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IN THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK

"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:7-8).

At this season of the year the Christian focus is on the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. And rightly so, because those events were crucial to the future of mankind, as the Apostle Paul explains: *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures... Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain..."* (1 Cor. 15:3-14). Paul declares that if Jesus had not died and been resurrected there would not be any hope of life after death.

Prophecy fulfilled

The Apostle states that Christ's death and resurrection were "according to the scriptures". That statement implies that Jesus' coming to Earth, His life, His crucifixion and His resurrection were prophesied by Old Testament writers.

One such prophecy is Psalm 40:7-8: *"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart"*. The writer to the Hebrews quotes those words and adds: *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Heb. 10:7-10). Psalm 40:7-8 was a prophecy of Jesus' coming to Earth.

There are several other prophecies in the books (volumes) of the Old Testament which detail various aspects of Jesus' coming to Earth. Isaiah is one such book: *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and*

the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn" (Isa. 61:1-2). Jesus confirmed Isaiah's words were prophetic of Himself: *"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee... And he came to Nazareth... and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord'. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:14-21). Jesus declared He was the One to whom Isaiah's prophecy referred.

Virgin birth

There are several other prophecies in the Old Testament which foretold specific details of Jesus'

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birth, life, death and resurrection. One example is that Jesus' mother would be a virgin: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). Matthew confirms the prophecy was of Jesus and that His mother was a virgin (Matt. 1:18, 23-25).

Further, the prophet Malachi foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and again it is Matthew who confirms that the prophecy related to Jesus (Matt. 2:6).

Several other aspects of Jesus' early life were prophesied by the writers of the Old Testament:

- Joseph being warned in a dream of Herod's intent to slaughter the children in Bethlehem and Joseph consequently taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt (Jer. 32:15; Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:13-18);
- On leaving Egypt Joseph did not return to Bethlehem but went to his home city of Nazareth in Galilee (a greater distance than to Bethlehem), again fulfilling the words of the prophet that "*he shall be called a Nazarene*" (Matt. 2:23).

John the Baptist

Jesus' ministry was heralded by John the Baptist, whose ministry was prophesied by both Isaiah and Malachi. Isaiah wrote: "*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*" (Isa. 40:3). Isaiah's prophecy is attributed to Jesus by Matthew (3:1-3), Mark (1:2) and Luke (3:4).

Malachi wrote: "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...*" (Mal. 3:1). Both Matthew (11:10) and Luke (7:27) confirm Malachi's words were prophetic of Jesus.

Triumphal entry

One of the events shortly before Jesus' crucifixion was His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was prophesied by David and Zechariah and confirmed by Matthew: "*And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem... then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me... And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them.... And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the*

multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Psa. 118:25-26; Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:2-11; Mark 11:9).

Betrayal

Jesus' foreknowledge of His entry into Jerusalem is evidence that He knew what lay ahead of Him, including not only that He would be betrayed, but who would betray Him: "*But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning... who should betray him*" (John 6:64). "*I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me*" (John 13:11, 18). Again this event was a fulfilment of prophecy: "*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me*" (Psa. 41:9).

Although the amount Judas would be paid for betraying Jesus is not recorded in the Old Testament, Matthew confirms that Jeremiah prophesied it would be thirty pieces of silver: "... *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me*" (Matt. 27:2-10).

Crucifixion

Several other details of His crucifixion were also prophesied in the Old Testament:

- That He would be crucified with sinners (Isa. 53:12; Luke 22:37);
- Some of the last words He would speak before He died (Psa. 22:1; Matt. 27:46);
- His legs would not be broken (the legs of the others were broken) (John 19:31-36);
- That His side would be pierced (Zech. 12:10; John 19:37);

- That they would cast lots for His vesture (Psa. 22:18; John 19:23-24).

Length of time in the grave

Matthew 12:39-40 records Jesus' words before His death regarding the length of time He would be in the grave: "*But he answered and said unto them... For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*"—Jesus referred to Jonah 1:17: "*Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights*".

Israel's failure

In spite of so many Old Testament prophesies being fulfilled during Jesus' life-time, Israel as a nation failed to realise He was the Messiah.

Additionally it was not only the fulfilment of many Old Testament prophesies but also the miracles He performed that provided evidence of who He was: "*Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them*" (Matt. 11:2-5). These remarks imply that the miracles Jesus performed were convincing evidence of His identity, yet Israel at large did not identify Him.

