

Drash on Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:21-30:10)

Ahavat Yeshua DC Service

March 8, 2025

David L. Craig

Parashat [Tetzaveh](#) (תִּצַּוֶּה) is the eighth parashat of the Book of *Shemot*. The Hebrew title arose from the second word of the book which in English means *names*, referring to the immediately following list of the sons of Jacob. The English title of the book, *Exodus*, is taken directly from the Greek title in the Septuagint literally meaning *way out*. The book chronicles the history of the Jewish people from the waning of Joseph's influence in Egypt through God's arrival in the newly completed Wilderness Tabernacle. The title of Parashat Tetzaveh comes from the second word meaning "[you] shall command." This weekly portion, situated between the giving of the Ten Words and the confrontation of the golden calf idolatry, continues the revelation of God's instructions to Moses regarding the establishment of The Tabernacle and the Aaronic priesthood. Specifically it details the olive oil for the menorah, the priestly garments, the consecration process, and the altar for incense.

Yah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyamin Moshe. Elaine will read chapter 28 verse 30 in Hebrew and in English from the *New King James Version*:

And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

Thank you, my bride.

It's time to examine the truly mysterious. One could even think this is classified information, there is so little authoritative explanation available. Why are *ooreem* and *tumeem*ⁱ so obscure? They are simply not explained in Scripture, apparently because it was expected the original readers of Exodus understood them as well as we understand smartphones these days. If Moses had written, "put in the breastplate the iPhone and the Android", the original readers would have been scratching their heads along with us (us for a different reason, though). So the origins have been lost in time, perhaps by grand design.

Let's start with the nouns themselves. *Ooreem* and *Tumeem* are both transliterations of the original Hebrew words as brought down to us in the Masoretic text. The specifics are in an endnoteⁱⁱ of this written drash for the curious, but basically *ooreem* means "light" or "fire," while *tumeem* means "complete" or "innocent," and both are plural. The original Strong's Lexicon entry for *ooreem* makes it clear it has something to do with *bright illumination*, while the entry for *tumeem* suggests "full, perfect, integrity". It turns out the word for *breastplate*—*khoshen* (כֹּשֶׁת) is closely tied to *ooreem* and *tumeem*. For starters, the Strong's Lexicon entries at biblehub.com for all three Hebrew words include a note that "There is no direct Greek equivalent [...] in the Strong's Greek Dictionary, as the concept is unique to the Hebrew Scriptures and the priestly practices of ancient Israel."

However, there is the Septuagint's translation of this verse into Greek, accomplished around 250 BCE by the 70 Jewish scholars. These specifics are in another endnoteⁱⁱⁱ for the curious but basically there are three differences in order of appearance:

1. *breastplate* as translated from the Masoretic text's *khoshen* becomes *oracle* by way of a non-Strong's variant of the Greek root *logos* meaning *words of God* (this translation is by far the most interesting of the three)
2. *ooreem* (meaning *bright illumination*) becomes *manifestation*, and
3. *tumeem* (meaning *full, perfect, integrity*) becomes *truth*.

Noting some translations of Scripture vary, there are usually seven or eight references in Scripture to *ooreem* and/or *tumeem*—both words are usually together. In addition there are usually 53 references to *ephod* and 38 references to *breastplate* (including the Septuagint's unique translation), although some may not refer to the ephod or breastplate of the High Priest.

Perhaps King David's inquiries in I Samuel chapters 23 and 30 provide the most information about the use of the *ooreem* and *tumeem*. You can dig into those on your own time. However, it is important to understand they were not the only means by which David heard from The LORD. Likewise, in I Samuel chapter 28 verse 6 [NKJV], King Saul lost those three means:

And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him,
either by dreams or by [Ooreem] or by the prophets

We can add a fourth way to hear from ADONAI—the two supernatural signs Gideon requested of The LORD to verify his calling to lead Israel in Judges chapter 6, commonly called a *fleece*. Regardless of the type of the means utilized, unwavering faith in it is essential to obtain an answer you can bet your life upon.

