

**LIGHT
FROM
THE
FUTURE
PARSHAS TETZAVEH**

BY

HESCHEL GREENBERG

**LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE - PARSHAS
TETZAVEH**

**LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE
ESSAYS ON PARSHAS TETZAVEH**

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE - PARSHAS TETZAVEH

**Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who,
more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us
for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption**

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Tetzaveh* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

“The time of your Redemption has arrived.”

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of

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thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus/exile* mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

The parsha Tetzaveh is a fundamental parsha because it is about the crushing of the olives to produce the ultimate light. This is analogous to the long crushing exile we endured, which will, imminently and finally produce the ultimate light of Moshiach and Redemption.

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ESSAY ONE

WHERE IS MOSES?

**When someone's name is not mentioned it
can suggest a lack his or her presence.**

**But it can also mean that the other is so
present that his or her name need not be
mentioned.**

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ESSAY ONE

WHERE IS MOSES?

Moses' Name Missing

This week's Torah portion *Tetzaveh* is unique in that it is the only Torah portion in which Moses name is not mentioned. (His name does not appear in the Genesis because it pre-dates Moses. Portions of Deuteronomy have no mention of Moses because it is **Moses'** monologue to the Jewish people).

[Chasam Sofer, the 19th century authority, provides a mnemonic to know which sections of the Torah do not have Moses' name in it. The words are *Asher Kasavta*-that you wrote. These words appear in the verse where Moses asks to be erased.

The letter *shin* is the initial of the section entitled Shoftim, the *reish* is R'ei, the *chof*

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and *tav* stand for Ki Seitzei, the *beis* for Bereishis and the *tav* for Tetzaveh.]

G-d's Name Also Missing

We find a parallel phenomenon in the Book of Esther – which we will read on Purim. In the entire book, G-d's name is not mentioned even once!

So concealed is G-d within the story of Purim that there is not even a word in the entire story which has the numerical equivalent of G-d's name, although there are other hints to G-d!

The miracle of Purim, did, indeed, occur at a time when G-d's presence was concealed. The heroine of Purim, Queen Esther, is so named because Esther derives from the Hebrew word *hester*, which means concealed.

The fact that we read the Torah portion of Tetzaveh the Shabbos before Purim raises the possibility that the two anomalies – the absence of Moses in the Torah portion of *Tetzaveh* and the absence of G-d's name in the Megillah – are interconnected.

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What possible connection can there be between the two?

Greater Involvement

On the surface, the omission of a name in a given area reflects the lack of involvement of that individual in the events discussed in that area. Accordingly it should follow that the content of *Tetzaveh* has nothing, or, very little to do, with Moses.

In fact, the very opposite is the truth. The Torah portion begins with the emphatic words:

“And **you** shall command the Children of Israel and they shall take unto **you** pure olive oil..”

Now, although Moses’ name is not mentioned, he is referred to rather emphatically at the very beginning of this Parsha.

To resolve this enigma – that Moses name is omitted, yet, he is referred to rather emphatically – it is necessary to understand

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why his name is not mentioned explicitly here.

Moses' Essence

When the Jewish people were threatened with annihilation because of their involvement with the golden calf, Moses told G-d:

“Erase me from your book.”

Moses, who is synonymous with the “book,” was prepared to give up his association with the Torah, to save the Jewish people – including those who were involved with the golden calf.

Moses had infinite love for the Torah. Yet, his love for the Jewish people was even greater. He was prepared to sacrifice not only his physical life, but even his spiritual life, i.e., Torah, for the lowliest of the Jewish people! This was so, because as great as his connection to Torah was, his **essence** was connected to Israel.

This is reflected in the absence of his name from this Torah portion, but his essence –

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represented by the word “you,” was not only left intact, but, is expressed as forcefully as ever. Moses’ essence is absenting his name for the sake of the Jewish people.

G-d’s Essence

A similar thought can be expressed concerning the omission of G-d’s name in the Megillah. In exile G-d may be hidden from our view because our behavior is wanting. But, Purim dramatizes the fact that even when His name is absent, He – His very Essence – is still amongst the Jewish people. And it is this Essence that is responsible for the orchestration of events that brought about the miracle of Purim.

The festival of Purim, thus, expresses the most fundamental relationship that exists between G-d and the Jewish people; one that transcends convention and nature.

Purim of the Future

We can now appreciate the statement of our Sages that in the Messianic Age all Holidays will pale in comparison with the new

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celebration of the Final Redemption. The holiday of Purim, however, will be an exception to the rule and will still be celebrated as a major holiday!

Superficially, Purim is thought of as a minor holiday. However, the foregoing citation from our Sages reveals that it is indeed a major holiday. But, the question still remains, why will it even be more prominent than Passover or Sukkos?

The answer is that Purim reveals the essence of G-d that transcends His name. And it is that Essence that will be on full display in the Messianic Age.

ESSAY TWO

THE INNER JEW

Society deems one with success, power,
wealth and fame to be on top of the
proverbial ladder.

Judaism, by contrast, views the simple, and
modest Jew who serves G-d sincerely and in
anonymity to be infinitely higher than
those on top of society's hierarchical value
system.

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ESSAY TWO

THE INNER JEW

The Anomaly

One of the anomalies of this week's Torah portion, *Tetzaveh*, is that it concludes with a description of the golden, incense altar that was situated inside the *Mishkan*, the portable Temple the Jewish people constructed in the desert.

In last week's parsha, the Torah describes in the greatest of detail how the *Mishkan* was built. In the description it describes virtually every vessel that the *Mishkan* contained: The ark, golden table, menorah, and the outdoors, copper altar. Conspicuously absent – until the end of this week's parsha – is the description of the Golden, Incense Altar.

The question that begs to be asked, and that has been raised by many Commentators, is:

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why did the Torah leave the description of the golden Altar for the end of its treatment of the *Mishkan*?

The Difference between Gold and Copper

To answer this question it would serve us well to understand the deeper significance of the Golden Altar and to appreciate the difference between its function and that of the copper Altar.

The copper altar – which was designated for the offering of sacrifices – was situated in the courtyard **outside** the actual structure of the Mishkan. This was a public area that was filled with many of the Kohanim (priests) who worked in the Mishkan. It was also in clear view of the many others who came to the *Mishkan* to offer a sacrifice etc.

In short, the Copper Altar and the services that were performed on it were of a public nature.

By contrast, the Golden Altar – which was used for the burning of incense – was situated **inside** the *Mishkan* in a place that

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was restricted to a Kohain who had a specific task to perform there.

Moreover, when the kohain offered the incense, nobody except that kohain was permitted to be there. According to Talmudic tradition, not even a heavenly angel was allowed to “trespass” there when the incense was offered on the Golden Altar. Only the Kohain and G-d were permitted to be there, to the exclusion of everybody and anybody else.

Public and Private Judaism

Whatever occurred in the *Mishkan*, our ages tell us, has its parallel in our own lives as Jews. Indeed, every one of us must serve G-d in two ways.

There are the things we do to express our Jewishness in a public forum. When we give tzedakah, publicly, for example, it is not be dismissed as being vain and selfish. On the contrary, Jewish law records the statement that “It is a mitzvah to publicize those who do a Mitzvah.” By publicizing acts of philanthropy, we encourage others to emulate

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our ways and increase the goodness and kindness.

On the other hand, we must realize that Judaism involves more than just our public persona. There is an inner sanctum, the inner precincts of our heart and soul that must also be exercised so that it too can be expressed.

Initially, and intermittently, public display of one's Jewish heart and soul is both acceptable and desirable. There is, however, a need for us to realize that the ultimate objective of building a spiritual sanctuary in our lives is to reach a level where our relationship with G-d is of a private and exclusive nature.

This is the service associated with the Golden Altar, which was not only situated inside the structure but was the place where the most intimate relationship with G-d took place. It represented the inner heart of the Jew, unaided by others, even G-d's angels, connecting with G-d Himself.

Translated into practice this means that in addition to the tzedakah and other Mitzvos we do in public, we should also contribute

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anonymously, without regard for any recognition – just to connect with G-d.

Private Persona will Prevail

We live in a society that glorifies and worships its public role. You haven't made it in society if you haven't achieved recognition, wealth and fame. If a woman stays at home and raises a family, she is considered a second class citizen.

In Judaism, the hierarchy of values is determined by one's private and inner life. The more one is unassuming the higher they rise. True Jewish leaders had to be drafted into leadership with all of its trappings of fame and glory. The genuine leaders, beginning with Moses, shunned glory and wanted no part of it. They sacrificed their inner life for the benefit of the community. No true leader ever ran for the position. If they ran, it was away from fame.

However, part of being in exile is that we find it difficult to express our innermost and most intimate spiritual feelings. In addition, exile

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concealment of truth engendered a culture that thrives on the public arena.

By placing the discussion of the Golden Altar with its private nature at the end of the discussion of the building of the sanctuary, the Torah teaches us that this is the goal and objective.

In the ultimate end of time – the Messianic Age of Redemption – our inner feelings will be redeemed and our relationship with G-d enhanced. We will not need recognition by others to make us happy. We will revel in the realization of our soul's internal connection with G-d.

ESSAY THREE

MIND CONTROL

**The mind is a terrible thing to waste.
Even worse is when the mind is not free but
subject to the whims and caprices of our
unbridled hearts and external pressures.**

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ESSAY THREE

MIND CONTROL

The Many Functions of the Priestly Garments

This week's Torah portion discusses the garments that were to be worn by the priests who served in the Temple. These garments served multiple functions. In addition to the utilitarian use of garments for warmth, protection and modesty, they also served to enhance the "honor and beauty" of the priest.

The Talmud adds a further purpose for the priestly garments. Each one of the garments would atone for the sins of the Jewish people that paralleled the function and status of the garment.

The Heart of the Belt and the Belt of the Heart

One of the priestly garments was the avnet, the belt. According to the Talmud (*Erachin* 16a) this belt was worn across the heart and

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was therefore atonement for the sin of improper desires that one may harbor in his/her heart.

According to a Midrash, the belt would surround the Kohein 32 times. In Hebrew the number thirty two is indicated by the two Hebrew letters, Lamed and Beit, which forms the word lev, meaning heart.

Whose Home is It?

A story is told of a Jew who struggled to gain mastery over his own undesirable thoughts. No matter how hard he tried; he could not clear his mind from all the bad thoughts that would enter.

Not knowing how to deal with his problem, he sought the guidance of Rabbi Dovber, known as the Maggid (preacher) of Mezritch, the leader of the Chassidic movement and successor to the Ba'al Shem Tov.

Upon hearing this Jew's dilemma, the Maggid suggested that he see the great rabbi Zev of Zhitomir. "There," he was told, "you will find the answer to your question."

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Rabbi Zev earned a living from an inn that he managed in a certain town. When the Jew arrived in this town it had already gotten dark and he discovered that the door of the inn was bolted shut from within. The Jew knocked on the door, but no one bothered to open it.

He waited a few minutes and knocked again. Once more, no one inside paid any attention to his knocking and the door remained shut tight.

It was a cold wintry night and when the cold weather began to get to him he began to plead that someone open the door for him, but to no avail.

Having no other alternative, the Jew spent the night outside. When it got light he awakened and knocked on the door. The door opened and the Jew was given a room in which he stayed several days.

The Jew followed virtually every move of Rabbi Zev, but was not overly impressed with anything that he did. He struggled in vain to find an answer to his own problem, for which he was sent to Rabbi Zev in the first place.

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After a few days had passed and Rabbi Zev had not asked him for the reason that he had come to his inn, the Jew approached Rabbi Zev and asked him: "The Rebbe, the great Maggid, sent me to your home. But, to tell you the truth, I haven't the foggiest notion as to why.

Rabbi Zev replied "I will tell you why the Rebbe sent you to me. It was to learn from me that a person is the master of his own home. A master of his home, will not open the door to someone he doesn't want to let in."

The Jew then realized that there is no magic formula to mastery over one's thoughts. All one needs to know is that he or she is the master of his or her body. A master has control over what he or she will allow to enter.

The belt that was worn by the priest's reminder, as well as a reminder to every Jew whom he represented, that we are all masters over ourselves and masters over our heart and its feelings.

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The Exile Reminders

In the present day and age, without the Temple in Jerusalem – may it be built imminently – we must rely on other reminders.

The precept of Tzitzis and Tefillin, both of which involve strings and straps are also intended as reminders of our need to gain mastery over our thoughts and emotions.

The Tzitzis, the Torah tells us, reminds us of our obligations and will prevent us from following the dictates of our hearts and eyes. The Tefillin, which are worn on the head and arm, opposite the heart, are the spiritual reinforcement that gives the mind the ability to control the heart.

There is also a Chasidic custom for men to wear a special belt known as a Gartel when they pray. This is a reminder and reinforcement for them to gain mastery over their thoughts and desires.

The Reason we Need Reminders

One is entitled to ask the question, why we

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need reminders. If we are the natural masters of our bodies, why do we need the Tzitzis or Tefillin.

One answer to this question is the phenomenon of Golus-exile. Exile conditions block the mind's natural capacity for control over one's feelings and behavior. Exile conditions cause us to become confused. The state of confusion upsets the normal structure of our personalities where the mind reigns supreme.

The word Melech-king is an acronym, *Mo'ach* (mind), *Lev* (heart), *Kaved* (liver). When presented in that order, the mind controls the emotions and they in turn control our lower functions.

If however, Galus conditions cause our system to become discombobulated then the word Melech turns into Lemech. Lemech was the hapless and hopeless descendent of Cain who in his confusion killed Cain and his own son Tuval Cain, as recounted in the Biblical narrative, according to Rashi's commentary. The name Lemech has since been used derisively for one who is totally confused and

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has no control over his actions.

Thus, exile is the culprit that alters our system's ability to function in a normal way. Exile renders our mind hostage to our feelings and hormones as well as to external stimuli. Even living in the freest of societies does not detract from our true state of enslavement.

As long as our heart is in control, our mind and soul is in exile. This internal exile is what keeps us in an external exile.

The Redemption, which brings an end to the exile, parallels the process of gaining mastery over our thoughts. Our mind will be free to exercise its mastery over our feelings and actions. By liberating our soul, from the constraints of our heart, we thus contribute to the process of Redemption and the coming of Moshiach.