The Apostle John explains the reason: "*But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them*" (John 12:37-40). Thus it was God's overruling that prevented them from recognising Jesus.

The Apostle Paul further explains that they were unable to recognise Jesus because the time had not yet come for God to open the door of faith: "*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed*" (Gal. 3:23). It was not until Jesus had been resurrected, the Law taken out of the way—"nailed to His cross" (Col. 2:14)—and the Holy Spirit given that their eyes were opened so they could understand the mysteries God had woven into His plan: "*And he*

said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day... And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:44-49)—the "power from on high" was the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit could not be given until Jesus' sacrifice was completed, He had been resurrected and had returned to His Father in heaven—that is, until He had been glorified (John 7:39). Now that that work is complete the words of Peter apply: "*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables... We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place... Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet. 1:16-21). And they wrote "the volume of the book".■

THINGS THAT ARE BROKEN

The sacrifices God accepts most are broken and contrite hearts. It was the thorough breaking down of Jacob's natural strength at Peniel that got him where God could clothe him with spiritual power. It was by breaking the surface of the rock at Horeb by the stroke of Moses' rod that it let out the cool waters to thirsty people. It was when the three hundred elect soldiers under Gideon broke their pitchers, a type of breaking themselves, that the hidden lights shone forth to the consternation of their adversaries. It was when the poor widow broke the seal of the little pot of oil, and poured it forth, that God multiplied it to pay her debts and supply means of support. It was when Esther risked her life and broke through the rigid etiquette of a heathen court that she obtained favour to rescue her people from death. It was when Jesus took the five loaves and broke them that the bread was multiplied in the very act of breaking, sufficient to feed five thousand. It was when Mary broke her beautiful alabaster box, rendering it henceforth useless, that the pent-up perfume filled the whole house. It was when Jesus allowed His body to be broken to pieces by thorns and nails and spear, that His inner life was poured out like a crystal ocean for thirsty sinners to drink and live.■

JESUS AND THE LAW

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18)

Jesus' relationship to the Law presented the scribes and Pharisees with a challenge: on the one hand He declared He had not come to destroy the Law, but on the other some of His actions were contrary to explicit statements in the Law.

Jesus' fulfilment of the Law.

Three examples of Jesus fulfilling the Law are His reactions to Satan in the Mount: *"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread'. But he answered and said, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'"* (Matt. 4:1-4).

The Law does not contain a direct statement that *"man shall not live by bread alone"*—such a statement would have directly refuted Satan's temptation—however Jesus understood not only the letter of the Law but also the principles of God's dealings with Israel, and those principles surpassed mere compliance with the letter. Deuteronomy 8:3 reads: *"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live"*. Jesus understood that God's dealings with Israel in the wilderness during their exodus from Egypt established a principle and He applied that principle to refute Satan's temptation. In that sense Jesus not only fulfilled the Law but He demonstrated a level of compliance with God's will that exceeded mere physical compliance—it was the application of the principle that helped Him overcome Satan's temptation.

The second temptation Satan put to Jesus was to display His Divine authority and God's protection: *"...If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"* (Matt. 4:6-7). Satan's second temptation was cynical and more devious than the first because it was based on a quotation from the Old Testament (Psa. 91:11-12). However again Jesus did

not falter but responded with a direct quotation from the Law: *"Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah"* (Deut. 6:16). Jesus did not succumb to vindictive retaliation but fulfilled the Law in the highest sense—He did not tempt God.

Satan's third temptation was for Jesus to "inherit" *"the kingdoms of the world"* if He would but worship Satan. Jesus responded: *"... Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve"* (Matt. 4:10). Although the wording is slightly different from Deuteronomy 6:13, the gist is the same: *"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him... Ye shall not go after other gods..."* (Deut. 6:13-14).

Upholding the Law

As well as personally complying with the provisions of the Law, Jesus taught His disciples that He had not come to destroy the Law: *"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying... Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"* (Matt. 5:1-2, 16-17).

Jesus went on to give a specific example how they were to fulfil the Law: *"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?... Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"* (Matt. 7:9-12). There is no direct instruction in the Law that they should do unto others as they would have others do to them, and so again Jesus is exemplifying His greater understanding of the principles of the Law—He is more than fulfilling the letter of the Law but also the spirit. Indeed such teaching is consistent with His statement to the Pharisees: *"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"* (Matt. 22:35-40). Jesus' instruction complied with the (unexpressed) principles of the Law—it fulfilled the Law in the highest sense.

