

## Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

### פרשת פקודי

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדת אשר פקד על פי משה עבדת הלויים ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן

**“These are the reckonings of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of Testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's bidding; the labor of the Levites was under the authority of Isamar, son of Aharon the Kohen” (38:21)**

In his sefer Darash Moshe, R' Moshe Feinstein writes that we can learn an important lesson from Moshe's reckoning of all the materials used in the construction of the Mishkan. A person has to give an accounting for everything that Hashem gives him. Moshe knew that he was responsible to show the people how he used their gifts. Likewise, a person must recognize that everything that he has in this world is a gift from Hashem and he should feel obligated to keep an account of how he has used them. A person must assess whether he is using what Hashem has given him to its fullest. Every gift from Hashem is a responsibility and a challenge and must be used in the right way. This includes all gifts from Hashem: physical possessions, unique talents, intelligence, health, and most importantly, but often overlooked, time. One is only granted a finite number of years in this world and he should treat every moment as a precious gift from Hashem. He should maximize his time and not waste any of it.

In the Shaar Hazechira ("Gate of Remembrance," Chapter 19) of the Orchos Tzadikim, the author lists thirty things that a person should constantly remember. One of them is to remember to use his time wisely. He writes: "One must remember that he saw in his days men who were younger and stronger than he, who were greatly enjoying their lives, but did not live long. Death cannot be impeded from coming at any hour and man has no control over it. One must remember that his soul is lent to him as a pledge and one has no idea when the Owner will come and claim His pledge. Should one not hasten to cleanse the pledge to return it as clean as it came to him?" (No. 16)

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Rashi says that the extraneous repetition of the word "mishkan" hints to the fact that the Bais HaMikdash was destroyed twice because of the sins of the Jewish people. R' Moshe Feinstein asks: Why is this allusion here, amid the reckoning of Moshe Rabbeinu? Is it not out of place? He answers that bad things happen when a person becomes overly confident and relies on himself too much. He feels that he is so strong that he will not make any mistakes. He feels confident enough to mix with all sorts of people who can potentially have a negative impact on him. This is either a miscalculation of his abilities or just excessive pride. One may feel that he is strong enough not to stumble when in a tough situation but, even if he can withstand the difficulties, others will not understand this. They will see that he does things that can lead to spiritual danger and will feel that this is okay to do such things. We learn this from Moshe's reckoning. Hashem testified as to the trustworthiness of Moshe Rabbeinu and yet he still felt the need to make it clear to all that he was being honest. Even Moshe felt the need to provide full disclosure because he understood that every single person is vulnerable to sin. If a person fails to recognize that and thinks that he is above falling, he will succumb to the influences around him.

This inability to recognize one's shortcomings and failure to protect oneself from potential pitfalls is what leads to further sins and this is what once led to the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash. Therefore, it is only appropriate that the allusion to the destruction of the Batei Mikdash is placed at the beginning of Moshe's counting. Moshe, the greatest man who ever lived, made sure that he would be unable to sin and we should follow his example.

The Orchos Tzadikim writes in Shaar Hazechira that a person should never be so sure of himself and feel that he knows everything: "One must remember and reflect that he whose eyes are weak cannot scrutinize too well vessels of silver and gold bearing delicate designs. Even though he may see the beauty of the vessel, he cannot observe the delicate design as closely as one whose eyes are strong. Similarly, if one learned Torah and wisdom in his youth, though he thinks he understands it well, let him not rely on that understanding, for wisdom strengthens itself with age, when one understands more than he did in his youth." (No. 24)

**ויהי מאת ככר הכסף לצקת את אדני הקדש ואת אדני הפרכת מאת אדנים למאת הככר  
ככר לאדן**

**“The hundred talents of silver were to cast the sockets of the Sanctuary and the sockets of the Partition; a hundred sockets for a hundred talents, a talent per socket” (38:27)**

Every person is obligated to recite one hundred blessings each day. (Orach Chaim 46:3) The Chidushei HaRim writes that just as the one hundred sockets were the foundation that kept the Mishkan standing upright, the one hundred blessings that one must recite daily are the foundation for our sanctity. When one recites a blessing, he testifies that Hashem is the master of the world. Rabbi Friedman adds that besides for the required recognition of the good that Hashem bestows upon us, the constant blessings throughout the day keep us connected to Hashem. Since we are always reciting blessings, we are frequently reminded of Hashem. Every Jewish person is like a miniature Mishkan in himself, serving Hashem. The blessings we recite are the sockets that constitute the solid foundation of our personal Mishkan.

Through the blessings that we recite, we are constantly reminded of Hashem and of our true purpose in life. The Orchos Tzadikim stresses this as well in the conclusion to Shaar Hazechira: "See how extremely broad the trait of remembrance is, for through it one remembers all of the good traits. Without it one would forget everything and remain empty of everything. Know that remembrance leads to action. Therefore, strengthen yourself greatly in the trait of remembrance and take care to remember, with each mitzvah, for Whose sake you are performing it and Who your Taskmaster is."

