

Meshech Chochmah Parshas Terumah

Moshe Rabbeinu and the Urim ve'Tumim

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ... כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵרְאֶה אוֹתְךָ... וְכֹן תַּעֲשׂוּ

They shall make a Sanctuary for Me... In accordance with everything that I am showing you... and so you shall do (25:8-9)

The Prototype for All Future Sanctification

We note that the final phrase, “and so you shall do,” is redundant, seeing as the first pasuk already commanded “They shall make a Sanctuary for Me”! In response to this, the Gemara¹ expounds that the words “and so you shall do” refer not to the Mishkan currently under discussion, but to all *future* sanctified places, indicating that the means through which they are to be sanctified is similar to the way in which the Mishkan was originally sanctified. Among the elements required, the Gemara mentions the *Urim ve'Tumim*.

Tosafos² are somewhat taken aback by the inclusion of the *Urim ve'Tumim* on the list for future sanctifications. After all, as we have noted, the requirement of these items relates back to the Mishkan, yet at the time the Mishkan was being built the *Urim ve'Tumim* did not yet exist!

The Meshech Chochmah's initial reaction to this question is one of surprise. After all, the requirement of these things was not for the initial *building* of the Mishkan, but for its *sanctification*! This took place much later on, during the seven *Miluim* days, by which time the *Urim ve'Tumim* were very much in existence!³

However, he proceeds to explain that even if we accept Tosafos' position that all those items were required at the time of the building, there were *Urim ve'Tumim* present at that initial stage...

¹ Shavuot 14a.

² Ibid. 15a s.v. *ve'chen*.

³ Indeed, the Meshech Chochmah notes that Tosafos elsewhere (Avodah Zarah 34a s.v. *bameh shimesh*) state further that even during the Miluim days themselves the Mishkan only had the status of a *bamah*, and did not attain the status of Mishkan until the eighth day, the first day of the month of Nissan.

Prophecy and the *Urim ve'Tumim*

Although the Gemara we have quoted states that the *Urim ve'Tumim* are required for all sanctifications, this is actually a matter of dispute among Tannaim, as discussed in the Yerushalmi:⁴

It was taught: If there is a navi present, what need is there for the Urim ve'Tumim? R' Yehuda says, one [nonetheless] needs the Urim ve'Tumim.

This presentation of the two disputing views is somewhat cryptic. Why does the first opinion feel that the *Urim ve'Tumim* are not necessary if there is a *navi* present, and why does R' Yehuda maintain that they are necessary nonetheless?

The reasoning of the first opinion is easy to understand, for both a *navi* and the *Urim ve'Tumim* perform essentially the same function, communicating messages from Heaven. Therefore, if we have one, we don't need the other!

What is R' Yehuda's response to this?

In order to understand his position, we need to consider whether there is any aspect contained within the *Urim ve'Tumim* which does not exist in a *navi*. As we will see, this matter itself is discussed by R' Yehuda and his colleagues.

Elsewhere in the Yerushalmi,⁵ it cites an opinion that the messages received from the *Urim ve'Tumim* are not unconditional in nature, for they can, in fact, be subject to repeal. As evidence of this idea, he refers to the episode of *Pilegish be'Givah*,⁶ where the people inquired of the *Urim ve'Tumim* if they should go out to battle against the tribe of Binyamin. The answer they received was yes, yet when they went to battle they were defeated the on first two occasions. It was only on the third occasion that they were successful. The reason for this is that on the first two occasions their merits

⁴ Sanhedrin 1:3.

⁵ Yoma 7:3.

⁶ Shoftim perek 20.

were not sufficient to allow them victory, hence, the message of the *Urim ve'Tumim* was not fulfilled. It was only on the third occasion, when they did complete teshuvah, that the *Urim ve'Tumim's* message was fulfilled.

The Yerushalmi then cites the opinion of R' Yehuda who disputes this and maintains that a message from the *Urim ve'Tumim* is indeed irrevocable. The reason they were not successful the first two times, he explains, is because on those occasions the *Urim ve'Tumim* did not actually foretell success, it simply told them “עָלוּ אֵלָיו – go up against him.”⁷ It was only on the third time that the *Urim ve'Tumim* responded with the message: “עָלוּ דָּךְ אֶתְּנֶנּוּ בְּיָדְךָ – Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hands.”⁸

We can now understand the background to the first dispute between R' Yehuda and his colleague. The first opinion there reflects the view that a message from the *Urim ve'Tumim* can be repealed. As such, there is no difference between the *Urim ve'Tumim* and a *navi*, whose prophecy can also be subject to repeal. Therefore, that opinion holds that if there a *navi* there is no need for the *Urim ve'Tumim* as well, since they do not add anything to what is already present.

In contrast, R' Yehuda holds that the *Urim ve'Tumim* do add something to the presence of a *navi*, for unlike prophecy that comes through a *navi*, a message from the *Urim ve'Tumim* cannot be repealed. This is a critical contribution to the process of bestowing unconditional kedushah on the Mishkan or Mikdash and hence, we require the *Urim ve'Tumim* in addition to a *navi*.

Which brings us back to our discussion of *Urim ve'Tumim* as a requirement for building the Mishkan

The Prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu

Although the rule is that the prophecy of a *navi* can be revoked, the Meshech Chochmah states that the exception to this rule is Moshe Rabbeinu. Since his domain of prophecy included transmitting mitzvos of

⁷ Pasuk 23.

⁸ Pasuk 28.

the Torah and Mitzvos, which are eternal, this impacted to totality of his prophecy and bestowed a permanent and unconditional quality on all matters concerning which he prophesied.

We can now understand how the Gemara maintains that the *Urim ve'Tumim* were required for the sanctification of the Mishkan. Tosafos objected that at the time the Mishkan was being built, the *Urim ve'Tumim* did not yet exist! As we have seen, the requirement of the *Urim ve'Tumim* is in order to bestow an irrevocable quality to the sanctification, something which cannot be achieved by a navi alone. The one exception to this was the building of the Mishkan, at which time the presence of Moshe Rabbeinu ensured this irrevocable quality. As such, Moshe Rabbeinu himself filled the role of the *Urim ve'Tumim*! On all subsequent occasions, however, the *Urim ve'Tumim* themselves are required in addition to the presence of a *navi*.

The Meshech Chochmah concludes his presentation of this idea with the words: "Look into this matter well, for it is indeed wondrous, with the help of Heaven."