Confusion

Notwithstanding Jesus' clear statements about the necessity to comply with the Law, certain of His actions caused confusion amongst the scribes and Pharisees: *"And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem... And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy... he (Jesus) said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God"* (Luke 5:17-25). They attributed such acts of healing to God alone and hence they deemed Jesus to be a blasphemer—nevertheless the miracle could not be denied.

On another occasion Jesus not only healed a man who had been blind from birth but He did so on a Sabbath day: *"Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them"* (John 9:16). After questioning the man the Jews declared: *"we are Moses' disciples"*, thus confirming their confusion about Jesus' origin and authority.

Two other events which caused confusion amongst the Pharisees are Jesus condoning His disciples plucking corn on the Sabbath day (Matt. 12:1-12) and, also on the Sabbath day, healing a man who had a withered hand (Luke 6:6-11). He justified both of these actions by declaring that *"the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day"* (Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5). With their limited understanding of the principles of the Law, and the time frame of God's dealings with mankind, a claim to be Lord of the Sabbath indeed seemed blasphemous: *"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates"* (Exod. 20:9-10).

Higher standard

The foregoing examples illustrate Jesus' authority and superiority above the Law. However His ministry did more than that—He also introduced a higher standard:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment..." (Matt. 5:21-22). The standard Jesus articulated was higher than physical action—now even to be angry with one's brother was sinful, and was to be considered as seriously as physically killing one's brother. Jesus did not merely fulfil (comply with) the Law, but He fulfilled it in its highest sense in that He introduced a standard that was based on its spirit. Thus the Apostle Paul wrote: *"the Law is spiritual"* (Rom. 7:14). ■

Another example of Jesus introducing a higher level of the Law—the spiritual—is recorded in Matthew 5:43. The requirement under the Law was that an Israelite must not take revenge against a fellow Israelite (*"his neighbour"*)—they were to love their neighbour as themselves (Lev. 19:18). However Jesus now introduced the higher standard of not taking revenge on their neighbour only, but loving their enemy. Thus was established the truth proclaimed by John: *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17). ■

CRUCIFIED AND RISEN

At this time of the year, the thoughts of every Christian turn particularly to those momentous events in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago when Jesus of Nazareth was crucified at Golgotha.

There it was that the only perfect Man who had ever lived, the One who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, was cruelly put to death.

It was a case of the Just One dying for the unjust—in the simplest sense He was not guilty of the charges brought before Him, but on a more comprehensive scale He died for the sins of every human being: it was in His wisdom that God *"laid upon Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:6).

In the short term His followers were distraught and confused: *"...we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel..."* (Luke 24:21). They had left all to follow Him. But now He was dead.

Consequently there was great joy when the angelic messengers proclaimed to the two Marys: *"He is not here, He is risen"* (Matt. 28:6).

Today it is His resurrection that brings the greatest joy to the Christian: *"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death"* (Rev. 1:18). ■

THE PRIESTHOOD

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).

There are many lessons that may be learned from the Apostle Peter’s words quoted above. The concepts of “lively stones”, “a spiritual house”, “spiritual sacrifices”, and “acceptable by Jesus Christ” are all applicable to the church of God during the present era. Midst all of them is the concept of “an holy priesthood”.

Meaning of priest

In the Old Testament, the term “priest” is translated from the Hebrew “*kohen*” which means “to mediate in religious services”. “*Kohen*” occurs more than 700 times, almost 300 of which are in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. As implied from the definition of “*kohen*”, the priest was a mediator, that is, he was the “go-between”—specifically between the Israelites and God: “*For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins*” (Heb. 5:1).

In the New Testament “priest” is translated from the Greek “*hiereus*”. Bible dictionaries do not elaborate on the meaning of “*hiereus*”. “Priesthood” is translated from the Greek “*hierateuma*”, the meaning of which is simply given as “a body of priests”. 1 Peter 2:5 states that the priesthood is “holy” (Greek: *hagios*) which means “separated”—separated from the world and consecrated to God.

History of priesthoods

The first priest recorded in the Bible is Melchizedek: “*And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God*” (Gen. 14:18). Other priests in early Old Testament times include “Potipherah, priest of On” (Gen. 14:18), and Jethro “priest of Midian” (Exod. 3:1). The Bible does not contain any record of the appointment of either of those priests.