Although the Apocrypha and Talmud are generally considered somewhat non-authoritative here at Ahavat Yeshua, there are many interesting *ooreem* and *tumeem* questions and answers recorded in [Yoma 73a and b](#)^{iv}, but I have not time to summarize them. Another non-authoritative source is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus who, around 90 AD, wrote [The Antiquities of the Jews](#) which is widely considered a legitimate historical work. In Book III, Chapter 8, Section 9^v, he recorded many remarkable statements about the *ooreem* and *tumeem*, which also cannot be delved into with the time available. I can only mention two points: (1) the Greeks themselves had, in their own language, named the High Priest's breastplate "Oracle" well before the Septuagint Torah was written, so apparently the 70 decided *that* was the best way to translate all references to it, and (2) the visible manifestations of the priestly regalia Josephus had described had ceased around 110 BCE for reason of a threshold regarding pervasive sin being breached. This was after the Septuagint was written, after the miracle of the Hanukkah victory—around the ascension of the Sadducees to the high priesthood. We can speculate their unbelief in afterlife and resurrection may have been a factor in this cessation (if indeed everything Josephus wrote here can be relied upon). Regardless, it should be clear that the unwavering

faith of the High Priest in everything connected to the ooreem and tumeem was imperative for ADONAI to respond to the questions submitted thereby.

Now a related concept must be discussed: casting lots. Modern learned people call this [cleromancy](#), a word that comes from the Greek word for *lots*. Cleromancy entails making decisions via a means deemed to be immune to any human influence but possibly or perhaps certainly controlled by a higher power. The Roman soldiers determining who got Yeshua's cloak possibly weren't expecting any higher power's involvement, likewise the captains of the Chiefs and the Eagles a couple Sundays ago, but the disciples deciding who should fill Judas' apostolic position clearly expected The LORD to speak, as did Jonah and his mariners. Parties involved in casting lots agree to be bound by the outcome and are prepared to live with a favorable or unfavorable outcome. Woe to any party caught gaming the means of outcome generation; e.g., by secretly substituting loaded dice or a two-headed coin.

Casting lots likely developed long before Moses was born, and perhaps before Noah. ADONAI commanded casting lots for some situations; e.g., on Yom Kippur the High Priest is to determine the fates of the two lambs by casting lots, not by using the ooreem and tumeem. Scripture defines certain methods of casting lots to be occult practices, so do not get involved with those (the 19th Century Ouija board developed in Baltimore falls into this class).

Two Proverbs speak to this concept of cleromancy:

Proverbs chapter 18 verse 18 [NKJV]:

Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart.

In other words, it is common sense that casting lots can provide a peaceful solution to an impasse.

Proverbs chapter 16 verse 33 [NKJV]:

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision *is* from the LORD.

That is a profound statement. Probability and statistics permeate life. Science has developed quite useful methodologies for predicting outcomes—weather prediction has improved many orders of magnitude in my lifetime. Better data, better forecasts. However, nothing is certain, because data can be inaccurate, significant factors can fail to be considered, and the unexpected or unknown can happen; thus, weather prediction remains imperfect. Whether or not the universe normally runs on autopilot according to the natural laws that ADONAI established in the Beginning, supernatural events *do* occur. Physics cannot explain how Yeshua could walk across the Galilee or ascend out of sight from the Mount of Olives. While Proverbs chapter 16 verse 33 seems to address the deterministic nature of merely casting lots, it suggests a much larger scope—that there is in fact nothing random within the entire universe. Our God *is that* big. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle of quantum mechanics is not a problem for God—He doesn't need to observe, He just *knows*. As the angel said to Mary in Luke chapter 1 verse 17 [CJB], “For with God, nothing is impossible.”

So what does all this mean for us in the 21st Century? Dr. Ralph F. Wilson's recent article [Inquiring of the Lord](#) offers an interesting point. He thinks the lot casting that chose Judas' replacement ten days

prior to Pentecost was the last time those followers of Yeshua so made a decision. The arrival of the Ruach H'Kodesh on Shavuot gave every Believer a much better way to inquire of The LORD (while keeping in step with the Spirit) just as Yeshua had demonstrated to them (and us). Still, if you're in a season of spiritual hardness of hearing, casting lots is better than nothing. Just remember its every decision is from The LORD.

The next parashat is *Ki Tissa* and spans Exodus chapter 30 verse 11 through chapter 34 verse 35.

- i These phonetic spellings are used to help the reader correctly pronounce them during oration. Note there are multiple “official” spellings of the transliterations; Strong himself was incorrect about using *th* for *thummim* instead of just *t*. So *urim* and *thummin* will be used in these endnotes, but since it looks so English, *chosen* is retransliterated *khoshen* throughout.
- ii *Urim* and *Thummim* are assigned Strong’s Hebrew numbers H224 and H8550, respectively. *Urim* is derived from the root *ur* (רוא), meaning “light” or “fire,” while *thummim* is derived from the root *tam* (תמ), meaning “complete” or “innocent,” and both are plural. The original Strong’s Lexicon entry for *urim* make it clear it has something to do with *bright illumination*, while the entry for *thummim* suggests “full, perfect, integrity”.

