

Sh'kalim is a zachor too

This Shabbat we read Parshat P'kudei in the first Torah and then Parshat Sh'kalim in the second Torah. The reading of the maftir is about the mitzva of MACHATZIT HASHEKEL, the silver half-shekel that was to be collected each year in the month of Adar.

The mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel is active during the time of the Beit HaMikdash; it is not - and cannot - be fulfilled today. In fact, when one gives the token (three) half-shekel coin(s) before Megila reading on the eve of Purim, he should say ZEICHER L'MACHATZIT HASHEKL, i.e. commemorative of the mitzva of the half-shekel. One should be careful NOT to say that he is giving Machatzit HaShekel - because he is NOT.

What we have so far is TWO commemorations of the mitzva - the reading of Maftir (and the Haftara) on Shabbat Parshat Sh'kalim and the giving of half shekels (or half dollars, half francs, etc.) before Megila reading. Some give the value of the original silver half-shekel (which we reported elsewhere in this issue is close to 40NIS this year - due to the rise in the price of silver).

It follows that if we are commemorating something, then what we do should remind us of the mitzva and more importantly, of the concepts and reasons for the mitzva.

Before we get into that, let's say a few words about the timing of Sh'kalim. Primarily, based on the opening mishna in Masechet Sh'kalim, it was on Rosh Chodesh Adar that announcements were made in all Jewish communities in the Land of Israel to prepare to give the silver half-shekel, later in the month. This was practical in order to build a communal fund *cont. on page 4*

Jerusalem Shabbat in/out times for P'kudei-Sh'kalim

5:03pm / 6:16pm (see page 3 for other zmanim)

Checked and double checked for Parshat P'kudei-Sh'kalim m'vorchim (Erev R"Ch)



Word of the Month Rosh Chodesh Adar Sheni is Sunday and Monday, Machar Yom Rishon v'yom Sheni...

ראש חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר שֵׁנִי יִהְיֶה מָחָר בְּיוֹם רִאשׁוֹן
וּבְיוֹם שֵׁנִי הֵבֵא עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְטוֹבָה:

The molad is on Friday night, 7 chalakim after midnight (11:39pm IST), ז' 1:1

Since that's before we daven on Shabbat morning, the molad will have occurred, hence המולד הקדיה ליל שבת, שבועה חלקים אחרי חצות הלילה



Candles	P'KUDEI	Havdala	next week
5:03pm	Yerushalayim	6:16pm	5:08 / 6:21
5:21pm	S'derot	6:19pm	5:26 / 6:24
5:19pm	Gush Etzion	6:17pm	5:24 / 6:22
5:19pm	Raanana	6:18pm	5:25 / 6:23
5:19pm	Beit Shemesh•RBS	6:17pm	5:24 / 6:22
5:19pm	Netanya	6:18pm	5:25 / 6:23
5:20pm	Rehovot	6:18pm	5:25 / 6:23
5:18pm	Be'er Sheva (& Otmiel)	6:18pm	5:23 / 6:23
5:19pm	Modi'in• Chashmona'im	6:17pm	5:24 / 6:22
5:03pm	Petach Tikva	6:18pm	5:08 / 6:23
5:03pm	Maale Adumim	6:16pm	5:08 / 6:21
5:18pm	GINOT Shomron	6:17pm	5:24 / 6:22
5:18pm	Gush Shiloh	6:17pm	5:23 / 6:21
5:19pm	K4 & Hevron	6:17pm	5:24 / 6:22
5:18pm	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:16pm	5:23 / 6:21
5:21pm	Yad Binyamin	6:18pm	5:25 / 6:23
5:21pm	Ashkelon	6:19pm	5:26 / 6:24
5:06pm	Tzfat	6:15pm	5:12 / 6:20
5:19pm	Zichron Yaakov	6:17pm	5:24 / 6:22

Rabbeinu Tam Havdala - P'KUDEI - 6:51pm

Ranges are 10 days. WED-FRI
26 AdarA - 5 AdarB • Mar 2-11

Earliest Talit & T'filin	5:16-5:05am
Sunrise	6:06-5:56am
Sof Z'man K' Sh'ma (Magen Avraham: 8:22-8:16am)	8:58-8:52am
Sof Z'man T'fila (Magen Avraham: 9:26-9:21am)	9:56-9:51am
Chatzot (halachic noon)	11:51¼-11:49¼am
Mincha Gedola (earliest Mincha)	12:22-12:20pm
Plag Mincha	4:25-4:30pm
Sunset (based on sea level: 5:37-5:43pm)	5:42-5:48pm

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LEAD TIDBIT cont. from front page

for use in the Beit HaMikdash from the beginning of Nisan, the start of the Temple's fiscal calendar.

Communal offerings were purchased from the half-shekel fund - the daily T'MIDIM and the MUSAF korbanot, as well as many other communal Mikdash needs.

This fact on its own, gives the mitzva a powerful significance of Jewish Unity and equal sharing in the community's offerings. And that, in turn, gives us a powerful KAVANA for our reading of Parshat Sh'kalim, the conversation at lunch on Shabbat, the feelings when giving the token half-shekel before Megila.

Which brings us to another issue. Aside from the match in time of year of the announcements of Sh'kalim and our reading of the Parsha, there is another significant connection. Not only is Parshat Sh'kalim read at the beginning of Adar, but it is noticeably read before Purim - emphasis on the Purim. In Megilat Esther, we find Haman offering the king a handsome contribution to his treasury, if Achashveirosh will give permission to Haman to kill the insignificant, disunited nation scattered among his 127 provinces. He offers 10,000 silver talents, which equal 300,000 silver shekels which equals 600,000 half-shekels. BINGO! That's significant. Because our Shekels, so to speak, precede Haman's. We, the Jewish People, symbolized by the number 600,000, are commanded to

give the same sum to the Mikdash each year that Haman was willing to pay for our destruction.

Ponder this today when we read Parshat Sh'kalim, as seriously as we would and will ponder it when we actually fulfill the mitzva of the silver half-shekel.

This is part of why our Sages perpetuated the mitzva (in commemorative, reminder form) between our being able to actually perform it.

In other words, the half-shekel mitzva is temporarily suspended, but the concepts and thoughts and messages are (or should be) alive and well in our time.

Parshat Zachor is in another two weeks, but Sh'kalim is no less a zachor (spelled with a lowercase z because it is not the fulfillment of a mitzva like the Amalek ZACHOR, but...)

Here's another thought to share at your Shabbat table... the salt you put on your HaMotzi is reminiscent of the salt that was put on all korbanot in the Beit HaMikdash. All korbanot - communal and personal and private. And that salt was purchased from the half-shekel fund. An individual who was bringing his own Chatat (sin offering) or celebrating with a TODA or a SH'LA-MIM, was not on his own. Every Jew who participated in Machatzit HaShekel had a tiny part via the salt of every-one's korbanot. For us, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Some have many seeds; others?

The palindrome among the 8

Aharon and sons are 5. Why 6?

31 days early

Ephraim Cohen displayed his talent at the intersection of Keren HaYesod and Shalom Aleichem

📖 Our picture of things depends for the most part on our frame of mind.

From "A Candle by Day" by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein

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The original silver half-shekel weighed approx. 10 grams. Current price of silver is \$33 per Troy ounce which is 31.1grams. At 3.65₪/\$, the half-shekel is worth almost 40₪

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch" obviously does not apply

Did Nathaniel's father ever belt his son?

P'KUDEI stats

23rd of 54 sedras; 11th of 11 in Sh'mot

Written on 158 lines in a Torah, rank: 41st

20 Parshiot; 6 open, 14 closed

92 p'sukim - ranks 40th (10th)

1182 words - ranks 42nd (9th)

4432 letters - ranks 44th (10th)

P'kudei is a short sedra with shorter than average p'sukim (does not go hand in hand; many short sedras have long p'sukim)

MITZVOT

Contains none of the Taryag

One of the 17 sedras in the Torah without mitzvot. There are two other mitzva-less sedras in Sh'mot (Sh'mot and Va'eira). Total for the Book of Sh'mot is 111 (thanks to Mishpatim's 53 mitzvot). The Book of Sh'mot averages 10 mitzvot per sedra, which is closest to the Torah's average of 11.35 mitzvot per sedra. Compare to the other averages: Vayikra 24.7, D'varim 18, Bamidbar with just over 5 mitzvot per sedra, and B'reishit with .25 mitzvot/sedra.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma respectively. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Kohen - First Aliya 12 p'sukim - 38:21-39:1

[S> 38:21 (3)] The sedra begins with an accounting of the materials collected for use in the construction of the Mishkan, its furnishings, and the garments of the Kohanim.