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ESSAY FOUR

CHUTZPAH

**You can't live with it and you can't live
without it.**

**We must have genuine respect for others
even as we remain adamantly committed,
bordering on Chutzpah, to our ideals**

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ESSAY FOUR

CHUTZPAH

Why Cover the forehead?

Among the various Priestly garments that are described in this week's parsha, we find the *tzitz*, the plate that the High Priest wore on his forehead, on which was engraved the words: "*Kodesh Lashem*-Holy unto G-d."

All the eight garments that the High Priest wore had a utilitarian purpose. Either they covered his body, or they performed a service such as the Breastplate that contained twelve Jewels. When an important question was asked of G-d, the letters engraved in the stones of the Breastplate would light up and provide G-d's response.

However, the *tzitz*, apparently served no physical function—the forehead does not normally get covered—nor did it serve any other function.

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The question then is: why did he wear the *tzitz*? What was its purpose?

Second, why did this ornament have the words “Holy unto G-d” engraved onto it? Weren’t all the other garments also holy and dedicated to G-d?

The Forehead and Positive Chutzpah

The answer to these questions, based on the Talmud’s statement that the *tzitz* atoned for the sin of brazen conduct, is as follows:

The forehead in Biblical literature is associated with chutzpah. Chutzpah is usually described as a negative trait. But, in truth, it is only through chutzpah that we have survived as a nation. It was sheer chutzpah that we did not disappear when the nations of the world wanted us to disappear. It was sheer chutzpa that we did not follow the pattern of so many other cultures that were forced into changing and surrendering.

Thus, the Talmud declares that “Israel is the most brazen of the nations.” It is this brazenness and chutzpah that has provided

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us with the ability to live, survive and flourish.

Double Edged Sword

However, chutzpah can be a double-edged sword. While its sharp edges enabled us to cut through the obstacles that stood in our way as a people, it can also become an instrument that causes pain to others. Unwarranted chutzpah can get us to dominate over others and show disregard for their feelings. In short, while chutzpah is an indispensable ingredient for our survival and further growth, it can become a destructive force in our lives as well.

To ameliorate the negative side of chutzpah, the High Priest would wear the *tzitz* on his forehead on which was engraved "Holy unto G-d," as a way of indicating that while chutzpah was desirable, one had to ascertain whether it was a G-dly chutzpah, one that emanated from a heightened awareness of G-d, and the strength that He gave us to persevere and flourish against all odds, or whether it was a personal ego trip that

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motivates us to step on everything and everyone that gets in our way; a total disregard for others.

In the days of the Temple, when the spiritual realms were closely intertwined with the physical, the High Priest's wearing of the *tzitz* itself generated the energies to help us express the proper chutzpah and suppress its improper form.

Now that the Temple no longer exists, it is our task to embrace the holy and G-dly chutzpah while repudiating the ungodly forms it takes, utilizing our own understanding. By reading the Torah portion that deals with the *tzitz*, G-d empowers us to use chutzpah the right way.

Amalek: Unholy Chutzpah

This Shabbat, in addition to the reading of the weekly parsha that contains the description of the *tzitz*, we also read an additional passage that deals with the commandment to remember the wicked nation Amalek.

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In light of the foregoing analysis of the tzitz we can see the connection to the reading about Amalek. Amalek's distinction was its unmitigated chutzpah that it displayed against G-d and the Jewish people. While we embrace the G-dly form of chutzpah, we totally repudiate its Amalekite counterpart.

Messianic Chutzpah

Our Sages tell us that before the onset of the Redemption chutzpah will proliferate. Is this a good sign or a bad sign?

The answer is that it is both.

On the one hand we have seen forces of evil assert themselves with unprecedented hubris and chutzpah. The world has condoned and even supported the attempts of terrorist murderers to destroy the Land of Israel and its inhabitants. A similar manifestation of this chutzpah can be seen in the attempts by these same murderous forces to destroy the United States and other civilized countries.

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We have also seen how the young generation has rebelled against their elders in the drug culture of the last few decades.

But, at the same time, we have witnessed an incredible new and positive trend, where our youth has demonstrated a desire to return to the beliefs, values and practices of Judaism, even when their parents and teachers were opposed to it.

And while Judaism has always demanded of us to show respect to our parents and elders, the young generation has applied the G-dly chutzpah to their lives. In most cases, the parents and teachers eventually follow in the footsteps of their young, in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy, at the end of the book of Malachi:

“And he [Elijah the prophet who precedes the coming of Moshiach] will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children.”

Rashi translates this verse as:

“...he will restore the hearts of the fathers *through* the children.”

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Indeed, this prophecy is unfolding before our very eyes.

But, the children must also remember the lesson from the tzitz, and the need to remember the evil of Amalek. These twin themes remind us that chutzpah can also be destructive when it is ego driven. It is their/our choice to use it wisely.

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ESSAY FIVE

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING JEWEL

**When something goes missing in our lives,
we must look for what is missing in our own
behavior.**

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ESSAY FIVE

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING JEWEL

The Twelve Jewels

This week's parsha, Tetzaveh, discusses the special garments the Kohanim-priests were required to wear when they performed the service in the Temple. Of all the garments the *Choshen* or Breastplate stands out for its colorful nature, both literally and figuratively; the. This was worn only by the *Kohain Gadol*-the High Priest. The *Choshen* consisted of four rows of Jewels, three stones in each row, for a total of twelve, the number that corresponded to the twelve tribes. Indeed the names of each of the twelve tribes were etched into these twelve jewels.

The very last stone was the *yashpeh*, translated as jasper. According to the chronological order of the twelve sons this

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gem corresponded to the youngest tribe that of Benjamin.

There is a fascinating story in the Jerusalem Talmud (Peah 1:1) concerning the extreme to which one must go to honor one's father that involved – it would appear only incidentally – the *yashpeh* jewel.

Jaspers and Red Heifers

The Talmud relates that once, during the Second Temple Era, it occurred that the *yashpeh* was missing from the *Choshen*. The Sages heard that a certain Roman official who resided in Ashkelon named Dama ben Nasina owned such a jewel. When they came to him and offered him a handsome sum for the jewel he turned them down saying that the key to the box in which the jewel was kept was in his father's possession and that his father was sleeping so he could not sell them the jewel at that moment. The rabbis offered to double the amount, thinking that he was using his father's sleep as an excuse. Again he demurred. Even when they offered to raise the price and pay an exorbitant amount for

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the jasper he refused. They realized that he was not going to sell the gem, and they left.

No sooner did his father awaken than he quickly retrieved the jewel and caught up with the rabbis and offered to sell the jewel to them. The rabbis offered to pay the final amount that they had indicated previously, but he refused to profit for honoring his father and so would only take the original sum they had proffered.

For his financial sacrifice for honoring his father, G-d rewarded him with the birth of a red heifer on his farm. This animal was used for the purification ritual of a person who has been in contact with the dead. This breed was so rare that it earned him the sum that was equivalent to the amount he forfeited because of the honor he extended to his father.

Benjamin's Jewel

Nothing in life happens by coincidence. Divine providence dictates that even the most minute and seemingly trivial detail happens by design. This is certainly true about the

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Torah. Everything the Torah relates to us has meaning and must convey an important message. In light of this we must try to understand what the connection is between the missing *yashpeh* stone in the *Choshen* to the Mitzvah of honoring one's father? What is the significance of the fact that this stone in particular was lost? And what lesson can we learn from the details of this story?

We can certainly learn a lesson from this story as to how far we should go to honor our parents, which is, of course, the main point of that Talmudic discussion. But what additional lessons can be gleaned from all the "minor" and seemingly trivial details?

Commentators point out that Benjamin, who is identified with the *yashpeh* stone, was the only one of Jacob's sons—the progenitors of the Jewish people—who was not involved in the sale of Joseph. Even Joseph was tainted by his own sale, although he was the victim, because of the way he provoked his brother's jealousy of him. Benjamin had absolutely no major or even minor role in the sale of Joseph.

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The Ultimate Honor of Parents

Of all the ways one can hurt their parents, as well as show a lack of concern and respect for them, is for brothers and sisters to not get along. Our parents' greatest wish is to see their children treat each other with love and respect. The more strident and vitriolic their divisions are the greater the pain that a parent will experience. And, conversely, the greater the love and the lack of jealousy among them is what causes parents the greatest joy and satisfaction.

The Psalmist exclaims,

“How goodly and how pleasant it is for
brothers to dwell together.”

The Talmud (*Kerisus* 5b) applies this verse specifically to Moses and Aaron. Elsewhere (*Shabbos* 139a) the Talmud states Aaron rejoiced in his heart when Moses, his younger brother, was chosen to be the liberator of the Jewish people. For his lack of jealousy and the great joy he experienced in his heart Aaron was rewarded by given the *Choshen* to wear over his heart.

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The *Choshen* thus represented the idea of brotherly love and respect, those feelings which brings the greatest joy to our parents.

A Jolt

During the second Temple era, especially near the end, at the time the Roman Empire was in control of Israel, the Jewish people degenerated into *sinas chinam*-senseless hatred. Their internecine divisions were at their worst level at that period in history and were the eventual cause of the destruction of the Second Temple as recorded in the Talmud.

In those very discordant times, the Jewish people had to be reminded of what they were missing. They might have deluded themselves into thinking that they were doing fine in terms of their relationship with G-d, their Father in heaven. To jolt them into realizing that they had failed in their honor for their physical parents, as well as for their Father in heaven because of their divisions, they lost the *yashpeh*. The *choshen*, which symbolized brotherly love, was missing its key

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component; the one jewel that corresponded to the tribe of Benjamin, the only son of Jacob who was not involved in the sale of Joseph.

Apparently the mysterious disappearance of the *yashpeh* stone did not accomplish its objective. This bizarre occurrence should have awakened the brothers to do some serious soul searching and to make them realize that they were missing the “Benjamin” mode of honor which is achieved only when we are united.

However, when the requisite conclusions were not drawn, divine providence alerted them to this lesson in a novel and circuitous way. A Roman official, whose very position was emblematic of the potential for and the onset of exile, was to impress upon them the need to shore up their filial responsibility. By owning the gem that symbolized brotherly love and by the unusual sacrifice he had made for his father, Dama ben Nesina served as the Divine agent to inspire them to recognize that they were missing the spiritual dimension of the *Choshen* in general and the *yashpeh* in particular.

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To further impress upon them what their course of action should be, Divine Providence alerted them to the phenomenon of the Red Heifer that was born on the farm of Dama. The enigmatic ritual involved sprinkling the ashes diluted with spring water on the person who was made ritually impure by contact with the dead. What is so enigmatic about this ritual is that the people involved in the preparation of the ashes would become impure while the person upon whom the ashes were sprinkled would become purified.

The message should have been unmistakably clear. The way to generate brotherly love and respect for our parents is by going out of our way to help bring purity to our brothers and sisters even if it means that we sacrifice some of our own purity. Only the sacrifices that we will make for one another are the key to reconnecting to our Heavenly Father.

Become a *Choshen* and Red Heifer

The word *Choshen* has the same numerical value as the word Moshiach. It is symbolic of Moshiach because in it we have all the Jewish

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people represented in the context of jewels. In the *Choshen* we have the feeling that we are all G-d's jewels, and we would feel incomplete should we lack even one of them.

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught that each Jew is a "land of desire" because of the infinite treasures buried within each of our souls.

The Rebbe would stand for hours and distribute dollars for tzedakah and blessings to thousands of Jews. When asked how he could endure such a strain and not tire, his famous response was, "When you count diamonds you do not get tired."

But as long as even one jewel is missing the *Choshen* is incomplete. Particularly if the jewel that is missing is the *yashpeh*, which symbolizes the lack of division, it causes our father in Heaven to shed tears and makes the exile for Him and for us more unbearable.

Now is the time when the lesson of the *Choshen* and Red Heifer are most needed. Now is the time for each one of us to reach out – or, more accurately – reach **in** to every Jew to discover and expose the Jewel within

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them, even at the expense of our own material and spiritual comforts.

This is the hallmark of identifying Moshiach. In addition to his other qualifications, Moshiach, according to our Sages, is a Jewish leader who sees the good in every one and dedicates himself to helping us actualize the diamond, or *yashpeh*, within. Moreover Moshiach is the ultimate expression of the Red Heifer mindset of putting the needs of his people ahead of his own.

Our mission is to emulate Moshiach's traits. And the power to accomplish this we derive from the spark of Moshiach within us. This, in turn, will hasten the imminent Redemption when we will see Aaron wearing the *Choshen* with all of the jewels intact!

ESSAY SIX

JEWISH BELL- BOTTOMS

Judaism, paradoxically, demands both external behavior and internal depth of understanding and feeling.

There are time when we have to sacrifice the latter to achieve the former

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ESSAY SIX

JEWISH BELL-BOTTOMS

The Noisemaker

One of the Priestly garments worn by the High Priest, discussed in this week's Parsha, is the *me'il*, or cloak. One of the distinguishing factors of the *me'il* were the bells that were placed on the bottoms of the cloak. The Torah even states what their intended utilitarian purpose was:

“...And its sound could be heard when he enters into the Sanctuary.” It was to alert people of his presence.

Every nuance of the Torah is precise. Every detail in the construction of the Sanctuary and the design of the Priestly garments were of utmost spiritual significance. In light of this fact, we must be able to find a deeper meaning for the placement of bells on the ends of the cloak.

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Two Components of Judaism

When we reflect on the structure of Judaism we will discover that there are two components:

First, Judaism consists of an elaborate system of observances. Each Mitzvah is a substantive act that connects us to G-d, refines the world and makes our lives meaningful.

Second, Judaism also consists of a methodology. How do we implement certain practices? What approach should we use in carrying out G-d's will? What mindset and emotion should we have when we fulfill our obligations? And while the methodology is also an integral part of Torah, there can and must be changes and variations depending on the circumstances and the exigencies of time.

