



Text:

Aaron is chosen to be the first Kohen Gadol [High Priest]. His vestments include a beautiful jeweled breastplate, in recognition of nobility of character displayed at the beginning of the Exodus:

1. And [G-d] said [to Moses], "Aaron your brother....will come out to greet you [on your way to Egypt to free the Jews], and he will see you and rejoice in his heart."

[Exodus 4:14]

"Not as you think, that [Aaron] will feel hurt by your rise to greatness. [Rather, Aaron will rejoice in his heart – he will be happy for you.]"

For this [purity of heart], Aaron merited the adornment of the breastplate, which is placed over the heart.

[Rashi ibid.]

2. Had Aaron known that G-d would write, "[Aaron] will come out to greet you," he would have gone out to greet [Moses] with drums and dances [i.e. with great fanfare].

[Midrash, Ruth 5:6]

Question:

We are told that Aaron received a badge of honor – the breastplate – in recognition of his selflessness in going out to greet Moses with joy. Then we are told that Aaron could have greeted Moses with "drums and dances" – indicating that he felt short of expectations. How can both be true?

Answer:

There is no contradiction, because the Midrash implies no criticism. Aaron did his best under the circumstances. But Aaron *would* have done more *if he had known* the degree to which his heroism would be recognized. The realization would have energized Aaron, boosting his abilities and enabling him to discover new strength.

Message:

Human potential is not fixed; what seems impossible – and may actually *be* impossible – can, with a bit of encouragement, become attainable. Aaron did the best he could – but he could have done even more if he had been privy to how greatly his actions were valued by G-d. With the right awareness, we can inspire ourselves and others, and watch the impossible become reality.

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Last week's Parsha detailed plans for the construction of the Tabernacle. **Tetzaveh** describes the clothing worn by the priests – Kohanim – who are to perform the Divine service.

Every Kohen wears four garments: short breeches, a floor-length tunic and a hat, all made of white linen, along with a multicolored belt.

The High Priest wears four additional garments:

The **Choshen**, or breastplate – a square of fabric worn over the heart. Twelve colored gemstones in golden settings – four rows of three –are engraved with the names of the twelve sons of Israel.

The **Ephod** – a sort of apron encircling the priest's back, tied with a belt in front. Two shoulder straps rise from the belt and come forward over the High Priests' shoulders; hanging from the shoulder straps are golden chains bearing the weight of the Choshen.

The Choshen and Ephod are woven of blue, crimson, purple, white and gold threads intertwined.

Concealed within the folds of the Choshen is the Urim VeTumim, a piece of parchment inscribed with G-d's name. The Urim VeTumim is a vehicle of prophecy: a Jewish leader seeking Divine guidance can ask the High Priest a question, whereupon various letters on the stones of the Choshen light up, spelling an answer.

The **Tzitz** – a strip of gold tied across the priest's forehead, inscribed with the words "Holy to G-d."

The **Me'il** – a tunic of sky-blue wool, worn on top of the white linen tunic. The Me'il was fringed on the bottom with golden bells and "pomegranates" –balls of blue, purple and crimson thread.

The High Priest wears all eight garments when performing his regular duties. On Yom Kippur, when he enters the Inner Chamber of the Sanctuary, he wears only four garments – the four worn by the ordinary Kohen – all made of white linen. Gold ornamentation would be reminiscent of the sin of the Golden Calf.

Aaron, Moses's older brother, is designated by G-d as Kohen Gadol, and his descendants as Kohanim for all time. Aaron and his sons are to assume their responsibilities on the first of Nissan¹, after a seven-day installation ceremony.

1) The month of Passover

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