SDT: *We are taught from the fact that Moshe Rabeinu gave a voluntary accounting of the materials, that a person in the position of collecting monies for the community must conduct himself in such a way that he will always be above suspicion. Even if the individual is completely trustworthy, he should take measures to avoid the possibility of appearing improper.*

We learn similarly from the episode of the two and a half tribes that one must behave in such a way that he will be "clean before G-d AND Israel".

The Talmud tells us that the family of Kohanim that was in charge of compounding the Ketoret (incense) did not allow its women to use perfume, lest they be suspected of taking from the sacred ingredients of the Ketoret. Similarly, bakers of the Lechem HaPanim did not eat fine bread, so that no one should even get an idea that they were taking the special flour of the Mikdash for their own use.

SDT: *In the opening pasuk of the sedra, we find the word Mishkan twice in a row - ...HaMishkan, Mishkan HaEidut. Rashi says that this is an allusion to the two Batei Mikdash. Chatam Sofer adds that the HEI of the first Mishkan is "missing" from the second. This alludes to the 5 special items missing in the second Beit*

HaMikdash - the ARON, the Holy Fire, the Divine Presence, the Holy Spirit, and the Urim VTumim.

Rashi teaches us that the description of the Mishkan as EIDUT, a Testimony, attests to the fact that G-d had forgiven us for the Sin of the Golden Calf. This is so because the SH'CHINA rested among us, in the Mishkan.

The work of assembling and dismantling the Mishkan throughout the years of wandering in the Wilderness was the domain of the tribe of Levi, under the supervision and leadership of Itamar b. Aharon HaKohen.

The chief artisans of the Mishkan, the Torah reminds us, are Betzalel of Yehuda and Aholiav of Dan.

[S> 38:24 (9)] The Torah next details the amounts of gold, silver, and copper which were collected for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Torah also lists the uses of the different metals. Then the Torah mentions the different dyed wools (sky-blue, purple, red - the shades of color are debated - e.g. sky-blue - but at what time of day?) that were used in the making of the sacred garments of the Kohen Gadol, and for the cloths that covered (and protected) the sacred items of the Mishkan during the traveling from place to place in the Midbar.

SDT: *The Baal HaTurim notes that the Mishkan was supported on a foundation of 100 silver ADANIM. So too are our daily lives as Jews supported by 100 silver*

foundation blocks - the 100 Brachot which we strive to recite every day.

Remember, that the silver was from a required, fixed donation; the other materials were "open".

Levi - Second Aliya 20 p'sukim - 39:2-21

[P> 39:2 (4)] This Aliya contains a detailed description of the Eifod and the Choshen of the Kohen Gadol. Both were woven from the same kind of weave and the two were attached firmly to each other when worn.

[S> 39:6 (2)] Two onyx stones (Avnei Shoham) were attached to the shoulder straps of the Eifod. The names of the 12 tribes (actually, it was the 12 sons of Yaakov) were engraved on the stones, six on each stone.

How the names were divided is the subject of dispute among our various sources. Another opinion is that the emblems of the tribes were engraved on the stones along side the names. Rambam says that Yosef was written as Y'HOSEF (a spelling that appears in T'hilim), resulting in a symmetrical 25 letters on each stone.

[P> 39:8 (14)] On the Choshen, the 50 letters of the names were supplemented by 22 letters of the names of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and the words SHIVTEI Y'SHURUN. This brought the total number of letters to 72,

corresponding to the SHEIM HA-M'FORASH. The arrangement of names and letters resulted in 6 per stone. In addition to the fabric of these two garments, there were gold settings for the stones, gold rings and chains for attaching Choshen & Eifod.

Shlishi - Third Aliya || p'sukim - 39:22-32

[P> 39:22 (5)] The ME'IL (different opinions - cloak, cape, poncho-like garment) was woven completely of T'CHEILET wool. Its neck-hole was reinforced to prevent tearing.

Observation: This is the second time that the Torah emphasizes the prohibition of tearing the ME'IL (or allowing it to be torn). None of the garments may be torn; precautions were taken to avoid tearing. Yet the Torah presents the rule specifically with the ME'IL.

The hem of the ME'IL was fringed with alternating bells of gold and pompoms of colored wools. According to Rambam, there were 72 bells in all, 36 in the front and 36 in the back.

Ramban says that the bells were embedded within the RIMONIM. Most other commentaries say that the bells alternated with the RIMONIM.

The author of HaK'tav V'HaKabala offers a beautiful explanation of the bells of the ME'IL: "The precept to

place bells... is similar to the mitzva of tzitzit on our garments. In the latter case, seeing the fringes... reminds us of all the precepts of the Torah, as per Bamidbar 15:39. In the former case, hearing the bells reminded the Kohein Gadol of all the precepts. Because of his elevated status, and the many obligations which he was required to fulfill, he was granted an additional reminder - via his sense of hearing. In this way, the sound of the bells at the edge of his robe would arouse his mind and heart the awareness of before Whom he wore the priestly garments, and Who commanded him to wear them. Thus, his mind and thoughts would be fully occupied in the service of the Supreme King."

[S> 39:27 (3)] The KUTONET, a long-sleeved, floor-length garment was woven of white linen. Some say that the sleeves were woven together with the body of the garment, rather than made separately and then sewn on.

All Kohanim wore a KUTONET. Each had it custom-fitted, since it is forbidden to do AVODA in the Mikdash if the garment was either too long or too short... or frayed or soiled.

A turban of linen was worn by the Kohen Gadol in one style, to accommodate the TZITZ. Regular Kohanim wore their turban in a different style.

The belt or sash, AVNEIT, was woven from the three colors of wool and from linen. It was

unusually long (32 AMOT, approx. 15 meters, about 50 feet) and therefore needed to be wound around the kohein's waist many times. (Some say that the AVNEIT was worn above the waist.) The winding produced a prominent bulge around his waist which he felt whenever his hands were at his sides. This served as a constant reminder to the Kohein of the seriousness of the service in the Beit HaMikdash. The AVNEIT was Shaatnez, as were the Choshen and Eifod.

There are different opinions as to whether the regular kohen wore an AVNEIT of pure linen or of the same mixed weave of the Kohein Gadol's AVNEIT.

[S> 39:30 (2)] Next comes the TZITZ, a.k.a. NEZER HAKODESH, made of pure gold and fastened around the KG's head with ribbons of T'cheilet wool. The TZITZ was embossed with the words KODESH TO HASHEM. There are many different opinions as to how the words were formed from the gold of the Tzitz, and in what order and orientation relative to each other. The TZITZ was like a royal crown for the Kohein Gadol, yet it was also meant to humble him greatly.

[S> 39:32 (1)] Thus, all the work of the parts of the Mishkan and the garments of the Kohanim came to an end. (All that remained was to put everything together and in its right place.)

SDT: *Talmud Yerushalmi notes that the phrase, "as G-d had commanded Moshe" appears 18 times in P'kudei. Correspondingly, we have 18 brachot in our weekday Amida (the connection between Service in the Mikdash and Davening is obvious, or should be). Thus says Sh'muel b. Nachmani in the name of Rabbi Yochanan. This does not include the first time the phrase is used: And Betzalel... did all the G-d had commanded Moshe. There are differences between the context of the phrase with Betzalel and contexts of all the other uses of the phrase that justify its not being counted together with the rest. On the other hand, our Amida does have a 19th bracha, so the "extra" phrase is covered. It is interesting to note that for each of the different things that the brachot of the Amida are associated with, there are 18 items AND a 19th one that can be counted but is a little different from the rest. This matches our continued reference to Sh'moneh Esrei even though there are now 19 brachot in the weekday Amida.*

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya || p'sukim - 39:33-43

[P> 39:33 (11)] All the components of the Mishkan, its vessels, and the sacred garments were brought to Moshe following the completion of the work by the many men and women who voluntarily contributed their talents to the Mishkan. Moshe inspected all of the work and found it to be consistent with what G-d had commanded to be done.

Moshe blessed the people: "May it be G-d's will that He will cause His

Presence to settle upon your handiwork." (Rashi)

The Torah once again enumerates all of the components of the Mishkan. And repeats over and over again that the People did everything that G-d had commanded Moshe.

Here's a thought... The emphasis upon the people doing as commanded stands in harsh contrast to the Golden Calf, which was not at all what G-d had commanded. We can see a rebuke every time the point is made that, "this time we listened, but what happened a couple of months ago..." (To be sure, it is complimentary, that we did as commanded, but we can also see an implied rebuke.)

Chamishi 5th Aliya 16 p'sukim - 40:1-16

[P> 40:1 (16)] G-d instructs Moshe to erect the Mishkan on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. After the structure of the Mishkan is in place, Moshe is to bring in the Aron and hang the PAROCHET which is to separate the Holy of Holies from the main part of the Mishkan.

