

# IT SHOWS ON THE FOREHEAD...

*by Rabbi Yaakov Menken*

*"And you shall make a Tzitz of pure gold, and you shall engrave in it, like the engraving of a seal, 'Sanctified to G-d.'" [28:36]*

The Tzitz was a band which the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, wore across his forehead. Engraved into this band, pressed in from the back so as to appear in relief, coming out from the band, were the words "Kadosh LaShem," Sanctified to G-d.

Our Sages explain in the Talmud that the Tzitz atoned for azus panim, literally "boldness of face" -- presumptuousness, brazenness, chutzpah. Think about a "bald-faced lie" -- sinning in an obvious, blunt, brazen way. The Zohar says that when the Kohen Gadol wore the Tzitz on his forehead, it subdued those who were brazen. Just imagining it can be frightening. The Kohen Gadol is wearing "Sanctified to G-d" on his forehead. What shows on my forehead? Brazen lies and other misdeeds?

In the Chapters of the Fathers, Chapter 5, there is a perplexing Mishnah. "He [Yehudah ben Teima] used to say: 'The brazen go to Gehennom [purgatory], but the shamefaced go to the Garden of Eden.' May be Your will, HaShem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that the Holy Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days, and grant us our portion in your Torah."

What is happening in this Mishnah? The author is telling us what Yehudah ben Teima used to say, and then he suddenly starts davening (praying)! Looking forward to the rebuilding of the Temple, and praying for our share in Torah, is a recurring theme throughout the traditional Jewish prayer book -- but why is it relevant to a discussion of appropriate and inappropriate character traits?

I found the following answer (original source unknown): the author of the Mishna wrote the saying of Yehudah ben Teima, and immediately thought of the brazen people in his own generation, who undoubtedly caused grief for the community and especially for straight, upright individuals. Those people, he wrote, were going to face cleansing in Gehennom for their behavior. And he remembered that when the Temple existed, the Tzitz on the forehead of the Kohen Gadol atoned for their sins, and indeed subdued them and prevented them from being so brazen in the first place.

Life would be so much better for everyone, if only the Temple were rebuilt! And so this short prayer burst from his heart, asking for this to happen soon.

Our Sages also say in the Talmud (Beitzah 25): "Why was the Torah given to Israel? Because they are brazen." And the commentator Rashi explains, "The Torah was given to them so that they should

involve themselves in it, and it will take their strength and subdue their hearts." Therefore the writer of the Mishnah concludes: "And give us our portion in Your Torah."

The Temple was not merely designed to be a glorious place for worship of G-d, a fancy edifice. In every aspect, it was built to help us, to improve each person who passed through its gates, or even shared the world with it. In the meantime, we take refuge in the Torah, which has everything spiritual within it -- but may we indeed see the Temple rebuilt, speedily in our days!

Good Shabbos,

Rabbi Yaakov Menken

*This week's class is dedicated for the refuah sheleima, the complete healing, of Perel Leiba bas Malka and Tzipporah bas Sarah by the Israel family of Potomac, Maryland.*