soon, we take it for granted. In time, we may discard the previously cherished possession and search for a replacement. This pattern is an expression of basic human nature. Marriages are intended to extend over decades. How can we prevent the members of this union from becoming bored with one other, taking the other for granted, and even eventually discarding his or her spouse?

The Torah prohibits intimate relations with a niddah. The result of this prohibition is that intimacy is regulated. During part of every month relations are permitted. During part of every month relations are prohibited. Husband and wife experience a period of separation each month and the excitement of reunion. Sefer HaChinuch suggests that a couple sharing this monthly experience has a greater appreciation of intimacy and of each other. The members of this union are less likely to become bored with one other.[3]

In short, Sefer HaChinuch, in his interpretation of the mitzvot in our parasha, suggests that some mitzvot of the Torah reflect health concerns. Some mitzvot are also designed to strengthen marriage and to specifically enhance intimacy. Both of these objectives are noteworthy and reflect enlightened perspective. Furthermore, this perspective is sometimes sadly absent from today's conventional views on the nature of piety and religiosity. ■

[1] Rav Yitzchak Arama, Akeydat Yitzchak on Sefer VaYikra, Parshat Shemini.

[2] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 166.

[3] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 166.

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(continued from page 1)

We recently completed the Torah sections describing the Temple and the priestly garments. Reflecting on those garments, the Breastplate possesses very unique characteristics. It included twelve stones, each engraved with the name of one of the tribes. With gold chains attached to the two shoulder stones of the Ephod, the Breastplate was suspended and laid firm against the priest's heart. The two shoulder stones were not colorful precious stones, but were black onyx, each stone engraved with six of the twelve tribes. So the tribes' names were engraved twice: once on the two shoulder stones, and again on each of the twelve Breastplate stones. What purpose was served with these two sets of stones? Why were the colored stones suspended by chains from the black two shoulder stones?

Inside the Breastplate was placed God's sacred names. Ramban (Exod. 28:30) states that Moses received these names through divine inspiration, as they are not recorded in the construction parameters written in the Torah, as are the Temple's vessels and the priests clothing. Ramban explains the purpose of these names. One would inquire of the priest regarding which tribe might go to battle first, or what might occur in the future of the battle. The priest would ponder God's names – the Urim and Tumim – contained in the Breastplate's folded pouch and he would receive divine knowledge of the answer. Ramban states the letters engraved in the twelve stone would serve to spell out the answer as they miraculously lit up. The priest would have to then ponder another name of God to figure out the order of those illuminated letters so as to reorganize them and make a coherent message. He would then communicate that message to the inquirer.

We wonder why these "names" of God were placed in the Breastplate. And why this unique mechanism of knowledge was used only in matters of war, as Rashi says on verse 27:21 in the Book of Numbers (Bamidbar)?

Ibn Ezra states that there is a deep fundamental to the Ephod (apron) and the Breastplate. (Exod. 28:6): "The key to understanding it are the two braided gold chains that were attached to the shoulder stone settings..." He is quite lengthy in his cryptic allusions, which I do not understand. But I was fortunate enough to have learned Rabbi Israel Chait's words on this matter years ago, and hope I do them justice. If I recall correctly, Rabbi Chait noted the black quality of the shoulder stones, and the colors of the Breastplate stones. He also noted the latter were suspended from the former. He stated that was to teach that the living twelve tribes (colored/vitality stones) are dependent (suspended) by the deceased (black/lifeless) tribes, the actual sons of Jacob. In other words, our merit is derived from those who already passed. Those tribes were perfected individuals, and their recorded lives in the



Torah provide a role model for our perfection. We are therefore dependent on them, just as the Breastplate stones are suspended from the two shoulder stones. This is congruous with Ibn Ezra. It is a marvelous thought.

