

# The Sweetness of the Parasha

משיחותיו של הגה"צ רבי מנחם ברוך יאודע שליט"א בעל 'מתקנות התורה'

## A Story for the Shabbos Table

### Mishloach Manos of Love and Peace

We live on the third floor of a four-story building. Above us was an apartment rented by tenants with whom we shared wonderful neighborly relations. One day, during Chanukah last year, the neighbor mentioned they were moving out soon. This news struck me like a thunderbolt on a clear day. We had a great friendship, and our kids played together. Seeing my reaction, he quickly added, "We want to stay, but the apartment owner has decided to move in themselves after several years."

Before I could even process this, he continued, "They're planning major renovations. They've already contracted builders, and we have

## Lesson from the Parasha

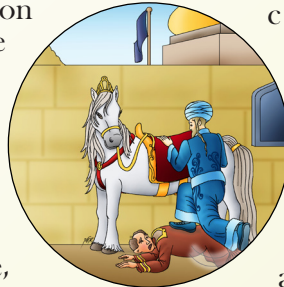
### To Destroy Amalek... and Be Filled with Joy

The Connection to Hashem That is Revealed on Purim

Our parsha begins with the counting of Bnei Yisrael through the giving of the half-shekel: "לכפר על נפשותיכם - to atone for your souls." This collective donation by all of Am Yisrael served as atonement for the chet ha'egel (sin of the golden calf). But an interesting question arises: why does the Torah mention chet ha'egel only after detailing the donations for the Mishkan and the counting of Bnei Yisrael? Furthermore, why were the people specifically counted using half-shekels, and why was this money specifically designated for the silver adanim (sockets)?

The Midrash Tanchuma explains that after chet ha'egel, when many among Bnei Yisrael perished in the plague, Hakadosh Baruch Hu instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to count the people. Why? Because Hashem deeply cherishes each Jew, and He wanted to demonstrate how beloved we still were to Him, despite the enormity and severity of our sin. This is similar to Chazal's comparison in the Gemara (Gittin 36b), describing chet ha'egel: "A bride who was unfaithful beneath

her own chuppah!" At Har Sinai, where Am Yisrael stood beneath a chuppah with Hashem to receive the Torah, they sinned with the egel—yet, despite everything, Hashem still cherishes us immensely. As Chazal continue, "Still, Hashem's affection for us never diminished."



Just as Hashem commanded the counting of the Jewish people to highlight His love for every Jew, we too must follow in Hashem's ways by appreciating, valuing, and counting the good in every person—especially within our own homes. When a person enters his home, he should realize he is about to encounter the Shechina; he's stepping into a miniature Mishkan. This awareness should fill him with profound appreciation for his family members.

Imagine for a moment that the Beis HaMikdash already stood—how excited we'd be to enter such a holy place! Chazal teach us that if a couple merits it, the Shechina dwells between them. If you uplift your wife and bring her joy, your home becomes a Beis Mikdash Me'at—a mini-Sanctuary.

Chazal tell us that on Yom



Hadin, even the beams of a person's home will testify about him. A wife is called "bayis" (home), as Rabbi Yosi taught. She testifies about her husband because Hashem measures a person by whether people find peace with him—especially his own household. This is why we conclude the Sheva Berachos blessings with the phrase, "mesameach chassan im hakallah"—that the joy should exist in the home between husband and wife, and their voices should blend in harmony.

Before a person enters his home, he must think on what he's about to bring inside—what kind words, yiras Shamayim, and joy he'll inject into his home. Similarly, when we see Jews from every community, we should count their good qualities and declare: "I have the merit of seeing another representative of Hakadosh Baruch Hu! Another child of the great King! Another Jew who sanctifies Hashem's Name! Another Jew proudly wearing his beard and peyos, another Jew dedicated to Torah study!"

We often live habitually, failing to notice the immense good around us. We see this clearly among Jews from abroad, who live among the nations. When they visit Eretz Hakodesh, they're amazed and deeply moved seeing thousands of Torah-observant Jews. This should awaken within us appreciation and joy, inspiring us to recognize and count the good in every individual.

When we appreciate, we naturally help and support one another. Thus, the counting was done specifically through tzedaka (the half-shekel) to Beis HaMikdash, teaching us to value and actively support those closest to us. Just as the Kohanim would eagerly draw lots for Beis HaMikdash services, each person should feel privileged to help at home. This explains why the counting of Bnei Yisrael, using the half-shekel donations, appears amidst the instructions for building the Mishkan—because to merit the presence of the Shechina, we must be loyal and supportive of one another.

To explain further: The chet ha'egel symbolized disloyalty towards Moshe Rabbeinu, who had led Am Yisrael out of Egypt and performed great miracles for them through Hashem's command. Yet, the moment things became challenging, they denied all that goodness and proclaimed of the calf: "This is your god, Yisrael, who brought you up from Egypt." As a rectification, we were commanded to build the Mishkan, whose very essence is loyalty: loyalty between Am Yisrael and our Father in Heaven, between talmidim and their rabbiem, and between friends.

Therefore, many elements of the Mishkan were connected to each other—such as the adanim (sockets), hooks, and loops, which bound the Mishkan together. The Torah expresses this unity both in lashon zachar—"ish el achiv" (man to his brother)—and lashon nekeiva—"isha el achosa" (woman to her sister). Likewise, the

Keruvim symbolized interpersonal relationships, teaching us that our primary task is to always seek ways to enhance harmony and unity with others.