Then the Shulchan and Menora were put in their places, followed by the Golden Mizbei'ach.

The MASACH was then hung from the posts at the entrance to the Mishkan.

The Copper Mizbeiach was then

place in front of the Mishkan, opposite its entrance.

The KIYOR and its base were then placed between the Mishkan and the Mizbei'ach, slightly to the side.

The courtyard curtains were then hung from their posts.

Following all this, Moshe was to anoint all the components of the Mishkan and sanctify them. Then the Mizbei'ach and its vessels were anointed, and the Laver as well.

Then the Kohanim were brought forward. After proper ablutions, they were clothed in their sacred garments and anointed.

Note that Aharon's sons were also anointed. Regular kohanim are not; they were exceptions. It gave them a status of Kohen Gadol. That's why Elazar and Itamar were not able to tend to the bodies of their brothers Nadav and Avihu, and cousins were called in to take care of things. Aharon's sons needed to be anointed, because they weren't kohanim by birth, as opposed to all other kohanim throughout all generations. (Pinchas is the one exception, and he was given the status of kohein by G-d.)

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 11 p'sukim - 40:17-27

[S> 40:17 (3)] And it came to pass that on the first day of Nissan, in the second year out of Egypt (almost), the Mishkan was completed. In this portion, the

Torah spells out the step-by-step procedures of finally carrying out the commands of Parshiyot T'ruma, T'tzaveh, beginning of Ki Tisa, all of Vayakhel.

Observation: There are many comments made about the fact that the order of parts and furnishings of the Mishkan are different between the commands of Parshat T'rumah and the construction in Vayakhel. Look at the order in the end of P'kudei, which describes the actual assembly of the Mishkan. It differs from either previous order. And it is a reasonable order that does not require miracles. (This does not mean that there were none.)

ADANIM (foundations), wall boards, braces for the walls, pillars for the curtains. Coverings.

[S> 40:20 (2)] Then the LUCHOT go into the ARON, the carrying poles are inserted into their rings, the lid (KAPORET) is placed on the ARON and the complete ARON is placed into the Mishkan. When in position, the PAROCHET is hung between what now becomes the Holy of Holies (with the ARON) and the rest of the Mishkan.

[S> 40:22 (2)] Then the SHULCHAN is set in place and the LECHEM HAPANIM is placed on its shelves.

[S> 40:24 (2)] The MENORA goes in place next, opposite the SHULCHAN. Then the oil cups are placed on the tops of the seven

branches of the Menora.

[S> 40:26 (2)] The Golden Mizbei'ach is then set in the middle of the KODESH and KETORET is offered on it.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya 11 p'sukim - 40:28-38

[S> 40:28 (2)] With that, the MASACH was hung across the entrance of the MISHKAN. Then the external (copper, earth, sacrificial) Mizbei'ach was put in place, opposite the entrance to the Mishkan, and an OLAH was offered on it.

[S> 40:30 (3)] The LAVER (KIYOR) was set between the Mishkan and Mizbei'ach, and it was filled with water.

[S> 40:33 (1)] Finally came the poles and curtains of the courtyard and the curtain at its entrance.

[P> 40:34 (5)] In the final 5 p'sukim of Sh'mot, the Torah tells us that Moshe was not able to approach the Mishkan because it was "covered by a Cloud". Only when the cloud lifted was Moshe able to approach. The Cloud was also that which signaled the people to travel or to remain encamped. The Cloud was there by day and the Pillar of Fire by night. Thus ends the Book of Sh'mot, with the stage set, so to speak, for Vayikra, Torat Kohanim.

In the course of the Book of Sh'mot,

we started out as a family that was in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed there. We grew into a nation, were redeemed from Egypt, accompanied by great wonders and miracles. We received the Torah, and set up the two main aspects of our nationhood - the day-to-day rules of a Torah way of life and the building of the Mishkan to be the focus of our spiritual energies.

G-d's plan for us is well underway. Everything is there except for THE venue for Jewish Life at its richest - Eretz Yisrael. But three books of the Chumash are still to come.

Maftir in 2nd Torah 6 p'sukim, Sh'mot 30:11-16

Maftir for Parshat Sh'kalim deals with the mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel, the half silver-shekel that was collected from every adult Jewish male each year. If a woman wanted to give, it was accepted from her. Not so with a non-Jew - even one who observes the 7 Mitzvot of B'nei No'ach.

Although the ½-Shekel collection was used for the census, its main purpose was to provide funds (to which all Jews contributed equally) for communal offerings throughout the year. It is useful to see this annual tax as a membership fee in Klal Yisrael, so to speak. All Jews - rich or poor - have the same share in the communal fund.

Haftara 17 p'sukim Melachim Bet 12:1-17 (Sfaradim start 4 p'sukim earlier)

The regular haftara of P'kudei is pre-empted by that of Sh'kalim. Since Rosh Chodesh is Sunday (and Monday), the Machar Chodesh haftara would have pre-empted the regular haftara, but it too is pre-empted by Sh'kalim's. Some communities (S'fardi and those who adopted the practice from them) read the first and last pasuk of Machar Chodesh after the Sh'kalim haftara. Ashkenazim (most) do not.

Silver is a recurring theme in the Haftara for Shabbat Sh'kalim. It was used for repairs in the Beit HaMikdash and symbolized the people's return to G-d after severe straying.

Rabbi Julian Jacobs z"l in his "A Haftara Companion", suggests the following: "A message of both the sedra and the haftara is that Jews in each generation have duties towards the upkeep of the Synagogue and other communal causes. Apart from the practical financial benefits this brings, the acceptance of this responsibility has contributed to the inner strength of the Jewish people down the ages."

Note that the first collection of silver was for the foundation of the Mikdash. Its later function was for repair and upkeep. This is truly an equalizing communal endeavor.

Divrei Menachem

Parshat Pekudei brings us to the end of the very long narrative describing the building of the Mishkan. As we recount the myriad of details, we might recall personal projects, the intricate aspects of which we turned over in our minds again and again.

Towards the end of the narrative we are told: "Like everything that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did Bnei Yisrael perform the labor (AVODA). Moshe saw the entire work - and behold! - They had done it as Hashem commanded; so they had done! (KEIN ASU) And Moshe blessed them" (Sh'mot 39:42-43).

In this climactic summary, the word AVODA - that conjures up the elevated service of the Kohanim - replaces MELACHA, the generally used description of the work of building the Mishkan. As if to say, for the rank and file, the meticulous tasks of crafting the Tabernacle were a holy labor of love.

The term KEIN ASU, giving credence to the exactitude with which the people fulfilled their duties, is repeated three times in the verses reaching this climax. Surely the Torah is teaching us that when followers are as energized as their leaders, and fulfill their tasks for the sake of Heaven, they not only deserve that their efforts atone for their sins [after the Ohr HaChayim] but they also have the additional merit of elevating the Sh'china in this world.

VEBBE REBBE

[This question appeared in this column seven years ago and was published in Living the Halachic Process, vol. I. Based on experience, it appears that a not insignificant percentage of people from traditional homes, who assumed that, as they had a brit mila so they had a pidyon haben, assumed incorrectly. Therefore, we are reminding our readership of the issue at hand.]

QUESTION: *I am my parents' firstborn son, and my father recently told me that my planned pidyon haben (redeeming of the firstborn by a kohen) was delayed because of my illness and was never done. (My parents were not fully observant.) Is there something I should do now?*

ANSWER: Sounds like you require a pidyon haben, as the mitzva does not expire. However, first we have to try to determine if you definitely require it, and then we can discuss how to do it in this situation.

First it pays to check if your father was right in planning the pidyon haben. The main exemptions are as follows: either of your parents is the child of a male kohen or levi; if your mother had a miscarriage prior to your birth; if you were born in a Caesarian delivery. Also ascertain from your father if, after all these years, he is sure that there was no pidyon haben. It is possible that the rabbi/kohen who was to have done the pidyon did so in a quick, halachic procedure that your father may have forgotten, while he remembers the fact that the party was canceled. If there is

uncertainty, get back to us, as we cannot give one blanket rule in advance.

Assuming that you need a pidyon haben, we have to deal with an interesting, relevant dispute among halachic authorities. A father is required to redeem his son. However, if he fails to do so, the son becomes obligated to redeem himself once he is bar mitzva (Kiddushin 29a). The question, though, is whether only the son is obligated at that point or whether the father's obligation remains. If the grown son does the pidyon haben, the matter is certainly taken care of, but the difference among the opinions is in a situation where the father is now interested in doing the mitzva, which was delayed for whatever reason.

