

Discourse 18

*“Lehavin Inyan Choshen v’Eifod... -
To understand the matter of the breastplate and the
apron...”*

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Tetzaveh,
Parshat Zachor, 13th of Adar, 5726
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

To understand the matter of the breastplate (*Choshen*) and the apron (*Eifod*): About the apron (*Eifod*) the verse states,¹⁰⁶⁸ “Aharon shall carry their names before *HaShem*-יהו"ה on both his shoulders as a remembrance.” Similarly, about the breastplate (*Choshen*) it states,¹⁰⁶⁹ “Aharon shall bear the names of the children of Israel... on his heart... as a constant remembrance before *HaShem*-יהו"ה.”

Now, his honorable holiness, the Tzemach Tzeddek, (this year being the hundred-year anniversary of his passing and Hilulah) points out¹⁰⁷⁰ that we must understand the reason for the difference between the apron (*Eifod*) and the breastplate (*Choshen*). That is, when it came to the apron (*Eifod*), the names of the twelve tribes were only on two stones, as the verse

¹⁰⁶⁸ Exodus 28:12

¹⁰⁶⁹ Exodus 28:29

¹⁰⁷⁰ In the discourse by the same title as this in Ohr HaTorah, Tetzaveh p. 1,656 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5633 Vol. 1, p. 157 and on.

states,¹⁰⁷¹ “Six of their names on one stone, and the names of the six remaining ones on the second stone.”

In contrast, when it came to the breastplate (*Choshen*), the names of the twelve tribes were on twelve stones.¹⁰⁷² Additionally, on the breastplate (*Choshen*), each tribe had a different kind of stone, so that Reuven was on the *Odem* stone etc., Yosef was on the *Shoham* stone, and Binyamin was on the *Yashfesh* stone etc.¹⁰⁷³ In contrast, on the apron (*Eifod*) there were two stones of the same kind, these being the two *Shoham* stones.¹⁰⁷⁴

Additionally, we must understand why the matter of Aharon bearing the names of the children of Israel is repeated, [once] on his shoulders on the apron (*Eifod*), and also on his heart on the breastplate (*Choshen*).

2.

The essential point of the explanation¹⁰⁷⁵ is that the general difference between the apron (*Eifod*) and the breastplate (*Choshen*) is that the apron (*Eifod*) (which Aharon would tie from behind) is the aspect of the back (*Achorayim*), whereas the

¹⁰⁷¹ Exodus 28:10

¹⁰⁷² Exodus 28:21

¹⁰⁷³ Exodus 28:17-20; “As stated in Mishneh Torah of the Rambam, Ch. 9 of Hilchot Klei HaMikdash, and in Midrash Rabba to the end of Parshat Tetzaveh, and Bamidbar Ch. 2” (Likkutei Torah, Re’eh 25d).

¹⁰⁷⁴ Exodus 28:9

¹⁰⁷⁵ With respect to the coming section, see Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 1,666 and on.

breastplate (*Choshen*), (which was upon his heart) is the aspect of the front (*Panim*).¹⁰⁷⁶

As this matter relates to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, the apron (*Eifod*)¹⁰⁷⁷ indicates serving Him in a way of the back (*Achor*-אָחור), as in the verse,¹⁰⁷⁸ "You shall follow after (*Acharei*-אָחֲרֵי) *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God." This refers to service of Him in a way that only is with self-restraint (*Itkafiya*), meaning that one's heart has not [yet] been transformed from the lusts of this world etc., and he does not yet have an inner desire and yearning for *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, but rather forces and compels himself etc.

In contrast, the breastplate (*Choshen*)¹⁰⁷⁹ indicates service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way of self-transformation (*It'hapcha*), wherein the emotional qualities of one's animalistic soul are transformed to become like the level and being of the Godly soul. This kind of service of Him is of the aspect of inner (*Pneem*-פְּנִימִים) and "front" (*Panim*-פְּנִימִים).

The matter of Aharon bearing the names of the children of Israel upon the apron (*Eifod*) and the breastplate (*Choshen*), is that it is the granting of empowerment to the children of Israel to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in these two ways, with self-restraint (*Itkafiya*) and with self-transformation (*It'hapcha*).

¹⁰⁷⁶ See Zohar II 231b – cited and explained in Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 1,667 and on; Also see Panim Yafot to Exodus 28:6, cited and explained in Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 1,642 and on.

¹⁰⁷⁷ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5633 p. 166 and the handwritten glosses there.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 13:5

¹⁰⁷⁹ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5633 p. 166 ibid., and the handwritten glosses there.

(This is similar to the matter of Aharon kindling the lights (*Neirot*), except that the kindling of the lights affected the Godly soul, whereas bearing the apron (*Eifod*) and the breastplate (*Choshen*) affected the refinement of the animalistic soul.)¹⁰⁸⁰

That is, it goes without saying that when our state of service is in the aspect of the “back” (*Achorayim*), which is the matter of self-restraint (*Itkafiya*), the effect of Aharon is needed, as the verse states, “Aharon shall carry their names before *HaShem*-יהו"ה on both **his** shoulders as a remembrance.”