H224 [<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/224.htm>]:

Plur of ['uwr](#); lights; Urim, the oracular brilliancy of the figures in the high-priest's breastplate -- Urim.

see HEBREW ['uwr](#)

H217 [<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/217.htm>]:

fire, light

From ['owr](#); flame; hence (in the plural) the East (as being the region of light) -- fire, light. See also ['Uwriym](#).

see HEBREW ['owr](#)

see HEBREW ['Uwriym](#)

H8550 [<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8550.htm>]:

Plural of [tom](#); perfections, i.e. (techn.) One of the epithets of the objects in the high-priest's breastplate as an emblem of complete Truth -- Thummim.

see HEBREW [tom](#)

H8537 [<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/8537.htm>]:

full, integrity, perfection, simplicity, uprightly at a venture

From [tamam](#); completeness; figuratively, prosperity; usually (morally) innocence -- full, integrity, perfect(-ion), simplicity, upright(-ly, -ness), at a venture. See [Tummiym](#).

see HEBREW [tamam](#)

see HEBREW [Tummiym](#)

iii The complete interlinear translation of Exodus 28:30 (28:26 in some versions) in the Septuagint (extracted via *biblehub.com* from

<https://ia804504.us.archive.org/31/items/InterlinearGreekEnglishSeptuagintOldTestamentPrint/Interlinear%20Greek-English%20Septuagint%20Old%20Testament%20-%20print.pdf>):

καὶ	ἐπιθήσεις	ἐπὶ	τὸ	λογεῖον	τῆς	κρίσεως
And	you shall place	upon	the	oracle	of the	judgment,
τὴν	δηλώσιν	καὶ	τὴν	ἀλήθειαν	καὶ	ἔσται
the	Manifestation	and	the	Truth;	and	they shall be
ἐπὶ	τοῦ	στήθους	Ἀαρὼν	ὅταν	εἰσπορεύηται	
upon	the	breast	of Aaron,	whenever	he should enter	
εἰς	τὸ	ἅγιον	ἐναντι	κυρίου		
into	the	holy place	before	[the] LORD.		
καὶ	οἴσει	Ἀαρὼν	τὰς	κρίσεις	τῶν	υἱῶν
And	Aaron	shall bring	the	judgments	of the	sons
Ἰσραὴλ	ἐπὶ	τοῦ	στήθους	ἐναντι	κυρίου	διαπαντός
of Israel	upon	the	breast,	before	[the] LORD	always.

The very different words between the Masoretic text's Hebrew *khoshen* translated *breastplate* and the Septuagint's Greek *logeion* translated *oracle* is quite the curiosity. The [biblehub.com](https://biblehub.com/Strong's/entry/H2833) *Strong's entry for H2833 khoshen (יֶשֶׁן)* includes:

From an unused root probably meaning to contain or sparkle; perhaps a pocket (as holding the Urim and Thummim), or rich (as containing gems), used only of the gorget of the highpriest -- breastplate.

Regarding *oracle (logeion)*; i.e., *words of God*, Google AI reports “logeion [...] refers to a high stage used by actors in Hellenistic theaters” and [the University of Chicago](https://www.chicagouniversity.edu/) summarizes it as a *speaking-place*. [Thayer's Lexicon entry for Strong's H3051](https://www.thayer.com/Lexicon/entry/H3051) clearly ties *logion* (and thus its root *logos* G3056) to the breastplate of the High Priest. If the rationale for the New Testament convention of applying *logos* to the written words of God was part of the thinking of the 70 scholars, it *could* seem they emphasized the letters engraved on the gemstones of the breastplate in their translation. Be all that as it may be, Josephus reveals what seems to be the truth regarding the word choice.

From *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Revised Edition* compiled by Johan Lust / Erik Eynikel / Katrin Hauspie and copyright 2003

[\[https://thoughtfulcatholic.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/A_GREEK_ENGLISH_LEXICON_OF_THE_SEPTUAGIN.pdf\]](https://thoughtfulcatholic.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/A_GREEK_ENGLISH_LEXICON_OF_THE_SEPTUAGIN.pdf), we extract these entries:

λογείον (lambda omicron gamma epsilon iota omicron upsilon) page 764

λογεῖον, -ου N2N 19-0-0-0-1=20

Ex 28,15.22.29.29a(bis)

stereotypical rendition of לִשְׁנֵי ; *oracle?* Sir 45,10; *breast pouch, piece of cloth with a pouch containing the means for making oracular decisions?, oracular breastplate of the high priest* Ex 28,15