The Rashba (Shut II, 321) says that as the mitzva of pidyon haben creates a monetary obligation on the father's property from the outset, there is nothing to remove the obligation, and the father remains obligated. The gemara (ibid.) says that if one has enough money to redeem only himself or his son, he should redeem himself, because the mitzva that relates directly to himself has precedence. The Rivash (Shut 131) infers from there that the son's obligation to redeem himself is the primary obligation, and the father's practical responsibility to redeem his baby is due only to the fact that a small child is incapable of performing the pidyon haben himself. When the child grows up, he alone is obligated. Many later authorities have debated the matter, and it is difficult to say that one

approach is more accepted or acceptable than the other (see Pidyon Haben K'hilchato 1:(16)).

We would suggest as follows. As you know your father better than we do, try to determine if he would want to be involved in the pidyon haben or not. If you think that he wouldn't mind, there is no problem doing it yourself. If he wants to do it, there is a way to devise a system whereby the right person will end up doing the mitzva. One such halachic method is as follows: Your father gives you the money and says that if the mitzva is his, you should be his agent to do the pidyon on his behalf (see Pidyon Haben K'hilchato regarding pidyon haben by means of an agent). You prepare another sum of your own money and physically give both sums to the kohen with the appropriate blessings and statements. You just state that it is being done on condition that the halachic redemption should relate to the person who should rightfully be doing it and to his money. Since few kohanim have done a pidyon haben in a case where a person is doing it for himself, you will anyway need a learned kohen and/or a rabbi to make the appropriate adjustments in the text of the blessings and statements and we would be happy to help with the process.

It is both important and not as complicated as it might sound to do the pidyon haben. While it is customary to have a minyan present at a pidyon, it can be done privately to avoid embarrassing your father.

Rav Daniel Mann, Eretz Hemdah Institute

Rabbi Weinreb's Weekly Column:

P'KUDEI

Count Me In

It was a cold and wintry day, about this time of year, when I paid a visit to a small Jewish community in the Midwest. The rabbi of the local synagogue invited me to join him for the afternoon prayers, Mincha.

Because of the time of year, the day was short, and sunset was shortly after 4:00pm. I told them that even in the larger Jewish community in which I lived then, it was difficult to put together a minyan of ten adult men at that time of day. He assured me that there would be a minyan, and said, "Just come and see."

We both arrived in shul where there were six or seven elderly men, all retired so that they had the leisure to gather in shul so early in the afternoon. I told the rabbi that I still feared that we would not reach the required quorum of ten. He motioned to the rear door of the synagogue, and said, "Just watch."

With about thirty seconds to go until the announced time for Mincha, I could see two bicycles pull up to the rear of the shul with two young boys dashing into the small beit midrash. It seems that the rabbi had an arrangement with the local day school that they would send several students of bar mitzva age each day to guarantee the minyan.

I will never forget the enthusiastic welcome those two boys received. I will especially never forget the look on their faces when they realized how much they were appreciated, how much they really counted.

One of the benefits of being a member of a small Jewish community is that each person counts. And on that winter day, those two boys literally counted. Throughout the year as well, each of their parents counted; one was responsible for the local Chevra Kadisha (burial society), and the other gave a daily class for those who knew no Hebrew.

This is a common experience of Jews who live in small towns. No one is taken for granted, and everyone has a significant role to play. In short, everyone counts.

In this week's Torah portion, P'kudei, we learn many lessons about counting and accounting. The very word "P'kudei" means "accounts of", and the entire parsha is one long accounting of every single gift to the Mishkan. One way of looking at this week's Torah portion is as a lesson in the importance of accountability.

But as each Mishkan item is carefully counted, we learn a deeper lesson as well. We learn that each item which is counted is blessed.

That each counted item is blessed may seem obvious, but it contradicts an interesting dictum in the Talmud (Taanit 8b): "Blessing is not bestowed upon things which are weighed, nor upon things which are measured, nor upon things which are

counted. Blessing is only bestowed upon things which are hidden from the eye."

This Talmudic adage reflects the negative attitude of our tradition toward the procedure of counting. King David, for example, was sorely punished for undertaking a census of the Jewish people. Indeed, as we read in Parshat Ki Tisa just two weeks ago (and this week in the second Torah for Sh'kalim), when a census of the people was necessary, each person was asked to contribute a half-shekel so that the coins could be counted, but not the people themselves.

I have often thought that this aversion to counting reflects a reluctance to reduce a person to a number. It is dehumanizing to be a statistic. The ultimate reduction of a person to a number was the tattooed number which we have all seen on the arms of Holocaust survivors. The Nazis knew how thoroughly demeaning it is to count a person as if he or she were an object.

Aware of this negative attitude toward counting, the great Chassidic master, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev, finds the counting that pervades this week's parsha very troubling. He finds the description of the public counting of each and every Mishkan item to be inconsistent with the statement that blessings are not bestowed upon things that are counted.

His answer, found in his commentary, Kedushat Levi, is based upon a

verse in Song of Songs (7:8): "Your eyes are as the pools of Cheshbon". Creatively, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok points out that the Hebrew word for "pools" can also mean "blessings" and that the place name "Cheshbon" can mean "counting". Thus, the verse then reads, "Your eyes bring blessings even upon that which is counted."

The lesson here is that whether counting is negative or positive depends very much upon one's perspective, upon one's "eyes". If you are counting people as numbers, or even physical things in a materialistic manner, then counting is negative.

However, if the things you count are seen from a spiritual perspective, then counting is undeniably a positive process. The items of the Mishkan are counted in this week's Torah portion from a spiritual perspective. They are consecrated objects, only used to express religious devotion. Therefore, counting them designates them as special and unique.

On that winter day in the small synagogue in the American Midwest, two young boys were counted. But they were counted from the perspective of their importance to a group of men who wanted to pray. They were counted in recognition of the role each and every individual plays in the broader community. They were counted because they mattered very much.

When I extract the experience I had

that day from the recesses of my memory, I recall what the boys exclaimed as they enthusiastically bounced into that small beit midrash. They each shouted, "Count me in, count me in!" □

MATANOT LA'EVYONIM, MISHLO'ACH MANOT, AND MEGILA [1]

by **Dr. Meir Tamari**

Amalek, grandson of Eisav ben Yaakov, the eternal arch-enemy of Israel and of G-d, derives his name from 'akalkal', falsehood. He comes in essence to divide and separate.

Amalek divides and separates between G-d and Israel as it is written, "ASHER KARCHA BADERECH, 'that chanced upon you on the way'" (Parshat Zachor, D'varim 25:18). "Amalek proclaims that the miracles in Egypt, the Exodus and Yam Suf were all mere accidents, merely chance, the results of natural phenomenon. He denies that they were G-d manifesting Himself in human history and the testament to His creation of all that exists. This denial makes Hashem's throne and Name incomplete so there is eternal war between G-d and Amalek" (S. R. Hirsch). The same verses tell of Amalek dividing the unity of Israel and its separation into individual fragments: "He struck the weaklings at your rear and those of you who were hindmost". Such national disunity and communal fragmentation perpetuates the

separation between Israel and Hashem. "We are commanded to be holy, but how is it possible for mere human men and women to be holy? The commandment is written in the plural, to teach that it is through the individual's connection with the unity of Israel, that he can achieve holiness" (Menachem Mendel of Kotsk).

Throughout history, of Israel and of the world, disunity and social fragmentation are caused primarily by money and materialism. They cause generational conflicts, problems in marriages, national disintegration, and wars and struggles between nations. Therefore, in so much of Judaism there is an intertwining of the challenge of the evils of materialism and money, with the guidance and moral demands of spirituality and religion. So too, there is this intertwining in the mitzvot that we observe to remember the threat posed by Haman of Amalek, and to celebrate the deliverance that came on Purim.

Three of the five mitzvot of Purim - Matanot la'Evyonim, Mishloach Manot and the Seuda, concern our money, while two, the reading of the Megila as Hallel and our recitation of Al Hanisim, are expressions of spirituality and religiosity. However, all five are introduced by the reading of Sh'kalim before Rosh Chodesh Adar and Zachor before Purim.

In the Torah, the spiritual verses of Parshat Zachor follow the material verses dealing with the injunction against false weights and measures, a

practice which if left unchecked, divides the individuals and fragments a society. Now Amalek and this injunction against economic divisiveness seem unrelated; yet "because the Jews were lax in their weights and measures He brought the adversary against them" (Rashi). The Torah also links this injunction to the Exodus; "He knows even the secrets of birth to differentiate between the firstborn and others when He destroyed the firstborn of Mitzrayim, will surely witness and punish those who distort their weights in secret". The Lubavitzer Rebbe taught that the mere existence of weak and laggards in its society on whom Amalek could prey, testified to Israel's spiritual weakness.

