

Tetzaveh 5778

BS"D Parashat Tetzaveh 5778

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Five Parshiot and a Half Shekel

There is much to be learned not only from the text of the parshiot (Torah portions) but even from their order of appearance.

The last five parshiot of Shemot are Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tisa, Vayak'hel and Pekudai.

Terumah and Tetzaveh deal with the Mishkan and its implements, while parashat Ki Tisa interrupts the sequence and tells of the sinful and disastrous episode of the Aigel Hazahav (the Golden Calf).

The final two parshiot, Vayak'hel and Pekudai, return to the subject of the Mishkan and its implements.

Mishkan, Mishkan, tragic episode of idolatry, and again Mishkan, Mishkan – what does it mean?

I submit:

The Torah, through the sequence of these five parshiot, is informing the Jewish people of the future that awaits them.

The instructions in parashat Terumah allude to the 478 years of the Mishkan before the Bet Hamikdash is established in Yerushalayim – 39 years in the desert, 14 years at Gilgal, 369 years at Shiloh, and 56 years in Nov and Givon.

Tetzaveh alludes to the 410 years of the Bet Hamikdash of King Shlomo on the Temple Mount.

The disastrous and sinful act of idolatry in parashat Ki Tisa alludes to the destruction of King Shlomo's (Solomon) Bet Hamikdash and the 70 years of exile for reasons of idolatry.

Parashat Vayak'hel alludes to the Bet Hamikdash built by Ezra and the Jews who returned with him from Babylon and Persia.

Parashat Pekudai alludes to the magnificent Bet HaMikdash built by Hordus (Herod).

The Temples of Ezra and Hordus stood for 420 years before being destroyed by the Romans and the subsequent 2000-year exile of the Jewish people from our holy land. This tragic period of death and destruction of our physical, religious and moral being in the galut is alluded to by the break between the books of Shemot and Vayikra.

The Jewish people are now standing in the new age of Vayikra, the book that instructs the nation as to the various kinds of sacrifices. It is as if to say, "Prepare – it is not far off."

For those who understand, the time we are living in is one of profound celebration for the beginning of our redemption and salvation. After 2000 years of unspeakable calamities to our nation, HaShem has recognized and honors the unflinching loyalty of His people and has returned us to our ancient Holy Land.

To remain true to the Torah, even after the Shoah, is worthy of the highest rewards from our Father in Heaven.

He has restored our sovereignty over a large part of Eretz Yisrael and over Yerushalayim.

He has protected us in times of war and has made us prosperous in times of peace. We are creating a Torah empire here the likes of which has not existed anywhere for over 2000 years.

What is transpiring today in the lands of our enemies is a remarkable, miraculous sign of HaShem's protective wing over His children in Eretz Yisrael.

In the Song at the Sea (Shirat Hayam, Shemot 15:7), the survivors sang:

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

“With Your infinite genius, You destroyed those who rose up against You. You unleashed your burning anger. It consumed them like straw”

At first glance, one would think that instead of “With Your infinite genius,” the wording should be “With Your infinite strength.”

But indeed, “With Your infinite genius” is the fitting statement. It describes how HaShem, in His infinite genius, time and again frustrates the diabolical plans of our enemies in ways which are totally unpredictable, and yet He keeps His hidden presence intact.

In keeping with this, just consider what is happening so suddenly and unexpectedly in our region.

The Arabs will be busy fighting each other for years to come. Sunnis vs. Shiites and both against the Alevis. Arabs against Iranians. Libyans against each other. Christian Copts vs. Moslems in Egypt. Everyone against everyone in Lebanon and Syria. The Sunnis of Iraq against the Shiites of Iraq and all of them against the Kurds. The Turks against the Kurds, and the former Southern Moslem states of the USSR against Russia and against themselves. The flood of Arab refugees from North Africa into Europe, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman, Somalia and more.

And within the midst of all this – in the eye of the hurricane – stands the tiny State of Israel, prosperous and happy in the knowledge that HaShem has spread over us His holy cloud of protection, as in the time of our forefathers' sojourn in the desert.

Indeed, the greatest of life's experiences is to be a Jew living today in Eretz Yisrael.

Salvation in the Mitzva of Shekalim

The Mishna (Shekalim 1,1) informs us that beginning with the month of Adar (the one closest to Nisan), nationwide announcements were made regarding the annual payment of one half shekel. This payment was a Torah mitzva, with the money being earmarked for purchasing animals for public sacrifices during the time that the Bet Hamikdash and the various Mishkanot were standing.



