

## Parshas Tetzaveh – Yeshaya Nosson Hepner

י"א אדר א' תשע"ו – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016 – שבת פ' תצוה

In this week's Parasha, the B'nai Yisroel are given the instructions for creating the Bigdei Kehuna – the four articles of clothing worn by the Kohanim, and the additional four worn by the Kohen Gadol.

Chapter 28 Pessukim 9-12 detail the Avnei Shoham / Shoham stones. These were two gemstones attached to the Ephod / Apron, each bearing the names of six of the Shevatim. They rested on the shoulders of the Kohen Gadol, and are described by the Possuk (28:12) as "Avnei Zikaron" – "stones of remembrance", in that their presence was a 'reminder' to Hashem of the merits of the Shevatim.

According to one opinion in Gemara Sotah 36a, the sequence of names on the two stones ran as follows:

1st Stone (right shoulder)	2nd Stone (left shoulder)
Yehuda	Gad
Reuven	Osher
Shimon	Yissachar
Levi	Zevulun
Don	Yosef
Naftoli	Binyomin

This is essentially in order of age; barring Yehuda, who was born after Levi. Why, then, is Yehuda singled out to be the first name inscribed on the stones? Ohr Hachayim suggests that this was due to the royalty which would one day stem from the tribe of Yehuda. Torah Temimah answers that the name of Yehuda includes the letters YUD, HEY, VAV and HEY which form the Name of Hashem. As such, Yehuda was listed first to accord honour to Hashem.

The Gemara Sotah 48b discusses how the names were inscribed. They could not be simply written in ink, since the Possuk (28:11) precludes this by explicitly requiring the stones to be "Pituchei Chosam" – "like the engraving of a signet". However, a later Possuk (28:20) refers to the stones using the word "B'milu'osam" (literally - "with their fillings"). The Gemara infers from this word that the stones must be absolutely complete. Engraving would violate this, as it removes some of the surface of the stone. What method remains with which to inscribe the stones?

The Gemara resolves the difficulty: The names were first written onto the stones with ink, in the usual way. Then the Shamir worm (a worm with the remarkable ability to split stone [see Avos 5,8]) was aligned atop the ink forming the letters, leaving the names embedded – rather than engraved – in the still-complete stones.

Rav Nosson Gestetner zt"l (Rav and Rosh Yeshiva in Bnei B'rak) asks in his Sefer L'horos Nosson: Why was it necessary for the names to be written initially onto the stones? Couldn't the Shamir worm alone have formed the letters, without the prior application of ink? Answers Rav Gestetner: There are four strata of creation:

Domem	-	Rock (inorganic matter);
Tzome'ach	-	Vegetation;
Chai	-	Animate beings and
Medaber	-	Humans (literally - one who can speak).

As mentioned earlier, the Avnei Shoham served to invoke the merits of the Shevatim – thereby prompting bountiful blessing from Hashem. With this in mind, the Avnei Shoham must encompass every facet of Creation, so that everyone and everything could be recipients of this blessing: The two gemstones themselves were Domem, the ink (which was plant-based) was Tzome'ach, the Shamir worm was a Chai and the Kohen Gadol bearing the Avnei Shoham was a Medaber. With all four strata represented, all of Creation would be recipients of Hashem's blessings.

***Dedicated with love to my paternal grandfather, who recently celebrated his eightieth birthday – Ad Meah v'Esrim Shonoh in gezund!***