

פרשת פקודי-שקלים

This Shabbat we read a special Torah portion about the obligation the Jews had to contribute a half Shekel towards the Mishkan. In this reading, the word תרומה (contribution) is mentioned three times. Rashi explains that one mention of תרומה is for the annual obligation that the Jews had to give a ½ Shekel, and this money went towards the upkeep of the Temple as well as for the various communal sacrifices that were offered. The second mention of Terumah is referring to the contributions that the Jews made to construct the Mishkan. Each Jew gave what they could afford, some gave more and some gave less. The third mention of Terumah was for the one time obligation the Jews had to contribute ½ Shekel towards the אדנים (sockets) of the Mishkan. The sockets were made of silver, and were the base of the Mishkan in which the קרשים (beams) were placed into.

Each and every Jew, no matter how rich or poor needed to contribute a ½ Shekel towards the sockets. What was so important about the sockets that necessitated everyone to be a part of?? If we analyze the components of the Mishkan in order of importance it would seem that the sockets would not be too high up on the list?! Obviously, there is something that the sockets represent that is integral for the entire Jewish nation to be a part of and this was the Misvah of Emunah-faith.

The Mishkan had 613 components; each component corresponded to one of the 613 Misvot. The sockets correspond to the Misvah of Emunah. This was something that needed to be equal amongst all Jews no matter how well to do they were or vice versa. Habakkuk the prophet stood the entire religion on one principle "וצדיק באמונתו יחיה" - "a Sadik will live through his faith". Emunah is the base of our entire religion. It's like the roots of a tree. The deeper our faith, the higher we can grow.

There are three parts to Emunah. One, is the belief that Hashem created the world Ex nihilo, with no partner whatsoever. "אני ראשון ואני אחרון ומבלעדי אין אלקים" "I am first-that I have no father". "אני ראשון-שאין לי אב" "I am last-that I have no son".

There is no one that proceeded Hashem, and no one that is a partner to his creation. This is contrary to the various other beliefs in the world, and we need to constantly remind ourselves of this daily. As we see the Rabbis obligated us to say "שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"-that Hashem is one- two times daily. Even a holy Sadik is not a partner with Hashem as the Pasuk says when the Jews crossed the sea; "ויאמנו בה' ובמשה עבדו"-“the people believed in Hashem and Moshe his servant”. They believed in Hashem, and they also believed; משה עבדו-that Moshe was only a loyal servant of Hashem.

This is a story with the Baal Shem of Michelstat (Rav Yishak Zekel Leib Wormeiser) who was a child prodigy. One day the king commanded him to appear before him in his palace on the following day. “How will I know in which room to find you? ; asked the young Baal Shem. “You must figure it out” answered the king. The next day the Baal Shem arrived at the palace at the appointed time and from outside, he began to analyze the many windows of the palace. He noticed that all of the shades were drawn except for one. He realized that this must be the room where the king is waiting. He entered the palace, and calculated which room he had seen from the outside. When he entered the king asked “how did you know which room I was in??” “Simple”; replied the Baal Shem. “I noticed that this was the only room the shades were not drawn”. “What if I had drawn the shades to this room as well, how then would you have found me??” asked the king. “I would’ve asked your servants” answered the Baal Shem. “What if one servant told you I was in the north wing and one said I was in the south wing, what would you have done then??” asked the king. “I would’ve asked a third servant and see what he said, as is the Torah law that we follow the majority” answered the Baal Shem. “Now I’ve got you! Exclaimed the king, you yourself just admitted that your religion follows the majority. If

so, why don't you follow the majority of the world and follow Christianity?! "My dear king" the Baal Shem replied, "now that I know which room you are in, even if a thousand servants told me otherwise I would pay no attention to them!!" it is the same with our religion, we know there is only one Hashem. It is as clear as are you being in this room! No matter how many people think otherwise they are all mistaken!!

The second part of Emunah is the belief that Hashem is running the world. Not only did he create it, but he micromanages every last detail of what goes on in the world. The Baal Shem Tov once explained to his student the extent of Hashem's involvement in even the seemingly insignificant minute details of what happens constantly. "Even when you see a few stalks of hay that fall off a passing wagon and land on the street you should know that those stalks were ordained to fall in that exact spot by Hashem!". Even a small pebble falling from a truck is a decree from Hashem! It is not the insignificant random act it seems to be!! How much more so everything that happens to us and affects our lives, is directly ordained by Hashem!

The first two parts of Emunah are relatively easy compared to the third part. The third part of Emunah is the belief that every single thing that happens in our lives is for the good!

We can understand a good person prospering and a wicked one suffering. But how are we to process a pure man suffering and an evil man prospering?! "צדיק ורע לו" - is one of the most difficult concepts to digest! This however is a mandatory part of having full Emunah in Hashem. We must know that - as clear as it is that Hashem created the world and runs it - Hashem is perfect in everything that he decrees upon us. Hashem has been around forever, and he has a *perfect record*! Only Hashem has been around forever and what happens today can be based and predicated on events that transpired thousands of years ago! It is impossible for any man to understand the calculations of Hashem.

Hacham Baruch Zt'l likened this to a man who entered the synagogue in the middle of prayers. He hears the Hazan reading the Pasuk in Ashrei;

"Hashem protects all those that love him and destroys all the wicked"- "שומר ה' את כל אהביו ואת כל הרשעים ישמיד". However since he is late, he misses the first two words of the Pasuk and only hears "את כל אהביו ואת כל הרשעים" "all of those that love him and all the wicked he destroys". "What's going on?" screamed the man. Hashem destroys those that love him?! Same idea with the man who left the synagogue early, and only heard the words "שומר ה' את כל אהביו ואת כל הרשעים" (Hashem protects those that love him and the wicked) without hearing the final word of the Pasuk "ישמיד"-destroy. "What's going on?" he asks, why would Hashem protect the wicked?! The one who left early and the one who entered late only hear half the message!! It sounds ludicrous to them, but they have not seen the perfection of the whole picture! They did not hear the entire Pasuk! We have no way of understanding the depth of Hashem's master plan in our time on this world.

When the עשרה הרוגי מלכות (ten holy martyrs in the times of the Romans) were being killed - each in a gruesome death, the angels pleaded with Hashem; "זו תורה וזו שכרה"- "this is Torah and this is its reward?!" "Keep silent" commanded Hashem "or else I will turn the world back to ובהו!" (The nothingness that the world was before creation).

What was the meaning of Hashem's response to the angels "or else I will revert the world back to nothingness"? This can be explained with a parable of a skilled Jewish tailor, who masterfully stitched beautiful suits for the king. The king would supply the material, and the tailor would use the materials to create the most fabulous clothes. The ministers of the kings became jealous of the Jewish tailor, and decided to fabricate a story about him. They told the king "you think he uses what you give him for your suits?! He takes your fabrics and materials, and sells them for a profit, then makes a suit for you out of inexpensive materials!! The king believed their lies, and summoned the Jewish tailor before him, and sentenced him to death. "Your majesty" pleaded the tailor, "can you please bring one of your suits before me?? The king did so, and the tailor masterfully destitched the entire suit, taking apart every button and thread. When he was done, he laid it all out in front of the king and asked; "please my dear king, examine all the materials and see that they are exactly what you've given me to

work with! The king did so, and realized that the Jew was perfectly honest. This is what Hashem was telling the angels. Would you like me to unravel the world back to nothingness and show you step by step how perfect and just I am?!! You cannot understand my ways which span all time!

The great Mekubal known as the שדה (ר' שאול דיוק הכהן) shed some light on the effects of the death of the 10 martyrs. He said that their deaths protected the Jews for 2,000 years. These 2,000 years expired in the English year 1940. It is then that the merit of the 10 martyrs will need to be regenerated (the שדה wrote this in the 1920's!). 1940 was the beginning of the Holocaust in which 6 million Jews lost their lives "ה' ימקום דמם". Each martyr corresponded to the 600,000 collective Neshamot of the Jews. 10 martyrs' times 600,000 Jews equals 6 million! It took the lives of 6 million Jews to regenerate this Zechut. Who can understand Hashem's "calculations"?!

This story is told of a rich boy who grew up in his parent's mansion. Each morning when he awoke, he had a fresh loaf of bread awaiting him on a silver platter. One day he was roaming around the mansion, and found himself in the kitchen area. He saw a bowl of kernels and asked; "what are these doing here??" "Your bread comes from these grains" they responded to him. The young man was astounded. How is that possible?! These are small bits of grain, how does this turn into bread?? They explained to the young man the process of how they take these kernels and grind them. Then they form the dough, by adding certain ingredients, bake it, then place the delicious bread on his silver platter. The boy was amazed! "I would *never* have imagined this" he cried.

Soon after the young man took a trip outside of town and passed by a farm. He became inquisitive and asked the farmer if he could stay with him to observe his farming routines. "Of course" replied the farmer, "but you must not ask any questions". The boy agreed. In the morning the boy awoke to find the farmer on a tractor that looked like it was tearing apart his beautiful soil!! What is going on, why would you destroy your field? Asked the young man, the farmer did not respond. A few days later the boy

noticed a giant bowl of the beautiful kernels he had seen in the kitchen of his mansion. “Finally I understand what he is going to do” the young man thought. He is going to bake some bread! The farmer took the bowl, and began to toss the kernels around the dirt in his field. “Are you crazy?!” Asked the young man, why would you take these precious kernels and scatter them throughout your field?!” The boy was baffled. A few days later the boy awoke to find the field had begun to grow beautiful golden stalks that were swaying back and forth in the wind. “What a breathtaking site” he thought, “maybe he *does* know what he is doing”. He then saw the farmer grab a sickle, and start chopping the stalks down! “He is absolutely nuts” thought the boy, just when something beautiful is developing he violently cuts them down! After that the farmer began to winnow the stalks and toss them up in the wind. The boy was beyond confused, and was convinced that the farmer was totally delusional. At the end of the process, to the boy’s amazement, there was a mountain of kernels left on the floor, and boy realized that all of this was the process that leads to the delicious bread that he enjoyed daily. What he thought was nonsensical, was really perfection.