Cf. HARLÉ 1988, 113; LE BOULLUEC 1989, 285-286; WALTERS 1973 41.284; WEVERS 1990, 451

δήλωσιν (delta eta lambda omega sigma iota upsilon) page 328

δήλωσις, -εως N3F 2-0-0-2-1=5

Ex 28,30; Lv 8,8; Ps 118(119),130; Dn^{LXX} 2,27; 1 Ezr 5,40

revelation, manifestation Lv 8,8; *inter-pretation* Dn^{LXX} 2,27; *symbol of revelation* (semit., transl. of the

Urim, understood as deriving from לִשְׁנֵי to give light) Ex 28,30 see δῆλος

Cf. CAIRD 1968b=1972 124; GUINOT 1989, 23-48; HARLÉ 1988, 113; LE BOULLUEC 1989, 288-289

δῆλος, -η, -ον+ A 2-2-1-0-3=8

Nm 27,21; Dt 33,8; 1 Sm 14,41; 28,6; Hos 3,4

visible, clear Nm 27,21; οἱ δῆλοι *manifestations, symbols of revelation* (semit., transl. of the Urim,

understood as deriving from לִשְׁנֵי to give light) 1 Sm 28,6, see also Sir 33,3; id. (of the Teraphim) Hos 3,4

δῆλον (sc. ἐστὶ) ὅτι [+ind.] it is manifest that 4 Mc 2,7

Cf. CAIRD 1968b=1972 124; GUINOT 1989, 23-48; →NIDNTT

ἀλήθειαν (alpha lambda eta theta epsilon iota alpha upsilon) page 129

ἀλήθεια, -ας+ N1F 8-19-24-94-61=206

Gn 24,27.48; 32,11; 47,29; Ex 28,30

truth Gn 24,27; *truthfulness* Prv 28,6; *symbol of truth* (of the Thummim) Lv 8,8; *fidelity, faithfulness* Gn 47,29

κύριος ποιήσει μετὰ σοῦ ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθειαν *the Lord will deal com-passionately and truthfully with you* 2 Sm 15,20

Cf. BARR 1961, 187-200; CAIRD 1968b=1972 124(Lv 8,8; Dt 33,8); HARL 1986a, 301 (Gn 47,29);

LARCHER 1983 290; 1984 365; SPICQ 1982, 17-19; →NIDNTT; TWNT

iv Talmud Yoma 73a.15 – 73b.12 [<https://www.sefaria.org/Yoma.73a.15?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>]

כִּי אָתָּא רַבִּין, אָמַר: נִשְׂאֵל אֵי תִּמְרָ. תִּנְיָא נְמִי הָכִי: בְּגָדִים שְׂכָהָן גְּדוּל מְשַׁמֵּשׁ בְּהָן — מְשֻׁחַ מְלֻחָמָה נִשְׂאֵל בְּהָן.

The Gemara cites an opinion that conflicts with that of Rav Dimi: **When Ravin came** from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia he **said**: The teaching that the priest anointed for war wears the eight garments of the High Priest **was stated** only with regard to **being consulted** for the decision of the *Urim VeThummim*. To be consulted he must wear all eight garments; however, he never serves in them. **That**

was also taught in a *baraita*: **The garments in which the High Priest serves** are also worn when the priest anointed for war is consulted for the decision of the *Urim VeTummim*.

תנו רבנן: כיצד שואל? השואל פניו כלפי נשאל, והנשאל פניו כלפי שכינה.

§ **The Sages taught: How does one consult the *Urim VeTummim*? The one asking** stands with **his face toward the one who is asked**, i.e., the High Priest or the priest anointed for war. **And the one who is asked**, the High Priest, turns **his face toward the Divine Presence**, i.e., the *Urim VeTummim*, in which the explicit name of God is found, by tilting his head downward toward it.

השואל אומר: "אֶרְדּוּף אַחֲרֵי הַגָּדוּד הַזֶּה", וְהַנְּשָׂאֵל אֹמֵר: "כֹּה אָמַר ה' עֲלֶיךָ וְהַצֵּלְחִי". רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אֹמֵר: אֵין צָרִיךְ לֹמַר "כֹּה אָמַר ה'", אֶלָּא "עֲלֶיךָ וְהַצֵּלְחִי".