This also explains the function of the priest's clothing atoning the Jews, as the Rabbis teach. How does atonement work? The sinner must have remorse for his sin, and also abandon that act...seeking God's pardon in the process and drawing closer to Him. The High Priest is the emissary of the Jewish nation. As he enters the Temple wearing the Breastplate, he thereby presents the aspirations of the Jews' wish to portray the lives of the Tribes, represented via proxy by our "suspension from them". Although we sin throughout the year, we endorse the High Priest's act of representing our aspiration before God. God "recognizes" our true wish, and pardons us.

This explains the design of the Breastplate, and its role. But what connection exists between this Breastplate, and divine knowledge regarding war? Why don't we use the divine names to learn answers to questions concerning Kosher, Tefillin, and other mitzvahs? I believe the answer is found in the nature of our questions.

God's Torah knowledge contains all that is necessary to arrive at the accurate understanding of all commands. Referring to the Written and Oral Laws, and the methods of derivation, all is addressed. This knowledge can be contained in the Torah because the commands concern intelligible phenomena. For example, the "object" of a mitzvah or its "performance" have precise and consistent structures. Torah and its laws will never change. Therefore, all can be contained and require no divinely inspired, additional facts.

But morality is different. First, morality requires an Authority to define what is and isn't moral. Leave this question up to man, and for every person, we will find a divergent opinion. And with such conflict, no single law can emerge which a society would

observe. We see man's moral ignorance today displayed in the debates over stem cell research, abortion, death sentencing, and other moral issues. There is no means by which man can determine rights of life, since man did not create life. Only the Creator of life can determine when life is or isn't appropriate. Therefore, in battle as Rashi taught, the Urim and Tumim was necessary to arrive at God's determinations regarding life. Wartime issues are not subject to the court system, where a murderer must be put to death. Cut and dry cases like that require no prophetic insight. But engaging in war is not a response to a single person, or to an act of murder...as war might preempt any casualties.

Perhaps God must illuminate us as to the right to take life as wartime actions fall outside typical Torah considerations. In fact, many laws are suspended in the time of war, like eating non-kosher and marrying a non-Jew. War presents many new considerations, and the taking of life is one of them. Therefore, I suggest this reason for the Urim and Tumim...God's divine names that miraculously enable the priest to acquire insight regarding morality and success in war. We also do not wish to place our lives in unnecessary danger, so we ask of the Urim and Tumim who should engage in battle first. Ibn Ezra states that we use the Urim and Tumim to learn the future. (Exod. 28:30)

This also explains why the Breastplate was named the Breastplate of "Judgment": the matters inquired addressed issues of justice. We may also explain why the Urim and Tumim are inserted in the Breastplate, where man's names appear: the questions are about mankind, represented by the tribes.

Why is there no description of the Urim and Tumim in the Torah sections outlining the Temple's vessels and the priestly garb? I feel Ramban hinted to the answer when he states that Moses received these names through divine inspiration. Next to creation itself, divine inspiration is the primary display of God's authority – the very concept that decisions concerning morality are based on God's authority. Thus, the very method Moses received these names was an authoritative method. The theme of morality is further embellished by the placement of the Breastplate next to the "heart" of the priest.

Finally, why is the means of learning God's answers through the priest's pondering of God's "names"? I believe this is precisely the correct method to teach of man's ignorance concerning morality. For we only know His name, and nothing else about Him. Therefore, God associates the lesson of man's ignorance concerning His name, with our search for moral answers. Just as we are ignorant of God's true nature and only know His name, so too are we ignorant of determining morality without His direction. ■

Idle Idols

Putting False Ideas to Rest

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

While the Jews spent their last day in Egypt, God commanded them to reject idolatry (Exod: 12,6-8):

“And it [the Paschal lamb] shall be under your guard until the 14th day of this month and the entire congregation of Israel shall slaughter it between sunrise and sunset. And you shall take of the blood and place it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses that you eat it in them. And you shall eat the flesh on this night, roasted over fire, with matzahs and bitter herbs you shall eat it”.

