



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

Sponsored by the Cypess Family Foundation

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

Half-Shekels for All

Presented by Rabbi Hillel Shaps, Director

"The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than a half-shekel... to atone for your souls." (30:15)

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, Hashem instructs Moshe to have each male over the age of twenty donate a half-shekel for the Mishkan. This instruction is followed by a clarification that the rich should not give more than a half-shekel and the poor should not give less. Since the mitzvah was to donate a half-shekel, why was this clarification necessary?

To address this difficulty, the Ksav Sofer raises two additional questions. 1) The Torah says that the half-shekel was to serve as an atonement. Why would the rich and the poor have to give the same amount? A half-shekel donation for a poor person is a much greater sacrifice than it is for a rich person. It would seem, therefore, that a poor person should not have had to give as much as a richer person. 2) In the opening verse of Sefer Devarim, Moshe references a place called "*Dee Zahav*." Rashi explains that Moshe was trying to exonerate the Jewish people from fault in the Sin of the Golden Calf by saying that Hashem provided them *dee zahav* – too much gold – and that led them to sin by donating their gold for the Golden Calf. This explanation could diminish the culpability of the rich; the poor, however, who also contributed to the Golden Calf, would not seem to benefit from this defense.

The Ksav Sofer explains that these two questions answer each other. Because the poor did not have the excuse that they had *dee zahav* – too much gold – they required a higher degree of atonement for their contribution to the Golden Calf. They were therefore expected to sacrifice more and donate an amount that was greater relative to their means. We can now understand why the Torah clarifies that "the rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less." One might have thought that to achieve atonement each person should give according to their means; the Torah therefore clarifies that a half-shekel is exactly right for all individuals.

This incredible insight of the Ksav Sofer carries an important lesson. At times, we look around and wonder why another person has more or less, or why life seems easier or harder for them. Sometimes, the Divine reason may seem apparent to us – other times it could take a great Torah sage like the Ksav Sofer to uncover the reason. Most often, though, no human will be able to explain Hashem's decisions. What we must remember is that Hashem is the ultimate conductor and has carefully calculated the needs of each and every individual.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded them; they have made themselves a molten calf, prostrated themselves to it, and they said, "These are your gods, Israel..." (32, 8)

This is the way the yetzer hora operates: Today he says to perform a minor sin and tomorrow he tells you to sin a greater sin, until he can convince you to serve an idol. (Shabbos 105a)

If an ordinary person only begins to serve idols after a gradual decline orchestrated by the Yetzer Hara, how could Bnei Yisrael in the desert, who had experienced Hashem's miracles and revelation at Har Sinai, fall into such a grievous transgression so rapidly?

Parsha Riddle

Which other Tzaddikim glowed like Moshe Rabbeinu?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:
Which two non-Jewish kings wore the Kohen Gadol's (High Priest's) vestments?
Answer: Balshatzar and Achashverosh

HATORAH V' HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parashas Ki Sisa contains the episode of the Golden Calf. *Shemos Rabbah* (46:1) teaches: *You find that when the Holy One blessed be He said to [Moshe]: "Go, descend, for your people have acted corruptly," (32:7) he grasped the tablets and did not believe that Israel had sinned. He said: "If I do not see it, I do not believe it," as it is stated: "It was when Moshe drew near to the camp [that he saw the calf and the dancing. Moshe's wrath was enflamed, and he cast the tablets from his hands, and he shattered them at the foot of the mountain]." (v. 19) He did not break them until he saw with his eyes. Woe to those people who testify about what they have not seen. Is it possible that Moshe did not believe the Holy One blessed be He who said to him: "For your people have acted corruptly"? It is, rather, that Moshe was informing Israel of proper conduct. Even if a person hears a matter from a trustworthy individual, it is prohibited to accept his testimony and to take action on the basis of his word if one does not see it.*

Interestingly, the Talmud actually does endorse a judge "taking action" on the basis of something he hears from "a trustworthy individual" at least in certain circumstances, e.g.:

There was a certain woman who was obligated to take an oath in order to avoid payment in Rava's court. The daughter of Rav Chisda said to Rava, her husband: I know that she is suspect with regard to taking a false oath. Rava reversed the obligation of the oath so that it fell onto the other party, who now had the option of taking an oath that the woman owes him money and collecting his debt. ... [On another occasion, Rava explained:] I relied on Rav Chisda's daughter because I know with certainty about her that she is always truthful. (Kesubos 85a)

In a later era, however, the courts voluntarily relinquished this authority: *[W]hen courts which were not fitting ... proliferated, the majority of the courts among the Jewish people agreed not to reverse oaths unless there was clear proof that a litigant was suspect of taking a false oath. ... The rationale for this stringency is to prevent any simple person from saying: "My heart trusts this person's words and my mind relies on this." (Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 24:2)*

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I served the below.
2. I lost my position.
3. I need redemption.
4. I was spared from the tenth.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. My mother cleans my mess.
2. I am not part of your leg.
3. I wasn't a golden opportunity.
4. Walking metal.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Choshen Mishpat (I'm named for the High Priest's garment, I'm for the money matters, The lips of the Kohen explain me, I also have "enlighteners.")

#2 Kohen's hat (Wrapped, On top, One of four and one of eight, I was not black.)

KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

