



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

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In One Voice

Because Moshe was conscious of his speech defects, Aharon acted as his spokesman before Par'o. However, when it came to the Israelite people themselves, Moshe was the speaker.

The two brothers worked well together and consulted one another about what to say and how to say it.

When God said, in the plural, "Speak to all the congregation of Israel..." (Sh'mot 12:3), they were both on the same spiritual wavelength and it appeared that they were both speaking (Rashi, quoting M'chilta).

This is real brotherliness, real collegiality, without jealousy, rivalry or jockeying for position - a rare blessing. Rabbinic sources apply T'hilim 85:11 to Moshe and Aharon - "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed one another."

Brotherly love, understanding and co-operation is also the ideal for international relations, when nations can say, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10).

At present, the most that nations are usually prepared to do is to co-operate for reasons of expediency, when it is in their joint interest to do so. That's already an achievement, but in Messianic times they will rise to a higher level and kiss one another in righteousness and peace.

On your hand, between your eyes

One of the sources of the command of T'fillin is the final section of this week's sidra.

God's deliverance of the Israelites with "a strong hand and an outstretched arm" is to be recalled by means of "a sign on your hand and a reminder between your eyes" (Sh'mot 13:9).

The T'fillin are attached to the person of a male Jew to indicate that he is bound to God, to the Divine commandments and to Jewish history.

The T'fillin are obligatory upon every Jewish male, hopefully for all three reasons. But there are different categories of Jews.

Some live a Jewish life because of belief; for them the T'fillin are a symbol of love for the Almighty.

Some whose faith is not so strong live a Jewish life because Jewish observance is a mark of Jewish identity;

for them the T'fillin are a symbol of the pattern of commandments and practices that make Jews distinctive.

Some are strong neither in faith nor in practice but they still have a bond with Jewish peoplehood; for them the T'fillin are a connecting link with national history.

Every Jew is precious, every Jew is crucial, every Jew is an asset. Even if some are not (yet) ready for full spiritual commitment, whatever they do as Jews and for Judaism is valuable to them and valuable to the Jewish heritage. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH