

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

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Parashas Shekalim

The modesty in the half-shekel protects Klal Yisrael

On the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh Adar, we read "Parashas Shekalim," which is the commandment at the beginning of Parashas Ki Sisa to give the half-shekel. During the time when the Beis HaMikdash stood, "on the first of Adar, they would announce about the shekels" (beginning of Meseches Shekalim) so that all of Klal Yisrael would remember and prepare their shekels by Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Now, in our current state of exile, when we no longer have the Beis HaMikdash and the altar for atonement, we still make the announcement "in remembrance of the Beis HaMikdash" on the Shabbos closest to Rosh Chodesh Adar. However, it requires clarification: if we do not give the half-shekel in our times, why announce it so early before "the time of giving," often even before "the first of Adar"?

It seems to me that there is a deep connection between the concept of the half-shekel and the miracle of Purim that occurred in the month of Adar, and even to the very essence of the "mazel" (energy) of the month of Adar.

Let us first address a significant aspect of the half-shekel, about which the Torah testifies, "so that there will be no plague among them when you count them." Even when the people of Yisrael are being counted – a situation where there is great concern for the **evil eye** and all the accusations from the prosecuting angels that may arise – the Torah testifies that the half-shekel protects against the plague because it acts as a barrier, concealing, and thereby shielding Yisrael from the **evil eye** and all external forces.

The hidden power at work in the miracle of Purim

It is known that the miracle of Purim was a **hidden miracle**. It is written in the sefer *Ohr Chadash* by the Maharal of Prague that a **hidden miracle** is greater than a revealed

miracle, and therefore it is not perceived by sight. We merited a **hidden miracle** due to Esther's **modesty** and **hiddenness** in all her actions. Based on this, it seems to me that the entire merit of being saved from Haman's decree involved **modesty** and **concealment**, which counteracts the **brazenness** and public desecration of G-d's name that Amalek always perpetuates.

The half-shekel saves from the ten thousand talents of silver of Haman

Our Sages state (Meseches Megillah 16a) that when Haman offered ten thousand talents of silver to Achashverosh to annihilate the Jewish people, the Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Their shekels have already preceded your shekels." Haman did not conceal his wealth; he boasted about it and his riches in general. When he sought to give the ten thousand talents of silver, he took pride in that money and publicized it, to the extent that it became well-known, as it is written: "And Mordechai told him all that had happened to him, and the **details of the money** that Haman had promised to weigh into the king's treasuries for the

destruction of the Jews" (Esther 4:7).

The Ibn Ezra explains, "**details**—from the decree to explain to them—means that Haman clarified the **matter of the money** to the officials." In complete contrast, the half-shekel is the opposite: the wealthy cannot increase it or boast about it; it is an anonymous donation that specifically conceals the identity of the giver, thereby protecting against the **evil eye** and all harm.

Modesty is the strength of Yisrael to prevail

The **modesty** of Klal Yisrael in all their actions is the secret of their eternity. Mordechai saved the life of Achashverosh, and although "Esther told the king in the name of Mordechai" (Esther 2:22), nevertheless, Mordechai, Esther, and all of Klal Yisrael did not boast about this deed but remained silent about it so that it would be forgotten and the information "would be stored in the book of records."

And this is what stood for us!

The deed was remembered precisely "on that night..." when we needed it to save us. Let us imagine what would have

happened if Mordechai had taken credit for saving Achashverosh, received a reward for his actions, and Achashverosh owed him nothing.

There would have been no humiliation for Haman in "take the [royal] robes and the horse and do so for Mordechai the Jew," which was the beginning of his downfall. The truth is that the **modesty** of Yisrael in all their matters, even in their commandments, stands as a shield and protection against the **haughtiness** of Amalek, and this is proven from the continuation of that event.

The command of "take the [royal] robes and the horse..." occurred on the 16th of Nissan, a time when, during the Temple period, they would bring the Omer offering. The Omer offering, which came from barley—considered inferior even to wheat—was a very **modest** gift to Hashem, blessed be He, for creating and guiding the world, as stated in the Midrash in Parashas Emor. And even from the Omer offering, Hashem only receives a handful from the Omer, as with all meal offerings.

When Haman came to parade Mordechai through the city streets, Mordechai was studying

the laws of the handful of the Omer with the sages, in remembrance of the Beis HaMikdash.

The Gemara states: "Haman said to them (to Mordechai and the sages), 'What are you occupied with?' They said to him, 'When the Beis HaMikdash stood, whoever pledged a meal offering would bring a handful of fine flour, and it would atone for him.' He said to them, 'Your handful of flour came and pushed aside my ten thousand talents of silver'" (Megillah 16a).

Even Haman recognized that the power of Klal Yisrael's **modesty** in the Omer commandment overcame the wealth he publicly boasted about.

The haughtiness of Amalek is the very cause of its downfall

Haman's **public pride** and **brazenness** led to his ultimate downfall, as it is written: "And Charvonah, one of the eunuchs, said before the king, 'Behold, the gallows that Haman made

for Mordechai, who spoke good on behalf of the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.' And the king said, 'Hang him on it'" (Esther 7:9).

The Malbim explains: "Standing at Haman's house, high, etc. – the gallows is still standing, fifty cubits high, to be seen by all, and this is a great disgrace to the king. At the time when Mordechai wore royal garments and they proclaimed before him that the king desired his honor, nevertheless, the gallows prepared to hang him was standing openly for all to see, as if to say that the man whom the king desired to honor was ready to be hanged. **There is no greater rebellion than this**, and based on this, the king rightfully judged and sentenced Haman to be hanged. So may all the enemies of the L-rd perish."

Yosef HaTzadik and the power of the month of Adar

Behold, the head of the tribes, Yosef HaTzadik, was protected and shielded

from the **evil eye**, and anyone who fears the **evil eye** should say, "I am from the seed of Yosef, upon whom the evil eye has no dominion" (Gemara Brachos 20a).

Therefore, he is likened to fish, upon which the **evil eye** has no dominion, as it is written: "And they shall multiply like fish abundantly in the midst of the land." All this is because they are hidden from sight under the water, and this provides a reason for the praise that we overcame Haman in particular, and Amalek in general, in the month of Adar, which is the sign of Pisces (fish), corresponding to Yosef, as is written in the holy sefer *Kedushas Levi*, just as Yosef splits into the two tribes of Menasheh and Ephraim, so too the month of Adar splits into Adar I and Adar II. Everything revolves around the same point: to be **modest**, hidden from sight, and humble, which counteracts the **brazenness** and public desecration of G-d by Amalek.

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