Changing Attitudes

To illustrate the point, one can refer to the way we are to perform a Mitzvah. One can perform a Mitzvah for pure motives or for ulterior motives. The Talmud tells us that we should never desist doing a Mitzvah even if

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we do it for the wrong reasons, “For by first doing it for ulterior motives we will eventually do it for the right motive.” Maimonides specifically instructs us to encourage children and other beginners to do the right thing even if it is for some material gain. When one however progresses one must learn to do things for the purest of reasons.

Another example is the mindset of joy. When one does a Mitzvah there is a need to be joyous. There are, however, times and places when expressing overt joy is totally out of place such as in the case of a mourner, G-d forbid. There are also times when a more somber and introspective mood are called for—such as in the period from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur—while in other times, it is best to not focus on introspection but on the challenges that each day brings. Too much introspection can lead to depression and can hinder one’s ability to function at full speed.

**Promoting Judaism Loudly at the End of
Time**

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A third example of the changes in methodology within Judaism that relates to the “bell-bottoms” mentioned in this week’s Parsha is the idea of the use of “noisy” fanfare in the promotion of one’s Judaism.

While there is certainly virtue in the private, personal and quiet expression of Judaism, there are times when the Torah not only sanctions the more noisy form of promotion, but even mandates it.

Generally speaking, Judaism seeks what is called in Hebrew *Pnimitut*, inwardness. Judaism generally shuns superficial displays of religiosity and piety. One of the highest forms of charity is when it is given quietly. Yet there are times when the opposite approach is acceptable and even desirable.

In “normal” times—if there was ever such a time—when Jewish life was the norm, there was no need to promote Judaism to other Jews. Either a Jew was steeped in his/her religion or they rebelled against it.

As we get closer to the Messianic Age, the state of Jewishness has changed drastically in both directions. While we have lost more

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Jews from the Jewish way of life than ever before, it is not because of their desire to rebel. One cannot rebel against something they know little or nothing about. The ignorance of our pre-Messianic Age is one that is borne out of benign neglect and generations of assimilation.

Because of the radically different situation we are in now, no Jew is truly resistant to Judaism. All that is needed is for those who are knowledgeable—and every Jew has some knowledge—to pass what he or she knows to the next Jew. To reach the widest audience, promotional methods—that were shunned in the past—are eminently acceptable and desirable in the present.

This then is the deeper meaning of what the Torah says that when the High Priest would enter into the Sanctuary, the bells that were on the bottoms of his cloak would ring. The High Priest entering into the Sanctuary symbolizes the learned Jew who wishes to introduce others into the realm of holiness. The “**bottoms** of his cloak,” alludes to the **end** of time—the present pre-Messianic Age. And the ringing noises that his cloak would make

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when he would enter into the Sanctuary refers to the need to loudly and proudly offer the Jewish people the knowledge of the Torah and the beauty of their heritage of Mitzvot. All of this will certainly prepare us for the boisterous and ecstatic reception the entire world will give Moshiach when he finally comes and brings peace to the whole world.

ESSAY SEVEN

NOTHING PERSONAL

Selfishness is not restricted to material matters.

When we share our deepest and most personal emotions to inspire others, that is a noble expression of selflessness

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ESSAY SEVEN

NOTHING PERSONAL

Interplay between the Menorah and Incense

One theme that repeats itself in this week's Torah portion concerns the lighting of the menorah (Candelabrum) in the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary the Jews built in the desert.

At the beginning of the parsha it discusses how the menorah was lit, the olive oil that was used for its lighting, the one to light it etc.

At the end of the parsha the Torah once more mentions the Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah. However, it is mentioned in the context of burning the incense on the Golden Altar. The Torah tells us that the Menorah must be set up and kindled at the time they would also offer incense.

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Every minute detail associated with the Mishkan possesses profound insight and offers guidance for each and every Jew. The fact that the Torah links the offering of incense with the kindling of the menorah must convey an important message for us.

The Ultimate Bond

The Hebrew word for incense is *Ketores*. Etymologically, it is related to the word *kesher*, a knot, that means to bind. The process of offering incense in the inner precinct of the Temple represented the Jew's most intimate connection with G-d. There are times when our relationship with G-d is so private and personal that it can only be felt within the deepest precincts of our soul.

Because the *Ketores* was an expression of the most intimate relationship with G-d, one might think that it cannot be expressed in any tangible form. By definition, an intimate moment of love is an internal matter of the soul and cannot be captured by or translated in any other area of human endeavor. One could not therefore express this experience in

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intellectual terms, or translate the power of this intimate feeling in everyday actions.

Furthermore, one might think that this intimate experience is certainly too personal and private to be shared by others. Only someone who participated in this ritual and what it stands for could possibly appreciate its depth and intensity. There would be no point in trying to share this experience with others.

Never too Personal to Share

To dispel both of these contentions, the Torah links the burning of incense with the lighting of the menorah.

The menorah symbolizes: illumination our souls with the warmth and light of Torah and Mitzvos. It is also a symbol of bringing the light of G-d and Judaism to the outside world.

By juxtaposing the burning of incense with the lighting of the menorah, the Torah teaches us unequivocally that every emotion, no matter how deeply rooted, must be

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expressed in practical terms. Even the most internal and intimate expressions of love for and connection with G-d, can and must be translated in the conscious levels of our soul; that which motivates us to action — learning more Torah and performing more Mitzvot. This in no way “cheapens” one’s emotional connection with G-d, to the contrary — it shows that we are so in love with G-d that we are ready to change our lifestyle and our daily habits for Him..

The Book of Kings relates that the windows of the Temple were shaped so that more light would escape the temple than enter it. The Menorah’s light was not meant to simply illuminate the Temple, it was meant to project through the Temple windows and illuminate the world with the unique spiritual warmth and light that emanated from the Temple.

Similarly, one should not feel that his love or appreciation for G-d is a private matter that cannot be shared with others. Again, the Torah puts the Menorah next to the Mitzvah of the incense. It tells us that our most G-dly experiences should never be limited to our

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private lives; we must share them with others and help them grow in their approach to G-d as well.

The message of the Menorah is so powerful that Nachmanides quotes a Midrash that says its light will last forever and will never be extinguished. Though we temporarily don't have the Temple Menorah, we must still carry on its message of spreading and sharing the light and warmth of Judaism, until Moshiach comes, when, the prophet tells us, "All the nations of the world will walk in Your light."

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ESSAY EIGHT

HACKERS IN THE TEMPLE

Modern technology is a double edged sword.
The positive is that Divine knowledge has
become infinitely more accessible.
It is a portent of the Final Redemption!

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ESSAY EIGHT

HACKERS IN THE TEMPLE

The First Computer!

The first reference to a “computer” of sorts can be found in this week’s Parsha. One of the special garments worn by the High priest in the temple was called a *Choshen Mishpat*, or Breastplate of Judgment.

The *Choshen* was a square ornament that comprised twelve jewels. In these jewels were engraved the names of the twelve tribes as well as the Patriarchs. Whenever the High Priest was consulted about a serious matter that needed Divine guidance, the answer would miraculously show up on the Breastplate.

For example, if the question was whether the Jews should go to war, and the answer was no, the two Hebrew letters, *lamed* and *aleph*,

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that spell the Hebrew word *lo* that means no, would illuminate.

Nachmanides explains that there were actually two steps in the process of receiving G-d's guidance through the Breastplate. Firstly the letters that formed the word of G-d's response would glow. But, the letters would not necessarily be in order. It was up to the High Priest to know how to decipher the message by rearranging the letters and placing them in proper order. This ability to decipher the message, too, was given to the High priest by G-d.

This is why the Torah refers to this Divine "computer" with the dual designation as the *Urim V'Tumim*, "the Lights and the Completeness." Simply, this means that this special garment would give both illuminating as well as perfect advice. But according to Nachmanides' approach, this double designation, of *Urim* and *Tumim*, reflects two separate functions. It was called "*Urim*-Lights" because G-d's reply would be illuminated, on the Breastplate. It was also called "*Tumim*-completeness" because the High Priest was also given the Divine

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inspiration to know how to decipher the Divine message.

Why the Need for the Breastplates Divine Answers?

The question arises. If G-d gave the High Priest the ability to decipher the cryptic message, why was there a need for the answer to appear on the breastplate in the first place? Why was there a need for the Divine reply come through in two stages?

Moreover, as we noted on numerous occasions, every aspect of Torah knowledge can be utilized as a source of guidance and inspiration for each and every one of us in all times, places and situations. What lesson can we learn from the High Priest's miraculous Breastplate and the two steps that were needed in revealing the Divine response?

The Torah Approach to Guidance

Throughout life there are times when we seek guidance. There are a myriad of ethical dilemmas that require us to make crucial

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decisions. Very often, people make these decisions on their own, relying on their own conscience. The Jewish approach, however, is to consult the illuminating and sage counsel of the Torah. The Torah — that includes the Bible, Talmud and the entire corpus of Jewish philosophical, ethical and mystical literature that is based on the Bible — is the repository of all the information we will ever need to cope with all of life exigencies.

Torah is therefore referred to as “*Torah Or*— The Torah is Light,” and “*Torat Chaim*,” the Torah of Life, because it illuminates our way through life.

Mentors

But, consulting Torah does not suffice. Even if one had all the requisite language and analytical skills to study the Torah, one still needs to find the “High Priest,” for his guidance in deciphering the Torah’s message. The High Priest is a metaphor for a mentor who is preoccupied with spiritual matters and who can also be objective. This is consistent with the directive of our Sages in

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Ethics of our Fathers, “Make for yourself a teacher.” While we might be knowledgeable and capable of guiding others, it is imperative that we do not rely on our own judgment when we deal with our own ethical dilemmas. Our self-love and subjectivity might cloud our judgment and the Torah’s illuminating answer might not be deciphered correctly.

Make for Yourself a Teacher!

The entire history of the Jewish people is a reflection of these two steps that are necessary for the Torah to guide our lives.

While the Jewish people were aptly described as the “People of the Book,” we were also simultaneously the “People of oral communication.” Jews were never content with just reading the book; we always depended on finding the teacher(s) who would assist us in deciphering the words of the Torah and transmitting its soul to us as well.

Having a teacher also enables us to have an interactive relationship with the Torah. The Torah commands the teacher to encourage

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questions and debates. The interactive nature of the internet, can serve as a metaphor for the way the Jewish people have preserved the knowledge of Torah.

Google it!

We are living in the age of the internet and Google. Although there are many troubling aspects of these new technology that must be dealt with, these technologies also present us with an incredible metaphor into the way things will be in the near future with the unfolding of the Final Redemption.

Our ability to get information from G-d will be immediate, comprehensive and with utmost clarity.

It is not surprise then that the word Choshen has the same numerical value as the word Moshiach. Indeed, the Messianic Age is the age concerning which the Prophet states "And your eyes will behold Your Teacher." Then we will be able to communicate freely with our Divine Mentor and our interactive relationship with G-d will be realized. Then Torah will indeed illuminate and be complete

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just as the Divine message that was
transmitted via the Choshen.

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ESSAY NINE

MOSES AND PURE OLIVE OIL

**For the integrity of knowledge, both the
teacher and student have to possess pure
souls.**

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ESSAY NINE

MOSES AND PURE OLIVE OIL

Absent, but More Forcefully Present

Much has been written about the fact that Moses' name does not appear in this Torah portion-Tetzaveh; the only such parsha since Moses' birth was recorded where his name does not appear (See Essay One).

In place of his name, however, he is referred to prominently by the pronoun "you," in the opening verse:

"And **you** shall command the children of Israel that they should bring to you pure olive oil crushed for lighting, to ignite the lamp continually."

Moses, though he was the one to communicate all of G-d's commandments, his status as the commander was reinforced specifically here with regard to the use of pure olive oil for the Menorah.

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Moses the Commander and Pure Olive Oil

The fact that G-d delegated His authority to Moses specifically for this Mitzvah needs to be understood. Why was Moses' role as commander stressed exclusively in this parsha with regard to the mitzvah of preparing olive oil for the kindling of the Menorah in the Sanctuary? Why isn't his role as the commander mentioned in earlier or later parts of the Torah? What connection is there between Moses and pure olive oil?

One explanation that can be given requires a better understanding of the purpose of lighting the Menorah in the Temple.

The Role of Temple Offerings

When one surveys the Torah's discussion of the services performed in the Sanctuary, we discover that they were dominated by offerings of various foods to G-d. Now G-d does not need our offerings. However, the offerings served as the means through which G-d "connected" to the world, or more precisely, the offerings served as the means through which G-d enabled us to be

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connected to Him. And just as it takes the ingestion of food to keep the soul and body together, the same is said about G-d's relationship with our world. G-d, the soul of the entire universe, is kept within the world through the offerings in the Temple—"G-d's food," so to speak. The offerings served the world's "nutritional needs."

In these times when we don't have the Temple, our prayers take the place of the offerings. Our daily prayers, among other "benefits" provide the world with its sustenance.

Menorah: Not (just) Another Offering

The menorah, by contrast, was designed not as another offering of olive oil, but as a source of spiritual light. The Menorah was to play a complementary role with the Altar and its offerings. While the offerings served as the means to bring G-d's energy into this world; the Menorah served to clarify and illuminate that relationship.

And here is where Moses' role is underscored. While Moses transmitted all of Torah

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knowledge to the Jewish people, it was his special role to illuminate the world with G-dly knowledge. And even though it was Aaron, Moses' brother, and his descendants, who actually kindled the Menorah; the power vested within them to accomplish this mission was given to them by Moses.

What is it about Moses that made him the source of the power to illuminate the world through the kindling of the Menorah?

The short answer is that Moses personified the Torah and the Torah is the ultimate source of light. Torah illuminates everything.

But, the Torah itself can be perverted and its light can be dimmed. In order for us to access the pure light of the Torah, symbolized by the pure olive oil, one must be connected to Moses whose distinction was that his personality was so transparent that anything he communicated was the unadulterated and unambiguous word of G-d.

When we study Torah and connect to Moses we will be endowed with the ability to light up the world.

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Golus Darkness

But even Moses Torah teaching, while pure, does not end up nearly as pure when it goes through the transmission of less than holy individuals.

This is especially true in the period of Galus-exile, when darkness and confusion prevail. Galus also affects the clarity of our understanding.