After He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and before He appointed Aaron as a priest, God chose the firstborn of Israel as His own: “*And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine*” (Exod. 12:51-13:-2).

When God gave instructions to Moses regarding the structure and furnishings of the tabernacle He also

appointed Aaron and Aaron’s sons to serve Him as priests in the tabernacle: “*And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons*” (Exod. 28:1). Thus Aaron and his sons were the inaugural priests of the tabernacle arrangement.

An additional part of the tabernacle arrangement was the selection of the tribe of Levi to service the tabernacle: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle... And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel*” (Num. 3:5-9). Thus the tribe of Levi was installed as the special servants of the tabernacle and the priests under Aaron have become known as the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood.

However there was greater significance in their selection and appointment than merely servicing the tabernacle—Numbers 3:11-13 explains: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn... therefore the Levites shall be mine; Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD*”. Thus God chose the tribe of Levi to represent the firstborn of all the tribes of Israel.

Exclusive

Not only were the Levitical priests specifically chosen to perform the service of the tabernacle, they were the only ones allowed to do so: “*Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations...*” (Num. 18:22-23).

Thus the only persons who were permitted to perform the priestly work of the tabernacle were those who were born into the tribe of Levi (which, in effect, was solely determined by God).

A testimony

There was still greater significance in the tabernacle arrangement than merely providing a means by which the Israelites could worship God. Hebrews 3:5-6 explains: “*And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*”.

There are at least two important points to be noted in Hebrews 3:5-6. Firstly the tabernacle was a testimony of things which were to be “*spoken after*”, and Christ has more merit than Moses.

A testimony is something which either provides information regarding a forthcoming event or bears witness to a past event—that the tabernacle and its priesthood were a prelude to the arrangement to be implemented under Christ and His house is evident from Hebrews 7:11-14: “*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise... and not be called after the order of Aaron?... For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood*” (Heb. 7:11-14). Thus it was God’s plan that the Levitical priesthood would be superseded—it was merely “*a testimony of those things which were to be spoken*”; that is, it testified (or bore witness to) the arrangement God would institute later.

Similarities and differences

Consequently it is not surprising that there are several similarities and contrasts between the orders of the two tabernacle arrangements and their priesthoods.

One difference is that the later tabernacle is not constructed by mankind. Hebrews 8:1-2 reads: “... *We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*” (Heb. 8:1-2). Not only is the later tabernacle “*pitched by the Lord*”, it is also superior in that it is “*more perfect*”: “*But Christ being come an High Priest to good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building*” (Heb. 9:11). It is “*not of this building*” because it is not made with physical curtains but is a “*spiritual house*” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Another difference is the nature of its High Priest. Christ is not a descendant of a human being as were Aaron and his successors, and even His human ancestry (via the virgin Mary) was not as a descendant

of the tribe of Levi but was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14): Thus the later tabernacle arrangement is distinguished and separated from the Aaronic tabernacle: it is not a physical place where people go to worship; but it is the congregation of Christian believers as the Apostle Paul explains: “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*” (1 Cor. 3:16-17). (In the context of Paul’s letter “temple” and “tabernacle” are synonymous, and thus, regarding the believers collectively, Peter wrote: “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*”—1 Pet. 2:9).

Chosen by God

Peter also writes that the royal priesthood (the body of believers of the Christian era) is “*a chosen generation*”. Thus the present priesthood is similar to the Aaronic priesthood in that both are chosen by God. Paul also wrote of them being chosen by God: “*But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*” (2 Thess. 2:13). It is in the same vein that Jesus told His disciples: “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you... I have chosen you out of the world...*” (John 15:16-19). And not just them, but all “*which believe on Him through their word*” (John 17:20). As the Apostle Paul wrote: “*Put on therefore, as the elect (select; chosen—Strong #1588) of God, holy and beloved...*” (Col. 3:12); and as he also wrote: “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election (selection—Strong #1589) of God*” (1 Thess. 1:4). Consistent with this selection, Jesus prayed to God “*not for the world but for those Thou hast given me*”, “*out of the world*” (John 17:9, 6).

