



Around the Shabbat Table

**Shabbat Tetzaveh 5765
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Shalom!

Introduction

This week's parasha, Tetzaveh, continues the discussion of the *mishkan* (the portable tabernacle) and its preparations. The particular focus in the parasha is on the *kohanim*, the priests who, beginning with Aaron and his sons, would officiate there.

Numerous articles of clothing were to be prepared for the *kohanim* to wear:

- *Choshen* –breastplate
- *Ephod* – a garment presumably worn on the torso
- *Me'il* –robe
- *Ketonet tashbetz* – a fringed tunic
- *Mitznefet* – turban
- *Avnet* – Sash
- *Tzitz* – A gold plate with the words “Holy unto God” engraved on it, worn on the head of the *kohen gadol*, the high priest.

The Torah describes in detail, the materials that are to be used in creating these.

One of the items described in the *parasha* is the *choshen*, the priest's breastplate. It was on this breastplate that the *urim v'tumim* were housed. While it is unclear exactly what the *urim v'tumim* were, it is clear that they, along with the *choshen*, were used to help the people of Israel in making certain key decisions. Among the times that this instrument was consulted was before declaring war.

The parasha continues with a description of the ceremonies and offerings through which the *kohanim* would assume their positions in the *mishkan*. Finally, there is a description of the incense altar which is to be built for the *mishkan*.



Questions for your Family's Discussion

1. According to our tradition, a decision to go to war was made by consulting the High Priest's breastplate. This was supposed to help the people to know whether it was God's intention that a war be waged.

Israel today is involved in determining not whether to go to war, but how to effectively make peace with the Palestinians living in territories it controls. To read background materials on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, you can go to

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Israel/PIConflict.htm .

Last week, an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was signed. You can learn about the agreement, and watch a video of the meeting of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6933812/> . This site also includes links to other information about the Israel-Palestinian issue.

You can read Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's statement about the agreement on the website of the Foreign Ministry of Israel at

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2005/Statement+by+PM+Sharon+at+Sharm+el-Sheikh+Summit+8-Feb-2005.htm>

As part of the peace agreement, Israel will need to withdraw its army from some Palestinian areas, and will likely require some Israelis living in disputed areas to move to areas within Israel's formal boundaries. This has become very controversial in Israel, with many Israelis supporting the withdrawal, but some Israelis vehemently opposed to the process.

Based on what you know and what you have learned, if you were the *kohen gadol*, would you be consulting the *urim v'tumim* for advice on how Israel should proceed with peace negotiations and strategies? What do you think the *urim v'tumim* would or should say?

2. In some synagogues, the rabbi and cantor wear special robes in much the same way as the *kohanim* wore special garments when officiating. Many synagogues however, have discontinued this custom. What do you think the reasons were for rabbis to wear robes? Why do you think it was discontinued in many places?



Towards an Action Agenda

- The *urim v'tumim* became a part of the seal of Yale University, which includes the Hebrew of this term. Learn more about how it became adopted, and some thoughts about what they might have actually been, by viewing an online exhibit of Yale's Peabody Museum at http://www.peabody.yale.edu/explore/cc_digging/dig_01.html .
- To see what some scholars suggest the special priestly garments looked like, go to the slide show at: <http://www.templeinstitute.org/gallery.htm>

- In honor of Presidents' Day, we are repeating a list of sites to help you learn more about the Jewish connection of some of our American presidents:

George Washington:

<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/bigotry.html>

Abraham Lincoln:

<http://www.ajhs.org/publications/chapters/chapter.cfm?documentID=200>

<http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0201/lincoln.jews.asp>

Thomas Jefferson:

<http://www.ajhs.org/publications/chapters/chapter.cfm?documentID=219>

John Adams:

<http://www.ajhs.org/publications/chapters/chapter.cfm?documentID=221>

Theodore Roosevelt, the Teddy Bear, and the Jewish Connection:

<http://www.ajhs.org/publications/chapters/chapter.cfm?documentID=239>



Shabbat Shalom!

Please join together in learning with other families by sharing your family's discussions and ideas by posting them on our web site. Simply respond with your thoughts and ideas to RavADS@bjeny.org

Around the Shabbat Table is a project of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. If there is any way we can be of service, please contact Rabbi Arnold D. Samlan, project coordinator, at the BJE Nassau Queens Center, 516-876-6535, or see our web site: www.bjeny.org

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