

## **PARSHAT SHEKALIM**

[for MAFTIR (Shmot 31:11-16) & HAFTARA ]

### **PART I - A 'BASE' AND A 'CROWN'**

What did Bnei Yisrael do with the silver collected from the very first "machazit ha'shekel"? From the commandment at the beginning of Parshat Ki-tisa (that we read as maftir for Parshat Shekalim) it is not very clear - as it simply states that it should be given: "I'avodat OHEL MOED" - for the needs of the Tabernacle (see 30:16).

Even though the commentators offer two explanations for what this specific phrase refers to: - either:

- \* to purchase the "korbanot tzibur" [community sacrifices] and hence a mitzvah for all future generations as well; or
- \* to construct the Mishkan itself and hence a one time mitzvah - for building the Mishkan [See lengthy discussion in Ramban on 30:16.]

Nonetheless, from the opening psukim in Parshat Pekudei it is clear that there was indeed a special donation of a "machazit ha'shekel" for the specific purpose of BUILDING the Mishkan.

In the following shiur, we will undertake a careful reading of those psukim (i.e. 38:21-31) in attempt to find the deeper meaning of what this silver was used for.

[It is highly recommend that you first read 38:21-31, i.e. the opening psukim of Parshat Pekudei, before continuing.]

### **TALLYING THE GOLD & SILVER**

In Parshat Pekudei we learn that Bnei Yisrael were permitted to donate as much gold and copper ["zahav" & "nechoshet"] as they chose. The primary use of the gold was to make the "keilim" [vessels] of the Mishkan ("aron", "shulchan", "menorah", etc.), while the copper was used to make the "keilim" of the "chatzer" - i.e. the "mizbach n'choshet" and the "kiyor".

[This donation totalled approx. 30 "kikar" of gold, and 70 "kikar" of copper / note that the weight of a "kikar" was about 30 kilo (or 65 lbs.)]

To our surprise, there was no donation of silver! In contrast to the gold and copper, the only silver collected was taken from the mandatory donation, known as the "machazit ha'shekel" - where each member of the male population age 20 (and up) gave a half a shekel (see 38:26).

Since the total census was 603,550, the amount of silver collected totalled 301,775 shekel. As 'everyone' knows, every 3,000 shekel equals one "kikar" [just ask your banker], thus the total amount of silver collected was 100 "kikar", with a remainder of 1,775 shekel.

What did they do with so much silver?

### **SOCKETS FOR THE BEAMS**

Actually, the answer is quite simple. The primary use of the silver was to make "adanim" [weighted base sockets] to support the "kerashim" [wooden planks] of the Mishkan. To set up the Mishkan - a total of 100 "adanim" were needed. The first 96 "adanim" were used to support the 48 "krashim" that formed the walls of the Mishkan. [The northern and southern walls were 20 "krashim" each, and the western wall need 8 "krashim" (20+20+8=48); the eastern side was 'open'.] As each "keresh" required TWO "adanim" [sockets], a total of 96 "adanim" were needed. Plus, four additional "kerashim" were needed to support the "parochet", but each of these "kerashim" needed only one "eden" for support. To summarize, a grand total of 100 [96+4] "adanim" were needed to form the base support of all of the "kerashim" of the Mishkan. [See Shmot 26:15-25.]

These 100 "adanim" were made from the 100 "kikar" of silver

- or simply each "eden" was made by pouring 1 "kikar" of melted silver into the mold. These 100 "adanim" thus formed the base for the walls of the Mishkan. The leftover 1775 shekels of silver were used to make some hooks ["vavim"] to connect the curtains to the poles of the outer courtyard ["chatzer"], and a silver plating for the heads of those poles as well.

### **WHO COUNTS?**

So why is this detail so important?

One could suggest that this silver from the "machazit ha'shekel" was intentionally chosen to form the "adanim". Considering that these "adanim" formed the very BASE of the Mishkan (and supported the entire structure), it may be significant that they were manufactured specifically from the material that was donated EQUALLY by every member of Am Yisrael. In contrast to the vessels of the Mishkan, that were manufactured from the 'donated' gold and copper, the sockets that formed the very base of the Mishkan remained unique and special - and hence were made out of silver.

Similarly, one viewing the Mishkan from afar, would see the silver coating on the very top of each of the poles of the courtyard ["amudei ha'chatzer"], and on the hooks connecting the curtains to these poles. This detail created a silver like 'perimeter', that may have appeared like a silver crown surrounding the Mishkan. This 'crown', just like its 'base', was made from this 'everyone is equal' donation of the silver from the "machazit ha'shekel".

Therefore, the very base at the bottom, as well as the shiny crown at the top, reflect the 'collective' donation - where each member of Am Yisrael is equal. However, in between them, we find the vessels made from the extra donations of gold and copper from private individuals.