Human qualifications

Just as the tribe of Levi did not of themselves have any quality which made them more worthy than any other tribe to perform the priestly service, so the members of the royal priesthood of this Age do not have any special merit of their own: “*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty... That no flesh should glory in his presence*” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Ancestry

However, a difference between the two priesthoods is that the Aaronic priests came from the tribe of Levi

only, whereas the priests of the royal priesthood come from all nations: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son...*” (Matt. 28:19). The privilege of priesthood is not restricted to any human ancestry—indeed it includes some who are classed as heathen: “*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed*” (Gal. 3:8)—“the heathen” being anyone who is not a direct descendant of Jacob.

The firstborn

Just as God chose the tribe of Levi to be His special tribe, in lieu of the firstborn of all the tribes, so also those whom He has chosen to comprise the royal priesthood are regarded as the firstborn: “*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven...*” (Heb. 12:23).

Washed with water

One further picture which can be derived from the procedures the Old Testament priests had to follow is the requirement to be washed with water: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations*” (Exod. 30:17-21).

The royal priesthood of this era also needs to be “washed”. However whereas the washing by the Levitical priests was physical, the washing of the royal priesthood is symbolic: “*... even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing...*” (Eph. 5:25-27). The writer to the Hebrews adds: “*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*” (Heb. 10:22).

Sprinkled with blood

Hebrews 10:22 introduces the additional concept of being sprinkled. The Christian’s sprinkling is also symbolic, and stems from the procedures required of the Aaronic priests: “*Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood... and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and*

upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him” (Exod. 29:20-21). The sprinkling with blood “hallowed” Aaron, that is, it “pronounced him clean”. Likewise the Christian is sprinkled—made clean—by the blood of Christ: “*For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water... and sprinkled both the book, and all the people... And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year ...*” (Heb. 9:19-25). The “patterns of things in the heavens” were the original material tabernacle and the Aaronic priesthood.

Sacrifices

Additionally Aaron and the priests who followed him had to offer a sacrifice before they could offer the sacrifices for the people: “*Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering... And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house*” (Lev. 16:3-6).

However Christ—the high priest of the church—did not need to offer any sacrifice for Himself. He was “*holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners...*”; therefore He “*needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's...For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity...*” (Heb. 7:27-28). Jesus did not need to offer a sacrifice first for His own sins—He was sinless.

And not only did He not need to offer a sacrifice first for His own sins, but as Hebrews 9:25-26 states He only had to offer Himself once and not to enter in year after year: “*Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*”.

The priests' garments

God gave Moses precise details of all the priests’ garments—the specifications of the high priest’s garments are detailed in Exodus 28:2-39: “*And thou*

shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty... ”.

The garments were a token of the office and were handed down to successive priests: “*And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them. And that son that is priest... shall put them on... when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place*” (Exod. 29:29-30).

God also specified the garments to be worn by the “under-priests” (Aaron’s assistants): coats, girdles, and bonnets (Exod. 28:40-43). They had to wear “*linen breeches to cover their nakedness... when they come unto the tabernacle of the congregation or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity and die*”.

Just as the linen breeches covered the Aaronic priests’ nakedness so also linen symbolically covers the imperfections of the holy priesthood of the present era: “*And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude... saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints*” (Rev. 19:6-8).

No inheritance in the land

Another aspect of the Levitical priesthood was that they sojourned without an inheritance in the land of Israel: “*But the Levites shall do the service of the*

tabernacle of the congregation... among the children of Israel they have no inheritance... Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance” (Num. 18:23-24).

Likewise the present priesthood does not have any inheritance in “the land”: “*For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come*” (Heb. 13:14)—the Christian’s inheritance is in heaven: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which... hath begotten us... to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*” (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

God’s Providence

The Levites were totally devoted to the service of God, their material needs being provided by the tithes of the other tribes. Likewise the royal priests should consider themselves totally devoted to the service of God, trusting that God will provide for their material needs also: “*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on... But seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you*” (Matt. 6:25-33). However that does not mean they will live in material luxury but maybe God will allow them to suffer deprivation as did the apostles (1 Cor. 4:11-13).

Summary

There is much similarity between the physical Levitical priesthood and the spiritual holy priesthood of the present era, and reflection upon the physical is a source of strength and encouragement for the personal pilgrimage of all members of the royal priesthood. ■

SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven (Matt. 18:21-22).

Although there are more than 30 instances in the Scriptures where “seven times” is specified as the critical measure, its significance is not defined.