Two questions arise: 1) why must both, blood be smeared and flesh eaten? 2) Why must the Paschal lamb be eaten “together” with matzah and bitter herbs?

Clearly, had God intended only that the lamb be destroyed, killing it would suffice. Certainly, God cares less about the life of the lamb, than He does about the perfection of His chosen nation. God orchestrated a means by which He would make some change in the Jews’ view of reality.

A human being lives many lives, and I am not referring to the false notion of reincarnation. I refer to the many spheres in which we all contend.

We live and deal with others. We live “socially”. We also

relate to the physical world even when not enjoying the company of others, assessing what we deem important...living by a “value” system. It appears God wished to undermine the view we had of the lamb, in both the social and value-based spheres.

Demanding we paint our doorways with the lamb’s blood – a public display – we cast social stigma to the wind, and concern ourselves more with the rejection of the lamb. In truth, both self-image and idolatry are fantasies, and we dismiss both in favor of adhering to reality. It appears that idolatry carries more appeal than the psychological dependency we imagine. It also includes the element of “organized religion”, the human behavior of following without understanding. This following is generated out of a need to be part of a group, i.e., social approval. It is a wrong decision. Although baseless, an entire culture of Egyptians accepted animal gods. This is due to social needs. God desired we rise above this need, submitting ourselves to the rejection of others who don’t approve.

And through eating the lamb, we render it as simply another meal. It is subordinate to us – the opposite view of idolaters. The lamb becomes nothing but food, and then human waste.

“And you shall eat the flesh on this night, roasted over fire, with matzahs and bitter herbs you shall eat it”.

What demands that the lamb be eaten together with matzah and bitter herbs? What did these two latter objects recall? The bitter herbs are of course to remind us of the bitter lives we led as Egypt’s slaves. Our physical existence was torture.

But what about the matzah? We must be clear: at this point (the night before the Jews left Egypt) there was yet no redemption. So the matzah (dough) that didn’t rise due to the speed of our exodus did not yet exist. Therefore, the night before we left, the matzah had but one identity: “poor man’s bread”, or Lechem Oni. But if we had the bitter herbs to recall our physical pain, what other role could matzah play?

Eating poor man’s bread is not painful, but it is humbling, as all of Egypt enjoyed soft bread. Thus, matzah embodies the “psychological” state of deprivation.

To break any further identification with the lamb that Egypt held in awe, matzah and bitter herbs complimented the Paschal Lamb in a negative fashion. When we ate (and will eat) that lamb, we view it with contempt, as it must be complimented by poor man’s bread and bitter foods. This registers a negative association to the lamb on our souls.

In the end, we identify the subtle, social appeal of idolatry, thereby unveiling the absence of any essential, positive attributes. For when the primary appeal is lost, there emerges an imposter religion, and we then see clearly, and expose idolatry as senseless. But we must still eat the lamb to go through the emotional process of subordinating it to us. And as we eat it, we sense contempt, as the accompanying foods recall our physical and psychological pain under the idolatrous Egyptian culture.

Animal worship and idolatry in general is thereby rejected, paving the way to accept the true God at the true God at Shavuos. ■



A MOTHER'S PERFECTION

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



"God decreed regarding the [days of prohibition] of the male child, commensurate with the days of his embryonic formation, and the female's day are doubled, and this is clear and proven". (Ibn Ezra, Lev. 12:4)

This commentary refers to our parsha's prohibition on mothers of newborns. They are not allowed to approach the Temple or contact sacred objects for the exact duration of the child's gender formation: 33 days for males and 66 days for females. Embryos are determined as male by day 33, and females by day 66. Today's science roughly corroborates this, stating that at week 6, the Y chromosome's presence determines the embryo as male, and at week 9, female characteristics appear in the genitalia. Thus, a mother of a male is prohibited 33 days, and of a female, 66 days. But what is the nature of this prohibition correlating the day's of gender formation?

