

This week, the *Shabbat* preceding *Rosh Chodesh Adar*, we will read *Parashat Shekalim* in addition to the weekly *Parashah*, commemorating the bringing of the annual half-*Shekel* tax that funded the public *Korbanot* in the *Bet Hamikdash*. Since the Temple's fiscal year began on the first of *Nissan*, the collection of the half-*Shekel* would begin a month earlier.

Parashat Shekalim begins (*Shmot* 30:12-13), "When you take a census of (literally, 'When you uplift') *Bnei Yisrael* . . . This shall they give--everyone who passes through the census-- a half *Shekel* of the sacred *Shekel*." In connection with this verse, the *Midrash Tanchuma* relates that Moshe said to *Hashem*, "When I die, I will be forgotten." *Hashem* replied, "Just as you are here now teaching *Parashat Shekalim* and uplifting *Bnei Yisrael*, so every year, when they read *Parashat Shekalim*, it will be as if you are standing before Me and uplifting them." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

What was Moshe's concern, and what was *Hashem's* answer? R' Shlomo Yehuda Tabak z"l (1832-1907; *Av Bet Din* of Sighet, Hungary, and a prominent *Halachic* authority) explains:

Earlier works say that once the Jewish People have angered *Hashem* completely, a *Tzaddik* cannot save them from harm unless he is in danger as well. This is why, at the time of the Golden Calf, *Hashem* told Moshe (32:7), "Go, descend, for your People that you brought up from Egypt has become corrupt." Moshe had to be among the Jewish People in order to pray for them. Thus, he was concerned that he would lose the ability to pray for the Jewish People--he would be "forgotten"--when he died. No, said *Hashem*, because the *Mitzvah* of giving a half-*Shekel* will "uplift" them, so they will be on a higher level and you can pray for them from afar, i.e., even after your death. (*Likkutei Erech Shai*)

Shabbat

We saw in a prior issue that there is a *Mitzvah* of "Oneg *Shabbat*" / making the *Shabbat* a "delight," and that that *Mitzvah* is fulfilled specifically through physical pleasures, such as eating and drinking. Why is this so?

The *Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu* (ch.26) states: If one makes the *Shabbat* an "Oneg," it is as if he honors G-d, as it is written (*Yeshayah* 58:13), "If you proclaim the *Shabbat* 'Oneg,' the Holy One, *Hashem*, 'Honored One' . . ." This teaches that "If you proclaim the *Shabbat* 'Oneg,' then you are proclaiming "the Holy One, *Hashem*, 'Honored One'." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Eliyahu E. Dessler *shlita* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; not to be confused with his cousin and namesake, the *Michtav M'Eliyahu*) asks: By sitting and eating, we honor *Hashem*?!

He explains: Though they seem to be two separate *Mitzvot*, the *Mitzvah* of *Oneg Shabbat* and the *Mitzvah* of *Kavod* / honor of *Shabbat* serve the same purpose--to highlight that *Shabbat* is different from all other days. In particular, having special *Shabbat* delicacies is meant to raise the stature of *Shabbat* in our eyes. (*Sha'arei Ha'zemanim: Shabbat Kodesh* ch.3)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.



Sponsored by

Martin and Michelle Swartz, on the *yahrzeit* of his father Paul S. Swartz
(*Pesach Shmuel ben Mordechai a"h* - 28 Shevat)

Robert and Hannah Klein
on the *yahrzeit* of his father Milton Klein (*Meir ben Kalman a"h*)

Mr. and Mrs. Jules Meisler, in memory of
his mother Anne Meisler (*Chana bat Lazer Hakohen a"h*)
and sister Gladys Citrino (*Golda Rivka bat Yitzchak a"h*)

Mrs. Elaine Taragin, on the *yahrzeits* of her
father, Irving Rivkin (*Yitzchak ben Yehudah Leib a"h* - 25 Shevat),
mother, Frances Rivkin (*Feiga bas Yeshaya a"h* - 29 Shevat), and
mother-in-law, Shirley Taragin
(*Sarah Esther bat Harav Moshe Zelig a"h* - 29 Shevat)

“I shall not drive them away from you in a single year, lest the Land become desolate and the wildlife of the field multiply against you. Little by little shall I drive them away from you, until you become fruitful and make the Land your heritage.” (23:29-30)

Midrash Tanchuma mentions our verse when it describes the reward *Hashem* promised Avraham Avinu for hosting the three angels. Specifically, commenting on Avraham’s words (*Bereishit* 18:4), “Let a little water be taken,” the *Midrash* relates that *Hashem* said to Avraham: “Because you said, ‘Let [there] be taken,’ I will give your descendants the *Mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach*, about which it says (*Shmot* 12:3), ‘They shall take for themselves -- each man -- a lamb or kid . . .’ Because you said, ‘A little,’ I will drive out your descendants’ enemies little-by-little [so that *Bnei Yisrael* can settle the Land as they conquer it and wild animals will not take it over, as promised in our verse]. Because you said, ‘Water,’ I will give your descendants water in the desert.” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