Even the Babylonian Talmud refers to itself as the “Talmud of Darkness” because it was composed in the time of Babylonian exile. Therefore, although its teachings are an integral part of Torah, and were all given at Mount Sinai, we do not necessarily absorb its knowledge in its unadulterated form.

The way we may have to grope in the dark in our attempt to fathom its Divine knowledge points to the deleterious effects of Galus.

Moshiach's Teachings: Pure Oil

This will all change with Moshiach.

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Moshiach is said to possess the soul of Moses, in addition to his own unique soul. Because his appearance comes at the end of exile he will be able to transit Torah knowledge in its most pure form. Nothing will obstruct our ability to comprehend the deepest secrets of the Torah.

Our prayers for Moshiach include our desire for him to inspire us to study Torah with the pure light that will illuminate G-d's presence in the world.

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ESSAY TEN

GET SOME OIL ON YOUR CLOTHES

Nature and nurture are two sides of one coin.

**While we must always refine our nature, the
goal is to ultimately transform it.**

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ESSAY TEN

GET SOME OIL ON YOUR CLOTHES

Oil and Garments

This week's parsha begins with the commandment to Moses to command the Jewish people to bring oil to him for the kindling of the Menorah in the Temple.

After the brief reference to oil the Torah continues to discuss the priestly garments that were to be worn by the Kohanim when they serve in the Temple.

It is axiomatic in Judaism that nothing happens by chance and there are certainly no coincidences in the Torah. It behooves us to know why these two themes—oil and garments—were placed together in the Torah. What connection is there between the oil used for kindling the Menorah and the garments worn by the priests?

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Commentators find these two themes highlighted by King Solomon in Koheles (Ecclesiastes):

“Let your **garments** always be white,
and your head never lack **oil**.”

Here too a connection is made between the whiteness of the garments and the oil.

O'elos Ephraim (a seventeenth century commentator, also the author of the famous Bible commentary *Kli Yakar*) explains that since stains can be easily detected on a white garment and are also hard to remove, King Solomon is, in effect, exhorting us to imagine ourselves as if we are wearing white garments while balancing a pitcher of oil on our heads. This sobering thought will make us forever mindful that one slight move in the wrong direction can cause our garments to become soiled.

Purity of Character by Pouring Oil on our Heads

Other commentators describe the purity of the garments as a reference to one's

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character. One must constantly strive to refine one's nature.

But if the whiteness of the garments is a reference to the purity of our character, what does the reference to oil suggest?

There are two ways one can have a sterling character. The first method is to be born and bred with refined traits. Whatever we may have inherited can be augmented by being raised by refined parents and by living in a good environment.

But there is another approach. It is, metaphorically speaking, by pouring an ample supply of oil over our heads inasmuch as oil is a metaphor for wisdom and knowledge.

When one studies Torah, particularly the parts of Torah that deal with character refinement, it will affect not only our behavior but also our personality. It is even more effective when we study the spiritual and mystical dimensions of Torah and apply them to ourselves. People who are prone to anger and other unbecoming dispositions have been known to change when they applied themselves to Torah; or more

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precisely, when they applied the Torah to themselves.

Kong Solomon therefore exhorts us to have “white (read: refined) garments” (read: characteristics). In this context he is referring to the natural tendency to refinement that comes from one’s nature and nurture.

But, that might not suffice. So King Solomon reminds us not to lack “oil on our heads.” We must use the wisdom and inspiration of Torah that is likened to oil, to cultivate an even more refined personality.

Why Oil Before Garments

Based on this interpretation the question arises why King Solomon reversed the order of these two themes and ideals as they are alluded to in this week’s parsha, where oil is mentioned before the theme of garments?

One answer to this question is to better contrast and analyze the two approaches to character refinement. Which of the two is superior? Is the person who is born and raised with a pure heart and refined

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disposition superior to the one who acquires refinement through Torah therapy? Or, perhaps, it is the other way around?

The answer is both!

The advantage of possessing a naturally refined soul is that it is not extrinsic to or superimposed on the person. It is who he or she really is.

On the other hand, when we utilize our intellectual powers to change our character we have, in effect, risen above our own nature. Our purpose on this earth is not simply to be naturally good, but to raise what already exists and is naturally pure and good, to a higher G-dly level.

Thus, when King Solomon prefaces the theme of white garments it is because King Solomon, who deals with the natural virtues—in the words of Koheles “everything that happens **under the sun**”—gives precedence to the process of natural refinement because it is so pure and natural; it is a part of nature, “under the sun.”

When the Torah discusses the themes of “oil” and “garments” it reverses the order. This is

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because Torah preceded the creation of the world and therefore transcends the parameters of the world of nature. The first thing it therefore emphasizes is the importance of the oil that elevates one's nature to a higher level.

Garden of Eden versus Messianic Age

These two dimensions of refinement reflect the difference between the way the world was in the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and the way it will be in the future Messianic Age. Both represent the ideal state of purity and refinement. Indeed, the Garden of Eden—before Adam sinned—was the most naturally pure and pristine place. It required no effort to be pure and holy. However, in the Messianic Age we will reach the same and even higher levels of purity; that which transcends nature.

The Messianic Age will be ushered in by a great Jewish leader who is referred to as Moshiach, the meaning of which is “the anointed one;” the one who is anointed with

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oil. This signifies that he is a person who lacks no oil on his head. And because of his “oil” his garments are pure. To be sure, Moshiach possesses natural refinement but he also is able to elevate his natural purity to a much higher level and thereby render his garments not only white and pure, but also glorious and beautiful.

Mordechai’s Garments Contrasted with Adam’s

We read Parshas Tetzaveh on the Shabbat that precedes the Holiday of Purim. In the Book of Esther it describes Mordechai—one of the heroes of Purim after Haman was plot was thwarted—thus: “And Mordechai left the King wearing blue and white royal clothes with a big gold crown and robes of fine linen and of purple wool; then the city of Shushan was cheerful and glad.”

While Adam was dressed by G-d to cover his nakedness when he lost his innocence and was driven out of the Garden of Eden, Mordechai’s royal robes were not intended just for covering himself. They were royal

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robes that expressed his miraculous triumph over all his adversaries.

Moreover, according to some interpretations, the reference to his crown is an allusion to the Tefillin that he wore that are likened to a crown of glory. And Tefillin, which are placed on the head, are analogous to the oil that King Solomon refers to as being on the head.

Tefillin symbolizes the mastery of the mind over the heart; man's ability to elevate his natural feelings and character by the use of his mind to a level that transcends logic and reason.

Mordechai's triumph is a portent of the future when our minds will help us refine our nature and enable us to transcend nature.

ESSAY ELEVEN

HOLY AND UNHOLY CHUTZPAH

Chutzpah is the most destructive force used
by the arch-enemy of Israel—Amalek.

To defeat Amalek we use a positive and holy
form of Chutzpah.

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ESSAY ELEVEN

HOLY AND UNHOLY CHUTZPAH

One of the eight special garments worn by the Kohain Gadol-the Hight Priest was the *tzitz*. This is how the Torah describes it in this week's parsha:

“You shall make a head-plate of pure gold, and you shall engrave upon it, engraved like a signet ring, ‘Holy to G-d.’ ”

Each garment had a special function. The common denominator of all eight garments was that they were holy. Yet, only the head-plate had the words “Holy to G-d” etched in it. Why not the other garments?

One would have imagined that the *Choshen*-Breastplate, which served as an oracle that communicated G-d's messages to the Jewish people, would have highlighted its Divine role

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by having those words etched on it. Yet, only the Tzitz had that distinction. Why?

Ksav Sofer offers the following explanation based on the Talmudic premise that the garments of the High Priest served as atonement for various sins of the Jewish people. The Breastplate, for example, was atonement for the sins of perverted justice.

Atonement for Chutzpah

The *tzitz*-head-plate was worn by the High Priest to atone for the specific sin of *azus panim* — hubris or brazenness.

This premise that brazenness is regarded as a significant sin that required the wearing of the head-plate by the High Priest is problematic. After all, Judaism sanctions assertiveness and boldness. The very same term in Hebrew *azus* is used by our Sages to describe the ideal mode of behavior for a Jew:

In Ethics of the Fathers we are taught:

Yehudah ben Teima says, “Be bold (*az*) as a leopard when fulfilling the will of your Father in heaven.”

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Indeed, the Shulchan Aruch, the authoritative Code of Jewish Law begins with this citation underscoring its importance; that our introduction to Jewish observance is the realization that we must be assertive and bold. How do we reconcile this with the previous assertion that the head-plate worn by the High Priest was intended as a form of atonement for the sins of boldness and brazenness?

The answer is quite obvious. Brazenness in and of itself is not a vice. It depends on what one is assertive about. If one's brazenness and hubris involves one's own personal life it is not a virtue at all. On the contrary. When it is directed to the fulfillment of G-d's will; standing up for one's convictions and not being deterred by any opposition—then it is a virtue.

Thus, the head-plate had the words “Holy to G-d,” engraved on it to underscore that the head-plate that symbolized brazenness was indeed a virtue when it was used for G-dly purposes. (See Essay four.)

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One could still return to the original question: Why did the Breastplate of justice not have the name of G-d etched on it that it was consecrated to G-d? After all, the Breastplate atoned for perversion of justice and justice can also be one base on G-dly principles or on secular principles. Wouldn't it have been appropriate then to underscore here too that justice is only a virtue when it is directed to G-d?

The answer is that while justice when it is meted out based on human reasoning and secular considerations is not the antithesis of G-dly judgment. The antithesis of G-dly judgment is when there is deception and perversion of it.

To explain:

Judaism is based on the notion that all justice is G-dly. The nations of the world are also bound by the requirement of maintaining law and order. One of the seven Noahide commandments that were given originally to Adam, then Noah, was to establish courts that will enforce the law.

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Moreover, they are also enjoined to accept the seven Noahide commandments on the basis of the revelation at Mount Sinai. In Maimonides words:

“A person who follows the seven Noahide commandments because they are based on human reasoning is not one of the pious (another version: wise) members of the nations of the world.”

The importance of the Noahide system of justice is so significant that, according to Rashi, they are the foundation of the principle that governs Jews: “The law of the government is the law.”

In other words, all forms of justice, even the so-called secular are based on Divine fiat.

Our system of justice, relative to the Noahide laws, is on a higher level, but all systems must be predicated on the belief that justice comes from G-d. The salient difference is that with respect to the Choshen, they got their G-dly response directly, whereas the judge must use his intellect to arrive at a just verdict. The Choshen, therefore, did not need

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the words “Holy to G-d” etched in it, because all of justice must be based on G-d’s system of justice, not just the Choshen.

By contrast, the Tzitz, came to atone for Chutzpah. Chutzpah is only kosher when it is used for G-dly purposes and does not involve one’s own ego. To highlight that crucial premise that disallows Chutzpah for anything but the purist G-dly intention, the words “Holy to G-d” were etched in it.

Pre-Messianic Chutzpah

Throughout our history, Chutzpah has been the power that allowed us to survive. When our enemies threatened us, as in the story of Purim, we steadfastly said, we will not disappear. It took tremendous Chutzpah to survive.

However, never before had we needed as much Chutzpah as we do today to counter the Chutzpah of the nations of the world, who claim, among other things, that the Land of Israel is not ours! It takes unmitigated gall to say that when, in fact, there is no nation on earth that has a connection to its land

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more than the people of Israel's connection to the Land of Israel!

The reason for this unprecedented Chutzpah is because as we stand poised to enter into the state of Redemption, the evil nation Amalek, known for its Chutzpah will be totally destroyed. As such, Amalek, the embodiment of non-Divine Chutzpah is making its last stand and pulling out all the stops to assert itself.

This is thus particularly the right time to counter with our own brand of *Tzitz* oriented holy Chutzpah, and declare that we are ready to break out of this exile and follow our righteous redeemer, Moshiach, into the Era of Redemption, which will commence with the building of the Bais Hamikdash.

However, the Talmud states, that a prerequisite to the building of the Bais Hamikdash is the destruction of Amalek, the personification of unholy Chutzpah. May we see the fulfillment of this imminently!

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ESSAY TWELVE

CHANUKAH IN THE MONTH OF ADAR

A teacher or mentor must maintain high standards for himself or herself.

But, when inspiring the students, he or she cannot demand purity.

The main objective of mentoring is to find the lowest level of each individual and raise it up.

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ESSAY TWELVE

CHANUKAH IN THE MONTH OF ADAR

The Discrepancy

This week's parsha of Tetzaveh begins with the words:

“And you shall command the children of Israel that they should bring to you clear olive oil, crushed for lighting, to ignite the lamp continually.”

This commandment comes on the heels of the preceding parsha which discussed the various contributions of the Jewish people for the construction of the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary in the desert and the vessels within it: the Ark, Table, Altar, and Menorah.

However there is a discrepancy in these two appeals for contributions:

In last week's parsha the Torah stated: “Take My offering from **every** person whose heart inspires him to generosity.” The Zohar states

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that when the Torah states “From **every** person whose heart inspires him...” it includes even the *Eirev rav* (the mixture of a multitude of nations—the riff-raff—that were inspired, for ulterior motives, to join the Jewish people at the time of the Exodus, having witnessed the incredible miracles).

However, commentators point out, that in contrast to last week’s parsha, this week’s parsha specifies that the contribution of the olive oil must come from “the children of Israel.” Absent is the statement that it should come from **every** person who is inspired to contribute as it did with regard to the Mishkan and all of its vessels. Why is the olive oil different?

To answer this question we must first preface the answer to a second question: Why did they have to bring the olive oil to Moses? After all, Moses was not the one to do the lighting of the Menorah in the Mishkan. They should have been required to bring it to Aaron who was charged with this responsibility as mentioned explicitly in this parsha.

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Lighting Up the Souls with Pure Oil

The answer to this question is that lighting the Menorah is more than a ritual. It was even more than a means to generate greater spiritual light to the world. It was about lighting up the souls of the Jewish people. To ensure that the light would be untainted by any outside influence it had to be pure olive oil not just in the chemical sense of purity.

To ensure that the olive oil—with which the soul/flame of every Jew would be kindled—was pure, it had to be brought to Moses. Only Moses' pure and transparent soul had the capacity to guarantee that the oil would be pure in the spiritual and ultimate sense of the word.