However, even about serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a manner of innerness (*Pneem*-פנים) and “front” (*Panim*-פנים), which is the aspect of self-transformation (*It'hapcha*), it is written, “Aharon shall bear the names of the children of Israel... on **his** heart... as a constant remembrance before *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” to elevate them “**before** *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” meaning, higher¹⁰⁸¹ than the aspect of the [lower] Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.¹⁰⁸²

3.

Based on this, we can understand why each tribe had a unique stone unto itself on the breastplate (*Choshen*), which

¹⁰⁸⁰ Likkutei Torah *ibid.*; Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 1,659; p. 1663-1,668; Vol. 8 there, p. 3,075; Sefer HaMaamarim 5668 p. 110.

¹⁰⁸¹ See Likkutei Torah *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸² In one of the transcripts it is noted that [the Rebbe said that] through the service of Him indicated by the apron (*Eifod*), we come to the service of Him through the aspect of the breastplate (*Choshen*). This is why the breastplate (*Choshen*) was bound and attached to the belt of the apron (*Cheishev HaEifod*) in a manner in which (Exodus 28:28) “the breastplate would not be loosened from upon the apron (*Eifod*).”

differed from each other in both kind and color, (according to the colors of their flags).¹⁰⁸³ For, since the matter of the breastplate (*Choshen*) indicates serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way of self-transformation (*It'hapcha*), this being the matter of refining all the particular powers of one's animalistic soul, thus transforming them into light, therefore each one differs in his colors and characteristics, meaning that it accords to the manner of his level and being, according to how he affects the transformation into light and goodness etc.¹⁰⁸⁴

In other words, this kind of service is such that each tribe ascends according to its path.¹⁰⁸⁵ This is why there were twelve stones, corresponding to the twelve tribes, these being the twelve diagonal borders (*Yod-Beit Gevulei Alachson*).¹⁰⁸⁶ This is similar to how it is even nowadays, in that there are twelve gateways through which prayer ascends, each tribe having a gateway unique to itself etc.¹⁰⁸⁷

[More specifically, just as the twelve tribes were divided into four camps, each camp consisting of three tribes, so likewise, the stones of the breastplate (*Choshen*) were divided into four rows, consisting of three stones in each row.]¹⁰⁸⁸

In contrast, when it comes to the apron (*Eifod*), which is the aspect of the "back" (*Achorayim*), indicating serving Him in the way of self-restraint (*Itkafiya*) alone, it does not apply for

¹⁰⁸³ See Rashi to Numbers 2:2

¹⁰⁸⁴ Also see Sefer HaMaamarim 5668 p. 120.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Also see Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 23 p. 54

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 1,664 and elsewhere. Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Five (*Tiferet*); Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 21, and elsewhere.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Torat Chayim, Tetzaveh p. 345c

¹⁰⁸⁸ See Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Five (*Tiferet*) ibid., and elsewhere.

each tribe to have a unique stone indicating the particular level of the Godly soul of that tribe. For, here the stone indicates the animalistic soul that has yet to be transformed and be subsumed in the Godly soul itself and literally become like it. Rather, here there only is the granting of empowerment to serve Him with self-restraint (*Itkafiya*), which applies equally to everyone. Thus, all twelve tribes were on a single kind of stone.¹⁰⁸⁹

Now, the reason the stones of the apron (*Eifod*) were specifically *Shoham* stones, is because the empowerment to be capable of dominating and ruling [over one's animalistic soul] through self-restraint (*Itkafiya*) must be drawn from a much higher place. This is hinted in the *Shoham*-שהם stones, in that the word "*Shoham*-שהם" shares the same letters as "Moshe-משה."¹⁰⁹⁰ That is, it specifically is through him that empowerment is drawn forth to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה through self-restraint (*Itkafiya*).

Moreover, the *Shoham* stone (of the breastplate – *Choshen*) was the stone of Yosef,¹⁰⁹¹ and the level of Yosef is

¹⁰⁸⁹ Also see Sefer HaMaamarim 5668 p. 121: "This is like the kindling of the lights, in that the drawing down from Above is the aspect of the oil for the kindling, whereas in the ascent and inclusion of the lights [from below to Above] there are seven lights... The same is likewise so when it comes to the refinement of the animalistic soul in the drawing down from Above... [that the empowerment] to assist with the refinement is the aspect of a single light, whereas the ascent is [divided into] twelve levels etc."

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ya'ir Netiv to Meorei Ohr, Aleph, Section 4 – cited in Ohr HaTorah, Tetzaveh p. 1,646. (There it states that "this may be understood in line with the verse (Numbers 1:2-3), "Take a head count..." in that in order to elevate the souls of the Jewish people, this is brought about through "You and Aharon," who are called "the agent of the King" (*Shoshvina d'Malka*) and "the agent of the Queen" (*Shoshvina d'Matronita*)... and they are the two *Shoham* stones, even though "*Shoham*-שהם" shares the letters of "Moshe-משה," nevertheless, it states (Exodus 6:26), "This is Moshe and Aharon" etc." Also see later in this discourse, in chapter five.