This intertwining of materialism and spirituality throughout the expanded simcha of the month of Adar, is clearly expressed by the reading of Parshat Sh'kalim which introduces this month.

"Everyone who passes through the census... shall give the half-shekel to atone for your souls" (Sh'mot 30:15-16); the census demonstrating allegiance to Klal Yisrael, the unity of Israel. "In Torah law, sh'kalim came to atone for sin, yet we may query how is it that they can bring atonement when we know that atonement comes from the blood of korbanot; 'the blood that is the soul of the animal will atone for the human soul'. Now in Torah sheb'al Peh, the sh'kalim came to finance communal sacrifices, korbanot tzibur. Sin comes from a weakening of the ties between the individual and Klal Yisrael. Korbanot tzibur financed by mandatory

public sh'kalim serve to strengthen these ties, bringing the sinners closer to Klal Yisrael and thereby bringing them atonement" (Shem MiShmuel).

What happens when there is neither census nor korbanot tzibur? "On the 15th of Adar, Shushan Purim, the roads are to be repaired [from winter damage], the mikva'ot cleared [of fungi] and all communal needs provided for" (Mishna Shekalim 1:1). The Talmud Yerushalmi makes it clear that is the duty of the batei din to enforce such communal duties and to finance them out of tax money.

Reading Parashat Sh'kalim before Adar is meant to remind us of our obligation to give machit hashekel; a reminder calling for communal efforts to mitigate any social disruption and fragmentation that may bring down the threat of Amalek.

Parsha Points to Ponder

P'KUDEI

1) Why does the Torah repeat the words AS G-D COMMANDED MOSHE at the end of every stage of the Mishkan's construction (see 39:1, 39:5, 39:7, for examples)? Couldn't it have stated this at the conclusion of the entire construction and we would understand that they fulfilled G-D's command at every step of the way?

2) Why does the Torah say AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL DID ALL THAT G-D ASKED THEM TO DO

(39:32) when in reality it was just Betzalel and the other talented craftsmen and artists who did the work?

3) Why does the Torah have to say AND HE TOOK AND PLACED THE TABLETS INTO THE ARK (VAYIKACH, VAYITEIN - 40:20)? Couldn't it have just said that Moshe PLACED them?

Parsha Points to Ponder by Rabbi Dov Lipman

Praying with Passion

Giving more meaning to our T'fillah
One Week at a Time

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P'sukei d'Zimra: Mizmor L'Toda Finding Joy

מִזְמוֹר לְתוֹדָה, הִרְיֵעוּ לָהּ כָּל הָאָרֶץ.
עֲבְדוּ אֶת ה' בְּשִׂמְחָה, בְּאוֹ
לְפָנָיו בְּרִנָּה... כִּי טוֹב ה', לְעוֹלָם
חֶסֶד, וְעַד דֹּר וָדֹר אֲמוֹנָתוֹ.

Meaning: translation...

A psalm of thanksgiving. **Shout joyously to G-d, all the earth. Serve G-d with joy. Come before Him with jubilation...** For G-d is good, His loving-kindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness is for every generation.

Theme:

An essential concept of the prayer

Reason to Celebrate

The daily miracles Hashem provides for us stir us to thank Him with joy.

Insight: Deeper meanings...

Grateful for Every Day

In the time of the Beit HaMikdash, people would bring a korban TODA, a

thanksgiving offering (Vayikra 7:12) when they survived a life-threatening situation, such as a serious illness, a sea voyage, a desert journey, or captivity (B'rachot 54b). During the offering of this sacrifice on the Temple Altar, the Leviyim would sing the joyful Psalm 100, MIZMOR L'TODA (Shavu'ot 51b). Since the Temple's destruction, in lieu of the sacrifices, MIZMOR L'TODA is included in the morning prayers on weekdays.

But why do we recite MIZMOR L'TODA every day if it was sung only when a person "miraculously" survived a lifethreatening situation? The Siddur She'lah and Ya'avitz explain that no day goes by without man experiencing a "miracle." However, the recipients of these miracles do not always recognize them (Nida 31a). Therefore, we recite MIZMOR L'TODA to acknowledge the miracles inherent in every day.

The Talmud states, "Who is rich? The one who appreciates what he has" (Avot 4:1). Happiness comes from appreciating and consciously enjoying

what one already has. Sometimes that awareness awakens only when a person nearly loses what he has, for instance, when he experiences a potentially life-threatening situation. Once a person understands the precious value of his gifts from Hashem, his joy overflows; he cannot contain his feelings of gratitude. Therefore, he invites everyone on earth to join him, to “call out to Hashem” and recognize the goodness He constantly bestows. With this consciousness, a person naturally fulfills the commandment to serve Hashem with happiness - IVDU ET HASHEM B'SIMCHA - for the sense of being showered with Divine gifts day in and day out can arouse no other emotion but joy.

Visualize:

Images that bring the prayer to life

In Perspective

Old Mr. Newhouse lived alone, next door to Michael Levine and his family. Mr. Newhouse often called Michael to come and help him with some household chore or repair, and Michael tried his best to respond graciously, even though the requests often interfered with his own busy agenda. One day, Mr. Newhouse called Michael and said, “I know you have been looking for a job for awhile. My nephew works at an accounting firm and they are looking for someone with just your experience to take a management position. Are you interested?” Of course, Michael was very interested, for his finances were in woeful shape and the new job paid

nearly twice what his old job had paid. It would be the difference between struggling and having plenty. He took the job and prospered. From then on, every opportunity he had to lend Mr. Newhouse a hand was grasped with pure joy. He even called upon his children to offer their help to their neighbor. “What can we possibly do to repay the man who’s done so much for us?” Michael thought. “It’s our greatest pleasure to show him our appreciation!”

When we can look around and see evidence of a benefactor’s largesse, it’s easy to feel overflowing gratitude. The more we focus on the good that surrounds us, the more we perceive Hashem’s infinite largesse, from which naturally flows the desire to praise and thank Him.

Word to the Wise:

Meaning within the word

R'NANA is t'fila with praise and thanksgiving to Hashem (Melachim Alef 8:28). David HaMelech states (T'hilim 3:9), “Lashem hay'shu'a al amcha birchatecha selah. Salvation is for Hashem, Your people must bless You forever.” Rashi sees a powerful connection between the beginning and the end of this statement. “It is His obligation to save His servants and His people,” writes Rashi, “and it is the obligation of His people to bless and praise Him.” In other words, it is like a pact, a covenant of reciprocal obligations. Why does Hashem want to save His people? Because when He does, they will praise Him for it. Therefore, by being prepared to sing His praises for

everything He will do for them, they become deserving of having those things done for them. The key to everything is praising and thanking. That is what He wants.

Of course, anyone with the slightest bit of sophistication in the concept of the divine understands that Hashem does not need our gratitude and praises in the way people desire to be thanked and praised. All Hashem wants is to bring humankind, and Klal Yisrael in particular, ever closer to Him so that they will rise to ever higher levels of spirituality and holiness. When we thank and praise Him, we are propelled upward, and that is exactly what He wants. *(Adapted from Praying With Fire 2, Forward, by Rav Mattisyahu Salomon)*

Technical details:

The custom is to say Mizmor L'Toda while standing. Mizmor L'Toda is not said on Shabbat or Chagim because the Korban Toda was not brought on those days. So too, it is not said on Erev Pesach nor during Chol HaMoed Pesach because the Toda was not brought on those days because the accompanying Menachot to the Toda contained chameitz. And we don't say it on Erev Yom Kippur because the it was not brought then because kohanim would not have sufficient time to eat their part of the korban. ☞

Maharal on the Sedra

The Suspended Mountain, Rava's Loophole, and Purim

Sh'mot 19:17 - ...and they stood under the mountain.

Rashi - According to the simplest understanding, "under the mountain means at the foot of the mountain. Midrashically, the mountain was plucked from its place and suspended over them like a tub.

Gur Aryeh - The gemara [Shabbat 88a] further elaborates that Hashem threatened them that if they did not accept the Torah, they would be buried there. Tosafot asked there if they had already accepted the Torah when they said as one, "we will do and we will listen" [24:7], why do they need to be coerced? Tosafot answer that when they witnessed the fire on the mountain, they backslid and retracted their confession out of fear.

I am not happy with that. The merit they accrued by preceding "doing" to "hearing" would have been canceled, a merit that has been credited to the Jewish people for generation after generation. Israel is compared to an apple, whose fruit precedes its leaves, in the sense that the promise to observe Torah preceded its presentation to us. The gemara says [Shabbat 89b] when Israel said as one "We will do and we will hear" [24:7], Hashem called them "My son, My firstborn" [4:22], and 1200 serving angels tied two crowns in their hair, one for "we

shall do" [naaseh] and one for "we shall hear" [nishma]. According to Tosafot, that was all recanted.