So too regarding Hashem, we are like the young boy who was totally clueless in what is a perfectly normal system. We are told to judge people for the best, even when we see someone doing something totally forbidden, we must use our imagination to think of various reasons why the person is justified in doing this act. How much more so, must we judge Hashem - our merciful G-d- favorably!!

A lady was reading a Chinese newspaper and could understand nothing but the pictures. She began to panic when she saw a photo of a ship sinking, and all the passengers in fear! Someone who spoke Chinese showed her that she was holding the newspaper upside down!! The ship was sailing peacefully upright, and everyone was really smiling!! Things that seem totally unfair are truly just and perfect.

The entire Jewish nation needed to be an equal part of this ½ Shekel contribution to the sockets that represented Emunah. They gave

specifically *half* a Shekel as opposed to a full Shekel, to show that in order to have proper Emunah we must understand that we only see “half” the story. There is a lot going on that we don’t know and cannot understand.

The Reuniting of יה and ויה

The word שקל in ב'ש form the letters בדכ that equal 26. (The א'ת system is when we take the first letter of the Aleph Beit, the 'א - and pair it with the last letter - the 'ת. The second letter, the 'ב- with the second to last letter - the ש. The third letter 'ג- with the third to last letter the 'ר- and so on throughout the Aleph Beit with this system) By giving a ½ Shekel we show that Hashem’s name is כביכול “incomplete” in the exile. The Pasuk says "כי יד על כס יה מלחמה לה' בעמלק" (“Hashem will have a war with Amalek from generation to generation). The word יה teaches us that Hashem is יה and is separated from the ויה. The letters יה and ויה are reflected in the Pasuk "ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ" - “let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad”. In this world we only have the יה (ישמחו השמים), meaning it is only in the heavens that we rejoice at Hashem’s will, but down here on earth we cannot rejoice because we do not understand the occasional seemingly harsh decrees!

In the future, when the ויה will return, we too will rejoice. It will be ותגל הארץ-earth be glad! Our job is to “bring back” the ויה with our firm belief that Hashem is always good. Even in a time of mourning ח"ו, when a person says Kadish, he says; "יתגדל ויתקדש שמייה רבא". The first two words "יתגדל ויתקדש" contain 11 letters, 11 is the numerical value of ויה. The mourners accept the difficulty, and have Emunah in Hashem. This causes the ויה to come closer and join with the יה as the Kadish continues; "שמיה רבה". The word שמיה can be read as שם-יה the name יה. "יתגדל ויתקדש שמייה רבה" - may the name יה be increased (יתגדל) and sanctified with the joining of the letters ויה represented by the 11 letters of the first two words of Kaddish!

The Holiness of 10 and Perfecting the 11

The holiness of the number 10 is well known. It takes 10 men to make a Minyan, the 10 commandments, the 10 utterances in which the world was created etc... As a general rule, whenever there is spirituality it is surrounded by impurities that try and overtake it. It says in the **אזמר** **בשבחין**: "ימינא ושמאלא ובנייהו כלה" (to the right and to the left, and in between the bride). The Shabbat is the holiest day of the week, and it is surrounded by Sunday- a day observed by the Christians, and Friday- a day observed by the Muslims. So too the number 10, It is surrounded by the 9 and the 11. These numbers are sometimes "seized" by the **סטרא אחרא** for evil. As we see the most tragic day in the year is **תשעה באב** the **9th** day of the **11th** month. Our job is to perfect these numbers. There is a way to "fix" the 9 (for a different discussion), and a way to "fix" the 11. The 11, as mentioned stands for **ו-ה**, and when we connect the **ו-ה** to the **י-ה** with our Emunah, Torah, and Misvot, we perfect the 11 and bring closer the redemption. The holy Ketoret had **11** ingredients corresponding to the holiness of the **ו-ה**.

We can bring down this holiness with our solid Emunah in Hashem, with knowing that he is perfect, and how lucky we are to be his people and know of him.

We must constantly remind ourselves that Hashem is one, and that he is micromanaging every last detail of the world and it is all with a grand master plan! With this faith, we will merit to see the good in our lives and merit to see the ultimate good with the coming of the Mashiach, the eradication of Amalek, the reuniting of the **י-ה** and **ו-ה** and the rebuilding of the Bet Hamikdash. Speedily in our days! Amen!