¹⁰⁹¹ Also see Ohr HaTorah *ibid.*, "As known, based on the verse (Exodus 13:19), 'Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him.'"

higher than the other tribes. This is because his soul was from the aspect of the Upper Unity (*Yichuda Ila'ah*) of the world of Emanation (*Atzilut*), (whereas the other tribes were from the world of Creation (*Briyah*)),¹⁰⁹² and it is from [the world of Emanation-*Atzilut*] that empowerment is drawn forth to serve Him with self-restraint (*Itkafiya*).

4.

Now, we should add that we also find this about the war against Amalek. For, as explained in the Chassidic discourses on Parshat Zachor,¹⁰⁹³ when the Jewish people left Egypt, their service of Him was with self-restraint (*Itkafiya*), this being the matter of the “back” (*Achorayim*). (About this the verse states,¹⁰⁹⁴ “The people fled,” because the evil in the souls of the Jewish people was still in its full strength etc.¹⁰⁹⁵

Thus, their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, was only by way of self-restraint (*Itkafiya*)) and this is why Amalek could stand in opposition to them etc. This is why the war against Amalek had to be carried out specifically by “Moshe’s men.”¹⁰⁹⁶ This is as explained above, that the empowerment for the service of self-restraint (*Itkafiya*) must be drawn from a much higher place etc.

¹⁰⁹² See Maamarei Admor HaZaken 5565 Vol. 1, p. 192 and on; Torat Chayim, Vayeichi p. 242d and on.

¹⁰⁹³ See Torah Ohr, Tetzaveh 84d and elsewhere.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Exodus 14:5

¹⁰⁹⁵ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 31 (40b).

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Torah Ohr ibid. 83b

Now, this can be connected to the discourse that has now come out of exile into redemption, the discourse entitled “*Hoo Moshe v’Aharon*,”¹⁰⁹⁷ (which appears to be from the Tzemach Tzeddek, or at the very least is founded on a discourse of the Tzemach Tzeddek, being that the substance of this discourse is [also] found in a discourse of the Tzemach Tzeddek in Ohr HaTorah).¹⁰⁹⁸ In it, he explains the verse,¹⁰⁹⁹ “This is Aharon and Moshe to whom *HaShem*-יהוה said, ‘Take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt... They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take the children of Israel out of Egypt; this is Moshe and Aharon.’”

Now, this must be better understood. For, about the words, “to **take** the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt,” the Torah states, “This is Aharon and Moshe,” (in which Aharon precedes Moshe), whereas about **speaking** to Pharaoh it states, “This is Moshe and Aharon” (in which Moshe precedes Aharon).

The essential point of the explanation¹¹⁰⁰ is that to take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt (*Mitzrayim*-מצרים), referring to removing the Godly soul from the matter of constraints (*Meitzarim*-מיצרים) and limitations, [and as mentioned before, about the departure from Egypt it states “the

¹⁰⁹⁷ In manuscript booklet 448 (p. 142a), subsequently printed in Ohr HaTorah Va’era (Vol. 8) p. 2,894 and on; Also see the discourse entitled “*Heim HaMedabrim* etc.” there, p. 2,899 and on.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ohr HaTorah, Va’era p. 225-229.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Exodus 6:26-27

¹¹⁰⁰ See Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 2,898 and on.

people fled,” in that the evil in the souls of the Jewish people was still in its strength and dominance etc., except that their yearning and inner desire was for their Godly souls to depart from exile in the side opposite holiness etc.], for this ascent and elevation the empowerment of Aharon was sufficient.

[This is as known, that the matter of Aharon is to affect that Godliness be apparent and revealed, which is why his name “Aharon-אהרן” has the same letters as the word “we will see-*Nir’eh*-נראה” (as explained in Likkutei Torah on the Torah portion of Beha’alotcha).¹¹⁰¹

This then, is the granting of empowerment to the children of Israel, so that they will be in a state of ascent] and the drawing forth through Moshe is only afterwards. This is why it states, “This is **Aharon and Moshe** to whom *HaShem*-יהוה said, ‘Take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’” mentioning Aharon first, and then mentioning Moshe.

However, for the animalistic soul to also ascend and be elevated, a higher level is needed, specifically through Moshe. About this the verse states, “They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take the children of Israel out of Egypt; this is **Moshe and Aharon**.” That is, regarding speaking to Pharaoh, which is the matter of breaking of the coarseness etc., this specifically is primarily brought about through Moshe, and only after this does Aharon come and have his effect etc.¹¹⁰²

This is similar to what was said before about the breastplate (*Choshen*) and the apron (*Eifod*), which refer to the

¹¹⁰¹ Likkutei Torah, Beha’alotcha 30a, 31a

¹¹⁰² Also see Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 2,900.

matter of refining the animalistic soul, (unlike the ascent and elevation effected by the lights [of the Candelabrum] which relates to the Godly soul). That is, for there to be the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of self-restraint (*Itkafiya*), (the apron – *Eifod*), special empowerment must be granted from our teacher Moshe (“*Shoham*-שהם” which shares the same letters as “*Moshe*-משה”).¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰³ The conclusion of this discourse is missing.