I believe this is tied to the sin offering a mother brings. The mother's wish to never again bear children, due to the pain of childbirth, requires atonement. God's correction of the mother is to realign her focus. She was at childbirth more concerned with her own pain, than with creating a new life. She must bring a sin offering for this flaw. But she also remains distant from Temple for the time it took to form the gender of her newborn. Contemplating a duration of prohibition that mirrors the gender's development period, the mother can focus on her infant in specific ("her" boy or girl) and realign her sensitivities to better mother the infant in accord with its gender, as Rabbi Reuven Mann suggested. Her focus on the specific gender will:

- 1) counter her former focus on her self, and
- 2) better prepare her to respond to a male or female infant accordingly, thereby contributing greatly to healthy psychological growth.

Each gender requires a different approach, and this preparatory period is helpful. ■

Letters



Letters

from our

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Letters

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The Breastplate

Doug: Thank you again for another wonderfully enlightening class today.

As follow-up, my understanding of the reason why the Urim and Tumim were used when the nation had to decide whether to go out to war is as follows.

Since the entire world was created by Hashem, then it all belongs to Him. We are only allowed to use it to the extent that we have permission to do so. Hence, as Rabbi Chait has related, saying a blessing before food serves in part to remind us of the permit we have been given by the Creator to partake of that food. Without that permit, we wouldn't be allowed to eat, because the food belongs to the Creator, and taking it without permission would be theft.

So too, this principle would apply to taking a life. Courts are given certain "permits", if you will, to execute people under certain circumstances, after rigorous investigation and a thorough judicial process. Apart from that, man is not given a permit to take another man's life, except in bona fide cases of self defense.

But what about war, can the nation of Israel unilaterally decide to go to battle against another nation? If a battle takes place, it's almost a certainty that humans will be killed. Does the nation have a "permit" to do that?

It seems that the Urim and Tumim serves that purpose. By consulting the Urim and Tumim before the nation goes to war, the nation is acknowledging that they must have Hashem's permission to undertake the battle. Otherwise, the killing that would result could be unlawful, since the nation wouldn't have permission from the ultimate "Owner" to dispatch the targeted group.

On another subject, while researching the above, I noted a very interesting idea related to the Rashi on Numbers 27:22. This is where Joshua is being installed as the leader of Israel as a successor to Moses. In Numbers 27:22, it says regarding Moses, that "He took Joshua and stood him before Elazar the Kohen and before the entire assembly." In a footnote, the Artscroll edition of Rashi states that,

"Sifrei 141. G-- told Moses only to persuade Joshua by telling him how fortunate he was to be the leader of God's nation (see Rashi to v. 18), but Moses went beyond that, and informed Joshua additionally of the reward he

would receive in the World to Come (Mizrachi; Sifsei Chachamim)."

Note that use of the word "persuade". Moses had to persuade Joshua to lead the nation – Joshua didn't jump at the chance. People in our society spend millions to gain leadership positions. Here Joshua is offered – free – the opportunity to lead God's nation and he has to be "persuaded".

In reflecting on this, I can't think of a single instance in Torah where someone who is considered wise and righteous actively vies for a leadership role. The exact opposite is the case. Moses didn't want to lead the people and tried to talk Hashem out of it. Here, the commentaries are indicating that Joshua apparently also wasn't automatically inclined to take on the leadership role, and Moses had to talk him into it.

The only time that I can think of where someone actively sought out a leadership role is the rebellious Korach. While I can't claim to know all of what was going on in his head, it would seem that ego and the desire for power was at least a part of his motivation, if not the overwhelming reason.

Contrast all of this with the situation in our society today where – in business, politics, and other arenas – people compete, maneuver, and spend untold sums of money in order to obtain leadership positions. Witness our current political scene, where candidates almost throw rocks at each other in order to gain the upper hand. Scores of books are written on leadership, and people are sometimes admonished that they should all strive to be leaders. The amount of ego and fantasy that we, as a society, seem to have around assuming leadership roles appears to know no bounds.

