

*The
"Daf HaShavua"
Parsha Paper
Mishpatim, 5781*



*TIMES for NY
February 12, 2021
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Issue # 777

In Memory of Shalom Tzvi ben Husni, Malkiel ben ImaShalom, Esther bat Sara, Penina bat Devorah, Aharon ben Esther, Moshe HaCohen Ben Burcho

"THE BETTER HALF"



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A woman and her husband interrupted their vacation to go to the dentist. The man walked into the office and announced, "Look doc, I need you to extract a tooth, but I'm in a big rush so I have no time to wait for Novocain. Just get the tooth out as quickly as possible, and we'll be on our way." The dentist was impressed. "You're certainly a courageous man," he said. "Which tooth is it?" The man turned to his wife, "Show him your tooth, dear."

Rabbi Aryeh Levine zt'l, "the tzaddik of Jerusalem", once walked into the doctor's office with his wife and said, "Doctor, my wife's foot is hurting us!" In regards to the Temple Service there seems to be an emphasis on halves:

- Each Jew was obligated to contribute a half-shekel in order to take a consensus of how many Jews there were¹.
- The special meal-offering was brought, "half it in the morning and half of it in the afternoon."²
- The dimensions of the Holy Ark that rested in the Holy of Holies were, "two and a half cubits its length; a cubit and a half its width; and a cubit and a half its height... a cover of pure gold, two and a half cubits its length; and a cubit and a half its width..."³

What is the significance of 'halves' in regards to the Divine Service? At the conclusion of parshas Mishpatim, the Torah records the events that occurred at the time of the giving of the Torah at Sinai.⁴ "Moshe came and told the people all the words of G-d and all the ordinances, and the entire people responded with one voice and they said, 'All the words that G-d has spoken, we will do.'"... He sent the youths of the Children of Israel and they brought up elevation-offerings, and they slaughtered bulls... Moshe took half the blood and placed it in basins, and half the blood he threw on the altar. He took the Book of the Covenant and read it with earshot of the people, and they said, "Everything that G-d has spoken we will do and we will hear (*na'aseh v'nishma*)."

What changed in the nation's response that at first they responded that they would **do** everything G-d commanded, whereas after Moshe divided the blood they responded with the legendary words, 'We will do **and we will hear**'? The Be'er Moshe explains that G-d created the world based on a system of 'provider-recipient'. No one is self-sufficient and we all need each other in different ways.⁵ Everything in the world is nourished and sustained based on this system.

The verse in Bereishis states⁶, "Male and female He created them." The male represents the provider of the raw materials, while the female represents accepting those materials and nurturing them, bringing them to their full potential. Only together do they compose the complete entity that G-d intended, "He created them male and female. He blessed them and called their name – Adam on the day they were created."⁷ The first man and woman as a synergistic union were called 'Adam', and represented composite perfection. In that sense, the primordial couple is the prototype for all future unions.

The gemara states that a cow wishes to express its milk to its calf even more than the calf wishes to nurse from its mother. This is true in regards to all such relationships. The 'provider' requires and benefits from the 'receiver' even more than the receiver requires the provider. The giver-provider connection is inextricable and both draw strength and inspiration from their respective roles. The receiver is granted new materials or knowledge that he requires, and the provider is granted a sense of innate purpose and satisfaction through giving and helping another.

If we desire that G-d shower us with blessing and goodness, we have to initiate that process by assist others. In this sense every individual must view himself as a half. The novelty is that not only should the receiver see himself as deficient without his provider, but the provider himself must view himself as deficient without the receiver. It is this repeated cycle that unites us and creates a sense of closeness and bonding. The Mishkan was a perennial microcosmic representation of the Revelation of Sinai⁸. At Sinai, the nation achieved an uncanny level of complete unification, which was a prerequisite for their

receiving the Torah. In order to remind them of the need to always feel that sense of fraternity there were many halves in the measurements of the Mishkan. Those halves served as a reminder that no one is complete when he stands alone. When Moshe divided the blood he was symbolizing this idea. The two halves of the blood together represented completion. The nation's declaration "we will do" represents this world, the world of action and physical accomplishment. The declaration "we will hear" on the other hand, represents the higher realm, the world of intellect and wisdom in which the voice of reason, based on the Word and Will of G-d, dominate.