Thus, Moses could not have asked for the *Eirev rav* to contribute the olive oil, because Moses knew of their lack of sincerity. He also knew that they were the instigators of the golden calf's construction (which according to many opinions preceded the commandment to contribute to the Mishkan). Moses could not afford to allow their participation in the

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donation of the olive oil because that would have sullied its pristine purity.

Now a question can be raised in the opposite direction. Why did Moses take their donations for the Mishkan? If their involvement would taint the purity of the oil, then it would also have compromised the integrity of the Mishkan.

The Lowlier the Better

To answer this question we must try to understand the difference between the respective objectives of the Mishkan with its vessels on the one hand and the olive oil on the other hand.

The Mishkan was a physical structure designed to be the instrument through which G-d chooses to reveal His presence in our world. The fact that our physical world is not a pure and holy place is not a contradiction to the objective of the Mishkan. On the contrary, the very purpose of the Mishkan was to bring holiness precisely into the parameters of the physical world with all of its deficiencies. One does not need to make

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the spiritual realms holy; the purpose of building the Mishkan—and the subsequent Beit Hamikdash that was built in Jerusalem—was to make the physical and material world holy.

The Mishkan was actually the prototype of G-d's image and vision for our world. G-d's objective in creating the world is to acquire a “dwelling place” for Himself in the lowliest aspects of existence, in our material, and often, spiritually resistant world. The lowliness of the world is not a negation of G-d's plan. On the contrary, it is an affirmation of it. Transforming the lowliest aspects of existence into a Sanctuary for G-d is indeed what life is all about; our very *raison d'être*.

Thus, when G-d asked for contributions for the construction of the Mishkan, the *Eirav rav*'s tainted past would certainly not detract from the mission statement of the Mishkan; indeed it would validate it. They were precisely the type of people for whom the Mishkan was most suited. And if one can lift up the people on the bottom rung of the spiritual ladder, it can surely uplift everyone else.

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The only caveat was that they ought not contribute to the Mishkan with negative feelings; they had to do it with and “inspired heart.” The fact that they had “skeletons in their closet” was in no way an impediment to their role in contributing to the Mishkan.

When, however, the oil had to be prepared to light up the **souls** of the Jewish people, that was an entirely different story. It had to be the purist olive oil in every sense of the word. The physical purity that was required was but a physical manifestation of its spiritual purity. The soul needs to be nurtured and its flame ignited in ways that do not eclipse its light or compromise its brightness for that defeats the very idea of what a soul is all about.

The *Eirav rav*’s contribution of the oil—even with their best intentions—would have undermined the very character of the lighting of the souls of the Jewish people, exemplified through the Menorah with purist of olive oil.

Once the Menorah is lit with the purist olive oil—under the direction and filter of Moses—it will ignite the spark of the souls of

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the Jewish people and once that light is shining brightly it will eventually also reach and ignite the souls of the *Eirav rav*.

An Analogy: Teacher and Student

Perhaps the analogy of a teacher's relationship to teaching can serve as an analogy to the different roles of the lighting of the Menorah and the contributions for the Mishkan.

If a teacher was to demand that all of his or her students should be sincere and perfect, that would undermine the entire function of teaching and mentoring. The objective of teaching is not just to impart knowledge; it is to uplift the student from his or her level to the next level.

This is what our Sages had in mind when they said (Pirkei Avos 1:1): Raise up many students." It does not say "teach many students" but "raise them." The goal is to find those who are on a lower rung than yourself and help them stand on their own two feet by raising their level.

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This is the analogy to the Mishkan that took contributions from everyone, even the riff raff.

Now, while a low level of knowledge and commitment is not an obstacle to teaching, it is its very *raison d'être*, the same is not true for the teacher's own standard. The teacher must strive to maintain the highest standards of morality and sincerity.

This is the analogy to the oil that was used for kindling the Menorah and elevating our souls; it has to be pure and associated with Moses.

Oil for the Menorah and Oil for the Flour Offerings

This distinction will also shed light (pun intended) on a Chanukah question. We know that the miracle of Chanukah was the discovery of an uncontaminated cruse of oil. And instead of lasting one night it lasted for eight. This miracle ensured that they would not have to light the Menorah with tainted olive oil; although under those circumstances

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where there was no other choice it would have been permitted.

The question has been raised concerning the oil that is needed for the various flour offerings that were brought in the Temple. Why were they able to use the contaminated oil for the offerings and not for the menorah? Why was there no need for a miracle to ensure that the offerings would also be brought with pure olive oil?

We can now understand that when it comes to offering of ourselves to G-d, He does not mind that it is brought from our lowest aspects. Indeed, sometimes the lower the offering the more G-d's objective of making a Sanctuary for Himself in the lowest of realms is realized. Not so when lighting the Menorah that represents the souls of all the Jewish people. For that purpose G-d performed the great miracle of Chanukah so that their souls would be capable of revealing its purist state.

Two Pronged Mission

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The lesson for us is that we—as we stand on the threshold of the final redemption through Moshiach—are also charged with a two pronged mission:

On the one hand, as we prepare to enter into the world of Redemption it is our responsibility to reach out to every Jew no matter how far they—or we ourselves—have strayed from the Torah. The worshippers of the contemporary version of the golden calf are just as integral to the unfolding process of the world proceeding from the state of exile to the state of Redemption as are the most connected and righteous. The universal Sanctuary that will be our world in the days of Moshiach is being built right now with the efforts of **every** single mitzvah of **every** single Jew no matter how far he or she may be from the state of purity. Moreover, the ultimate Mishkan needs those “lowly” contributions even more than those of the more lofty souls. G-d desires to dwell especially within the lowest of realms.

However, as we prepare our **souls** for the coming of Moshiach at which time we will see G-d's glory without any screen or filter, it

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is our task to come before Him with a pure soul. By taking our “olive oil” and bringing it to Moshiach, the Moses of our generation, by following in his pure and holy ways that are untainted by the exile mindset, we are guaranteed that our souls will be purified. And when we will stand before G-d in the third Temple we will not be embarrassed because our souls will radiate the purist of light.

Perhaps this is what our Sages had in mind when they composed the prayer that we recite before the Shema (as well as in other similar prayers):

“Illuminate our eyes with Your Torah, and allow our hearts to cling to you with Your Mitzvot, and unify our hearts to love and have reverence for Your name; and we shall not be shamed nor embarrassed forever and ever.”

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ESSAY THIRTEEN

MESSIANIC JUSTICE

We are always judging others.

We must learn to see beneath the surface.

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ESSAY THIRTEEN

MESSIANIC JUSTICE

The *Choshen*: Breastplate of Justice

This week's parsha highlights the making of the priestly garments. Each Kohain-Priest would wear four garments, but the Kohain Gadol-High Priest would wear eight garments.

One of the additional garments reserved for the High Priest was the *Choshen*, the Breastplate. This, the High Priest wore over his heart and consisted of twelve jewels with the names of the twelve tribes engraved in them.

The Torah refers to the *Choshen* as the "*Choshen Mishpat*, the "Breastplate of Justice."

What does justice have to do with a breastplate?

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Rashi explains that the priestly garments were worn to serve as atonement for the various sins of the Jewish people. The *Choshen*, specifically, atoned for the sin of *kilkul hadin*-corruption of the law.

However, this too requires clarification. What connection is there between the breastplate worn over the heart to the integrity of justice?

Choshen and Moshiach

One answer to this question can be found by referring to an interesting observation made by the Tosphos commentary (a collection of Midrashic comments by the French Tosafists who thrived in the 13th through 15th centuries): The word *Choshen* has the numerical equivalent of the word Moshiach (358).

Tosphos explains the connection between the role of the *Choshen* to atone for corruption of justice to the coming of Moshiach by citing Isaiah (Chapter 11) that Moshiach will judge by using his sense of smell. This is a metaphor for his ability to “sniff out” any

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miscarriage of justice. Moshiach will be endowed with Divine inspiration that will guarantee the integrity of justice.

The role of justice in relation to Moshiach is actually spelled out in the verse in Isaiah (Chapter one): "Zion will be redeemed with justice." However, there are two stages in justice: In the Pre-Messianic age, justice cannot be perfect. However, the sincere pursuit of justice is needed to hasten the process of Redemption. The second stage follows the coming of Moshiach and the final Redemption at which time the higher, more divinely inspired, form of Messianic justice will be revealed.

This sheds light on our prayer, recited thrice daily, "Return our judges as in earlier times." We ask G-d to restore justice the way it was in the days of old when we had the Holy Temple and the Sanhedrin. And this will occur **after** the coming of Moshiach with the restoration of the Sanhedrin. Yet, the prophet avers that we need justice now to bring Moshiach. Does justice precede Moshiach or follow him?

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Two Stages of Justice

In light of the above, there are two stages of justice. The pre-Messianic stage is where we make a sincere effort to ensure the integrity of justice within the limits of our existence in galus/exile. And there is a more advanced form of justice that will come with and follow the coming of Moshiach.

However, the question still remains. What connection is there between the twelve jewels of the *Choshen* and that it was placed over the heart and justice? More specifically, how does it relate to the coming of Moshiach?

The twelve stones of the Choshen, representative of the twelve tribes, point to the reality that despite our differences we are all jewels. As the Rebbe told a woman who was amazed at his ability to stand hours to distribute dollars for tzedakah and blessings to thousands every Sunday: “when you count diamonds you do not tire!”

Notwithstanding the stark differences between the twelve tribes, they are all equally represented in the *Choshen* and they are all precious jewels.

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Equipped with this realization, there is a smaller likelihood for the miscarriage of justice based on the judges' jaundiced view of one of the litigants in a case he must adjudicate.

Jewels or Criminals?

One might ask: Doesn't viewing both litigants as being both equally precious and righteous contradict the teaching of our Sages in Ethics of the Fathers:

“When the litigants stand before you, regard them both as wicked; but when they leave your presence, regard them as innocent, once they have accepted the verdict.”

How can we reconcile this statement that we regard both litigants as equally wicked with the earlier assertion that we view them both as precious gems?

The answer lies in a more literal translation of the words employed in the foregoing citation from Ethics of the Fathers:

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“When the litigants stand before you, they shall be **in your eyes as if** they were wicked; but when they leave your presence, they shall be in your eyes as if they are righteous, once they have accepted the verdict.”

The key words here are “in your eyes” and “as if.”

As If...

The Alter Rebbe in his classic and seminal work the Tanya, cites the words of the Talmud:

“...even if the entire world tells you that you are righteous, regard yourself (literally: “be in your own eyes”) as (literally: “as if”) wicked.”

The Alter Rebbe raises the question. This dictum appears to contradict the statement in Ethics of the Fathers: “Be not wicked in your own estimation.” Furthermore, if a person considers himself wicked, he will be grieved at heart and depressed and will not be able to serve G-d joyfully and with a contented heart. And if his heart will be at all

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grieved by this self-appraisal, he may be led to irreverence, G-d forbid, by such an attitude."

Based on these questions, the Alter Rebbe develops the thesis that one should certainly **not** view himself as being truly wicked. Rather, as the literal wording of the foregoing Talmudic phrase suggests, one should imagine that he is "as if" he were wicked.

What does "as if" mean? It suggests that acting righteous does not mean that one is internally righteous as well. One may actually have negative traits that may have been suppressed. We should never judge ourselves by an "external" examination and conclude that we are righteous. Beneath the surface there may be a tempest brewing and a fierce struggle between the animal soul and the G-dly soul, waiting to erupt. We must always be on guard and not be complacent based on our superficial assessment of our character and status.

In Your Own Eyes

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There is another approach to answering the Alter Rebbe's question. *Shev Sha'amtsa* (authored by a contemporary of the Alter Rebbe) offers (in the introduction to his classic work on Jewish law) the following reconciliation of the two Talmudic statements of how one should view oneself:

"In your own eyes, one should view oneself as wicked" means that you could and should conclude that your iniquity is only superficial. You should, however, recognize that deep down there is a core of righteousness.

There is a difference between the way we view a person with our eyes and with our heart. When we use our eyes to judge another we can only see the external. We see not a diamond but a person who is involved in a bitter dispute with his fellow alleging injustice and perhaps even criminal behavior. The judge is admonished not to draw any conclusion based on what his eyes see because they can only see the external.

Therefore, Ethics of the Fathers counsels the judge, to view them both equally "as if" they were wicked. Don't conclude that they are

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inherently evil; merely act towards them and treat them equally.

Reconciliation

Both of these approaches serve to reconcile the idea that the judge should view each litigant as a jewel with the statement in Ethics of the Fathers that they should be viewed as wicked.

First, the judge may only view their external character “in his eyes” and not their essence. Second, he may only view them **as if** they were wicked, i.e, that they have inner struggles that cause them to be involved in bitter squabbles but they are essentially good people. And it is the process of justice that will deal with these externalities by helping to remove the effects of bad choices.

Over the Heart

There is another lesson in the *Choshen* serving as the symbol of integrity in administering justice. In an earlier discussion, the Torah relates that, in response to Moses’s

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request that G-d select his brother Aaron to be the liberator, G-d replied that Aaron "will rejoice in his heart." Rashi comments: "Not as you think, that he will resent your attaining a high position. Because of this [Aaron's goodness and humility], Aaron merited the ornament of the breastplate, which is placed **over the heart** (Exod. 28:29).

In other words, wearing the *Choshen* over his heart indicated that Aaron did not begrudge the honor given to another. The ability to not be upset, moreover, to exult at another's good fortune, is the ultimate sign that our connection to our fellow is not superficial.

All of us Judges

This, then, is the lesson for us in the final days of golus as we prepare for Geulah. Although most of us are not judges, we are all in the business of judging others. A teacher judges his students, a parent his children, an employer his employees, a rabbi his congregants, a doctor his patients, a donor the recipients of his charity etc. and vice versa. And based on these judgments, we

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determine the degree and tone of our relationship with the other.

With the knowledge that the proper approach to judgment is the way to hasten and prepare for the ultimate Redemption, it is crucial that we look to the Breastplate as our guide. And there are at least two powerful lessons we should take to heart:

We must view the other as a jewel; the negative being on the surface.

We must also make sure that our view of the other is free of any trace of malice and envy. On the contrary, we should rejoice at the good of the other just as we would grieve at their loss.

Indeed, Moshiach is the ideal judge because, like Aaron who wore the *Choshen*, he sees the diamond, empathizes with everyone and rejoices with them in their moments of happiness. And while we still need improvement in this area, the pursuit of this goal of integrity in our justice system is the catalyst that will bring about the final Redemption when we will experience the

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more advanced stage of true and impeccable
justice on all levels.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

DO YOU HEAR?

**One major challenge of life is to know how to
prepare for a momentous and inspirational
occasion.**

**A second challenge is to know how to follow
up on it.**

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ESSAY FOURTEEN

DO YOU HEAR?

The Bells on His Robe

The *Kohain Gadol* - the High Priest was required to wear eight garments when he served in the Beis Hamikdash, the Holy Temple. One of the garments discussed in this week's parsha is the *Me'il* - the Robe.

The Torah states that, at the bottom of the Robe, the *Kohain Gadol* was to wear "pomegranate shapes of turquoise, purple and crimson wool, all around the edge, and golden bells among them all around." The Torah then proceeds to explain the function of the bells:

"...its sound shall be heard when he enters the Holy Place before G-d, and when he leaves, so that he will not die."

Abarbanel's explanation of the necessity to have the High Priest hear the sounds of the

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bells is that it would remind him that he was about to enter or leave a holy place. This was prudent, as routine behavior can cause a person to become desensitized to the significance of the service he is about of perform.

Indeed, we have a reminder in the Tzitzis that we wear on our four cornered garments. The rationale for these fringes is clearly stated in the Torah: "And you will look at them and you will be reminded all of G-d's commandments." According to *Haksav V'Hakabbalah*, the *Kohain Gadol* needed an audio as well as a visual reminder. Because of the sensitivity of his status and where he entered, he needed an extra layer of reminder.

The Three "*V'nishma's*"

Ba'al Haturim cites two other places in the Torah where the expression *v'nishma*-shall be heard is used.

When the Jewish people were offered the Torah at Mount Sinai, they responded "*Na'aseh v'nishma*-We will do and we will

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hear". The "we will hear" in Hebrew is identical to the word *v'nishma* concerning the noise made by the High Priest's bells that rang when he entered the Holy Temple.

The third mention of the word *v'nishma* is in the Megillah, the Book of Esther. When the Persian King's advisor suggested to him that he issue a decree for women to honor their husbands in the aftermath of queen Vashti's refusal to appear before the king, the Biblical text states "*V'nishma* *pisgam* *hamelech*-And the edict of the king shall be heard."

What's the Connection?

How are these three references to the word *v'nishma* connected? The first is about hearing the words of the Torah, the second is the sound of the High Priest's bells attached to his robe and the third is about hearing the king's edict for women to give honor to their husbands. What connection is there between these three rather disparate themes?

Positive Impulsiveness

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To discover the connection let us examine the first time this expression is used. As stated, when the Jews were offered the Torah they immediately consented and declared impulsively: "We will do and we will hear." The Talmud states that it was a rather rash thing for them to commit themselves to the dictates of the Torah without first hearing what it was all about.

However, this eagerness to embrace the Torah stood them in good stead. They were rewarded for this with the angels placing two crowns on their heads.

There is, however, a drawback to this impulsive approach to Torah if it is applied incorrectly. While their enthusiasm for the Torah was noble and praiseworthy, it must be augmented. Once a Jew accepts the Torah unreservedly he or she must make preparations to enter into its holy precincts with measured steps and serious reflection. Yes, any Jew, in whichever state he or she may be, can and must study Torah. Yet, we have the challenge to make the proper preparations for Torah study so that our acceptance of it is solid and enduring.

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Three Preparations for Torah

What are the proper preparations for Torah?

First, we must acknowledge that the Torah is Divine. We do that orally by reciting the blessings on the Torah each and every morning soon after getting up. We do not rush into it without that acknowledgment.

Second, we must attempt to purge all improper and extraneous thoughts that would sully our minds. It is true that the Talmud states that “word of Torah cannot be contaminated,” and even a person who is ritually unclean may study Torah. Nevertheless, Maimonides and other great authorities advocate immersing in a Mikveh before prayer and Torah study. Certainly we should cleanse our minds before prayer and Torah study to ensure optimal absorption and effect on us.

Third, a finite and biased mind and an egocentric attitude stand in the way of absorbing words of Torah that contain G-d's infinite wisdom. To allow the words of Torah to percolate and resonate within us we must

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divest ourselves of our preconceived notions and our egotistical mindset. Only when we become “empty vessels” can the Divine teachings of the Torah penetrate and integrate with us.

These preparations are especially important when we study the inner dimension of Torah, specifically the teachings of mysticism, such as Kabbalah and Chassidic thought. And while it is true that we cannot wait for all of the preparations before engaging in Torah study, it is certainly a goal that we should aspire to reach.

This explains the second reference to the word *v'nishma* in the context of the *Kohain Gadol's* entry into the Beis Hamikdash. Before one enters into the holy precincts of Torah study, Mitzvah observance and prayer, one must make the necessary preparations. Otherwise the Torah states he may die.

On a spiritual level this means that if we engage in these holy exercises without adequate preparation, although we enter with great enthusiasm and passion, the inspiration will ultimately fizzle out and “die.” While we

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must be impulsive and excited about accepting the Torah, we must simultaneously be deliberate and focused as we enter into its domain in order for it to become a permanent fixture in our lives.

Preparing to Leave

Moreover, even when the *Kohain Gadol* leaves the Sanctuary he must hear the sounds of the bells on his robe. The implied message is that even when we take leave of the holy experience and we go out of the *Beis Haknesses* -synagogue and *Beis Hamidrash*-House of Study to be involved in mundane pursuits of earning a living, we have to make preparations for that transition.

Simply immersing ourselves in the spiritual ocean of Torah and then abruptly leaving it to go onto “dry land” can be hazardous to our health. Deep sea divers know that they need to make a gradual transition from the deep sea onto dry land otherwise they are in danger of contracting decompression sickness known as “the bends” that can be fatal.

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The analog to this concept is that a person steeped in Torah or prayer has to recognize the need to translate the lofty ideals into day-to-day life. If we fail to make the gradual and deliberate transition from the holy to the profane we risk suffering a spiritual form of decompression illness that can derail our spiritual progress.

This is the underlying rationale for the Havdalah service at the end of Shabbos or Jewish Holidays. It assists us in making a gradual transition from the holiness of Shabbos to the weekday. In addition, it is customary to eat a special meal after the Shabbos is over called *Melave Malkah* - Escorting the Queen as a further way of easing into the weekdays.

Now that we have attained the excitement to embrace the Torah, coupled and tempered with our cautious and incremental preparations for its study and practice, we now reach the third and final step in our spiritual journey.

In the first two steps we incorporated the two crucial ingredients for making Judaism

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resonate within us. The first is a passionate and impulsive acceptance of the Torah even if it goes against our rational mind. We connect with the Divine without question or hesitation. This initial, impulsive approach to Torah is followed and complemented by a thorough process of preparation. In this way, the Torah penetrates not only our soul's spiritual consciousness but it also reaches into our intellect and our emotions. Ultimately, even our animal soul becomes receptive to the teachings of the Torah.

The Entire World Hears the Edict of the King

However, this individual focus does not suffice. The entire world should hear and embrace the message of the Torah: the Jewish people embracing the 613 commandments and non-Jews their seven Noahide commandments. This the point where the third reference to *v'nishma* comes in and assures us that ultimately—upon following the first two steps of *v'nishma*—a guaranteed third *v'nishma* will come to fruition. G-d's word will spread to the entire world with the

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coming of Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption.

This is the underlying spiritual meaning of the third reference to *v'nishma* in the Book of Esther in the context of the king's edict. According to our Sages, every reference to the word "king" in the Megillah can also be allegorically interpreted as a reference to G-d, the Supreme King of Kings. The Book of Esther in thus describing the edict of the king also alludes to G-d's edict; it will ultimately be heard in all His kingdom, consonant with the verse: "G-d will be the King of the entire earth; on that day He will be one and His name will be one."

The Hebrew words *pisgam hamelech*-edict of the king in one form of Gematria (where we add up the numerical value of the letters plus the number of words) equals 620, which is also the numerical value of the word *Keser*-crown. This alludes to the time when G-d will put the crown on Moshiach's head and lead us, imminently, from the profane existence of Galus into the Holy precincts of the Third Beis Hamikdash.

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ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE GREAT OFFENSIVE

Living in a world filled with negative influences dictates that we have the right defenses.

There are seven aspects of the priestly cloak, which we can all use to circumnavigate the minefields of society and even change them.

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ESSAY FIFTEEN

THE GREAT OFFENSIVE

Priestly Garments

Garments play an important role in the life of a Jew. But in no area of Torah learning is the significance of clothing more pronounced than in reference to the Bais Hamikdash. When a *Kohain*-Priest offered sacrifices or lit the Menorah, he had to wear the four Priestly garments. The *Kohain Gadol*-High Priest could not officiate without an additional four garments.

The Priestly garments endowed the *Kohain* with dignity and beauty and pointed to an ultimate state of perfection, in which the external appearance mirrored the internal.

The Talmud ascribes another quality to the priestly garments. Each of them brought atonement for a specific sin.

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The *Me'il*-the Robe with its bells, the Talmud (*Arachin* 16a) states, atoned for *lashon hara*-slander. "The Holy One, blessed is He, said, 'Let something that emits sound come and atone for acts of emitting sound.'"

One is entitled to ask how does the mere wearing of a garment effect atonement for any sin, let alone the sin of *lashon hara*, which our Sages equate with idolatry, adultery and bloodshed?

It may be suggested that the answer is actually provided in the very detailed requirements of the robe mentioned in this week's parsha:

You should make the Robe of the Apron entirely out of *t'cheiles* (turquoise wool). Its collar at the top should be hemmed inside, the work of a professional weaver, like the collar of a coat of armor. It must not be torn. On its bottom edge you should make pomegranate shapes... and golden bells... [W]hen he performs the service, and its sound should be heard when he enters the Holy Place before G-d...

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Negating Idolatry

The first description of the robe in this verse is that it was associated with the *Ephod*-Apron. It was worn underneath the Apron. The Apron, the Talmud states atoned for the sin of idolatry.

The message then is to enrobe and envelope ourselves with a holiness that will sensitize us against seeing the faults of others; we must negate idolatry in all of its forms, particularly self-worship. When a person is full of himself he all too easily sees the negative in others. Sadly, by exposing the other's negative aspects he enhances and justifies his own sense of importance.

To wean ourselves off the need to see and speak of the deficiencies of others, we must garb ourselves with the power to remove every vestige of self-glorification from our heart.

Redirecting Love and Fear

The second trait of the robe described in this verse is that it had to be made entirely out of

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t'cheiles. In Chassidic literature this material is seen as a metaphor for love of and fear/reverence for G-d. *T'cheiles* is related to a word that means to be consumed with passion for G-d. Conversely, the Talmud sees the bluish color of the *t'cheiles* as a vivid reminder of the blue heavens above which helps foster our awareness of and reverence for G-d.

Thus, to buttress our efforts at combating the obsession with seeing the negative in others we must transform our emotions of love and fear and redirect them toward G-d. Without that redirection we risk allowing our hearts to focus on our own interests and fears. When we are full of anxiety we conjure up enemies that don't exist; we see the negativity in others. When we are consumed with self-love we feel compelled to justify it by demeaning others. This makes us feel that we look good and are worthy of our self-love.

When we channel our love toward G-d and G-dly things we no longer have the need to look down at others, the root cause of *lashon hara*.

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“Head in the Mouth”

The third aspect of the Robe is that its collar should be hemmed at the top.

The Chassidic work *Ohaiv Yisroel* provides a novel interpretation of the symbolism in this requirement, following its literal rendition:

Its head shall be inside its mouth; a
hem shall be made around its mouth.

This, the *Ohaiv Yisroel* states, is to suggest that we must place our heads in our mouths. We do that by thinking before speaking and thereby create a hem, a guard and protection for the words that flow from our mouths.

Get Professional Help!

The fourth requirement of the Robe is that it must be the work of a professional weaver.

Creation of the Robe that transforms our idolatrous way of thinking and self-serving emotions cannot be left to amateurs. We must seek the counsel of professionals. As our Sages state (Ethics of the Fathers Chapter one): “Make for yourself a teacher.” Every individual has to look for someone who can

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inspire, guide and support this transformation.

Coat of Armor

The fifth characteristic of the Robe is that it must be like the collar of a coat of armor.

The preceding four measures are based on the need to transform ourselves by ceasing idolatrous self-worship and redirecting our passion and anxiety with the assistance of our mentors.

They do not necessarily protect us from external threats, however. We must therefore create spiritual armor that will deflect the poisonous arrows of hatred and division that come at us from the Galus-exile environment.

There are two ways of creating a protective shield. The first is to withdraw from society, live a totally insular life and shun all influences from the outside world.

The problem with this approach is that it cannot fully succeed in preventing the outside influences from getting through. A bullet-proof vest can shield one's torso from an

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assassin's bullet, but it doesn't protect the head. Without even realizing it, the insidious hostile influences of the world find ways of entering our minds and then from our minds creep into our speech and taint every other part of our lives.

This is particularly true in this day and age, when it has become virtually impossible to keep all of the most negative influences from entering our homes and schools and affecting our children.

The Best Defense is a Good Offense!

There must be another form of armor for our complete protection.

This approach is based on a Biblical verse that describes *tzedakah*-charity as armor. The Talmud (*Bava Basra* 9b) cites the prophet Yeshayahu's declaration: "And he garbed himself with *tzedakah* as a coat of mail..." as an ode to the power that *tzedakah* has to shield us from moral harm.

We must learn how to protect ourselves by considering the lesson of a famous adage

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which goes, “the best defense is a good offense.”

When we reach out to others and give them material and spiritual *tzedakah*, we become impervious to malign outside influences.

When we do so, we are too busy reaching out to others with a positive message to have the time and energy necessary to absorb the negative vibes. To paraphrase a Talmudic principle regarding the kosher laws: When a pot is busy spewing out its contents it cannot simultaneously absorb new flavors.

Second, little by little, every effort at spiritual *tzedakah* neutralizes, refines and transforms the environment.

Don't Rip it!

The sixth element of the Robe is that it must not be torn.

There are people who, in the process of influencing others, need to rip them. This is not the way to get rid of the negativity in others. We may not rip the Robe. Some folk even apply the idea of “ripping the Robe”

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when dealing with their own negative traits and actions. While Judaism advocates that we rebuke others along with serious soul-searching and repentance on our own part, it does not want us to rip the other or ourselves in the process. Our efforts at strengthening our defenses must not be destructive.

Pomegranates and Bells

The seventh point of description of the Robe is that it had to have woolen pomegranates and golden bells on its bottom edge. These bells were designed to ring when the High Priest would enter the Holy Place.

The Rebbe explains that the bells worn by the High Priest convey a message, specifically, for these last days of exile. Our mission today is to bring the light of Torah and Mitzvos to those who have yet to appreciate their value. These Jews are represented by the pomegranates, about which the Talmud states,

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“Even the sinners among you are filled with Mitzvos as a pomegranate is filled with seeds.”

We cannot be content with quiet and deliberate action to reach all of our lost brethren. We must employ all forms of publicity and fanfare to reach the largest number of Jews and bring them back into the fold. The way we educate them must involve making a lot of noise, as represented by the bells on the bottom of the Robe.

This message assumed even more importance after the Rebbe told us that our mission now is to prepare ourselves and the entire world for the coming of Moshiach and the Final Redemption. To accomplish this we have to harness every form of modern technology and ring all the bells of our Robe.

Getting Rid of Galus—the Ultimate *Lashon Hara*

The parsha's lesson of how to deal with *lashon hara* through wearing the Robe is especially pertinent today. Galus is one ceaseless *lashon hara* experience. We Jews,

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our Torah and our G-d are continually slandered by the enemies of Israel. The connection between *lashon hara* and Galus can be understood mystically as well. Divine speech, which was responsible for the creation of the world, is now muted, allowing evil to exist and flourish.

To counter the slander, and usher in the ultimate age of *lashon tov*-positive speech, we must take the seven steps discussed above:

- a) Negate idolatrous self-worship.
- b) Redirect our passion and anxiety into love of G-d and fear/reverence for Him.
- c) Put our heads in our mouths by having our minds control our speech.
- d) Avail ourselves of the help of mentors.
- e) Wear protective armor. Mount a vigorous offense by reaching out and transforming the dark world.
- f) Avoid ripping others or ourselves.
- g) Avail ourselves of every means at our disposal and with as much fanfare as possible, to go on the offensive and introduce

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the world to Judaism, with particular
emphasis on preparing for Moshiach.

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ESSAY SIXTEEN

RAISE YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD

It is axiomatic in Judaism that as important logic and reason are; one must be able to go beyond reason and logic in the pursuit of G-dly goals.

That is the meaning of Holy Chutzpah.

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ESSAY SIXTEEN

RAISE YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD

The Tzitz and Tefillin

The *Kohain Gadol* (High Priest) was required to wear eight priestly garments. One of them was the *tzitz*, a golden plate, placed on the High Priest's forehead, on which was engraved the words "Holy to G-d." The Torah commands the High Priest to have it upon his forehead "at all times." Rashi explains that this means he had to wear it as long as he was involved in the Temple service.

Why then does the Torah use the expression "at all times?" The Talmud (*Yoma* 7b) explains (and Rashi cites this interpretation in his commentary on the Torah) that it means that the *Kohain Gadol* should never divert his attention from the *tzitz* while he is wearing it.

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The Talmud also discusses the laws of Tefillin at that point and states,

“one is obligated to touch his Tefillin constantly so as not to divert attention from them.”

The Talmud bases this law on the parallel requirement for the *tzitz*, arguing:

If even concerning the *tzitz*, on which there is only one mention of G-d's name, the Torah says it shall be on his forehead constantly, which teaches that he should not divert his attention from it, Tefillin, in which there are many mentions [of G-d's name], how much more so [should a person avoid diverting his attention from them.]

From this Talmudic statement it follows that the Tefillin we wear is even holier than the gold plated *tzitz* worn by the holiest person, the High Priest!

However, Talmudic commentators questioned the premise that Tefillin are holier than the *tzitz*. It seems to be contradicted by the statement of the Talmud (*Tamid* 8b) that the High Priest would not be permitted to raise

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his hands above his head when giving the priestly blessing (unlike the average Kohain, who did not wear the *tzitz*, and did raise his hands when he blessed the congregation). Raising one's hands above the *tzitz* would not be respectful to the *tzitz* that contained G-d's name.

The question then is: why is there no such restriction concerning the Tefillin? The Talmud expressly permits a *Kohain* (other than the *Kohain Gadol*) to raise his hands when reciting the priestly blessing even while wearing Tefillin. If Tefillin are holier than the *tzitz* why would the rule of not raising hands above the head not apply as it does to the *tzitz*?

One simple answer would be that although Tefillin contain many references to G-d, they are all inside the Tefillin and are not visible on the outside, whereas the name of G-d etched into the golden plate was visible to any observer. Hence, when it comes to one's thoughts, which are hidden, Tefillin are considered holier because they contain many hidden references to G-d. However, when dealing with the overt action of raising one's

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hands, it would be more disrespectful to raise them above the *tzitz* in which G-d's name is visible to all.

Moshiach Comes When Our Attention is Diverted!?

One can perhaps offer a deeper answer to this apparent contradiction, based on the premise that diversion of one's attention is not always a negative.

With respect to the coming of Moshiach the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 97a) states that "Moshiach comes when our attention is diverted from it."

At face value, this statement is rather puzzling. One of the 13 principles of faith is not only to believe in Moshiach but to anticipate his coming. In our daily prayers we recite: "for Your salvation we hope for all day." The Talmud (*Shabbos* 31a) states that when one leaves this world one of the first questions posed to the soul is "did you anticipate salvation?" Maimonides codified this requirement in the strongest terms possible: "One who does not believe in him or

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one who doesn't anticipate his coming denies the Torah." How then could the Talmud state that Moshiach comes when we are distracted from his arrival?

The Alter Rebbe (*Tanya, Iggeres Hakodesh* #4) answers that it does not mean that we forget about Moshiach, but rather, the Moshiach and Redemption transcend our knowledge. Moshiach and Redemption will exceed any prior understanding of their nature. We will, in effect, be totally surprised by Moshiach's coming notwithstanding the fact that we never lost sight of it and constantly yearned for it. But that which we will experience will be light years ahead of what, with our limited resources, we imagined in the period of exile.

In this context, distraction from something means recognizing there is something higher than our perception of it.

When a person raises his hands above his head it symbolizes the limitation of our minds; there is a higher perception that we cannot fathom.

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The Two Dimensions of Tefillin

We can now understand the difference between the law that does not allow the High Priest to raise his hands above the *tzitz and* the law that allows us to raise our hands above our Tefillin:

Tefillin consist of two parts, the Head Tefillin and the Hand Tefillin. The Head Tefillin are considered holier than the Hand Tefillin. Nevertheless, the Torah commands us to don the Hand Tefillin first.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that the Hand Tefillin represent the simple, sincere dedication to G-d's will exhibited by simple Jews who focus on surrendering their will to G-d. These simple action-oriented Jews are considered superior to the "heady" Jews, whose focus is on their understanding.

From this we can derive the principle that although the Head Tefillin are considered more spiritually sophisticated than the Hand Tefillin, the Hand Tefillin actually transcend the Head Tefillin in terms of reaching G-d.

If our relationship with G-d is limited by our understanding we will discover an

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unbridgeable chasm between us and G-d, for G-d is infinite and our human minds are finite. There is no greater gap than the distance between the finite and the infinite. The Hand Tefillin represents connecting to G-d in ways which transcend our understanding. It is the Head Tefillin that cannot tolerate distraction, for the focus of the Head Tefillin is knowledge.

There is no issue about raising our hands above our heads when we wear Tefillin because that actually represents the idea that our connection to G-d is not limited to the mind and that Tefillin also signify the idea of transcending knowledge.

Tefillin are thus the synthesis between approaching G-d with intellect and transcending that intellect. On the one hand (no pun intended), we may not be distracted and our minds have to be focused. On the other hand, we are allowed to raise our hands above the head as a way of acknowledging that our intellect is not without its limits.

Holy Chutzpah

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The *tzitz* worn by the High Priest, in contrast, does not allow him to raise his hands above his head. The reason is that the *tzitz*, unlike the Head Tefillin, is not about intellectual approaches to G-d.

The *Zohar* (cited by the Alter Rebbe in *Likkutei Torah, Shir Hashirim* 23c) states that the forehead represents the Divine will that transcends logic.

This might explain why our Sages teach that the *tzitz*, which was worn on the forehead, served as atonement for people who suffered from hubris and chutzpah, which is Biblically related to the forehead. The *tzitz* thus represents the positive form of chutzpah, which is assertiveness, tenacity, stubbornness and going beyond the measured steps of the intellect. It is this form that can atone for the negative version of chutzpah which is not rational.

Now, if the *tzitz* itself represents transcendent logic there is no need for the High Priest to raise his hands above his forehead, for that would suggest that the *tzitz* itself must be transcended. That would

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be an affront to the *tzitz* and its transcendent power.

Rabbi Yehudah's View: Transcending Transcendence

However, the Talmud records the dissenting view of Rabbi Yehudah, who maintains that the *Kohain Gadol* would actually raise his hands above his head.

Rabbi Yehudah feels that even in transcending logic there can be many levels. Frequently we may recognize, rationally, that there are situations which demand that we go beyond our understanding. That is the point at which logic surrenders to faith. Rational people will rely on a physician's recommendation for surgery even if they cannot fathom the logic behind the doctor's advice. One can use logic to argue the notion that there are certain things above and beyond our logic.

Hence even that is, to some degree, bound by rational thought. There can then be a higher level of transcendence which totally defies rationality; not because it is irrational but

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because it is connected to an infinite, Supra-rational G-d.

Hence, Rabbi Yehudah feels that just like Tefillin allow us to raise our hands above our heads to highlight the need to transcend, so too, a *Kohain Gadol* can raise his hands above the *tzitz on* his forehead to indicate that there is no end to transcendence. One can and must transcend transcendence as well.

The *Tzitz* and Moshiach

As stated above, the Talmud speaks of the Messianic Age coming to pass when our attention is diverted. This was understood to mean that the Messianic revelations of G-dliness will transcend our highest level of understanding. But, according to Rabbi Yehudah, it doesn't stop there. In the Messianic Age, no matter how high we are able to climb, there will always be another more elusive level to scale.

The word *tzitz* is etymologically related to the word in *Shir Hashirim* which describes the way Moshiach peers, *meitzitz*, through the crevices.

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What is the connection between the *tzitzit* which signifies holychutzpah and trans-rationality to Moshiach looking through the cracks?

The Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichos* volume 38 p. 199) explains that in exile we need to have unwavering trust in and attachment to Moshiach that goes beyond reason. This is consonant with the Rebbe's historic talk (28th of Nissan 5751) that "ten stiff-necked, unyielding people are needed to bring the Redemption."

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ESSAY SEVENTEEN

TWO FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Some people are great at receiving and
absorbing inspiration from others.

If you lack that talent, realize that G-d gave
you the ability to discover your own inner
jewel.

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ESSAY EIGHTEEN

TWO FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

What was Etched in the Breastplate?

Among the eight garments the *Kohain Gadol* (the High Priest) wore when he performed the service in the Temple—described in this week's parsha—was the *Choshen Mishpat*, the Breastplate of Judgment. This Breastplate comprised twelve jewels on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes.

In addition to the names of the twelve tribes, there were other words that were etched into these twelve stones. There are two opinions cited in the Midrash as to what the other words were.

One opinion states that it also had the names of the Patriarchs. This opinion bases itself on a play on words: The Hebrew word for stones, *Avanim* is a composite of the two

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words: “*Av* and *Banim*,” meaning father and children.

The other view states that in addition to the names of the twelve tribes, the Breastplate of the High Priest also contained the names of the jewels themselves.

This opinion is based on an alternate translation of the verse that prescribes the obligation to engrave the names of the Children of Israel: Instead of rendering the verse, “The names of the children of Israel should be on the stones...,” the verse is now rendered: “The [names of the] stones shall be together with the names of the children of Israel.”

Whenever there is a legitimate difference of opinion about the interpretation of a certain aspect of Torah, the Talmud invokes the principle: “Both opinions are the words of the living G-d.” This means that, while in actuality only one opinion may be historically accurate, both opinions are conceptually valid, each contributing a different moral and spiritual nuance.

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Communicating through the Names of the Tribes

The Breastplate worn by the High Priest, served as an oracle. Whenever there was a major dilemma in the Land of Israel, the answer would be Divinely communicated via the Breastplate. Suppose the query was whether they would be successful in their battles against an enemy, the answer would show up by having the letters—that formed the answer—of the Breastplate illuminate.

The question we can ask is why would G-d communicate through the names of the Tribes? Weren't there other ways for G-d to answer our questions?

To understand the dynamics of the Breastplate and its connection to the names of the Jewish people, we have to view G-d's communication through these stones as His way of showing us that He has a healthy relationship with His people.

Frequently problems that arise in a relationship are caused by the lack of communication. When G-d responded to their questions, and was effectively

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communicating with them, He was affirming that the relationship He has with Israel was solid.

To underscore that he was communicating with—not talking down to—us, G-d's answer was channeled through the names of the Jewish people as they were etched in the precious gems. G-d was commenting on the condition of the Jewish people—that they were gems, worthy of His love and closeness.

Counting Diamonds

The Lubavitcher Rebbe had a custom to personally distribute dollars to thousands of people from all walks of life who would line up for hours every Sunday. When a relatively young woman reached the Rebbe and realized that the Rebbe—who was then in his late eighties or early nineties—was alert and spry, she remarked to the Rebbe in amazement: “I’m so much younger and I’ve been standing on line for a few hours and I’m so tired, how do you stand on line for so much longer and not tire?”