However one instance from which an inference may be drawn is Leviticus 14:7: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest... And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy **seven times, and shall pronounce him clean...***”. The leper was pronounced clean after being sprinkled seven times.

Likewise 2 Kings 5:1-14: “*Now Naaman... was a leper. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh*

*shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean... Then went he down, and dipped himself **seven times** in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean”.*

In a different context Psalm 12:6 reads: “*The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*”.

In all three instances, “**seven times**” resulted in cleanliness or purity.

“**Seven times**” occurs only four times in the New Testament—Matthew 18:21, 22 and Luke 17:4. Both passages relate to forgiveness but there is a difference

between the exhortations: Matthew 18:21-22 does not mention repentance by the offender whereas Luke 17:4 reads: *“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him”*. Luke’s record includes repentance by the offender.

The phrase “**seventy times seven**” does not occur in the Old Testament and it occurs only once in the New Testament—in Matthew 18:22 (quoted above), from which it may be inferred “never ending”—the one who is offended is to continue to forgive.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness involves recognition of a fault and not merely denial of a wrong-doing. Denial does not invoke forgiveness because if there is no fault there is no cause for forgiveness. The challenge is to acknowledge the offence and then to forgive.

One example of forgiveness is related in the story of the prodigal son: *“A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all... He... came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found”* (Luke 15:11-24).

The father acknowledged the errors of his son: *“For this my son was dead”*—but he dismissed the error. Such is the standard the Christian must practise.

Strategy

The Scriptures provide some advice by which the Christian is helped to achieve that standard.

One very powerful strategy is to adopt the advice Paul gave to the Colossians: *“If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col. 3:1-2). If one’s mind is focused on heavenly things the attraction of the earthly will diminish, and the less attractive (or important) the earthly becomes the less will be the impulse to demand one’s just rights.

Nevertheless all Christians are in the flesh and so they all fail at some time or other. An antidote for despair in such cases is to recall the words in 1 John 1:8-9: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”*. The first part of this strategy is to acknowledge one’s own sins—not deny them—followed by confession to God and belief that He will forgive the errors. Constantly reminding oneself of one’s own weaknesses helps to also keep in mind that the other is also suffering from the weaknesses of the flesh and such realisation helps to suppress the demand for justice when one feels they have been wronged.

Mercy

Forgiveness involves mercy, and in that vein it is profitable to remember the words of the Apostle Paul: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...”* (Eph. 2:4-5). And God’s mercy is multitudinous—it is not a one-off occasion. Perhaps things go well for a time, but eventually one will fail. The Lord’s grace and mercy never fail, and such a continuous reminder helps the Christian to forgive those who defraud them. As the Christian grows more mature they realise more fully the mercy God has shown to them and therefore how more gratuitous they should be towards others.

It should not be expected that all actions of mercy will be recognised at this time. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: *“That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:7). It will not be until the Kingdom Age that God’s mercy will be appreciated—and it is likewise with His children.

Additionally the Christian must always be mindful of the mercy they receive in the present life: *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb. 4:15-16). The Christian’s High Priest does not deny the failings of His people but is always available to be their High Priest and Advocate before God—the Christian must always exercise the same spirit towards all men, both to those who are in their fellowship and those who are not.

Israel

Much strength can be gleaned from considering Israel’s experiences: *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red*

like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). Both scarlet and crimson are intense colours so the standard of forgiveness is apparent. God has not "turned a blind eye" to Israel's transgressions but in His mercy He will forgive them: "*though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool*". God forgives to the uttermost and the Christian must do likewise.

Sanctification

Another aid in developing forgiveness is to heed the words of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples: "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*" (Matt. 6:13). Certain environments are not helpful to the Christian who is trying to develop the capacity to forgive, and, consistent with the prayer the Lord taught His disciples—"not to be led into temptation"—it is advantageous to remove one-self from such environments. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "...ye are the temple of the living God... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:16-17).

Failure

Personal failure may also be an influence which helps the Christian to forgive because it highlights their own weaknesses and heightens their realisation of their own need for forgiveness, provided it does not overthrow one's zeal for and confidence in the Lord—after David's fall he was still "*a man after God's own heart*" (Acts 13:22). His state of mind is summed up by the words of Psalm 51:1-2: "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin*". The realisation of one's failure enhances their sensitivity to the failures of others, and to the fact that all mankind is "*shapen in iniquity*" (Psa. 51:5).