The one who asks says his question, e.g.: **"Shall I pursue after this troop?"** (I Samuel 30:8). **And the one who is asked** answers him according to the response he receives and **says**, for example: **Thus says God: Go up and succeed. Rabbi Yehuda says: He need not say the words: Thus says God; rather**, it is sufficient to relay the content of the response and say: **Go up and succeed**, since he is obviously only repeating what he was told.

אֵין שׁוֹאֵלִין בְּקוֹל, שְׁנֹאֲמַר: "וְשָׂאֵל לוֹ לִפְנֵי ה'", אֶלָּא כְּדַרְךְ שְׂאֲמָרָה חֲנָה בְּתַפְלִתָּהּ, שְׁנֹאֲמַר: "וְחֲנָה הִיא מְדַבֶּרֶת עַל לִבָּהּ".

One does not ask in a loud voice, as it is stated: "And he shall stand before Elazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the *Urim*" (Numbers 27:21), which implies that the inquiry is to be audible only to the person asking. **And he should not think his question in his heart** but should enunciate it, **as it is stated: "And...who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the *Urim* before God"** (Numbers 27:21), and immediately afterward it states: "By his mouth" (Numbers 27:21). **Rather**, how shall he inquire? He should do so **akin to the way that Hannah spoke in her prayer, as it is stated: "Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard"** (I Samuel 1:13), which indicates she did enunciate the words but spoke so quietly that no one else could hear.

אֵין שׁוֹאֵלִין שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים כְּאַחַד. וְאִם שָׂאֵל — אֵין מְחַזְרִין אֶלָּא אַחַד, וְאֵין מְחַזְרִין לוֹ אֶלָּא רִאשׁוֹן, שְׁנֹאֲמַר: "הִסְגִּירוּנִי בְעַלִּי קַעִילָה בְיָדוֹ הִירַד שְׂאוּל וְגו' וַיֹּאמֶר ה' יִרְדּוּ". וְהָא אֲמַרְתּוּ אֵין מְחַזְרִין אֶלָּא רִאשׁוֹן! דָּוִד שָׂאֵל

One does not ask about two matters simultaneously; rather, one asks one question, and after he is answered he asks a second question. **And even if he asks about two matters simultaneously, he is answered only** with regard to **one** of them, **and he is answered only** with regard to **the first** question. **As it is stated** with regard to King David that he asked two questions simultaneously: **"Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down?"** (I Samuel 23:11). And he was answered with regard to only one: **"And God said: He will come down."** (I Samuel 23:11). The Gemara asks: **But didn't you say** that if one asks two questions, he is **answered only** with regard to the **first** question? Yet the verse states that David received an answer for his second question, not the first. The Gemara answers: **David asked** the questions

73b

שְׁלֵא כְּסֹדֵר, וְהִחְזִירוּ לוֹ כְּסֹדֵר. וְכִינּוּן שֶׁיִּדַע שֶׁשְׂאֵל שְׁלֵא כְּסֹדֵר, חֲזַר וְשָׂאֵל כְּסֹדֵר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “הִיִּסְגִּירוּ בְּעַלְי קַעֲלָה אוֹתִי וְאֶת אַנְשֵׁי בְּיַד שְׂאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר ה' יִסְגִּירוּ”.

out of order and he was answered in order. He should have asked first whether Saul would come down, and afterward what the people of Keilah would do. **And once he realized that he had asked out of order he went back and asked in order, as it is stated** immediately afterward: “**Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And God said: They will deliver you**” (I Samuel 23:12).

וְאִם הוֹצֵבֶךָ הַדְּבָר לְשָׁנִים — מִחְזִירִין לוֹ שָׁנִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וַיִּשְׂאֵל דָּוִד בַּה' לֵאמֹר הֲאֶרְדּוּף אֶחְרֵי הַגָּדוּד הַזֶּה הֲאֶשְׁיָגֵנּוּ וַיֹּאמֶר (ה') לוֹ רְדוּף כִּי הִשַּׁג תִּשָּׁיַג וְהִצַּל תִּצְלִיל”.

But if the matter is urgent and **requires** asking **two** questions simultaneously, there being no time to follow the standard protocol, one may ask both questions simultaneously and **he is answered** with regard to the **two** questions together, **as it is stated:** “**And David asked of God, saying: Shall I pursue after this troop? Will I overtake them? And He answered him: Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and will surely rescue**” (I Samuel 30:8).

וְאִף עַל פִּי שְׁגִזְרַת נְבִיא חוֹזֶרֶת — גְּזִירַת אוֹרִים וְתוֹמִים אֵינָה חוֹזֶרֶת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוֹרִים”.