The Rebbe answered with a fatherly smile:

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“When one counts diamonds, you don’t get tired.”

What Makes us so Precious?

The question can be asked. What is it that makes us so precious?

And to this we have two answers. One answer is that the link that has been forged by fathers (and mothers), who passed down the teachings of Torah to the next generation have made us into precious jewels. The true definition of (precious) stones (*Avanim*) is father and children—together. We can then become the vehicles through which G-d communicates through us and to us.

But not every Jew was born into a family that kept up the chain of tradition. Circumstances of exile that are beyond our control have severed or strained the spiritual bonds with our past. In these circumstances one may think that the Jew is no longer capable of being a conduit for G-d’s communication.

The second opinion therefore teaches us that there are times that the breastplate has all

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the names of the tribes without the names of the fathers and nevertheless it remains intact and G-d communicates through it no less. Instead the name of the tribes stand together with the names of the gems, as if to say that every Jew—even one who is so far removed from the past— retains his jewel status. And while we acquire some of our holiness from our forebears, we possess a reservoir of G-dly energy within our own souls that is no less potent, provided we write the names of the gems next to our names, i.e., we appreciate that we are gems.

Polishing the Diamond

A diamond must be polished for it to display its exquisite beauty.

The Jewish people have gone through the most unbearable persecution and we steadfastly remained loyal to our identity as Jews. That certainly qualified as polish.

As we stand now at the end of the painful exile, all of our individual faults notwithstanding, we are a most precious people because the diamond in the rough has

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been polished and set into the most beautiful gold setting. And while we may not see the jewel aspect of every Jew it is because we are not connoisseurs.

The message for our times is clear. Some of us can point to our connection to the past as the source of our strength. Others, who do not have this overt connection to the past, are no less worthy. Indeed, they are all diamonds.

All of us are thus capable of achieving the same goal—getting G-d to respond to our needs, including the most pressing need, to bring an end to exile and all of the negative energy it brings, and to usher in the Age of Moshiach.

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ESSAY EIGHTEEN

FATHER KNOWS BEST

**Our future redemption is achieved by making
our connection to the past vitally present.**

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ESSAY EIGHTEEN

FATHER KNOWS BEST

Be-jew-eled!

One of the most striking features of the garments worn by the High Priest, described in this week's parsha, is the *choshen*, the breastplate, that contained twelve jewels. Each of these jewels represented one of the twelve tribes, the names of which were etched into the twelve stones.

The last of the twelve stones was the jasper, referred to in the text as *Yashpei*. This stone represented the tribe of Benjamin. Commentators point to the fact that the word *yashpei* shares a numerical equivalency with the phrase, "Benjamin the son of Jacob."

The Missing Jasper

The Talmud relates an interesting story

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concerning this particular jewel.

Once, the Sages sought to replace the *yashpei* of the High Priest's breastplate that got lost. A certain Roman official, Dama ben Nesinah, who resided in Israel had such a jewel. When they approached him to purchase it for the Temple, he refused to sell it, even at a very large profit, because the key to his safe was under his father's pillow. He refused to awaken his father to get the key. The Talmud extols this Roman official's profound respect for his father.

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that nothing happens by chance. Everything that happens is *b'hashgacha pratis*, by Divine Providence. Why, commentators have wondered, was the lesson of honoring parents, conveyed specifically by the stone that was associated with Benjamin?

The answer given by commentators was that when Joseph was sold by his brothers causing their father anguish—the very antithesis of honoring a parent—Benjamin was the only brother who did not participate in that event. Hence the lesson about honoring a father

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came about through the jewel associated with Benjamin.

Losing Touch with their Roots

When the Talmud relates that they lost the *yashpei* jewel, it may be interpreted to mean that the Jewish people were beginning to lose touch with their roots and were gradually drifting away from their heritage. The Talmud acknowledges that more and more disputes arose amongst the Sages because, as the Talmud puts it, "they did not serve their masters adequately." Their link to the past was beginning to erode.

To help them restore this "jewel," G-d orchestrated it so that a Roman official—the very people who dominated the Jews and who ultimately destroyed their Temple and ushered in the longest period of exile—would reinforce their connection to their past.

Tradition and Moshiach

Commentators also have made the observation that the Hebrew word for the

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Breastplate is *Choshen*, which has the numerical value of 358, the same as the word Moshiach. The Breastplate's complete name was *Choshen Mishpat*. The word *Mishpat* has been translated as either justice or the laws of the Torah that form the basis of Jewish justice. The connection between *Mishpat* and the Messianic Age is that it takes the study of Torah to get us ready for the coming of Moshiach and that when it happens, and only then, will justice be fully restored.

It follows then that each of the twelve stones of the *Choshen*, represents one of twelve approaches that one can take towards the attainment of the highest ideals of justice and Torah knowledge.

The last jewel, *yashpei*, associated with honoring parents, thus alludes to the need to respect the Torah tradition. It does not suffice to learn Torah and master it. One must forge a link between oneself and the generations of the past.

In the words of King Solomon: "listen my son to the words of reproof of your **father** and do not forsake the teachings of your **mother**."

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The Father and Mother of Torah

Our Sages comment that “father” and “mother” in this regard refer to the Written Torah and Oral Torah, respectively. However, by using the metaphor of father and mother, King Solomon, was telling us that one must study always go back to the previous generation of Torah teachers to get the deeper insights contained within the Torah.

Torah study, though it is an intellectual exercise, is also primarily an attempt at retracing our steps to Sinai. In order for us to capture the spirit of Sinai—the thunder and lightening that accompanied the giving of the Torah—we cannot rely on our own understanding of the Torah. It is crucial that we speak to our fathers and mothers, our teachers and masters, for they form the link between us and the Sinai experience.

Moshiach's Link to the Past

One of the characteristics of Moshiach, Maimonides records, is for him to be steeped in Torah as “his **father** David.” It does not suffice for him to have mastered the Torah

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independently, he must also feel his link to his “father.” To usher in the coming of Moshiach, thus, every one of us must awaken the spark of Moshiach within ourselves, and connect to our ancestors.

And when we feel we may have lost this “gem” our “Breastplate of Judgment” is incomplete. To bring Moshiach, we must look for every way—even by following the good example of “Romans,” i.e., foreign influences—to reconnect to our forebears, our parents and teachers, through whom we reconnect to the Sinai experience.

Our **future** redemption is achieved by making our connection to the past vitally present.

ESSAY NINETEEN

JUST ONE DROP OF OIL

Oil is a symbol of light and inner purity.

When dealing with inner purity, quantity
becomes immaterial. One drop suffices.

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ESSAY NINETEEN

JUST ONE DROP OF OIL

Bring the Oil to Moses

One of the most important functions carried out in the Mishkan (the portable Sanctuary in the desert) and later in the Bais Hamikdash (the Holy Temple) was the lighting of the Menorah, the seven branched candelabrum. The primary objective was to extend the light of the Sanctuary where G-d was revealed to the entire world. It would not suffice for there to be a single place on Earth that reflects the Divine reality; the ultimate objective is that the entire world will be illuminated by and bask in Divine light. This, indeed, is the very rationale for the creation of the world and which will be realized in the imminent Age of Redemption

This week's parsha begins with G-d's instruction to Moses:

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“You should command the children of Israel that they should bring to you clear olive oil...”

The question is asked, why did they have to bring the oil to Moses? After all it was Aaron and his sons who lit the menorah, not Moses.

Another question is asked concerning the use of the word olive [oil] in the singular, [*shemen*] *zayis*. Why does it not use the plural [*shemen*] *zeisim*-[oi of] olives, in the plural?

The Chassidic work Panim Yafos answers that in Moses' merit one drop of oil sufficed! This was similar to the miracle of the “Western light” of the Menorah that would not extinguish on its own. This miracle lasted for the duration of the first Bais Hamikdash-The Holy Temple, and then for a brief period in the Second Temple era. This was also the essence of the Chanukah miracle; one night's supply lasted for eight nights.

Breakdown of Analogy

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But here is where the analogy breaks down:

There is a well established principle of Jewish law that a Mitzvah should be performed within the parameters of nature. If one must invoke supernatural forces to facilitate the fulfillment of a Mitzvah, it undermines the spiritual quality of the Mitzvah.

There is a well-known story of the Alter Rebbe on this point. When he was rowed across a waterway to transfer him from one prison facility to another, the Alter Rebbe noticed the new moon shining brightly in the sky. So he asked the prison official who was rowing the boat to stop so he could say the traditional Sanctification of the Moon blessing. The official refused. The Alter Rebbe resorted to his supernatural powers to cause the boat to stop on its own. As soon as it stopped, he recited a preliminary psalm and then the boat started to move again. The Alter Rebbe asked the official once more to stop the boat. This time the official acceded to his request and willingly stopped the boat, whereupon the Alter Rebbe recited the blessing on the new moon.

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The question has been asked: If the Alter Rebbe had the power to stop the boat why did he let it resume moving? Why did he again ask the official to stop the boat when he had the ability to stop it himself?

The answer given by the Rebbe is that Alter Rebbe refused to do a Mitzvah with the aid of a supernatural force. He wanted the official to decide to stop the boat of his own free will, so the Alter Rebbe could fulfill the Mitzvah without the support of a miracle

Why then would the central Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan be based on a miracle; that one drop of oil would suffice when there was no shortage of olive oil?

The fact that the Western light did not go out on its own is not a good analogy. There was sufficient oil for the entire night, which satisfied the basic requirement of the Mitzvah to light a Menorah so that it lasts "from evening until morning." The miracle merely allowed one flame of the Menorah to extend beyond the time it was required to burn.

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Likewise the miracle of Chanukah was designed by G-d to show His love for the Jewish people and highlight the victory over the Greeks. Furthermore, their only alternative was to use contaminated oil which was much less preferable than the use of miraculous oil. (See *Likkutei Sichos*, volume 5 n.35).

Which brings us back to the original question, why did G-d invoke Moses' merit to cause a solitary drop of oil to suffice and thereby compromise the integrity of a Mitzvah that should be done within the parameters of nature?

Why the Focus on Nature?

To answer this question we must review the reasons for the insistence that a Mitzvah should be done through natural means.

The Rebbe provides two explanations: (See *Likkutei Sichos*, volume 35 p. 226):

The first is that G-d cherishes the natural order, for it is His Handiwork. Therefore He

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does not want us to alter nature; even to perform a Mitzvah.

The second reason is that, although the Torah itself transcends the parameters of nature, it was given precisely to affect and refine nature. To perform a Mitzvah with miracles circumvents the very objective of a Mitzvah.

Now let us examine the lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan, which relied on a miracle that one drop of oil brought to Moses sufficed.

If the reason we attempt to perform a Mitzvah within the parameters of nature is to respect the laws of nature, that did not apply during the sojourn in the desert wherein everything that happened was miraculous, from the splitting of the Red Sea, Manna from Heaven, the Clouds of Glory and Miriam's Well. Indeed, the supernatural phenomena were more common than the natural. A child who grew up in the desert would be more surprised to see an apple slowly growing on a tree than by the ration

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of Manna that rained from Heaven daily for forty years!

If lighting a Menorah from one drop of oil was miraculous for **us** it was commonplace for **them** and, indeed, was a part of **their** “natural” world.

If, however, the reason for the need to perform a Mitzvah within the confines of nature is to affect nature and refine it, the question still remains, why would they light the Menorah with but one drop of oil?

Two answers come to mind:

Not Operational Yet

The first is that the objective of Torah to refine the world was not fully operational until the Jewish nation conquered the Land of Israel. According to the Alter Rebbe, the reluctance of the spies to enter the Promised Land was due to their preference to remain in the totally spiritual desert environment. They could not adapt to living within the parameters of a natural world with the duty

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of changing it. They chose to live in a spiritual world and remain pure and G-dly rather than engaging the material world and risk the danger of being swallowed up by its physicality.

Thus, as long as the Jewish nation was in the desert, the objective of refining the world by entering into its precincts and changing it from within, was on hold. There was thus no problem with using the supernatural for the observance of a Mitzvah because they were not yet in the mode of refining the natural world from within its own boundaries. It was an era of the miraculous overwhelming, and not changing, the world with G-dly light.

Ahead of its Time

A second but opposite approach can be offered: the lighting of the Menorah by Moses in the desert was actually ahead of its time. Rather than suggesting that the mission to change the world had not yet begun in earnest, this explanation posits that Moses was setting the tone and paving the way for

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the ultimate future, when the natural world will have been fully refined and changed to the point that there will be a seamless transition from the natural to the supernatural.

This can also explain why the miracle that occurred specifically with the lighting of the Menorah was associated with Moses and not Aaron, who actually lit the Menorah.

Our Sages tell us that “Moses is the first redeemer and he will be the final redeemer.” This, they explain means that Moshiach will possess the soul of Moses and represent his essence, which is Torah.

The Menorah, in contradistinction to the Altar and the Table, was designed to illuminate the Divine in the world. The Menorah channeled the Divine light from the first day of creation that “illuminated from one end of the world to the other.” And it is that light which will be fully revealed in the Messianic Era.

Thus, when the oil (the power of Moshiach) was brought to Moses (the first and final

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redeemer) to light the Menorah (the portent of the light of the Messianic Age) one drop sufficed because in the future there will be no dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural.

The Power of Faith

There is one very important caveat: The Torah does not actually say that Moses took one drop of oil for the Menorah. Rather, it states that the Jewish people were commanded to bring their “olive oil,” in the singular, to Moses. No one dwelling in the desert thought it was bizarre that a single olive was enough!

The lesson here is that the Jewish people had total faith in the ability of one drop of oil to burn for as long as needed. That pure faith was a miraculous phenomenon and a taste of the Messianic future; that the Jews of the desert, who were always murmuring and doubting, would have a spiritually lucid moment and behave in a futuristic Messianic fashion.

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The contemporary Chassidic work Shefa Chaim suggests that it was this faith that actually caused the miracle to happen.

Our generation has witnessed countless miracles and we have, as the Rebbe taught, reached the point of no return to our exile past. When we respond to the Rebbe's call with simple and profound faith and deliver our "one drop of oil," the core of our soul that will bring about the true and complete Redemption, when G-d's light will spread to the entire world.

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