The lesson was brought home to David even more pointedly when God sent Nathan to him and gave him the parable of the one who stole his neighbour's sheep. David's conclusion was: "That man shall die!" "*And Nathan said unto David: Thou art the man!*" (2 Sam. 12:5-7). God's forgiveness is expressed simply in verse 13: "*And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin...*". The example conveys the magnitude of forgiveness—nothing is too big that it cannot be forgiven.

Forgetting those things behind

Having forgiven one, the next step is to act as Paul exhorted: "*Forget those things which are behind*" (Phil. 3:13). While Paul's admonition related to his own weaknesses and transgressions, the same principle applies to those whom the Christian deems have wronged them—forgive and forget is good

advice, and is the application of Jesus' prayer: "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (Matt. 6:12-15).

Judgement

However forgiveness brings with it the danger of overlooking or avoiding the need for judgement. The situation is challenging because Jesus exhorted His disciples: "*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*" (Matt. 10:16). Acting out this advice requires judgements to be made—who or what is a wolf? Consequently there is a need to recognise the wolves, and not be injured by them. The balance is provided by exercising pity—to pity those who are caught up in the throes and wiles of the evil One.

However selfishly "*coming out from among them*" has the potential to destroy the "*weak in the faith*" (Rom. 14:1) due to too suddenly making them aware of the narrowness of the way. Paul's admonition to the Ephesians provides the proper course: "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Eph. 4:32).

Personal issues

There are times when issues should be addressed directly with the offender. However in such cases it is essential that proper procedures be followed: "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican*" (Matt. 18:15-17). The overriding principle must always be: "*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*" (Rom. 12:18), which includes fellow believers.

In that vein, one source of antagonism amongst brethren is differences of understanding doctrine. In such cases, it should never be forgotten that, while studentship has great rewards, in the final analysis it is God who "*gives the increase*" (1 Cor. 3:5).

The overall lesson is summarised by Luke 6:35-36: "*Love your enemies and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful*". ■

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians concentrates on the warfare of the Christian's mind. It might be considered to be the out-working of James' statement "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" (Jas. 4:7). And so it is that in Philippians 4:8 Paul gives advice that is intended to enable his readers to resist the devil by guarding their minds against the threats with which they would be confronted: firstly, thinking (only) on things that are true and honest and now "*things that are just*".

"Thinking on things" implies deliberation, that is, not just a momentary or passing thought, but rather enduring or sustained thought. The Greek for "think" means to "take an inventory". An inventory is a document which contains records of possessions or property, the purpose of which is for future reference, to enable the items listed to be recalled and accessed. It is the same for the Christian—their spiritual inventory should contain the things which they can reflect upon and which will provide their minds with a safe-guard against the Adversary in the future. Paul's admonition to think on things which are just is an admonition for them to make an inventory of just things and reflect upon them as a source of protection from the wiles of the Adversary.

Equity

One characteristic of things that are just is that they are fair; they do not attempt to defraud. The necessity to deal justly was dictated explicitly to Israel of old: "*Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have...*" (Lev. 19:35-36). If the Christian continually remembers to think on such fairness and equity they will guard their mind against the temptation to exploit or defraud another.

Equity and fairness do not always mean one's actions will be seen to be just, but the over-riding principle is adherence to the original contract. Jesus used a parable to explain this principle to His disciples: "*So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the*

burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee" (Matt. 20:8-13). To the natural mind it might appear the lord of the vineyard exploited the early workers, however as the Scripture states, he did not do any wrong—he was just; he kept his word with all the labourers, he paid them the amount they had agreed. While the parable has application to rewards for the Christian, it can also be applied directly to the present life: the Christian must always acknowledge what is their just portion and not covet more. "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have...*" (Heb. 13:5). Thinking on things which are just, and thus being content with such things as one has, is a powerful weapon against the Satan's temptation to exploit, to defraud and to deal unjustly.

The same criterion of dealing justly applies to employers: "*Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving*" (Col. 4:1-2). The admonition to continue in prayer, thinking always on those things that are just assists the employer also to thwart Satan's temptation to deal unjustly.

Bribes

Another aspect of guarding one's mind against unjust actions is to reject bribes and gifts of favours, just as Moses commanded Israel: "*Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates... and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*" (Deut. 16:18-20). Thinking on things that are just helps guard one's mind from the temptation to accept bribes, which is another of the wiles of the Adversary.■

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