The Gemara (Megila 13b) points out the direct connection between the mitzva of shekalim and the holiday of Purim:

הָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ וְהָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ
:וְהָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ .וְהָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ ,וְהָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ
'וְהָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ וְהָיָה מִצְוַת שֶׁקָּלִים בְּיָמֵינוּ

Raish Lakish (the Eretz Yisrael Amora Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish) said: It was apparent to the Creator of the world

that, in the future, Haman would count out (give) shekalim to destroy the Jewish people. Therefore, HaShem pre-empted this attempt by having the Jewish people precede Haman's shekalim with their mitzva of shekalim.

Questions:

Initially, the connection between the holy mitzva of shekalim and the Amalek Haman would appear to be imposed and illogical. What does the mitzva of shekalim have to do with Haman and the Purim episode?

Why did Achashverosh and Haman limit the time for the "final solution" to their "Jewish problem" to one day – the 13th of Adar?

Why did Haman offer the king 10,000 talents of silver, when all property and belongings of millions of Jews in the King's 127 states would belong to him anyway after annihilating his loyal Jewish subjects?

How many divisions did Haman have to enforce the decree of killing all the Jews in one day?

Even Achashverosh's army could not accomplish such a widespread genocide, when taking into account that many Jews would hide on that day or change their appearance.

I suggest:

Haman had no soldiers, and Achashverosh's army did not know all the Jews in their various districts in order to kill every man, woman and child.

Indeed, the monarchy was unable to carry out its own dictates. However, the local people in each of the 127 states, who knew their Jewish neighbors and their whereabouts, could perform the grisly task of murdering millions of Jews in one day. The plan was to give the goyim an incentive to rise up against

their peaceful Jewish neighbors and murder them a la Hebron 1929.

The incentive was that any citizen in Bavel and Medes who murdered a Jewish family could keep their possessions. But it had to be done on the 13th of Adar in order to foment the hatred into a murderous frenzy and also to prevent the Jews from regrouping and retaliating.

Now, in order to compensate the King for relinquishing all that Jewish wealth, Haman offered him 10,000 talents of silver.

Haman's plan was to exploit the inherent anti-Jewishness of the tranquil peace-loving citizens of Persia and Medes by offering financial promises in return for their cooperation in annihilating the entire Jewish nation in one day. A brilliant, diabolical plan worthy of Amalek. This was not to be an establishment-initiated and orchestrated genocide, but rather the general will of the loyal citizens who thought that the root of all evil in the world was the satanic Jewish people and their ancient "Protocols of Zion" whose goal was to control the world.

To fully grasp the extent of the danger that awaited the Jews of Persia and Medes, just imagine what would have happened in 20th-century Poland, Ukraine, Russia, France and all the other countries of Europe had the Germans allowed any gentile who killed a Jewish family to keep the spoils. All of Christian Europe would have fallen into the same evil trap that Achashverosh and Haman set for the Jews of Persia and Medes. But this was prevented by the very evil and greed in the German heart that so coveted the Jewish property to not want to share it with their gentile comrades of Europe.

Now comes into play the connection between the mitzva of shekalim and its capacity to abrogate the evil intent of Haman and Achashverosh.

Shekalim is the most universal mitzva in the Torah. It eliminates all distinctions between Jews. A rich man was not allowed to donate more than a half shekel, just as an indigent person had to do everything possible to acquire a half shekel. Wise or foolish, talmid chacham or unlearned, rich or poor, nobility or common man – all had an equal share in the same mitzva.

This universal act on the part of every Jew was the exact opposite of the planned universal act of every goy of Persia and Medes to destroy the Jewish nation. It was the universal national will of Am Yisrael to uphold HaShem's mitzva of shekalim for the Bet Hamikdash that exposed and highlighted the distinction between HaShem's chosen people, who lived a life of Torah, and the murderous common people of those 127 states.

The background of the Purim episode has returned to haunt us. Judenhass (hatred of the Jews) in today's world is not government initiated. Quite the contrary, in the free world it is prohibited to be anti-Semitic in public. However, it is present in all ranks of society from cocktail parties along the Potomac, to university campuses, to high schools and even to supermarkets where the common folk come out to convince people not to buy Israeli products. Walking today in most European cities while wearing a kipa is a courageous act.

Purim is here again with the same cast of players. We Jews still naively believe that there is inherent good in mankind. In reality, the goyim haven't changed, except that today they camouflage their murderous intentions with politically and morally accepted nuances.

And as in the time of the Purim episode, we must be prepared to defend ourselves against outwardly-unabashed Jew-hating enemies, and we must also be wary of allies whose "friendly" advice to Medinat Yisrael would lead us to extinction.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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