### **THE PROPER BALANCE**

This may reflect the proper balance between the need on the one hand for everyone to be equal and work together at the very base level of Judiasm, yet at the same time allowing for each individual to make his own personal contribution in any additional realm that he may choose. Yet, all said and done, when one looks from the outside, the 'finishing touches' [the silver crown surrounding the Mishkan] must reflect the very same unity that forms its base.

In later generations, after the Mishkan was built, the "machazit ha'shekel" was used to buy the "korbanot tzibur". Again we find that the very basic "korbanot TAMID & MUSAFIM" were offered daily on the MIZBAYACH reflected the unity and collective nature of Am Yisrael. However, in addition to those standard "korbanot tzibur", each individual was also permitted to offer an additional "korban nedava" [voluntary offering], but once again, at the base level, we all stand in front of God as "kneset Yisrael" - as one collective unit.

What may be the deeper meaning of this 'balance' is discussed in Part Two.

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### **PART II - MACHAZIT HA'SHEKEL & KLAL YISRAEL**

Why does the Torah command us to collect a HALF of a shekel? After all, once we are taking up a collection, would it not be more logical (and profitable) to collect a WHOLE shekel instead of a half?

This special law that each member of "klal Yisrael" must bring a MACHAZIT ha'SHEKEL (a half of a shekel) suggests that the very concept of a "machazitit" (a half /or a fraction) may be significant.

One could understand this "machazit" aspect not only as quantitative, but also as qualitative. In other words, the act of giving specifically a 'fractional' amount (opposed to a whole), emphasizes to the individual that he should consider himself as an integral part of a more complete entity.

To help explain this concept, we'll employ a parable from nature.

## TWO MODELS

The nature of the relationship between an individual and the group that he is part of can be understood in one of two ways:

- 1) Like a tree in a forest  
Applied to our case, each INDIVIDUAL could be viewed as a single tree, while Am Yisrael (the "klal") would correspond to the forest (with many trees).
- 2) Like a leaf on a tree  
Am Yisrael itself could be compared to a tree, while each individual Jew would correspond to the various parts of the tree, such as the leaves, roots, twigs, branches, etc.

A 'qualitative' understanding for "MACHATZIT ha'shekel" suggests that we use the latter example to explain the relationship between KLAL YISRAEL and each individual Jew. From a 'spiritual' perspective, all members of Klal Yisrael are interdependent. [This explanation can help us understand the concept of "kol Yisrael areivim zeh l'zeh".]

This understanding can explain an important comment made by Rashi in Parshat Yitro. In chapter 19, the Torah describes Bnei Yisrael's arrival at Har Sinai using a singular verb:  
"va'YICHAN sham Yisrael neged ha'har"  
-And Israel encamped next to the mountain (see 19:2)

Rashi comments:  
"as ONE person, with ONE heart"

Rashi's commentary may emphasize this very point in regard to the collective nature of Am Yisrael. One could suggest that the Torah can be given to Am Yisrael only AFTER we become a nation - a collective entity. This may indicate that our relationship with God exists first and foremost at the national level. At Har Sinai (and later in the Mishkan) Am Yisrael (as a "klal") meets Hashem. Our own relationship with God as individuals then becomes possible, as each individual is an integral part of that greater whole.

This concept could also explain the pasuk that we say every morning in "hodu" (Tehillim 105:6) that describes Avraham Avinu as ZERA (seed): "zera Avraham ohavo, bnei Yaakov bechirav...". As Bnei Yisrael can be considered an 'organic' unit, then like any other organic unit, it must have begun with one seed!

Based on this understanding, we can advance a possible reason for giving a "machazit ha'shekel" specifically when taking a census. When a group is counted individually, there tends to be a focus on the independent nature of each individual. However, should we count the nation collectively, i.e. by each person giving a "machazit ha'shekel", we focus on the collective interdependent nature of the nation.

Considering that God has given Am Yisrael a Divine purpose as a collective group, i.e. to become God's special nation, then we ask God to judge each individual more leniently IN ORDER that he can fulfill that Divine purpose. Therefore, in its introduction to this mitzvah, the Torah states:  
"v'lo yihyeh NEGEF b'fkod otam..." -[Count them using a machazit ha'shekel] in order that there should not be a plague when you count them." (see Shmot 31:12)

Otherwise, counting each person individually would reflect a lack of understanding of the collective nature of Am Yisrael, thus invoking God's anger.

Therefore, it is not by chance that the money collected from the "machazit ha'shekel" is used to buy the KORBANOT TZIBUR - the collective offerings brought each day in the Bet ha' Mikdash. These daily offerings {korban Tamid/ see Shmot 29:42-44!} represent the entire nation as we stand before God in the OHEL MOED - the tent of meeting - where Am Yisrael can 'meet' Hashem, thus 're-living' the experience of Ma'amad Har Sinai (see shiur on Parshat Terumah/Tezaveh).

