

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

T'TZAVEH

The eight garments of the Kohen Gadol include the Choshen Mishpat, the Breastplate of Judgement, which displayed the twelve precious jewels naming each of the 12 Tribes of Israel.

Aharon shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the Choshen Mishpat... as a constant remembrance before G-d... (28:29-30).

There seems to be a consensus among Chazal and later commentators that connects the "constant remembrance" of the Choshen Mishpat and other aspects of the garments of the Kohen Gadol with shortcomings and failures of Klal Yisrael. Specifically, the latter include errors in judgement made by dayanim when carrying out their responsible duties in good faith (Zevachim 88b), by members of the public entering the holy premises of the Beit HaMikdash unknowingly in a halachically unclean state (28:36, Rashbam), and by offerings that, unknown to those exercising due care, were invalid for something inadvertently overlooked. The "constant remembrance" includes the merits and good deeds of the twelve sons of Ya'akov Avinu represented by a separate gemstone for each, and the words

Kodesh LaShem on the TZITZ (a.k.a. NEIZER KODESH), golden headplate. The golden headplate, explains the Ohr HaChayim, means the Jewish Nation (c.f. "Israel is holy to G-d, Yirmiyahu 2:3). Such is the enthusiasm and devotion of Am Yisrael to the Torah and Mitzvot, says the Ohr HaChayim, that G-d views them as an extenuating reality to accept offerings that strictly speaking would be invalid.

Thus on one side, the Torah strictly forbids deliberately perverting justice and involvement in Temple-related issues when in a state of tum'a, impurity. Yet on the other side, as the Rabbis stress (e.g. B'rachot 25b, Kiddushin 54a), G-d gave the Torah to human beings, not to His ministering angels. Being human means that mistakes will happen. It does not mean that they should happen or that they ought to happen, but that they will happen to a greater or lesser extent. It is on Klal Yisrael to reduce the extent by striving for perfection, though it is in the nature of things that perfection will not always be achieved.

What is important is that Klal Yisrael should look at the examples of the great people of the distant and more recent past and enthusiastically identify with them. It is their heritage that we bear. That is also the "remembrance". Also, though we do

not have the Kohen Gadol and the Beit HaMikdash in front of us, we do have the Torah and our attitudes towards its demands and its teachings. One person, sadly, may see it all as a heavy burden, with seemingly innumerable do's and don'ts from getting up in the morning until the last thing at night. Another, usually more Torah-learning-engaged, will embrace it as an opportunity, as a framework for growth and constant improvement in turning life into a deeply ongoing meaningful and productive experience. It is that which brings the Kodesh LaShem, as engraved on the golden headplate of the Kohen Gadol.

This, then, is the challenge of true Torah engagement. It is being part of "this wonderful way of life that we follow and strive to do better". It is in that framework that Am Yisrael is Kodesh LaShem, and that He may overlook genuine errors on the journey toward perfection. 📖