The Gemara notes the reliability of the *Urim VeTummim*: **Even though a decree of a prophet can be retracted**, as sometimes a dire prophecy is stated as a warning and does not come true, **a decree of the Urim VeTummim cannot be retracted. As it is stated:** “**By the judgment of the Urim**” (Numbers 27:21). The use of the term judgment suggests that the decree is as final as a judicial decision.

לָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמֵן אוֹרִים וְתוֹמִים? “אוֹרִים” — שֶׁמְאִירִין אֶת דְּבָרֶיהָ, “תוֹמִים” — שֶׁמְשַׁלְּמִין אֶת דְּבָרֶיהָ.

Why is it called Urim VeTummim? Urim, which is based on the word *or*, light, is so called because **it illuminates** and explains **its words**. **Tummim**, which is based on the word *tam*, completed, is because **it fulfills its words**, which always come true.

וְאִם תֹּאמַר: בְּגִבְעַת בְּנֵימִין מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא הִשְׁלִימוּ?

And if you say: In the battles following the incidents in **Gibeah of Benjamin** (Judges 19–20), **why did** the *Urim VeTummim* **not fulfill** its words? The Jewish People consulted the *Urim VeTummim* three times with regard to their decision to attack the tribe of Benjamin, and each time they were instructed to go to battle. However, the first two times they were defeated and only on the third attempt were they successful. Is this not proof that the *Urim VeTummim* does not always fulfill its words?

הֵם שְׁלֵא בִּיחְסוּ אִם לִנְצַח אִם לְהִנָּצֵחַ, וּבְאַחֲרוֹנָה שֶׁבִּיחְסוּ הִסְכִּימוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “וּפְנִחְסוּ בְּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אֶהֱרֹן עוֹמֵד לְפָנָיו בַּיָּמִים הֵּם לֵאמֹר הַאֲוֹסִיף עוֹד לְצֵאת לְמִלְחָמָה עִם בְּנֵי בְנֵימִין אַחִי אִם אֶחְדָּל וַיֹּאמֶר ה' עָלוּ כִּי מָחָר אֶתְנַנּוּ בְיָדְךָ”.

The Gemara answers: The first two times **they did not check** with the *Urim VeTummim* **whether they would be victorious or be defeated** but only inquired how and whether they should go to battle. Had they asked, they indeed would have been told that they would not succeed. **But on the last time, when they did check** and inquire whether they would be successful, the *UrimVeTummim* **agreed** with them that they should go to battle and that they would succeed, **as it is stated: “And Pinehas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days, saying: Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And God said: Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver him into your hand”** (Judges 20:28).

כיצד נעשית? רבי יוחנן אומר: בולטות. ריש לקיש אומר: מצטרפות.

How is it done? How does the *Urim VeTummim* provide an answer? The names of the twelve tribes were engraved upon the stones of the breastplate. These letters allowed for the answer to be received. **Rabbi Yoḥanan says:** The letters of the answer **protrude**, and the priest then combines those letters to form words in order to ascertain the message. **Reish Lakish says:** The letters rearrange themselves and **join** together to form words.

והא לא קתיב בהו צדי? אמר רב שמואל בר יצחק: “אברהם יצחק ויעקב” קתיב שם. והא לא קתיב טית! אמר רב אחא בר יעקב: “שבטי ישורון” קתיב שם.

The Gemara asks: How was it possible to receive an answer to every question? **But** the letter *tzadi* is **not written** within the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the breastplate’s stones. **Rav Shmuel bar Yitzḥak said:** The names **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were also written there.** The name *Yitzḥak*, Isaac, contains the letter *tzadi*. The Gemara asks again: **But surely** the letter *tet* was **not written** on the breastplate, since it is not found in the names of the Patriarchs nor in the names of the twelve tribes. **Rav Aḥa bar Ya’akov said:** *Shivtei Yeshurun*, the tribes of Jeshurun, **was also written there.** The word *shivtei*, tribes, contains the letter *tet*. In this way the entire alphabet was represented.

מיתבי: כל כהן שאינו מדבר ברוח הקודש ושכינה שוכה עליו אין שואליו בו, שיהי שאל צדוק ועלתה לו, אביתר ולא עלתה לו, שנאמר: “ויעל אביתר עד תום כל העם וגו’”!