## ===== FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Read I Divrei Hayamim chapter 21 (alt. Shmuel bet chapter 24). In that chapter, David ha'Melech conducts an unnecessary census of Bnei Yisrael which kindles God's anger. God gives David a choice of three punishments, from which David chooses the most severe one from the hand of God (what we say everyday in tachanun). After this plague has taken some 70,000 casualties, the plague stops when David offers a korban on the field of Arnan the Jebusite, which later becomes the site of the MIZBAYACH and the BET HA'MIKDASH on Har ha'bayit.

Once again, we find a connection between the MIZBAYACH and OHEL MOED (the Mikdash) and counting the nation.

See the various commentators on that chapter (and on the parallel chapter in Sefer Shmuel II chapter 24) concerning why it was improper for David to count the people.

See also Rashi on Shmot 30:11.

B. In Parshat Kitisa, i.e. Parshat Shekalim (Shmot 30:11-16), it is not clear what specific type of census the psukim are referring to.

The possibilities raised by the commentators include:

- 1) the machazit ha'shekel for the daily korbanot tzibur,
- 2) a special census to collect money for the building of the Mishkan (relate to Shmot 38:25-28!).
- 3) the census of Bnei Yisrael taken in preparation for their journey towards and conquest of Eretz Canaan (see Bamidbar chapters 1->2).
- 4) any census which Bnei Yisrael must take before going to battle.

In your opinion, which interpretation appears to be most logical? [See the parshanim.]

C. In our shiur on Yom Kippur, we suggested that KIPPUR (or KAPPARA) may imply 'protection' from a punishment which one may deserve. Relate this concept to Shmot 30:12, where the machazit ha'shekel is referred to as KOFER NOFSHO, and later as KESEF HA'KIPPURIM.

Does this relate in any way to the question above (B)?

Relate this to the concept of DAM ha'KIPPURIM found in relation to the MIZBACH ha'KToret (see 30:7-10), and our shiur on Parshat Tezaveh.

## ===== HAFTARAH for Parshat SHEKLAIM - II MELACHIM 12:1-17.

The Haftara describes the collection of funds that was made during the time period of King Yoash in order to repair and renovate the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

To understand WHY it was necessary to renovate the Bet ha'Mikdash during the time of Yoash, we must first review the tragic events that led to how he became king.

Recall that Achav, the king of Israel, made a treaty of the King of Sidon (and hence his marriage to Jezebel) which led to the proliferation and legitimization of Baal worship in Israel (see I Melachim 16:29-34).

At the same time when Achav was king of Israel, Yehoshafat was king of Yehuda. Although Yehoshafat was a good king, he had also entered into a military treaty with Achav. This friendship ultimately led to the marriage of Yehoshafat's son YORAM with Achav's daughter ATALYA. Due to the bad influence of the house of Achav, both YORAM and his son and successor ACHAZYA became kings who rebelled against God (see II Melachim 8:16-29).

Achazyah, King of Yehuda, was also killed during YEHU's revolt against the house of Achav (see II Melachim chapters 9->10). In retaliation for Yehu's murder of the members of both royal families, ATALYA, the only remnant of the House of Achav, murdered the entire royal family of Yehuda. The only survivor of Atalya's terror was Achazyah's infant son YOASH (see 11:1-2). The "kohen gadol" Yehoyada kept the infant Yoash hidden, while

ATALYA took over the kingdom of Yehuda.

Therefore, since the time of Yehoshafat's death, i.e. during the reign of YORAM, ACHAZYA, and ATALYA, the Bet Ha'MIKDASH in Yerushalayim was quite neglected, and the kingdom had gone astray from God.

After reigning for six years, Atalya was finally ousted by a coup d'etat orchestrated by the High Priest Yehoyada. Yoash, then only seven years old, was proclaimed king. During the early years of his reign, Yoash was a good king. With the guidance of Yehoyada, proper worship was restored in the Bet ha'Mikdash. Nonetheless, the Mikdash itself required major renovations.

Finally, in the 23rd year of his reign, Yoash, together with Yehoyada, make a special effort of raise funds for proper fixing of the Mikdash. Towards that purpose, Yehoyada makes the first "pushka" (tzdaka box/ see 12:7-12), and placed it in the Bet Ha'Mikdash near to the MIZBAYACH. From the funds collected, they were able to pay wages of workers who finally finished the renovation of the Temple (see 12:13-16).

Yoash's renovation of the Mikdash reflected a new start in the proper direction for Am Yisrael after many years waning political and spiritual leadership. It reflected a new hope after several decades of troubled times.

Similarly, as we read Parshat, let's hope and pray that with the onset of spring, Am Yisrael will become worthy once again of proper leadership, so that it can take the proper steps towards rebuilding a just and God-fearing society.

chodesh tov  
& shabbat shalom,  
menachem