The real explanation would seem simple. The message of the mountain over their heads is that to survive Israel must accept the Torah. They must not think that their voluntary free will acceptance is reversible and subject to that same free will. It is well known that matters subject to coercion are most serious, to the degree that existence is impossible without them. Had it not been for the mountain over their heads, they might have thought the Torah was not permanently necessary, that just as they accepted it voluntarily they could have rejected it voluntarily. However the Torah is a much more serious matter - the whole Universe depends on it, and without it would revert to *tohu vavohu* [Rashi, B'reishit 1:31].

This explains the juxtaposition in the gemara [Shabbat 88a] of our "mountain" midrash with the explanation of the extra HEI in 1:31, "and it was evening and it was morning THE sixth day." The definite article "the" is superfluous, not being found in connection with days one through five, and refers to another sixth day, the sixth day of the third month when Israel received the Torah. All of Creation depended on the events of that day.

The coercion of the mountain over their heads brings about Rava's famous loophole [Shabbat 88a]. When Hashem summons Israel to judgment for not keeping what they accepted upon

themselves, they have an answer - they were forced to accept it.

The Jewish people later accepted the Torah without coercion in the days of Achashveirosh as recorded in the gemara [Sh'vi'it 39a]. It is written in the Megila [Esther 9:27], "All the Jews established and accepted...", which the rabbis interpreted as the establishment of that which they had previously accepted. This refers to the acceptance of a new commandment, the reading of Megilat Esther on the fourteenth of Adar, willingly, without coercion, which implies willing acceptance of the whole of Torah, for how could they keep a new commandment and not keep the other 613 willingly? The rabbis said [Megila 14a] that 48 prophets and seven prophetesses stood up for Israel, and none of them added to or detracted from Moshe's Torah except for the reading of the Megila. This act of acceptance of the commandment, and, implicitly, the rest of Torah, cancels Rava's loophole. Those who transgressed the Torah could have defended themselves with the claim that Torah is not valid for the Jewish people because they were coerced into accepting it, and matters coerced lack validity. Consider a rock in midair. Only an applied external force can keep it suspended, for its nature is to fall to earth. The extrinsic force is not part of the nature of the rock. Similarly, Torah was not intrinsic to Israel until Megilat Esther when the coercion became moot and the Torah was validated.

Column prepared by Dr. Moshe Kahr

Excerpted with permission from
Gold From the Land of Israel
A New Light on the Weekly Torah Portion
From the Writings of
Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook
by **Rabbi Chanan Morrison**
URIM PUBLICATIONS, J'lem • NY
website: ravkooktorah.org

Stars in the Mishkan

Adapted from Ein Ayah vol. IV, p. 245

There is an interesting tradition concerning the beautiful tapestries covering the Mishkan. The covering was comprised of ten large tapestries with patterns of cherubs woven into them. These colorful tapestries were sewn together in two sets of five, and the two sections were then fastened together with fifty gold fasteners.

We know that the structure of the Mishkan corresponded to the entire universe. What did these metal fasteners represent?

Like the Stars

The Talmud (Shabbat 99a) tells us that from inside the Mishkan, the gold fasteners would sparkle against the background of the rich tapestries like stars twinkling in the sky.

This analogy of fasteners to the stars requires further examination.

Stars and constellations represent powerful natural forces in the universe, influencing and controlling our world.

[“Good are the luminaries that our God has created... He granted them strength and power, to be dominant within the

world” (from the Shabbat morning prayers).]

The Mishkan fasteners, however, indicate a second function of the stars. The fasteners held the tapestries together. In fact, they emphasized the overall unity of the Mishkan. By securing the two sets of tapestries together, they would “make the Mishkan one” (Sh'mot 36:13).

Holding the Universe Together

In general, the design of the Mishkan reflected the structure of the universe and its underlying unity. For example, the Mishkan building consisted of wooden beams with pegs that slid into silver sockets, called ADANIM. The precise interlocking of the Mishkan's supporting base of ADANIM with the upright beams symbolizes the harmonious synchronization of the universe's foundations with the diversified forces and mechanisms that regulate and develop the world. When we reflect on the beautiful harmony of the different parts of the Mishkan, we begin to be aware of the fundamental unity of the universe and all of its forces.

This insight allows us to recognize that everything is the work of the Creator, Who unites all aspects of creation in His sublime Oneness.

For all of their grandeur and apparent autonomy, the true function of the stars is to act like the Mishkan fasteners. They hold together the great canopy of the cosmos, in accordance with the Divine plan of Creation. Like the sparkling fasteners, the stars “are filled with luster and radiate brightness” on their own

accord, but their true function is to bind together the forces of the world, making the universe one.

**The Jerusalem Institute
of Jewish Law**
Rabbi Emanuel Quint, Dean

Lesson # 553

A Two-Judge Judgment (part two)

While a proceeding before a two judge court is normally a nullity, a situation may arise where the litigants desire to have their case decided by a court of two judges.

Many litigants who are seeking judicial proceedings culminating in a trial and judgment (as opposed to arbitration) confer jurisdiction upon a court which does not have personal jurisdiction. In the Talmud there is the opinion that the decision is not binding but there is a view that it is binding. After much discussion it emerges that the litigants may voluntarily confer jurisdiction upon a court that would otherwise lack jurisdiction.

Asheri (1250-1327) in his code seems to hold that if the litigants accepted a court of two judges, then this court is for all purposes the equivalent of a court of three. Similarly, his son Yaakov Tur in his code states that the proceedings before a court of two are a nullity if the litigants have not accepted the jurisdiction of the court. The clear

inference is that if the litigants do accept the jurisdiction of two judges, then their proceedings are legally binding. All pleas and admissions made before them would have the same force and effect as if made before a court of three judges. Also, if the credibility of witnesses or parties were impeached in the course of such proceedings, then the consequences are binding in any future litigation.

Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) in the Shulhan Aruch follows the position of Rabbi Yaakov Tur. He states that if fewer than three persons judged a case, their decision is not binding unless the parties accepted them as a court. His language makes manifest his position that litigants may confer jurisdiction upon a court that would otherwise lack jurisdiction. He also immediately states that if a court does not consist of three judges, then pleas and admissions made before them are of no force or effect and may be changed. From these statements one can infer that pleas and admissions are binding if made before a court of two judges whom the litigants have accepted.

Rabbi Moshe Isserles in his emendations to Rabbi Karo is very explicit and leaves nothing to be inferred. Rabbi Karo states "If the court does not consist of three judges, then admissions made may be changed. After the word "judges", Rabbi Isserles inserts the phrase "and the litigants have not accepted them". Now the entire text reads "If the court does not consist of three judges and the litigants have not accepted them, then admissions made may be changed."

This shows that if the parties accepted less than three judges to judge their case, then pleas and admissions made before

them may not be changed.

If a decision made before a court of two judges is not valid, then certainly the same results should apply to a court consisting of only one judge. Are there any situations where even a one man court may compel the litigants to have their case decided in his court? (To be discussed in the next lessons IYH)

ParshaPix explanations

Hard not to repeat ParshaPix elements because of the Mishkan- heavy content of the last several sedras. But we tried for a different focus on some of the elements.

- Upper-left is a pot of gold, overflowing, as was the generous contributions of gold to the Mishkan effort.
- To the right of the gold is a hunk (or chunk) of silver. The collection of silver was mostly the mandatory and controlled half-shekel collected from the adult male population. Therefore this fits for P'kudei and for Sh'kalim, the special maftir this week.
- Which brings us to the pennies, which represent the copper that was collected and used in the Mishkan - even though, as we mentioned previously, there is hardly any copper in today's pennies. Nonetheless, they still represent the metal copper.
- Upper-right is an adding machine which was used to calculate the amounts of metals that were brought to the Mishkan project.
- Under the pot of gold is the reverse

of today's half-shekel coin. It is used as a token donation to tzedaka in commemoration of the mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel. Usually, three half-shekel coins are given, for the thrice mentioned phrase T'RUMA LASHEM in the parsha of Sh'kalim.

- Next to the Israeli half-shekel is an old, tarnished Ben Franklin half dollar coin. What is significant about it is that it was made of silver (90%) and is considered more commemorative of the Machatzit HaShekel because, not only is it a HALF coin, but it is silver, as well. It was (probably still is) common for shuls in the States to scotchtape together three silver half dollar coins and put the bundle into the collection plate. Then, the givers, in turn, would "buy" the 3 halves, for at least \$1.50 - often a larger donation - and then put the silver halves back into the plate L'ZEICHER MACHATZIT HASHEKEL, commemorative of the mitzva. Half dollars should not be used in Israel, because even though dollars are accepted as currency in Israel, US coins are not, and that is a "requirement" of the custom.
- Next to the Franklin half dollar is a non-silver Kennedy half dollar. This too is used in the States (but not in Israel) for the custom.
- Completing of numismatic display are both obverse and reverse of a French half franc. In France, that's what Jews can use for ZEICHER L'MACHATZIT HASHEKEL. Note: If the local half coin is only of minimal, insignificant value, then it should not be used and

a silver coin of worth should be used instead.

