

And Aharon shall bear the judgment of the Bnei Yisrael on his heart constantly before Hashem. (28:30)

This *pasuk* is a reference to the *Choshen*, Breastplate, which Aharon wore. The *Choshen* was folded in half to form a pocket into which was placed a parchment containing Hashem's Ineffable Name. This was called the *Urim V'Tumim*. The *Urim V'Tumim* catalyzed the individual letters of the names of the *shevatim* which were inscribed on the *Choshen* to light up and give answers to questions of national importance. The *zechus*, merit, of wearing the *Choshen* was given to Aharon because of his special character. When he was coming to greet Moshe, after Moshe had been selected by Hashem to be the one to lead the Jews out of Egypt, he came with a smile and a gladness of heart, as the *Torah* records in *Shemos 4:14*: "And when he (Aharon) sees you (Moshe) he will rejoice in his heart." This remarkable devotion and love for a younger brother, this incredible selflessness, was rewarded with the *Choshen* that was worn over the heart that rejoiced.

Was it so difficult to rejoice for a brother's good fortune? Does Aharon deserve such an amazing tribute just for being happy for his brother? **Horav Avigdor Halevi Nebentzahl, Shlita**, identifies that there are various levels of selflessness. It is one thing to defer to one's brother. It is a totally different phenomenon when an individual has shouldered the responsibility of leadership for years of persecution, pain and sorrow just to have his younger brother take over--and yet be happy about it. This represents *middos tovos*, good character, in the truest sense of the word. Aharon experienced pure, unadulterated joy for Moshe's good fortune. Furthermore, Aharon was himself the leader of the Jewish People. He would now descend from the pedestal of leadership to be second-in-command, and he was pleased for his brother!

It is easier to share in one's sorrow than to celebrate his joy. In order to transcend personal feelings, one must consider his friend to be an integral part of himself. His heart is my heart; his joy is my joy. We are one. This was the *madreigah*, spiritual level, of Aharon. Only a person who possesses such a big heart, who was able to include others in his reality, had the merit to wear the Breastplate over his heart.

Horav Nebentzahl notes that Aharon is praised and rewarded for his love of his brother. Is that such a great challenge? The *Torah* implies that one who demonstrates love, one who is sensitive to the needs of those close to him, will similarly be loving and caring to those that are distant from him. Does this represent a realistic approach? One would assume that the real test of a sensitive person is that one cares about those that are suffering in distant lands or those with whom he has no familial relationships. The *Torah* view obviously does not coincide with what has regrettably become normative behavior in our society.

Caring about those in distant lands is not as demanding as caring about people who are close by. Such love has no requirements. We do what we can. Some even go beyond their means to help faraway people with total devotion and love. When all is said and done, however, such caring does

not carry with it heavy responsibilities. The individual in need is not at my doorstep. I do not have to cope with him all of the time, even when it is inconvenient. In contrast, to love a neighbor, to get along with a friend whom we see every day, who can be bothersome, might not be as easy. To put up with a brother who might be very demanding, a friend whose luck has changed, or who is depressed and needs someone with whom to talk--at all hours of the day or night--might be a bit more difficult. Friendship can be very exhausting at times.

Is it any wonder that so many communal organizations flock to help the Jew overseas, while the Jew in town has nowhere to turn? Many individuals open their wallets, their homes, and their hearts, to those that are distant, those that are not even Jewish, while their brethren are so needy. We tend to gravitate to the exotic *tzedakos*, the attention grabbers, while those who are very near and very much in need continue to suffer. Aharon was lauded for the love he demonstrated for his brother. It would serve us well to exhibit similar devotion at home.