How different is the Torah approach, where leadership roles were avoided, except when individuals recognized that they were the best equipped for the job and/or when there was no one else appropriately qualified to assume the role. Perhaps this is because the driving force behind the lives of those individuals centered around the opportunity to study and learn, and the responsibilities of leadership were realistically seen as a distraction from the real purpose of life, rather than its main goal. ■

Best wishes for a great week.

Doug Taylor

The Breastplate II

Kal: Rabbi – Again you have tickled my brain to want to find meaning to the topic of conversation surrounding the Urim and Tumim in this morning’s class. The one word that my mind keeps coming back to is “patterns”, as in, look for the patterns. The other phrase that comes to mind is “hierarchy to Hashem”.

I particularly resonated with the description you gave to the black stones on the shoulders representing the twelve deceased sons of Jacob and that the colored stones represented the living descendants of each of the twelve. The “hierarchy to Hashem”, that I mentioned, seems that through the righteousness of the patriarchs, by studying their actions and what they represented, we are able to see how Hashem relates to man – establishing a system to be passed on through generation to generation. Even though the patriarchs are gone, the communication can continue to be passed on through the living.

Getting back to the contents of the Breastplate, the living descendants (life) is represented by the colored stones and it is only through the correct understanding of how Hashem relates to man that that “life” can become illuminated with the knowledge/wisdom of Hashem as passed down through the patriarchs (the letters lighting up on the colored stones).

The “Ineffable Name” of Hashem was placed on a piece of parchment into the pouch-like pocket in the breastplate by Moses, (from a commentary I read in The Stone Edition of the Chumash, referring to Rashi from Yoma 73b). Again, this identifies another pattern that Moses was the only man to receive direct communication from Hashem. By Moses, placing The Name in this pouch, was man able to receive this communication from Hashem in the form of lit up letters.

Yet man, in his relationship to Hashem must use his intelligence – that which separates us from all of Hashem’s other creations, to “unscramble” or gain the insight/wisdom from Hashem in particular situations. We mentioned in class that this communication through the Urim and Tumim for “particular situations” was only used for seeking Hashem’s wisdom in defending the Jewish nation from its enemies.

This implies the importance of the preservation of this system being maintained through the preservation of the Jewish nation.

The other pattern I see here is that Hashem is “complete” or one. He doesn’t need anything or anyone to exist. He also doesn’t need a physical form, thus, he used fire to communicate his existence at Sinai and in the pillar of fire in the desert because anything physical would be consumed by fire. He is the source of all knowledge bringing light to our understanding of all things. The name of Urim and the Tumim represents these facts about Hashem in that “Urim” means light and “Tumim” means complete or perfect.

Man, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. For example, even from his creation he needed a mate. He also needed “completion” in his relationship with Hashem and those ideas pertaining to “man’s perfection” were attained through circumcision.

This also takes us back to the “hierarchy to Hashem” in that man was never meant to exist alone. As an effective leader, man needs to have advisors. The breastplate was worn by the High Priest and not the king, preventing the danger of man’s emotional tendency to become arrogant with perceived power and knowledge.

Even Moses, the only man to have direct communication with Hashem, had his place in this “hierarchy”. How often we see that man attaches inappropriate significance to certain people through religious emotion (i.e., Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, etc.), through his need for security, (i.e., Warren Buffet, Donald Trump, etc.), and his need for fame/recognition/attention (i.e. various movie stars, models, etc.). Without reference to the patriarchs in both physical lineage for the setting up of the Jewish nation as well as communication from Hashem through the Torah, Moses would not exist or have purpose. Man is dependent on Hashem for life and fellow man for his continued existence. Only Hashem exists independent of anything and at the top of this hierarchy for man. ■

Respectfully submitted,
Kal Taylor

“...through the righteousness of the patriarchs, by studying their actions and what they represented, we are able to see how Hashem relates to man – establishing a system to be passed on through generation to generation.”