**וישם אתם על כתפת האפד אבני זכרון לבני ישראל כאשר צוה ה' את משה**  
**“He placed them on the shoulder straps of the Ephod as remembrance stones for the sons of Israel, as Hashem had commanded Moshe” (39:7)**

The Meshech Chochma points out that the stones of remembrance served as a reminder to the Jewish people, not to Hashem. The names of the tribes were inscribed on stones worn by the Kohen Gadol so that when the people would remember that their names were involved in the service before Hashem, they would be ashamed to sin. The stones on the ephod were a deterrent against sinning from much earlier. The Gemara in Sotah 36b says that when Yosef was about to give in to the temptation to be with the wife of Potiphar, he saw a vision of his father Yaakov, who told him that if he sinned, his name would not be among those of his brothers on the Ephod. One who realizes that his name resides in such a special place is embarrassed to sin.

Wherever we are, we are always in the presence of Hashem. If we remember this, it will prevent us from sinning because we will be ashamed to be seen by Hashem. As the Rema writes: "I place Hashem before me always - this is an important rule in the Torah and among the

levels of the righteous who walk before Hashem. The way one sits, moves and acts when he is alone is not the way he sits, moves and acts when he is before a great king... Certainly when a person remembers that Hashem, the great King Whose glory fills the entire world, is standing over him and sees his actions... Immediately fear and humility will seize him in his trepidation before Hashem and his shame before Him." (Orach Chaim 1:1)

This too is on the Orchos Tzadikim's list of thirty things to constantly remember: "One should remember how afraid and confounded those who stand in the king's service are at the possibility of the king's punishment. How much more should one fear the punishment of the King of kings and run to serve him." (No. 26)

**ויביאו את המשכן אל משה את האהל ואת כל כליו קרסיו קרשיו בריחו ועמדיו ואדניו**  
**“They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe, the Tent and all its utensils; its hooks, its planks, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets” (39:33)**

The Midrash Tanchuma writes that Moshe felt bad that he had not participated at all in the construction of the Mishkan. Therefore, Hashem made the Mishkan too heavy for the people to assemble on their own and they came to Moshe for guidance. Thus, Hashem reserved the erection of the Mishkan for Moshe Rabbeinu. We see from this midrash that if a person feels bad that he was unable to do something, Hashem opens up new opportunities for him. If he feels bad that he has missed out on the chance to do a good deed, Hashem will take note, just as he did for Moshe.

R' Nissan Alpert asks: Why should Moshe be upset that he was left out? He should have been excited that everyone else participated so energetically! We never find that Moshe was selfish about serving Hashem. After all, Moshe himself honestly wished that every Jew could be a prophet like him (Bamidbar 11:29). He answers that Moshe was concerned that the emphasis of the Mishkan was being placed on the beauty of the physical edifice rather than the purpose of Mishkan as the resting place for the Divine Presence. He felt that without his personal involvement, the people would infer that the spiritual aspect of the edifice was secondary because Moshe had not participated. Moshe wanted to make sure that people saw him partake in the construction. This was required in order to infuse the physical building with its spiritual function and ensure that all the people recognized this as the Mishkan's primary purpose.

Similarly, it is easy for a person to get so caught up in taking care of his physical health that he neglects his spiritual welfare. One should realize that his health is only a means by which to be able to serve Hashem. Nevertheless, people often turn the physical aspect of life into the most important aspect and get their priorities confused. The Orchos Tzadikim says: "One must remember how zealous and quick he is in the acquisition of wealth, how he thinks of this day and night and considers a friend to be only one who can assist him in acquiring silver and gold, though his efforts may be entirely in vain, for he may lose everything, or his wealth may be for his evil, or he may die very soon. In spite of all this, he labors so much. And if he labors so for his body, what should he do on behalf of his soul, which exists eternally! How much more so must you care for it and be zealous to remember always to purify and refine it with a refinement that endures throughout all eternity." (No. 11)

### **Parshas Shekalim**

Why do we only give a half-shekel and not a whole one? One reason is that a person must realize that he is a half and not a whole and that there is always room for him to improve. This manifests itself in many ways. A person can always improve his character. He must set goals to be better than he currently is in order to become a better person. Additionally, a man is only a half on his own and needs a wife, a good friend and the help of Hashem in order to become a

whole and succeed in this world. We must recognize that we are just half in our own right and that there is always room for growth.

In Shaar Hazechira, the author calls upon us to remember that we can always grow more and that there is always a higher level to strive for: "One must always remember all of the King's mitzvos and accustom himself to the doing of good until he is greatly habituated to it, and then he should add more and ask Hashem to assist him - to impart wisdom to him and strengthen his limbs to bear His mitzvos and rise from level to level." (No. 21)

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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