

Parashas

Ki Sisa

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י"ח אדר תשפ"ו

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י"ח ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הר"צ

רבי גמליאל הכהן

רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition Purim

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

גורמי החטא - המהירות והפחיתות

Causes of sin – Speed and impulsiveness

טיב המערכות

Half of the shekel מחצית השקל תרומה לה'; *as a portion to Hashem*

Purim has passed, but the impression remains. We merited to rejoice, to dance, to sing, and of course to fulfill the mitzvos of the day in the most beautiful manner. And now, what remains from all of this? The intention is not to the reward in the World to Come, but rather what remains in our hands? With what do we continue?

The Gemara says (Shabbos 88a): "And they stood at the foot of the mountain" — Rebbe Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that HaKadosh Baruch Hu overturned the mountain upon them like a barrel, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, good; and if not, there shall be your burial place. Rava said: Even so, they accepted it again in the days of Achashverosh, as it is written: "The Jews confirmed and accepted," they confirmed what they had already accepted. And this is: "For the Jews there was light." Rav Yehuda said: Light — this is Torah. So if we are now at the conclusion of accepting the Torah out of love, with what do we continue?

In our parashah, the Torah commands to give the half-shekel, and thus the Torah says (30:15): 'העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעט' - "The rich shall not increase and the poor shall not decrease from the half-shekel." At first glance, the words "the rich shall not increase and the poor shall not decrease" appear to be unnecessary, because if the Torah says to give a half-shekel, then it is understood that it is a half-shekel, not less and not more, for if it were possible to give whatever one wants, it would not be a half-shekel. So why does the Torah add these words? Rather, in order to teach us that the entire matter of the mitzvah of the half-shekel depends upon the purity of intention. Therefore, even the rich person, who very much wants to add in honor of Hashem, cannot add, because this mitzvah needs to be for the sake of Heaven. And for this reason the mitzvah was given only from the age of twenty and above, because in order to reach this level of performing a mitzvah truly for the sake of Heaven, one must labor and toil, and those under the age of twenty are not yet mature for this.

It is clear to us that in order to fulfill a mitzvah for the sake of Heaven, it is not possible except when it is done out of love, because one who fulfills mitzvos by compulsion cannot perform the mitzvah in completeness. And this is what we take with us from Purim: the love of Hashem. When we remember all the miracles that HaKadosh Baruch Hu performed for us, His love will be aroused in our hearts with even greater strength, and every single mitzvah that we perform we will strive to fulfill for the sake of Heaven and השם, מתוך אהבת השם, and then certainly all of our service will be much better, because that is how it is when one loves.

Tiv HaTorah – Ki Sisa

סרו מהר מן הדרך אשר צויתם עשו להם עגל מסכה: (לב, ח)

They have strayed quickly from the way that I have commanded them, they have made for themselves a molten calf. (32:8)

One must reflect on what HaKadosh Baruch Hu intended in saying "They have turned aside quickly from the way." The essence of the sin is that they made the calf. What difference does it make whether they made it "quickly" — with alacrity — or only with deliberation?

The answer is that the haste is indeed part of the sin. Just as there is a claim regarding the sin itself, there is also a claim regarding the haste, for were it not for the haste, the sin would not have come to fruition.

Haste is one of the tactics of the yetzer. The yetzer knows that even if he succeeds in inflaming a person toward a sinful act, and the person has already resolved in his heart to transgress, if only he would be given some interval between the decision and the action, that interval would be a cause for nullifying his decision. Since in the end this is rebellion against the Kingdom of Heaven, a person would utilize that time to reconsider whether it is fitting and proper to do it, and ultimately, he would arrive at the conclusion that the matter is in the category of prohibition. Therefore, besides the fact that the yetzer inflames a person to sin, it also urges him to do it in such a way that he will have no free moment for thought.

In the same manner the yetzer acted in the sin of the calf. This sin was an open rebellion against the Kingdom of Heaven, and in order for such a stumbling block to emerge from the "generation of knowledge," the yetzer had to labor greatly. It is self-understood that even after it succeeded in inflaming their hearts to such a lowly and strange sin, it had to arouse in them an intense desire to hurry and do it, for there is no doubt that if they had been given a small interval to reflect, this betrayal would not have emerged from their hands. As indeed we see that in addition to the sin itself, the fervor of zeal pulsed within those who desired that sin, and from their great eagerness for this sin nothing stood in their way, and they sought to act immediately. And Chur, who dared at that time to speak to their hearts, not only did they not pause for a moment to weigh his words, they even saw fit to spill his blood in death, so that there would not be anyone standing in their path. And Aharon also understood wisely that this was not the hour to refuse, and with no alternative he sought to act cleverly and delay them only through technical reasons, with the hope of postponing the sin through them until Moshe would come, but he did not dare to express in an explicit statement that he opposed their view and their will. However, even for these technical reasons they found a solution, after the yetzer had placed the full weight of his pressure upon them to hasten them, Rachmana litzlan.

Regarding this was the claim of HaKadosh Baruch Hu in saying "They have turned aside quickly from the way." Why did you hurry to sin? The very fact that they stumbled in sin is also a claim, but it is not as strong a

claim as that they hastened to do it. It is true that the same yetzer that inflamed them to the sin also inflamed them to the haste and alacrity, and nevertheless, even if a person does not have the ability to withstand the temptation itself, he does have the ability to withstand the temptation to hurry.

When it appears to a person that the power of endurance against the yetzer that provokes him is difficult, and he has already resolved in his heart to be enticed by it, he still has the ability to be clever and say to his yetzer: I have already resolved in my heart to act according to your counsel, I am no longer weighing in my mind whether to do it or not; if so, what difference does it make to you whether I do it today or tomorrow? Thus, he is obligated to say to his yetzer even if he has truly already resolved in his heart to sin, and it appears to him that there is no difference whether it will be today or tomorrow. He does not see that on the next day some reason may arise that will give him support to overcome his yetzer. Nevertheless, he should do what is within his power; the interval of one day he can still allow himself. And after he indeed acts this way, there will be fulfilled in him the statement of Chazal (Yoma 39a): "A person sanctifies himself a little below, they sanctify him greatly from above," and in that interval that he gives between decision and action, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will already be at

his help to strengthen him and fortify him so that he will not fall into the net of the yetzer.

The interval between decision and a good deed is also relevant when a desire to do good awakens in a person. If he sees that there awakens within him a desire to hasten in this, for an intense desire that awakens within a person even for a mitzvah is suspect lest it be the agent of the yetzer who intends thereby to gain some profits.

This matter is also seen in the words of rebuke of Yaakov Avinu to Reuven for having disturbed his couch, when he said to him (Bereishis 49:7): "פחז במים אל" - 'תותר - "Impetuous as water, you shall not have preeminence." Although we do not grasp at all what the sin of Reuven was, and there is no doubt that even if in practice he did some act that was not according to law he intended only for the sake of a mitzvah, and our holy Chazal said (Shabbos 55b) that anyone who says Reuven sinned is nothing but mistaken, nevertheless we see that there was a claim against him, because even if he intended for the sake of a mitzvah he should not have hurried.

And as is told about the holy Gaon Rebbe Chaim of Volozhin zy'a, that when the desire first arose in his mind to open his well-known yeshiva in Volozhin, he entered before his teacher the Vilna Gaon to consult with him regarding the idea, and the Gaon told him that for the

time being he should leave the idea. After a period of time Rebbe Chaim appeared again to ask regarding the idea, and now the Gaon inquired into each and every detail of the plan that Rebbe Chaim had and gave his consent to the idea.

Rebbe Chaim himself was astonished at the complete consent, since he had not prepared for this, knowing that initially the Gaon had not been enthusiastic about the idea, and before entering again to his teacher he thought that the Gaon would explain his refusal and perhaps they would find a way to establish the yeshiva under different conditions that would satisfy the Gaon. Since this was so, he wished to know the explanation of the matter: at first what did he think, and in the end what did he think?

When Rebbe Chaim presented his wonder before his teacher, the Gaon gave him to understand, and thus he said to him: When you first came to ask regarding this idea, I saw that you were very enthusiastic about the idea, and this did not find favor in my eyes, for from when does the yetzer hara give a person an intense desire for a mitzvah? Therefore, I rejected the matter, because when you would see my refusal, you would reconsider whether there was some flaw in the matter. And now that you have come a second time, I knew that you had already reconsidered the matter and found no flaw in it; if so, I also agree with the idea.

‘מדברים אחרי התפילה’ ‘We will speak after davening’

A surprise call from the IRS caught me unprepared for this scenario. It was exactly during Corona, when business had declined somewhat, and I was forced to deposit a great deal of cash into the bank account so that the standing orders and payments would continue to go through. The clerk on the other end of the line asked me to come to his office and bring him all of my bank statements.

I tried to evade and gain time, and I explained to him that I was sick with Corona and had no possibility of bringing him what he requested, and that immediately after I recovered I would bring it to him.

But the gentile told me that in any case many people were working from home now during Corona, and therefore he asked that I send him the bank statements through the computer.

I said all right and ended the call with a trembling heart. If he were to see the statements, I would become seriously entangled, especially since in the United States for money-related offenses one sits in prison; it is a federal crime. I called a good friend who knows the system from the inside to clarify what could be done in my case.

He was stunned to hear the name of the investigator. He told me that this was an antisemitic goy from the seed of Amalek who enjoyed abusing Jews. "Only a miracle will save you. Try to speak with the Creator, for only He can help you."

I was shattered to pieces. All the years I had worked in an orderly manner, and precisely now the wrath of this Jew-hater fell upon me?

Exactly during this period of Corona many requests of rabbis were publicized that each person should take upon himself a good spiritual resolution for the merit of the people of Israel, each one in the area in which he needs strengthening, and each one knows what he needs to take upon himself. Among other things it was publicized that the entire Corona came as a result of disrespect in shul such as talking during davening and Torah reading, and measure for measure many shuls were closed. I immediately accepted upon myself not to speak at all except after davening. Although I was not among those who spoke, between one aliyah and another I allowed myself to speak. Shabbos passed, and specifically it was not difficult for me at all, and moreover I enjoyed the davening and the Torah reading without any speaking whatsoever. The next day I received a phone call from the friend who informed me that this gentile who had abused many Jews had left the office and a vehicle struck him and he was pronounced dead on the spot. I was stunned by the good news and I strengthened myself even more regarding the matter of speech and strengthened many others. More than six years have passed since then, and until today, Baruch Hashem and with the help of Hashem going forward, I have not heard from the IRS.

טיב ההשגרה

נ.א.

טיב המעשיות

Tzedakah With Money and Words

זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל הָעֵבֶר עַל הַפְּקָדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל
הַקֹּדֶשׁ עֶשְׂרִים גֵּרָה הַשֶּׁקֶל מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה.

This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting: half a shekel according to the holy shekel. Twenty geirahs equal one shekel; half a shekel shall be an offering to Hashem. (30:13)

There are several types of people who donate money to charity. Some give to make a name for themselves, so that wherever they go they are acknowledged as huge benefactors and baalei chesed. Others give to collect merit, either for the sake of someone who is ill or for a yeshuah that they themselves need. And then there are those who give literally for the sake of Heaven, for the sake of fulfilling the mitzvah to give tzedakah. They are not interested in publicizing their deed; they do not even want anyone to know about it.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Bnei Yisrael to donate half a shekel for the needs of the Mishkan. He emphasized that הַעֲשִׂי לֹא יִרְבֶּה וְהִדָּל לֹא יִמְעִט מִמִּחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לְתֵת אֶת הַתְּרוּמָה הַזֶּה, The rich shall give no more and the poor shall give no less than half a shekel to give the portion of Hashem (30:15). This not only teaches us what to give but also how to give. Everyone gives half a shekel, but it must be a portion of Hashem — for the sake of Heaven and for no other reason.

In this way, the mitzvah of tzedakah is different from all other mitzvos. If a person gives tzedakah with ulterior motives, such as gaining respect or earning reward, he may fulfill the mitzvah of making the poor person happy, but his fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzedakah is not complete. When one is giving tzedakah, even if it is only half a shekel, it should be for the sake of Heaven.

As every year, Parashas Ki Sissa is read around Purim time, when we have a mitzvah to give to whoever “stretches out his hand” (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim 694). At this time of year, we say the opposite of the rich shall give no more; instead, we say (Beitzah 16a), “Whoever increases, increases for himself from Heaven.”

The giving may be without limits, but still, it is possible that the recipient will not be happy with his donation, because he doesn’t sense the donor’s joy in giving. If a person has the ability to give, let him give with joy, for the sake of doing a mitzvah. And then, in turn, when he extends his hand toward Heaven, he will have his own requests fulfilled without limit.

Why is this mitzvah so unique and so different? There is no other mitzvah that is performed this way. Take tefillah, for example. One person takes a long time for tefillah while another person is brief, and each one’s kavanah depends on his own level of understanding and his degree of connection with Hashem. There are no two Jews who daven the exact same way.

The same applies to all the other mitzvos — each individual fulfills it according to his level and resources. All except the mitzvah of the half shekel. When it comes to this mitzvah, everyone has to give the same exact amount. Another point is that the Baal Shem Tov, zy”a, taught that if a person does a mitzvah

with ulterior motives, it would have been better had he not done it at all. But when it comes to tzedakah, even if a person does not do it with the best of intentions, it is still considered a fulfillment of the mitzvah because he is sustaining a poor person. We do not make calculations when it comes to giving tzedakah. If a person is presented with the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah, he should hurry and give without thinking too much about it. If he is giving only for the sake of Heaven, even better! But if he is not yet at this level, he should not procrastinate, thinking that he is not on the level yet to fulfill this mitzvah properly.

This is why there is no berachah for the mitzvah of tzedakah, even though it is a mitzvah from the Torah. If a person were to start reciting a berachah, taking time to say it with concentration and focus, it is quite possible that the poor person collecting the charity will die in the meantime...

Nevertheless, even if a person can fulfill the mitzvah when his intentions are not totally pure, Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants him to train himself to give for the sake of Heaven, for the sake of a mitzvah. For this reason, the Torah instructed us to give half a shekel for the needs of the Mishkan— no more and no less — and this way the giver will not become haughty, thinking he should be honored for his contribution, since the poor man gives the exact same amount. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is telling us, “Give even just half a shekel! But do it for the sake of the mitzvah without any stipulations or ulterior motives.”

This is a time of year when everyone is involved in the mitzvah of tzedakah. Let us strive to give for the sake of the mitzvah and with no other motives, the Mishnah states (Menachos 13:11), “It is the same whether a man offers much or little, as long as he directs his heart toward Heaven.”

A young student once told me that during a certain period of his adolescence he fell into a severe personal crisis. He saw no success in his learning, and as he wandered without inner fulfillment or spiritual vitality, the evil inclination ensnared him, and he deteriorated step by step—may Heaven have mercy. He resolved to leave the yeshivah entirely, having seen no fruit in his toil, and was determined to cast off the yoke of Torah and, Heaven

forbid, drift into foreign domains—the powers of the sitra achra and their offshoots. Hashem safeguard us.

At the final moment, just before carrying out his plan, the merit of the prayers of his forebears seemingly stood by him. He decided instead to spend a holy Shabbos in Meron, near the exalted resting place of the Divine tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. There, by the tzaddik’s merit, he was saved from descending into ruin.

After the Shabbos meal on Friday night, he thought, “It would be a pity to waste this important night in sleep.” He took up his Gemara and began learning with renewed vigor, pushing aside the turmoil raging within his afflicted heart. He sat immersed in Torah study the entire night in the study-shtieblach established for travelers on the mountain. He did not notice that dawn had risen and the sun had shone for hours, and that the vasikin minyan had already concluded.

Suddenly, a group entered the shtiebl, having just completed their prayers, and began arranging the hall for the next service. One of them remarked that more shtenders were needed so that additional learners could benefit. A brief disagreement arose—whether narrow or wide shtenders would better suit the space. They turned to the one who appeared to be in charge: “And what is the Rav Ploni Almoni’s view on the matter?”—he being among those overseeing dedications at Meron.

He pondered briefly and replied: “There is merit in conserving space. But in this shtiebl it seems more fitting to bring the wider shtenders. These study-shtieblach exist primarily for the sake of Torah scholars. A large Gemara, when opened, does not rest well on a narrow stand.”

Then, without noticing the youth listening from the corner, he gestured toward him and said: “Look, a refined young man sits there, absorbed in his Torah learning with diligence. The entire world stands upon his Torah! Is he not worthy of a wide and fitting shtender?” These words pierced the youth’s heart like a ringing bell: “The entire world stands upon my Torah!”

At that very moment, a resolution ripened firmly in his heart: to transform his entire course of action and overturn all his former plans. It is Needless to detail the many tefillos and weeping that he poured out during that Shabbos by the holy tziyun, beseeching Heaven for a full return and for success in his Torah path.

When that lofty Shabbos concluded, he did not travel to Tel Aviv as arranged, but returned directly to the yeshivah. He overturned his conduct and swiftly became one of its foremost scholars, ascending gloriously in Torah and yirah until he was counted among the select iluyim of the holy yeshivah. They even said of

him in good-natured jest that Rabbi Shimon had sent his attendant to restore the heart of his guest for the good and lead him onto the correct path.

Some time later, he merited to find that Rav Ploni Almoni again—whose identity he had not known—and thanked him deeply for the unwitting words that had anchored his salvation. He pledged faithfully—without vow—that he would never depart from Torah again, and would fulfill with heart and soul the teaching of Ben Bag Bag in Pirkei Avos (5:22): *בן בג בג אומר הפך בה ובה הפך בה וכלא בה, ובה תתן, וסיב ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה* - “Ben Bag Bag said: Engage in it over and over again, for everything is in it. Through it you will attain clarity; grow old and worn in it; do not depart from it—for you have no better portion than it.” Amen.

How great is the immense and wondrous charity that Yisrael—holy and devoted—dispersed on the day of Purim, as the halachah establishes: One does not scrutinize the coins of Purim; rather, *לְלוּל פּוֹתִימִים לוֹ* - “Whoever extends his hand to receive, we give to him.”

A question was once put to me concerning this charity: how can we be certain, amidst the many acts of giving, that the funds indeed reach deserving and upright recipients?

And I replied, that even so, our duty is to fulfill the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch plainly and according to halachah, and surely from Heaven the proper and fitting charity will be guided to its intended and needed place.

This is exemplified by the wondrous incident involving the gaon and tzaddik Rav Chaim Uri Freund, a member of the Eidah Chareidis beis din here in Yerushalayim, when he married off one of his children and required the enormous sum of 25,000 liros, a very large amount in those days, as he had undertaken for the purchase of a home for the young couple.

The tzaddik did not know from where such a formidable sum would come, and he prayed before Hashem that He stand at his right, to support him and assist him in his distress, placing his trust in Him.

And behold, on the final day allotted for payment of the home, a messenger arrived from the seller, urgently declaring that if the

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debt were not settled in full that very day, the contract would no longer be binding, and the home could be sold to another.

At that moment, Rav Chaim Uri did not possess even a single lira, and did not know how to begin repaying such a vast debt. He therefore took up the Sefer Tehillim and poured out his soul before Hashem, in the craft of his fathers across generations, with a broken heart.

And then, in the early hours of the afternoon, a special envoy arrived at his home, a trusted emissary from the holy gaon, the Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel zy"l, holding in his hand a check of 25,000 liros exactly—no more and no less. Rav Chaim Uri rejoiced exceedingly and offered thanks to Hashem and to His righteous servants, and promptly sent to settle the debt.

Upon this he taught: When a person acts mightily and wondrously in the mitzvah of tzedakah with messirus nefesh, fulfilling the words of the pasuk (Devarim 15:10), *כִּתּוֹן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא יֵרֶע לְכַבֵּד בְּתִתֶּנּוּ לוֹ* —You shall surely give to him, and let your heart not be grieved when you give to him — then Heaven will surely help that his donation will reach a needy person, and thus was the tzaddik was granted by Heaven that the precise sum should help a needy person and reach him at the precise time it was needed.

He further illustrated by way of parable: Just as a person eats his food, and only a small portion remains to sustain the body, so too in the lofty mitzvah of tzedakah: from Heaven that which is

given with completeness and messirus nefesh is preserved and guided to the right need at the right time.

Therefore, as with the lesson of the parable, we must give generously as commanded by the Torah, and Hashem will direct each act of charity according to His will, to its rightful place.

A similar teaching of humility is found in the well-known story of Rav David Mintzberg zt"l, a talmid of the holy mekubal Rav Yehudah HaLevi Ashlag zt"l, the Baal Hasulam, who would traverse by foot from Batei Warshah to Givat Shaul for the tish of Leil Shabbos, driven by an immense thirst for Torah and the inner wisdom, heedless of distance and fatigue. One year, Purim in Yerushalayim fell on Erev Shabbos, a pressing and difficult Purim for the residents of the holy city, who must complete the avodah of the day and prepare for the approaching Shabbos within but a few hours. In the order of the Purim feast there are many minhagim: some are careful to hold the meal before midday, as the Rama writes, “—for the honor of Shabbos (Orach Chaim 695:2); others begin after midday; others conclude at twilight; and some practice “*prisas mapah*” and connect the seudah of Shabbos with that of Purim, each according to his tradition.

On that Leil Shabbos, Rav Yehudah Ashlag arranged his tish in exalted measure, seeking to draw from the kedushah of Purim into the kedushah of Shabbos.

But Rav David did not appear that night, for he felt too weak and weary to begin the long journey all the way from Batei Warshah to Givat Shaul at such a late hour, and so concluded that he had a good excuse to forgo the tish.

The next morning, he arose and went for Shacharis to his Rebbe's beis midrash. After the tefillah the Rebbe asked him, “Who determined that you could not? Did you try and see you could not? Why decide so before beginning? One should at least start the path, advance step by step, and perhaps new strength would be granted in honor of Shabbos—and if not, one can always return. Why decree upon yourself from the outset that you cannot?”

Rav Dovid zt"l, would recount the substance of this story many times. He said that the words of his Rebbe—sharp as goads—penetrated deep into his heart, and became a guiding light for his path. From this he derived a lesson for many undertakings in life: not to retreat at the outset out of despair or a sense of distance, saying, “Surely this is not meant for me... I will not succeed in ascending the holy heights, nor in advancing in the sacred service.”

This accords with the rebuke of Shmuel the prophet to King Shaul in the haftarah of Shabbos Zachor (Shmuel I 15:17): *הֲלוֹא אִם קָטַן אֶתָּה בְּעֵינַי רֹאשׁ נְשִׁבְטִי וְגו' יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתָּה וְגו' יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתָּה* - Even if you are small in your own eyes, you are head of the tribes of Yisrael. And it further parallels the pasuk (Yoel 4:10), *הַחֲלֵשׁ יֹאמֶר הִנְיָ! גִבּוֹר אָנִי* - Let the weak one say: I am mighty!