Further note (as we have already noted more than once): Some follow the custom to give an amount of money equal to the current value of the original silver half-shekel. Rav Yoel Schwartz in his ADAR UFURIM says that the original half-shekel was about 10 grams of silver, which is slightly more than a third of a Troy ounce. Based on the current price of silver and the dollar rate for new Israel shekalim, it comes close to 40NIS.

Most of the right-hand side of the ParshaPix is taken up by the Davka graphic of the Kohein Gadol, whose garments are dealt with in great detail in Parshat P'kudei (as well as back in Parshat T'tzaveh).

Under the half-shekel coin are two mounted flat onyx stones. In this photo they are earring size and the setting is silver. However, they represent the shoulder stones of the Kohein Gadol, which were SHOHAM (onyx) stones set in gold and probably a lot larger than earrings.

Next are the two fellows in hard hats consulting plans or diagrams. They represent Betzalel and Aholiav, the main artisans of the Mishkan.

There's a pomegranate with a bell on it. This stands for the decorations at the bottom of the M'IL of the Kohein Gadol. Some say that the pompoms of colored wool (RIMONIM) alternated with gold bells. Others say that the bells were within the pompoms, which is why we presented them as we did.

Under the pomegranate-bell is a set of Shulchan Aruch, which consists of four main sections known as the four TURIM, named for the precursor of Rav Yosef Karo's halachic work, the one written by Rav Yaakov ben Asher, who became known as the Baal HaTurim, from his calling of the four sections the four Turim. That term comes from the Choshen of the Kohein Gadol which was set with four rows of gemstones, each row called a TUR.

Under the two hardhats is a model of the new KIYOR being built by the Temple Institute in Jerusalem for hopeful use in the next Beit HaMikdash. They already have a KIYOR (and its base) in the more traditional form, but this new one has some technological advances that will make the washing of hands and feet more comfortable and efficient for the kohanim serving in the next Mikdash.

What's a ParshaPix without some baseball element? These both delight baseball fans and irk non-American Anglos. Stan the Man Musial wore number 6 on his jersey, making that garment a TTriddle-style version of BIGDEI SHEISH (sheish meaning both 6 and linen).

Lower-left is a forklift for moving the silver ADANIM, foundation sockets, which were quite heavy.

The cloud next to the forklift is the Mishkan following its completion, when it was covered by cloud. This is analogous [l'havdil] to the hat in the Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-

Exupéry which children were able to see that the hat was really a boa constrictor swallowing an elephant. Some see just a cloud, while TTradders and especially TTriddlers should see the whole Mishkan.

Portion from the Portion

ADAR BET

This week we announce the new moon of the second Adar which will be Sunday and Monday. Did you ever wonder why it is that we add another month of Adar during a leap year? It's true that the kids like ADAR because of all the silliness - but why not add any other month in the calendar during a leap year?

One reason given by the Tosafot for the addition of another Adar is actually based on a verse from Megilat Esther. It says (3:7) ...L'CHODESH SH'NEIM ASAR HU CHODESH ADAR - During the twelfth month which is Adar". If we were to add a different month during the year then Adar would not be the 12th month.

But this still doesn't really answer the question: the verse hints to adding another Adar but what is the real reason behind this endeavor? What is the reason for adding this month in the first place? The main reason for adding a month is "MIPNEI HA'AVIV UMIPNEI HAT'KUFA - because of the spring", in order to make the lunar and solar calendars match up so that Pesach could be during the AVIV - the spring. This could possibly be done by adding a different month such as Marcheshvan, Kislev, Tevet or Shvat -

so why ADAR?

During the time that the Beit HaMikdash stood there were other reasons for IBUR HASHANA - MIPNEI PEIROT HA-ILAN - because of the fruit. We wouldn't want the produce to ripen after ATZERET - Shavu'ot. If they were to ripen only after Shavuot, the owner would have to trek all the way to the Beit HaMikdash (to bring Firstfruits) even if he had just been there. Another reason mentioned is because of HAD'RACHIM - the roads that might have been destroyed during the rainy season and weren't fixed yet, making it difficult for a person who must go to Jerusalem along those broken roads. These things would only be known close to the time - meaning very close to Pesach and then they would have to add another Adar. So Adar was chosen to be the month that is always added. That's good because MISHNICHNAS ADAR MARBIM B'SIMCHA - When the month of Adar enters, we have extra happiness. Enjoy this second ADAR.

The Puah Institute

for Fertility and Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha

Ovarian Transplants - The Donor

Last week we discussed why there is no problem of castration for the recipient in the case of ovarian transplants. This week we will look at the problem of castration in relation to the donor.

This certainly appears to be more complex, since she is undergoing an operation that will remove part of her ovary and possibly limit her fertility. Yet she is not being healed through this

treatment, rather she is assisting in treating someone else.

Last week we mentioned that there is a difference of opinion as to whether the definition of castration is damaging or removing the reproductive organs, or whether it is adversely affecting fertility.

It can be claimed that removing a small part of the ovary cannot be considered castration, especially as there are many opinions that female castration is a rabbinic prohibition. But what about limiting her fertility?

In discussion with the doctor who performed the latest ovarian transplants, he said that the operation does not cause the woman to be infertile but may possibly result in her reaching menopause a couple of years earlier than she would have without this treatment.

This is a different type of castration, one that does not stop fertility but may limit fertility sometime in the future.

Several poskim have already written that causing infertility at a later stage (grama) is not prohibited. This is the opinion of the Minchat Chinuch and the Aruch HaShulchan.

In addition we could claim that since a woman is not obliged in the commandment to be fruitful and multiply, the prohibition of castration cannot possibly be to limit her fertility and her ability to bear children.

Thus, there is no prohibition for the donor to donate part of her ovary to assist another woman to become pregnant.

In summary, while still in its infancy, the technology of ovarian transplants opens up new and exciting possibilities for couples.

The future may see this become a more routine treatment.

In this case, the mother of any child born will be the recipient of the ovarian transplant, not the donor of the tissue. There is no problem of castration, neither for the donor nor for the recipient.

Our prayer is that no one should be afflicted by infertility, but we are in awe of the modern capacity for treatment and marvel at how Hashem has enabled this generation to become closer to the blessing that there will be no infertile people among us.

[Ed. note: Some sources do say that P'RU URVU does apply to women, but this fact would not change the conclusion here.]



Last issue's (VAYAKHEL) TTriddles:

A note about TTriddles: As we have said more than once in the past, TTriddles are not for everyone. They are riddles about the sedra (or, as you will see, about the TT issue number, the number of p'sukim in the sedra, or about the Jewish Calendar). They are purposely obscure, tricky, involve plays on words - Hebrew, English, both together, and sometimes Aramaic and other languages. Unlike the ParshaPix elements which are mostly explained in the same issue, TTriddle solutions are presented in a report in the following issue - that's what you are reading now. But know too that the solutions often contain more than just the answers to the TTriddles. There are mini-divrei Torah, statistics, and various tidbits sprinkled throughout. So even if you are not a TTriddle solver, we hope you will read and enjoy and learn from the TTriddles Reports.

[1] And if not now, when?

V'IM LO ACHSHAV, EIMATAI - gimatriya of this statement of Hillel's from Pirkei Avot is 945, as in this week's TT issue number.

[2] Smallest Odd Abundant Number

In number theory, one of the properties of numbers that is explored and studied is the sum of its proper factors. Proper factors of a number are all the whole numbers that will divide a particular number without leaving a remainder - including one, but not including the number itself. For example, the proper factors of 15 are 1, 3, and 5. Their sum is 9. The proper factors of 12 are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. Their sum is 16. The proper factors of 6 are 1, 2, and 3. Their sum is 6. When the sum of the proper factors of a number equals the number, the number is called perfect. If the SPF is less than the number, the number is called deficient. If the SPF is greater than the number, the number is called abundant. 6 is a perfect number. 15 is deficient. 12 is abundant. 12 is the smallest abundant number; the next few are 18, 20, 24, 30. Even numbers have an "easier" time being abundant, since they each have factors of 1, 2, and half of the number. A few more factors and their sum can easily go above the number itself. Odd numbers have a "harder" time. The smallest abundant odd number is 945.

[3] Parochet, Lechem HaPanim, Menora Oil, Anointing Oil, Incense - Highest possible hand?