The Gemara **raises an objection** from a *baraita*: **Any priest who does not speak with Divine Spirit and upon whom the Divine Presence does not rest is not consulted** to inquire of the *Urim VeTummim*. **As Zadok inquired** of the *Urim VeTummim* **and it was effective for him**, and he received an answer; but **Ebiathar inquired and it was not effective for him**, and he did not receive an answer. **As it is stated: “But Ebiathar went up until all the people had finished”** (II Samuel 15:24), which is taken to mean that he was removed from the High Priesthood since the Divine Spirit had departed from him.

סיעי הנה מסייע בהדייהו.

The Gemara asks: If it is true that the letters of the breastplate protrude or even join together to form the answer, why does the High Priest need the Divine Spirit and Divine Presence to be with him? And if he has the Divine Spirit and Divine Presence with him, why does he need the *Urim VeTummim*? The Gemara answers: The Divine Spirit **assisted the Urim VeTummim**. In other words, the letters formed

the answer only if the High Priest himself was worthy, but his divine inspiration was not great enough to provide an answer without them.

ואין שואלין אלא למלך. מנא הני מילי? אמר רבי אבהו, דאמר קרא: "ולפני אלעזר הכהן יעמד ושאל לו במשפט האורים וגו'". "הוא" — זה מלך, "וקל [בני] ישראל אתו" — זה משוח מלחמה, "וקל העדה" — זו סנהדרין.

§ It was taught in the mishna: **And the High Priest may be consulted** for the decision of the *Urim VeTummim* **only on behalf of the king**, or on behalf of the president of the court, or on behalf of one whom the community needs. **From where are these matters derived?** **Rabbi Abbahu said that the verse states: "And he shall stand before Elazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim** before God; by his mouth they shall go out, and by his mouth they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation" (Numbers 27:21). Each phrase describes a different circumstance in which the *Urim VeTummim* may be consulted: "**He**"; **this is a reference to a king**, as "he" refers to Joshua, who had the status of a king. "**All the children of Israel with him**"; **this is a reference to the priest anointed for war**, as all of the Jewish people follow him to war according to his instruction. "**Even all the congregation**"; **this is a reference to the Sanhedrin**, who are the heads of the Jewish people.

- v The Antiquities of the Jews, Book III, Chapter 8, Section 9 by Flavius Josephus [<https://gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm>] — translation and footnotes by [William Whiston](#):

9. I will now treat of what I before omitted, the garment of the high priest: for he [Moses] left no room for the evil practices of [false] prophets; but if some of that sort should attempt to abuse the Divine authority, he left it to God to be present at his sacrifices when he pleased, and when he pleased to be absent.²¹ And he was willing this should be known, not to the Hebrews only, but to those foreigners also who were there. For as to those stones,²² which we told you before, the high priest bare on his shoulders, which were sardonyxes, [and I think it needless to describe their nature, they being known to every body,] the one of them shined out when God was present at their sacrifices; I mean that which was in the nature of a button on his right shoulder, bright rays darting out thence, and being seen even by those that were most remote; which splendor yet was not before natural to the stone. This has appeared a wonderful thing to such as have not so far indulged themselves in philosophy, as to despise Divine revelation. Yet will I mention what is still more wonderful than this: for God declared beforehand, by those twelve stones which the high priest bare on his breast, and which were inserted into his breastplate, when they should be victorious in battle; for so great a splendor shone forth from them before the army began to march, that all the people were sensible of God's being present for their assistance. Whence it came to pass that those Greeks, who had a veneration for our laws, because they could not possibly contradict this, called that breastplate the Oracle. Now this breastplate, and this sardonyx, left off shining two hundred years before I composed this book, God having been displeased at the transgressions of his laws. Of which things we shall further discourse on a fitter opportunity; but I will now go on with my proposed narration.

Footnote 21

[Of this strange expression, that Moses "left it to God to be present at his sacrifices when he pleased, and when he pleased to be absent," see the note on B. II. against Apion, sect. 16.]

