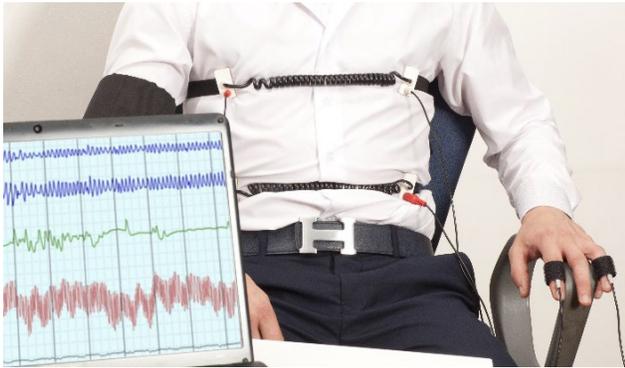


## SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

**Lie Detectors, DNA, and the Messiah's Identity**

In 1975, two New York inventors bonded liquid crystals with quartz stones and set them into rings. The “mood rings” became a fad and were thought to change color based on the wearer’s mood. In reality, the rings were only reacting to changes in temperature.

There are, however, scientifically proven methods to read someone’s mood and uncover hidden secrets.

The FBI, for example, trains their agents to observe facial micro-expressions to determine emotions like fear and happiness. A lie detector polygraph test enhances human perception by measuring physiological indicators that can signal if someone is lying.

More recently, DNA tests can identify family relationships and even criminals.

Hundreds of years ago, these scientific methods would have been considered magic. However, simply because we don’t understand how something works does not mean it isn’t possible. As Albert Einstein said, “If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.”

In this week’s Torah portion Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:20-30:10), we learn about a garment worn by the Kohen Gadol or High Priest, which could clarify difficult questions.

The High Priest’s “*breastplate of judgment*” [choshen mishpat] was made of “*gold, blue, purple, and crimson wool, and twisted fine linen*” (Exodus 28:15). Twelve precious stones, each bearing the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, were set on the breastplate. The “*Urim and Tumim*”, a parchment with one of God’s sacred names, was placed within the fold of the breastplate.

Together, this garment provided the High Priest with the ability to prophetically answer questions and “*adjudicate for the children of Israel*” (Exodus 28:30).

Our sages explain that during the second Temple, when the divine presence was concealed, “*the spirit of prophecy departed*” (Yoma 9b), and the breastplate of judgment did not respond to questions.

The sages did not say prophecy “ceased” because, as the prophet Joel says, prophecy will return in the messianic age when God “*will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy*” (Joel 3:1). The book of Ezra states that the prophetic power of the breastplate of judgment will also return in the future.

*continued on reverse*

The book of Esther records the Purim miracle and the salvation from King Ahasuerus' decree to annihilate the Jewish people. Before the miracle, which we celebrate this year on February 26, King Cyrus of Persia had granted the Jews permission to return to Israel and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Cyrus' edict was so significant that he is referred to as God's "*anointed one*"<sup>1</sup> (Isaiah 45:1).

Under the leadership of Ezra, between 40,000 and 50,000 Jews left Persia and returned to Israel. In addition to directing the rebuilding of the Temple, Ezra reestablished Jewish observances and recorded family lineages. However, one family stood out as an exception when they could not present their genealogical records. This family was disqualified from the priesthood and told their genealogy would be resolved in the future when "*a priest will arise with the Urim V'Tumim*" (Ezra 2:62-63).

This incident refutes one of the major arguments used by missionaries. These missionaries incorrectly claim that "all genealogical records were stored in the First Temple and destroyed," making it impossible for anyone today to prove the messianic requirements of being a descendant of the tribe of Judah and Kings David and Solomon.

There is no evidence that genealogical records were stored exclusively in the First or Second Temples. The events in Ezra's time prove that people possessed personal records that survived the destruction of the First Temple. Additionally, after witnessing the destruction of the First Temple, it is unlikely that they would risk keeping records only in the Second Temple. Finally, even if the future messiah does not have family records, his lineage will be confirmed when the "*Urim V'Tumim*" returns. For these reasons, the missionary argument is false.

Today, most Jews are from the tribe of Judah, and some individuals can trace the lineage to King David. However, even if we do not possess genealogical records, by following the Torah, we are part of a remarkable spiritual heritage that traces back to the founders of monotheism, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This heritage is our spiritual DNA.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

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<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the Hebrew word for anointed, "moshiach – משיח" is used to describe a variety of subjects, including Jewish kings, prophets, priests, objects, and in this case, a non-Jewish king. Therefore, it is essential to check the context to determine the correct topic of discussion.