As was mentioned in the ParshaPix

explanations, the opening portion of Vayakhel is loaded with ETs and EITs (or ESes and EISes). Specifically, in nine p'sukim - Sh'mot 35:11-19 - there are 41 ALEF-TAV words, as follows: 14 ETs and another 19 V'ETs (that's 33 ETs with a SEGOL), 2 EITs and another 6 V'EITs (that's 8 EITs with a TZEIREI). When the ALEF-TAV word is linked to the word it introduces by a MAKAF (upper-dash), it is voweled with a SEGOL, ET or ES. When it stands alone, its ALEF has a TZEIREI, EIT or EIS, and most often (always?) has a TROP-note. The first five Mishkan items that are introduced with EIT are items in the statement of this TTriddle. In Ashkenazic pronunciation, that would be five ACES, the highest possible hand in poker (using a wild card - without wild cards, the highest hand is a royal flush).

[4] Who told you? Zilpa?

MI HIGID L'CHA = 40+10 (50) + 5+3+10+4 (22) + 30+20 (50) = 122, which is the pasuk-count for VAYAKHEL. So too for ZILPA, 7+30+80+5 = 122.

[5] And G-d hardened Par'o's heart; And He confused the Egyptian camp

More gimatriya. Each of these two partial p'sukim totals 945.

[6] It has a coppery finish

The sedra. The last word is NECHOSHET.

[7] Adar is the 12th month, the 6th month, the 7th month, the second

month, and the first month. How so?

Adar is the 12th month counting Nisan as the first. It is the 6th month if we count from Tishrei. These are both reasonable ways to count - the first based on HACHODESH HAZEH LACHEM ROSH CHODOSHIM and the second based on counting the months of any specific year. If the names of the months are rearranged in order of their gimatriya, with TISHREI at the top with 910 and AV at the bottom of the list with 3 (quite the range), then ADAR with 206 is the 7th month on the list. In alphabetical order (Hebrew), ADAR is second to AV. And in English, ADAR heads the list as the first month. YYW and MM/Bklyn, probably the two all-time top TTriddle solvers, in addition to getting the other TTriddles, explained this one as being related to the four Rosh HaShanas presented in the opening mishna of Masechet Rosh HaShana. Counting from Tishrei and Nisan, we've already done. Counting from the Rosh HaShana for Maaser B'heima, Adar is the 7th month, and counting from Sh'vat, it is the second. He answered its being the first month as the first of the two Adars.

[8] Unexplaineds from the ParshaPix

The pomegranate with the letter TAV on it represents the 400 (TAV) RIMONIM mentioned in the haftara. They were decorative.

The onion and the Canada Dry logo go together. The onion is BATZAL. And Canada Dry's most famous product is

ginger ALE. Taken together - using onion instead of ginger, so to speak - gives us a sound-alike for the name of the chief artisan of the Mishkan - B'TZALEL.

On page 25 in last week's TT was a visual TTriddle consisting of three items. An onion (no connection this time to B'tzalel), a kiwi fruit, and a cluster of grapes with an arrow pointing to one single grape. $BATZAL = 2+90+30 = 122$. $KIWI = 100+6+6+10 = 122$. $EINAV$ (grape) = $70+50+2 = 122$. The number of p'sukim in VAYAKHEL.

P'KUDEI Adapted from
Unlocking the Torah Text
by **Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

A Retrospective: From Servitude to Sinai

Context: In retrospect, the book of Sh'mot reflects that the Jewish nation is born through a two-stage process, with the road to Sinai passing through Egypt. The Exodus and Revelation are both clearly portrayed in the Torah as critical components in the formation of our national character.

Questions: Why are the Exodus and Revelation both essential to the birth of the Jewish nation? Is there a philosophical continuum between these two events that might inform our lives today?

Approaches:

A. At first glance, the questions raised seem clearly rhetorical. The Torah itself

openly elucidates lessons to be learned from each of these monumental events - and rabbinic literature is replete with additional observations.

The existence of God; God's hand in history; our obligation to be kind to strangers; the equality of our personal origins; gratitude to God for our freedom; the recognition that true freedom carries obligations; the transience of seemingly powerful empires; the primacy of law - these are only a some of the foundational ideas so clearly conveyed by the two powerful experiences which shape the earliest moments of our national history.

B. And yet, perhaps an even more basic observation can be made about the nature of our early national journey, inspired by a parallel, yet quieter journey: the individual passage of the potential convert who wishes to join the Jewish nation today.

The question is raised in the Talmud: Where does the potential convert begin? What is the first step along the path towards conversion to Judaism?

One would assume the answer to be obvious: the journey should begin with elucidation of the mitzvot. After all, what defines Judaism if not the Torah and its laws? Shouldn't the initial requirement for entry into a nation forged at Sinai be the understanding and acceptance of the law given at Sinai? Nothing else would seem appropriate.

The rabbis, however, disagree. In a striking Talmudic passage they clearly outline the first step a potential convert must take:

"If a prospective proselyte comes to convert in this day, we say to him: 'What

did you perceive that prompted you to come? Did you not know that the Jewish people are afflicted, oppressed, down-trodden and harassed - and that hardships are regularly visited upon them?'

If the individual responds: 'I know, and I am unworthy [of sharing in their hardships],' we accept him immediately [as a potential convert worthy of education] and we inform him of some 'minor' mitzvot and some 'major' mitzvot..."

Apparently the rabbis feel that there is a prerequisite to the acceptance of mitzvot. Before an individual can begin to accept the Torah, he must first meet the challenge of belonging; he must first be willing to throw his lot in with the Jewish people, whatever trials that choice might produce, whatever difficulties might ensue.

C. What, however, is the basis of this rabbinic position? What source can the Talmudic scholars cite to support their confident claim that conversion to Judaism must begin with the choice to "belong"?

The answer, it would seem, is powerfully simple. The rabbis believe that the initial journey of an individual who wishes to join the Jewish nation must mirror the initial journey of the nation itself.

As stated above, the Jewish nation is born through a two-stage process. Before we could arrive at Sinai, God challenged us with participation in the Exodus. Before we could experience Revelation we had to choose to "belong" to the Jewish people. Each of us had to throw our lot in with our fellow Israelites, to leave the familiar and travel into the unknown, to

follow the leadership of a relative stranger towards a destiny shrouded in mystery. The Midrashic tradition that only a fraction of the Israelites actually followed Moshe into the wilderness reflects a keen awareness of the difficulty of this decision.

The rituals of the conversion process, as we have seen, are derived from the experience of the Israelites immediately prior to and during the Revelation at Sinai. The first step towards conversion, however, like the first step of our national journey, is rooted in the Exodus.

Reaching across the ages, the journey of the book of Shmot speaks to us clearly. First you must choose to "belong." ❖

Parsha Points to Ponder

Suggested answers

1) The S'forno answers that these words come to teach us that as the artisans worked on the Mishkan they continuously actually stated that they were doing this work according to the commands of G-D to Moshe to reinforce that their work was for the sake of Heaven and not for any personal gain or achievement.

2) The Ohr HaChayim teaches that this actually serves as a source for the concept of all the Jewish people unifying to fulfill the Torah as a unit. There are mitzvot which are exclusively for me, others for women, some for the Kohanim, etc. and no one person can complete the entire Torah. However, we see from this verse which credits all Israel for doing the work that the mitzvot which one

person does can count for the other person who cannot fulfill that particular mitzva.

3) The Ramban explains that the words AND HE TOOK describe Moshe taking the tablets from a closet in which he kept them until this Aron was constructed. This demonstrates that Moshe, on his own, put the Luchot away, demonstrating the reverence which Moshe had for them.

Albatross

From the Book of Animals by John Lloyd and John Mitchinson, published by Faber & Faber Ltd

20 species, from gull-size to one with an 11' (3.3m) wingspan... they fly further and for longer than any family of birds... some circle the whole Earth in less than 2 months... some can soar for six days without flapping their wings once... the young Wandering Albatross can get airborne and stay aloft for 10 years, until it's ready to breed... they eat at sea, sleep in flight with each half of their brains taking turns turning on and off... very well-developed sense of smell... can find food and nesting site from miles away... mate for life... have unique method of communication with mates after long periods of separation... they raise one chick every two years, both parents taking turns on the nest and searching for food... will regularly travel a thousand miles to feed their chick one mouthful of food... life expectancy of 60 years... breed so slowly that they face possible extinction... It is a myth that killing an albatross brings bad luck - in fact, British sailors regularly killed them for

food and to make pipes from their bones... The superstitious belief that an albatross is the reincarnation of a drowned sailor persists in some cultures...

משנכנס אדר מרבים
בשמיזזה ונמשך גם בחודש
ניסן (רש"י)