Footnote 22

[These answers by the oracle of Urim and Thummim, which words signify, light and perfection, or, as the Septuagint render them, revelation and truth, and denote nothing further, than that I see, but the shining stones themselves, which were used, in this method of illumination, in revealing the will of God, after a perfect and true manner, to his people Israel: I say, these answers were not made by the shining of the precious stones, after an awkward manner, in the high priest's breastplate, as the modern Rabbins vainly suppose; for certainly the shining of the stones might precede or accompany the oracle, without itself delivering that oracle, see Antiq. B. VI. ch. 6. sect. 4; but rather by an audible voice from the mercy-seat between the cherubims. See Prideaux's Connect. at the year 534. This oracle had been silent, as Josephus here informs us, two hundred years before he wrote his Antiquities, or ever since the days of the last good high priest of the family of the Maccabees, John Hyrcanus. Now it is here very well worth our observation, that the oracle before us was that by which God appeared to be present with, and gave directions to, his people Israel as their King, all the while they submitted to him in that capacity; and did not set over them such independent kings as governed according to their own wills and political maxims, instead of Divine directions. Accordingly we meet with this oracle [besides angelic and prophetic admonitions] all along from the days of Moses and Joshua to the anointing of Saul, the first of the succession of the kings, Numbers 27:21; Joshua 6:6, etc.; 19:50; Judges 1:1; 18:4-6, 30, 31; 20:18, 23, 26-28; 21:1, etc.; 1 Samuel 1:17, 18; 3. per tot.; 4. per tot.; nay, till Saul's rejection of the Divine commands in the war with Amalek, when he took upon him to act as he thought fit, 1 Samuel 14:3, 18, 19, 36, 37, then this oracle left Saul entirely, [which indeed he had seldom consulted before, 1 Samuel 14:35; 1 Chronicles 10:14; 13:3; Antiq. B. 7 ch. 4 sect 2.] and accompanied David, who was anointed to succeed him, and who consulted God by it frequently, and complied with its directions constantly [1 Samuel 14:37, 41; 15:26; 22:13, 15; 23:9, 10; 30:7, 8, 18; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19, 23; 21:1; 23:14; 1 Chronicles 14:10, 14; Antiq. B. IV ch. 12 sect. 5]. Saul, indeed, long after his rejection by God, and when God had given him up to destruction for his disobedience, did once afterwards endeavor to consult God when it was too late; but God would not then answer him, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets, 1 Samuel 28:6. Nor did any of David's successors, the kings of Judah, that we know of, consult God by this oracle, till the very Babylonish captivity itself, when those kings were at an end; they taking upon them, I suppose, too much of despotic power and royalty, and too little owing the God of Israel for the supreme King of Israel, though a few of them consulted the prophets sometimes, and were answered by them. At the return of the two tribes, without the return of the kingly government, the restoration of this oracle was expected, Nehemiah 7:63; 1 Esd. 5:40; 1 Macc. 4:46; 14:41. And indeed it may seem to have been restored for some time after the Babylonish captivity, at least in the days of that excellent high priest, John Hyrcanus, whom Josephus esteemed as a king, a priest, and a prophet; and who, he says, foretold several things that came to pass accordingly; but about the time of his death, he here implies, that this oracle quite ceased, and not before. The following high priests now putting diadems on their heads, and ruling according to their own will, and by their own authority, like the other kings of the pagan countries about them; so that while the God of Israel was allowed to be the supreme King of Israel, and his directions to be their authentic guides, God gave them such directions as their supreme King and Governor, and they were properly under a theocracy, by this oracle of Urim, but no longer [see Dr. Bernard's notes here]; though I confess I cannot but esteem the high priest Jaddus's divine dream, Antiq. B. XI. ch. 8. sect. 4, and the high priest Caiaphas's most remarkable prophecy, John 11:47-52, as two

small remains or specimens of this ancient oracle, which properly belonged to the Jewish high priests: nor perhaps ought we entirely to forget that eminent prophetic dream of our Josephus himself, [Footnote one next to a high priest, as of the family of the Asamoneans or Maccabees,] as to the succession of Vespasian and Titus to the Roman empire, and that in the days of Nero, and before either Galba, Otho, or Vitellius were thought of to succeed him. Of the War, B. III. ch. 8. sect. 9. This, I think, may well be looked on as the very last instance of any thing like the prophetic Urim among the Jewish nation, and just preceded their fatal desolation: but how it could possibly come to pass that such great men as Sir John Marsham and Dr. Spenser, should imagine that this oracle of Urim and Thummim with other practices as old or older than the law of Moses, should have been ordained in imitation of somewhat like them among the Egyptians, which we never hear of till the days of Diodorus Siculus, Aelian, and Maimonides, or little earlier than the Christian era at the highest, is almost unaccountable; while the main business of the law of Moses was evidently to preserve the Israelites from the idolatrous and superstitious practices of the neighboring pagan nations; and while it is so undeniable, that the evidence for the great antiquity of Moses's law is incomparably beyond that for the like or greater antiquity of such customs in Egypt or other nations, which indeed is generally none at all, it is most absurd to derive any of Moses's laws from the imitation of those heathen practices, Such hypotheses demonstrate to us how far inclination can prevail over evidence, in even some of the most learned part of mankind.]
