



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS PIKUDEI

REMEMBER THE EIGHTEEN

"Abba, can you please help me with my homework assignment?"

"My pleasure, Chaim."

"We have a difficult question to work on. We are learning about the weekly Amida prayer. We call it Shemoneh Esray because it originally consisted of eighteen berachos. The question is: why were there eighteen berachos? Is there some significance to the number eighteen?"

"That is an excellent and thought provoking question, Chaim."

"The Rebbe said that our Sages answer this question when commenting on a verse in this week's parasha."

"In that case, let us open up the 'Torah Temima' Chaim. The author, Rav Boruch HaLevi Epstein from Pinsk collected all of the Gemoras and other works of our sages relevant to the verses in the Torah."

"Look, Abba! He quotes the Gemora Yerushalmi (Berachos 4:3) on the second verse of the parasha!"

"I see, Chaim. 'Every day, a man prays eighteen blessings. Why eighteen? Rav Shmuel Ber Nachmani says in the name of Rebbe Yochanan, 'The eighteen blessings correspond to the eighteen commands in the parasha of Mishkan Sheini.'"

"That answer itself raises a few questions, Abba."

"Yes, it does need some explanation, Chaim. The Torah Temima gives us the background. The eighteen commands are the eighteen verses that end with the words, 'As Hashem had commanded Moshe.' The Torah describes a portion of the work of the Mishkan, and then ends with the statement that Betzalel and Oholiav did everything as Hashem had commanded Moshe."

"What is Mishkan Shenei, Abba?"

"The Mishkan of Parashas Pikudei, Chaim. The first reference in the Torah to the building of the Mishkan is in Parashas Trumah. That is called Mishkan Rishon. Our parasha, the second description of the work of the Mishkan, is called Mishkan Shenei."

"I see, Abba. The Torah makes the statement 'as Hashem had commanded Moshe' eighteen times in Mishkan Shenei."

"Right, Chaim."

"Still, Abba, we need to know what is the connection between this and the eighteen blessings."

"Yes, Chaim, the Torah Temima continues by explaining that the Mishkan and its successors, the two Bottei Mikdash, provided *kaporos* (atonement) for the Jewish people. The *korbonos* (sacrifices) that were offered there forgave the sins of the Jewish people. With the destruction of the second Beis HaMikdash, this *zechus*

was taken away from us."

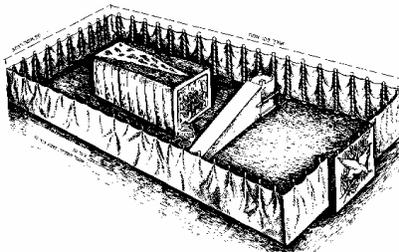
"Oy vey vey vey, Abba! What can we do to get a *kapora* for our sins?"

"Hashem gave us a replacement, Chaim. It is called *tefillah* (prayer). The central point of the weekday *tefillah* is the *Amidah* - *Shemoneh Esray*. The *Anshei Kineses Hagedola* (Men of the Great Assembly) authored this prayer, as well as all of our blessings and prayers. They fixed the number of blessings in the *Amidah* at eighteen to remind us that our prayers are a substitute for the offerings that were brought in the Mishkan and *Bottei Mikdash*. The eighteen blessings corresponding to the eighteen commands in the building of the Mishkan."

"Wow, Abba! You have changed my whole perspective of the *Amidah* prayer. Instead of being just praise, requests, and thanks to Hashem, I now understand that it is like *korbonos*! My *tefillah* has the power to bring a *kapora*, just as the *korbon chattos* did! The *korbon tomid* forgave the sins of all Klal Yisrael. So can I! I am going to pray with a new *kavannah* (intention) Abba! I am going to offer up my *tefillah* like a *korbon*!"

"May Hashem accept and answer all of your *tefillos*, Chaim."

"Amen!"



Kinderlach . . .

What can we do to receive a *kapora* for our *aveyros*? The first step is, of course, *teshuvah*. Even after a person has done *teshuvah*, some *aveyros* also require the *kapora* of a *korbon*. How can we receive that *kapora* to cleanse our *neshamos* when we have no Beis HaMikdash? By praying properly. Our sages teach us that prayers are our substitute for *korbonos*. The eighteen blessings remind us of the Mishkan and its *korbonos*. Keep this in mind *kinderlach*, when you are praying. It will undoubtedly help your *kavannah*, and the effectiveness of your prayers. May we soon have the opportunity to offer up real *korbonos* in the next Beis HaMikdash!

SHEKALIM

This week is Parashas Shekalim, the first of the four parshios preceding Pesach. We read a special Maftir, from the beginning of parashas Ki Sisa, which describes the *shekalim* - half-shekel donations. In Biblical times, Rosh Chodesh Nissan marked

the date that every male Jew over the age of twenty was obligated to bring a half-shekel to the treasury of the Beis HaMikdash. This money was used to buy *korbonos tsibbur* (communal offerings). Nowadays, we have neither a Beis HaMikdash, nor *korbonos*. Therefore, our Sages enacted that we read this parasha in the Torah, to remind us of the shekalim that we once brought.

Rav Zeidel Epstein zt"l, in his sefer *Heoros*, shares a deeper meaning behind the reading of Parashas Shekalim. This original half-shekels were brought to use as building materials for the Mishkan. The Mishkan itself was a *kapora* (atonement) for the *chet ha'eigel* (sin of the golden calf), as the verses themselves state. "Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul" (Shemos 30:12). "Give the portion to Hashem to atone for your souls" (30:14). Which sin corresponded to this atonement? The people had taken their wealth and given it to make an idol - the golden calf. This was a horrible sin - idol worship. To atone for it, they needed to give their money to make a Mishkan - a holy place of *avodas Hashem* (service to the Almighty) where the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) would dwell. This *kapora* for that sin in the midbar became a lesson for all generations. Hashem gives us material possessions. What does he want us to do with them? To serve Him. A Jew should dedicate all of his *gashmius* (material possessions) to *avodas Hashem*. Just as the original shekalim went to build a Mishkan, so too our shekalim should be used for holy purposes.

Kinderlach . . .

These four parshios are part of the preparation for Pesach. Hashem will shower down upon us a great hisorerer (spiritual awakening) the night of the Pesach Seder. We want to grab it all, internalize it, and take it with us. In order to do that, we must be prepared. These four parshios are four different ways to prepare. Number one is to dedicate all of your material possessions to Hashem. How do you serve Hashem with your possessions? "I use my pen to write *Divrei Torah*." "Very good, Chaim." "I wear my clothes neatly, befitting of someone who serves Hashem." "Excellent, Ahuva." "I eat wholesome food, which will help me stay healthy to do Hashem's mitzvos." "Great, Avi." "I give money to *tesdaka*, to help poor people." "That's a great mitzvah Leah." *Kinderlach*, follow these examples and use everything to serve Hashem!

Parasha Questions:

- What were the Bigdei Srad? (Rashi 39:1)
- What was Moshe's job in building the Mishkan? (Rashi 39:33)
- How did Moshe have the strength to put up the Mishkan? (Rashi 39:33)

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