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פרשת תצוה PARSHAT TETZAVEH

DVAR TORAH

BUILDING THE INCENSE ALTAR TODAY

"I heard from the holy rabbi, Harav Elimelech (of Lizhensk), זצ"ל, that during an עליית נשמה – when his soul (during his lifetime) ascended to Heaven – he saw angels carrying the vessels of the Beit Hamikdash. When he inquired about them, they responded, "They're the same vessels of the Beit Hamikdash you redeemed from exile" (The Ropshitzer Rebbe, Harav Naftali Tzvi Horowitz, זצ"ל, 1760-1827, Galicia, in Zera Kodesh, Parshat Ki Teitzei, "Ki Tivneh").

This anecdote teaches that through our Avodat Hashem we are building the Beit Hamikdash and all of its vessels. In the Zera Kodesh's essay he shows how even today we can still be involved in preparing the inner core of the Beit Hamikdash. If we could figure out the theme behind each component of the Mikdash, we could collectively "build" it in Heaven, thereby hastening its actual physical building.

How would we go about building the Mizbach Haketoret, the gold Incense Altar that appears in our Parshah?

Rashi gives us a direction. The Incense Altar, along with two other vessels of the Mishkan, the Aron (Ark), and the Shulchan (Table), were each surrounded by a gold crown, זר זהב סביב. These three vessels, says Rashi, represent three of the leaders of the Jewish People, the king, the Kohen, and the Torah scholars. The crown adorning the Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark that housed the Two Tablets and the Torah scroll, is the Keter Torah, the Crown of Torah. That adorning the Shulchan, whose showbreads expressed bounty and wealth, is the Keter Malchut, the Crown of Royalty. And the crown surrounding the Altar whose incense was exclusively linked with the Kohanim was the Keter Kehunah (see Rashi on Shemot 30:3).

The Shem Mishmuel suggests Avraham is associated with the Crown of Kehunah, Yitzchak with Malchut, and Yaakov with Torah. Why is Avraham associated with crown of Kehunah and the Incense Altar?

Avraham, he says, was a connector and a leader. Ketoret, says the Shem Mishmuel, is related to the root קטר, which in Aramaic means knot, tie, connection. Avraham was a unifying force (see Bereishis Rabbah 39), unifying the world with its Creator and cultivating unity among the people of the world through teaching Chesed, altruistic giving. Avraham is also referred to as a Kohen. In a chapter of Tehillim that Chazal explain as speaking about Avraham Avinu, Hashem says to Avraham, "אתה כהן לעולם" – "You are forever a Kohen" (Tehillim 110:4). Two complementary aspects of Kehunah emerge from the commentators on that verse; princely leadership (Rashi) and service (Ibn Ezra), leading People and serving Hashem.

Putting together the teachings of the Zera Kodesh and the Shem Mishmuel – through acting as a ממלכת כהנים, a Kingdom of Kohanim, descendants of our forefather Avraham the Kohen, we can build the spiritual core of the Mizbach Haketoret, which bears the crown of Kehunah. By unifying, leading, and serving, we can bring the actual restoration of the Mizbach Haketoret one step closer.

SOURCE GUIDE: WHAT ARE THE URIM VETUMIM?

Even though the Mishkan, its vessels and structure, are described in great detail – it is unclear from the words of the Chumash itself what the Urim Vetumim are. We turn to Rashi's commentary for explanation, and to the Gemara for its description of how they were used.

A. The Verse

The Urim Vetumim are to be placed in the the Choshen Mishpat, the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol:

<p>1. Shemot 28:30 You should place in the Choshen Mishpat the Urim and Tumim. And they will be on Aharon's heart when he comes before Hashem. And Aharon will carry the judgement of the Children of Israel on his heart before Hashem always.</p>	<p>שמות כח:ל וְנָתַתְּ אֶל חֹשֶׁן הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֶת הָאוּרִים וְאֶת הַתּוּמִים וְהָיוּ עַל לֵב אַהֲרֹן בְּבֹאוֹ לִפְנֵי ה' וְנָשָׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת מִשְׁפַּט בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל לִבּוֹ לִפְנֵי ה' תָּמִיד.</p>
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B. Rashi's Explanation

Rashi explains the words Urim and Tumim, and the Urim Vetumim's connection to the Choshen Mishpat:

<p>2. Rashi on Shemot 28:30 "The Urim and the Tumim" – This refers to the writing of the Divine Name that was placed in the folds of the Choshen; through that Name the Choshen's words shone (Urim) and were perfect (Tumim). The Choshen was present in the Second Temple, for it is impossible for a High Priest to be missing any of his garments (and still serve in the Temple). But that Divine Name was not within it. It is because of that Divine Name that it is referred to as Mishpat, Judgement, as it says, "He (Yehoshua) will ask him (Elazar the Kohen) the judgement of the Urim" (Bamidbar 27:21). "The judgement of the Children of Israel" – Clarifying that which they were judging and deliberating about, whether to do it or not.</p>	<p>רש"י על שמות כח:ל "את האורים ואת התומים" - הוא כתב שם המפורש, שהיה נותנו בתוך כפלי החשן, שעל ידו הוא מאיר דבריו ומתמם את דבריו. ובמקדש שני היה החשן, שאי אפשר לכהן גדול להיות מחוסר בגדים, אבל אותו השם לא היה בתוכו, ועל שם אותו הכתב הוא קרוי משפט, שנאמר (במדבר כז כא) ושאל לו במשפט האורים: "את משפט בני ישראל" - דבר שהם נשפטים ונוכחים על ידו אם לעשות דבר או לא לעשות.</p>
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Rashi on Shemot 28:15 explains that the word משפט in the expression חשן משפט means clarifying and elucidating (as opposed to judging or punishing). It is, perhaps, better translated as "clarification." He also offers an alternate explanation based on the standard translation of משפט as court judgement – that the חשן משפט atones for corruption of justice.

C. In Tanach

<p>3. Bamidbar 27:21 He (Yehoshua) will stand before Elazar the Kohen and ask him the ruling of the Urim before Hashem. On his mouth (word) they will go out and come in, him, all of the Children of Israel with him, and the entire congregation. Shmuel I 28:6 Shaul inquired of Hashem, but Hashem did not answer him, neither through dreams, nor through the Urim, nor through the prophets. Ezra 2: 63 And the Tirshata (Nechemiah) said to them (a group of Kohanim who could not verify their pedigree) that they should not eat of the holiest sacrifices until a Kohen arises to ask the Urim and Tumim.</p>	<p>במדבר פרק כז:כא וּלְפָנַי אֲלַעֲזָר הַכֹּהֵן יֵעָמֵד וְשָׁאֵל לּוֹ בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים לִפְנֵי ה' עַל פִּי יֵצְאוּ וְעַל פִּי יָבֹאוּ הוּא וְכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתוֹ וְכָל הָעֵדָה: שמואל א' כח:ו וַיִּשְׁאֵל שָׁאוּל בַּה' וְלֹא עָנָהוּ ה' גַּם בְּחִלְמוֹת גַּם בְּאוּרִים גַּם בְּנָבִיאִים. עזרא ב:סג וַיֹּאמֶר הַתִּרְשָׁתָא לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֹאכְלוּ מִקֹּדֶשׁ הַקִּדְּשִׁים עַד יֵעָמֵד כֹּהֵן לְאוּרִים וּלְתוּמִים.</p>
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In each of these instances the Urim Vetumim were to clarify a matter of national concern: whether to go out to

war or not; or identifying which Kohanim can serve in the Beit Hamikdash.

C. How Did the Urim Vetumim Work?

Two rules about the Urim Vetumim appear in the Mishnah:

<p>4. Mishnah Yoma 7:5 The Kohen Gadol serves with eight items of clothing and a normal Kohen with four, with the tunic, trousers, turban, and belt. The Kohen Gadol, in addition, has the Choshen, the Eford, the cloak, and the Tzitz. [While] wearing these [eight] inquiring of the Urim Vetumim is done. The inquiry is only made on behalf of a king, a court, or someone needed by the community.</p>	<p>משנה יומא ז: כהן גדול משמש בשמונה כלים, והקהודים בארבעה. בכתנת ומכנסים ומצנפת ואבנט. מוסיף עליו כהן גדול, חשן ואפוד ומעיל וציץ. באלו נשאלין באורים ותמים. ואין נשאלין אלא למלך ולבית דין ולמי שהציבור צריך בו.</p>
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The Gemara outlines the halachot of the Urim Vetumim. Here are some of them:

<p>5. Yoma 73a The Rabbis learned: How did they inquire of the Urim Vetumim? The questioner faced the Kohen Gadol being asked, and the one being asked faced the Divine Presence (Rashi – facing the Urim Vetumim and the Divine Name within the Choshen). The questioner asks: “Should I pursue this legion?” (Shmuel I 30:8), and the one being asked says, “Thus says Hashem, ‘Go up and be successful.’” Rabbi Yehudah says: He does not need to say “Thus says Hashem,” only “Go up and be successful.” They should not ask in a loud voice, for it says, “He should ask him” (Bamidbar 27:21), neither should he just think the words in his heart, for it says, “He should ask him before Hashem.” Rather, he should speak the way Chanah spoke during her prayer, as it says, “Chanah spoke on her heart” (Shmuel I 1:13) ... And even though a decree announced by a prophet can be retracted, the decree announced through the Urim Vetumim cannot, for it says, “The judgement of the Urim” (Bamidbar 27:21). Why are they called Urim Vetumim? Urim – for they illuminate their words, and Tumim – for they complete their words ... How was [the communication] made? Rabbi Yochanan says, “They (the letters) stuck out;” and Reish Lakish says, “They gathered together.” But there was no Tzadi among them (the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the Choshen)?! Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were also written there. But there was no Teit?! Said Rav Acha son of Yaakov: Shivtei Yeshurun (the tribes of Yeshurun, the Upright One) was written there. The following Baraita disproves this (that the communication was done through letters on the Choshen either miraculously protruding or gathering together): Any Kohen who does not speak through Ruach Hakodesh with the Divine Presence resting upon him is not to be asked, for Tzadok was asked and it worked, but Evyatar was asked and it did not, as it says, “Evyatar went up until the nation was finished ...” (Shmuel II 15:24). [The Gemara resolves:] The Kohen would aid the communication through the letters (as opposed to speaking based on Ruach Hakodesh).</p>	<p>יומא עג. תנו רבנן: כיצד שואלין? השואל פניו כלפי נשאל, והנשאל פניו כלפי שכניה (רש"י – כלפי אורים ותומים ושם המפורש שבתוך החושן). השואל אומר: “אררף אחרי הגדוד הזה?” (שמואל א' ל:ח), והנשאל אומר: “כה אמר ה' עלה והצלח.” רבי יהודה אומר: אין צריך לומר “כה אמר ה'” אלא “עלה והצלח”, אין שואלין בקול – שנאמר “ושאל לו” (במדבר כז:כא), ולא מהרהר בלבו שנאמר “ושאל לו לפני ה'”. אלא כדרך שאמרה חנה בתפלתה, שנאמר: “וחנה היא מדברת על לבה” (שמואל א' א). ... ואף על פי שגזירת נביא חוזרת, גזירת אורים ותומים – אינה חוזרת, שנאמר “במשפט האורים” (במדבר כז:כא). למה נקרא שמן אורים ותומים? אורים – שמאירין את דבריהן, תומים – שמשלימין את דבריהן. ... כיצד נעשית? רבי יוחנן אומר: בולטות, ריש לקיש אומר: מצטרפות. – והא לא כתיב בהו צד"י! – אמר רב שמואל בר יצחק: אברהם יצחק ויעקב כתיב שם. – והא לא כתיב ט"ת! – אמר רב אחא בר יעקב: שבטי ישורון כתיב שם. מיתיבי: כל כהן שאינו מדבר ברוח הקודש ושכינה שורה עליו – אין שואלין בו, שהרי שאל צדוק ועלתה לו, אביתר ולא עלתה לו, שנאמר (שמואל ב' טו:כד) ויעל אביתר עד תם כל העם וגו'. – סיועי הוה מסייע בהדיהו. ...</p>
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The Urim Vetumim served as a way to get direct and specific guidance from Hashem on national issues. We pray for its restoration, restoring the lines of communication between Hashem and the People of Israel.

CLOTHING OF DIGNITY & BEAUTY BY RABBI MENDEL FARBER

Our Parshah deals with the clothing of the Kohanim. The Torah defines the purpose of these garments as **לכבוד ולתפארת** – “for dignity and for beauty” (Shemot 28:2). This contradicts our normal understanding of the function of clothing. The Torah at the beginning of Creation describes the story of Adam’s sin, and as a result of that sin the Torah says, “And the eyes of both of them opened and they realized they were naked. And they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves aprons” (Bereishit 3:7). This is the standard perception of clothing, to hide the parts of the body we’re ashamed of. But is this dignity and beauty?

The second chapter of Bereishit ends with “They were both naked, the man and his wife and they were not ashamed” (Bereishit 2:25). The next verse follows with “The serpent was more cunning than any other animal” (Bereishit 3:1). And Rashi on that verse says “Why does this verse appear here? The Torah should have written here ‘And Hashem made for Adam and his wife garments of **עור**, of skin, and clothed them’ (Bereishit 3:21).”

Rashi is telling us that the Hashem’s making clothing for Adam and Chavah should have preceded the story of the sin, which takes place after the cunning serpent is introduced. It seems clear from Rashi that clothing would have existed even without the sin.

What was the purpose of that clothing? The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 20:12) tells us that in Rabbi Meir’s Sefer Torah they found the words of Bereishit 3:21 written “**כתנות אור**” – with an Alef (**אור**, light) instead of with an Ayin (**עור**, skin). Hashem made for them garments of light, not garments of skin. To Rabbi Meir, whose name means ‘to illuminate,’ Adam’s clothing was a source of light, enhancing and revealing the true essence of the human form. The purpose of the fig leaf that man made for himself after the sin was to cover his shame; but the clothing Hashem would have made for man – without the sin – was intended to illustrate the dignity and beauty of the human form, the **צלם אלקים**. With those garments, man’s essence would have penetrated its physical exterior, and instead of his body being covered, as it is after the sin with skin, it would have been a source of light, revealing the Divine ideal, the **צלם אלקים**.

The garments the Kohanim wore were the garments intended for Adam before the sin. Those are not garments meant to hide; they are meant to reveal, to reveal the beauty and the dignity of the **צלם אלקים** inherent in every one of us. That essence was shown through the Kohanim in the Beit Hamikdash. They were clothed with garments of light, **לכבוד ולתפארת**. This is the true meaning of **צניעות**, not to hide the body simply for the sake of hiding, but rather to minimize the impact of the body so that our inner essence can come to the fore, to dress with dignity so that our **צלם אלקים** should be visible.

שבת שלום ומבורך

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