Why is Avraham rewarded for saying that he will bring “a little” water? R’ Uri Weisblum *shlita* (*Mashiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Nachalat Ha’levi’im in Haifa, Israel) explains:

The *Gemara* (*Bava Metzia* 87a) derives from Avraham’s interactions with the angels that “The righteous say little and do a lot.” Avraham offered the angels bread, but he brought them an entire meal. In contrast, “The wicked say a lot and do not do even a little”--like Efron, who first offered to give away the *Me’arat Ha’machpelah* for free, and then demanded an exorbitant price for it. R’ Weisblum writes: The above *Midrash* is teaching us that “*Tzadikim* say little” does not mean only that they say few words; it also means that they downplay their own words. He explains: If Avraham had said, “Let water be taken” (without “a little”), it would have meant “unlimited water.” And, certainly, Avraham would have given his guests as much water as they wanted. However, by saying “a little” water, Avraham was modestly downplaying his kindness. For that proper use of speech, he certainly deserved a reward! (*He’arat Ha’derech* p.319)

– Continued from facing page –

The *Vizhnitzer Rebbe* continues: R’ Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz *z”l* (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) writes that the ox is forbidden because any object that was a source of harm should be despised and we should be prohibited to benefit from it. Indeed, the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 149b) teaches that if Person A was punished because of Person B, Person B is not admitted to *Hashem’s* “inner sanctum.” (This is a reason to promptly forgive those who wrong us.) The lesson for us, concludes the *Vizhnitzer Rebbe*, is that one should take extreme care never to be the source of harm to another. (*Torat Mordechai*)

“And these are the civil laws that you shall place before them.” (21:1)

R’ Yehoshua Heschel (Harry) Kaufman *shlita* (rabbi in Washington, D.C., and Montreal) asks: Why doesn’t our *Parashah* open with, “And *Hashem* spoke to Moshe, to say,” as do most legal sections of the Torah?

He answers: The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 6b) records a three-way dispute whether a *Bet Din* / rabbinical court should set aside the letter of the law and make a *Pesharah* / mutually agreeable settlement between the parties. One Sage says that *Pesharah* is prohibited, a second says that it is permitted, and a third says that it is a *Mitzvah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules in accordance with the third opinion, *i.e.*, that *Pesharah* is a *Mitzvah*. In this vein, R’ Yaakov ben Asher *z”l* (the “*Ba’al Ha’turim*”; Germany and Spain; 1269-1343) notes that the Hebrew word “*Ha’mishpatim*” / “the civil laws” is an acronym of a Hebrew sentence that means: “A judge is obligated to make a *Pesharah* before he judges in accordance with the letter of the law” (“הַדַּיִן מְצוּוֹה שִׁיעֵשָׂה פְּשָׂרָה טָרָם יַעֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט”).

Therefore, concludes Rabbi Kaufman, the Torah did not open our *Parashah*, which presents the laws of monetary dealings between individuals, with, “And *Hashem* spoke to Moshe, to say.” Had the Torah done so, one might have thought, incorrectly, that these laws are absolute commands, leaving no room for judges to reach compromises or promote settlements. (*Ohr Yehoshua*)

“If an ox shall gore a man or woman and he shall die, the ox shall surely be stoned; its flesh may not be eaten . . .” (21:28)

Rashi explains: Of course the ox may not be eaten after it was stoned, as it was not *Schechted* / slaughtered properly! The verse is teaching that even if one did slaughter the animal according to *Halachah* after the sentence of stoning had been pronounced, but before it was carried out, the meat may not be eaten. [Until here paraphrased from *Rashi*.]

R’ Mordechai Hager *z”l* (1922-2018; *Vizhnitz-Monsey Rebbe*) explains: One could ask, “Why should an ox be stoned for goring a person? Oxen do not have free will!” In fact, even when one human harms another person or his property, one could argue that the aggressor should not be liable, because he could not have done harm if it had not been G-d’s will. Nevertheless, one who does harm does deserve to be punished, because he chose with his free will to do harm or, at least, to be careless. Also, there is a principle: “*Megalgin chovah al yedei chayav*”--if *Hashem* chooses someone to be His agent to carry out a decree against someone else, it is a sign that the agent is himself lacking in some way, so he must repent. But, this reasoning does not apply to oxen, which have no free will!

– Continued in box on facing page –