Originally the nation pledged to do all of the mitzvos by fulfilling everything demanded of them. After all, the Torah was being given to a physical world of action. But when Moshe divided the blood before them, it symbolized that there is a need for another component in their acceptance – a level of depth and understanding. It isn't enough to act in isolation, or even to perform actions with others. There is a need for understanding and connection – not only physically, but moreover on a spiritual level. Thus, the next time they added that they would do *and* they would hear. This idea is applicable to many facets of life. But it is perhaps no more true than in marriage – the ultimate union⁹. Megillas Esther relates that when Queen Esther risked her life and approached King Achashveirosh unlawfully, it was a moment of incredible peril. Essentially, the future of the entire Klal Yisroel was in limbo. "When the King noticed Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favor. The King extended to Esther the gold scepter that was in his hand, and Esther approached and touched the tip of his scepter."¹⁰ The words "in his hand" seem to be extraneous. Where else would the scepter be? Rabbi Shimshon of Antropoli zt'l explained that a scepter has two parts. The top of the scepter represents the authority and august majesty of the king, and therefore always remains in the hand of the king. The bottom of the scepter was used as the extension of the king's hand, to symbolize whether the king was pleased with the person's presence or not. When Achashveirosh saw Esther standing before him he was so taken by her charisma, sincerity, and persona that he did something unthinkable. He turned the scepter around so that the top portion which always remained in his hand was facing Esther, as if to say that she was worthy of all his power and prestige. In her extreme humility and wisdom Esther walked up to the king and touched the bottom of the scepter (which was now facing him), symbolizing that she deferred to his authority and majesty. This exchange between Esther and Achashveirosh represents an ideal marriage. A husband must be ready to forgo his honor to his wife, while she defers it back to him, both with unyielding love and admiration for the other. The Sages explain that every time the word "*hamelech* (the king)" appears in the megillah it is an allusion to G-d, the King of Kings. The King represents G-d while the Queen represents us who receive G-d's blessing and goodness. Rabbi Hirsch explains that when Moshe divided the blood and placed half on the altar and half in the basin he was symbolizing that there is a deep relationship between us and G-d, as it were. "The one half of the blood had already been thrown on the Altar and now Moshe threw the other half towards the nation. This would express the idea, that every drop of blood, every ounce of our forces, that we give up to carry out G-d's Will on earth, is given back to us in full measure that we give it to G-d. We receive it back from G-d, and we only really have true possession of ourselves if we offer ourselves to G-d."

There is a new custom that has gained a following in the distorted world of feminist Judaism. They decided that the noise of groggers being spun at the mention of the name of Haman was obnoxious and disturbing (basically it's too 'manly'). So they created flags that have a depiction of Esther on one side and Vashti on the other side¹¹, and little bells on the bottom. Whenever the names of Vashti or Esther are read, they wave the flags gently. Such distortion of holy customs emanates from a lack of regard and appreciation for the Torah's viewpoint of the woman's role. In a marriage built on love and trust, such feelings do not arise because the husband 'turns the scepter' towards his wife, while she directs it back to him. It is only when a marriage is not built on mutual respect and love, that feelings of inferiority and inadequacy arise. The Kav Hayashar quotes the Zohar which relates the following: "Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Abba were guests in someone's home one evening. At midnight they arose to study Torah. The daughter of their host got up and lit a torch so that they could study Torah. When Rabbi Abba saw her actions he began and he said: (The verse in Mishley (6:23) says) "For a mitzvah is a candle and Torah is light." The woman is commanded to light the Shabbos candles, and not the man. The reason is the woman corresponds to the Divine Presence. "Torah is light", meaning, the Torah that her husband studies, for a man is commanded about the study of Torah. That gives tremendous light like the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. What emerges is that both of them create the light of Torah and Shabbos." In a proper home the spiritual light is created by the joint efforts of both the husband and wife. Parshas Shekalim always marks the imminent commencement of the month of Adar¹². The gemara¹³ states, "When Adar arrives we increase joy." There is much discussion about exactly what this means and how one increases joy. But one thing is for certain. Whenever we are able to help another person in any way it fills us with an indescribable feeling of contentment and joy.

The reading of the Shekalim reminds us that we all need each other, not only on a physical level, but also (and perhaps even more so) on a spiritual/psychological level. It is our ability to feel worthy and needed that gives us a sense of purpose and mission¹⁴. When we appreciate each other we will realize why, as a nation, we are united. The joy that emanates from that awareness is why we were able to reaccept the Torah on Purim and why the joy of Purim is unparalleled.

"Moshe took half the blood" "When Adar arrives we increase joy"

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is dedicated in loving memory of:

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Ester bat Sarah
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David ben Tamar
Zilpa bat Zulaycha
Tziviva (Svetlana) bat Frecha
Aharon ben Ester**

Rabbi Dani Staum

(1) This is discussed in the special reading for Parshas Shekalim. Shemos 30: 11-16 (2) Vayikra 6:12; This meal offering was offered by every Kohen once in his lifetime, the first time he performed the Temple Service. In addition, the Kohen Gadol brought this offering every day. (3) Shemos 25:10-22(4) Shemos 24:1-11; There is a dispute among the commentaries exactly when this account transpired. According to Rashi it occurred prior to the giving of the Torah. Ramban, Ibn Ezra, and Rashbam however opine that it occurred after the giving of the Torah. (5) This is all the more true in regards to our relation with G-d as we are completely reliant on His beneficence. (6) Bereishis 1:27 (7) Bereishis 5:2(8) See Ramban (Parshas Terumah) (9) I heard the following thought from Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer shlita, Kehillas Bais Avrohom (Monsey NY), Shabbos parshas Mishpatim/Shekalim 5762, in honor of the occasion of my afuf. (10) Esther 5:2 (11) They have decided that Vashti is an underrated heroine because she refused her husband's demand that she appear in public completely immodestly. Apparently, in their ineptitude, they feel that the fact that the gemara says that she was an incredibly wicked and immoral woman is subject to change. (12) Parshas Shekalim is read the Shabbos prior to Rosh Chodesh Adar (13) Ta'anis 29 (14) When elderly or disabled people feel that they can no longer be of benefit to others and are merely a burden, it can be overwhelmingly disheartening for them. When such a person asks to help, perhaps our best response should not be "it's okay" because we don't want to burden them. By allowing them to help out we may just be giving them a spark of life.

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