The silver adanim that held up the Mishkan represent our legs, which hold up a person. By bringing their money willingly for the Mishkan, Am Yisrael corrected their earlier willingness to donate for the egel. Now we understand why the counting of Bnei Yisrael precedes the mentioning of chet ha'egel: It highlights their pure-heartedness and initial loyalty to Hashem that they had even before the sinned. As it says "לָקַחְתָּ אֶחָדִי בְמִדְבַר בְּאֶרֶץ" לָקַחְתָּ אֶחָדִי בְמִדְבַר בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה – you followed Me in the desert, in a land not sown." This was the feeling yet before chet ha'egel, thus it stood for Am Yisrael.

So too, Chazal tell us that Haman offered Achashverosh ten thousand silver talents to be granted permission to destroy the Yidden. But, Hashem said: "Rasha, I preceded you by giving Am Yisrael the mitzvah of machatzis haShekel. Haman's decree resembles hastaras panim (that Hashem is hidden from us), as Chazal say: "Where do we find mention of Ester in the Torah? ' וְאֲנֹכִי הִסְתַּרְתִּי אֶתְּפִילִי פָנַי – And I will hide My face on that day." Yet, even within the concealment, we witness the deep loyalty of Am Yisrael to Hashem.

Chazal state regarding Shabbos: "Anyone who observes Shabbos is forgiven." Shabbos represents repairing our connection and expressing our gratitude to Hashem for His creation—and similarly, before Kiddush, we sing "Eishes Chayil," expressing gratitude for the kindness shown by our wives.

The korbanos in the Mishkan symbolized gratitude to Hashem for the functioning of all our limbs. The korban tamid shel shachar (daily morning offering) symbolizes the man, and the tamid shel bein ha'arbayim (evening offering) symbolizes the wife. When we learn gratitude and loyalty, then our sins become atoned, because the root of all sin is a lack of loyalty and gratitude. As Chazal teach, the korban tamid served to atone daily for sins.

We must internalize these ideas deeply. Our personal Mishkan—our home—is built on foundations of unity and mutual respect. If one truly understood that his eternal future depends on how much he values his family, he would invest every day in it wholeheartedly! Sadly, we often mistakenly prioritize minor issues, overlooking the essence.

Indeed, Chazal say that "an act of kindness is greater than charity itself." When one enters their home smiling, uplifting and appreciating family members, he himself grows spiritually. This was how all the great tzadikim always behaved at their home. Thus, we must never directly count Jews individually, since numbers focus on imperfections. Rather, we must look generally, seeing the pure heart within every Yid and the unity binding us all together.

♦ Purim is an incredible opportunity, filled with hidden potential. There's so much concealment on this day, so we must be wise and use Purim to increase our heartfelt davenings stemming from immense love and closeness to Hashem.

♦ Purim is unique because it's initiated through isarusa d'letata (human action), unlike other moadim. Therefore, Purim will never be nullified, as the Rambam states at the end of Hilchos Purim. This highlights the strength of the entire Jewish people collectively and each individual Yid specifically, showing that we each have the power to draw close to Hashem and witness miracles and wonders.

♦ The halachah follows Rabbi Meir, who rules that we must read Megillas Ester from the very beginning—starting from the story of Achashverosh. One might wonder, what lesson do we learn from Achashverosh and Vashti's behavior? Yet the Megillah teaches us that even seemingly minor details, difficult times, and hardships themselves pave the road to redemption.

When a person gets used to appreciating every blessing Hashem gives, reflecting on what was once lacking but is now present, he will live a tranquil and peaceful life, filled

with joy from all the goodness around them.

♦ Purim has a special characteristic unmatched elsewhere in the Torah: certain places fulfill the mitzvos of Purim on different days. Villagers can read the Megillah on the 11th, 12th, or 13th of Adar. The Talmud Yerushalmi goes even further, allowing travelers who know they won't have access to the Megillah on Purim itself to read it from Rosh Chodesh Adar. This teaches us that Purim isn't only a communal Yom Tov; it emphasizes how personally close Hashem is to each of us, loving every Yid as His only child. Thus, everyone has their own "personal Purim."

♦ The miracle of Purim unfolded over many years, through seemingly natural events filled with difficulty and concealment. Destruction was decreed upon the Jewish people, Ester was taken to Achashverosh, and only at the end did everyone recognize Divine Providence guiding events for the benefit of the entire Jewish nation. Every individual who opens their eyes daily can recognize their own "Purim miracle," seeing clearly how Hashem watches over them and listens to their davenings. Yet, the yetzer hara makes us forget our successes, reminding us only of hardships. Sometimes, a person mistakenly

On Purim, the deep and internal connection between Am Yisrael and Hashem is revealed. We rejoice greatly, realizing Hashem is with us at every step, blessing us with goodness both in this world and the next. Recently, captives returned from an extremely harsh and cruel captivity, held by the wicked Amalekim in Gaza. These individuals returned filled with powerful faith in Hashem, publicly declaring that what kept them strong throughout their suffering was their belief and the feeling that Hashem was with them even in their distress. Despite having been distant from Torah and

.mitzvos, they returned wholeheartedly to Hashem. This powerful experience demonstrates to each of us how deeply connected and inseparable we are from our Creator, and this realization is our greatest joy. When we hear about the suffering



they've endured, we must fill our hearts with compassion, davening fervently for all those still held captive—that they may quickly return home safe and sound to serve Hashem fully. At the same time, we must thank Hashem for protecting us, granting us the tranquility to live peacefully in Eretz Hakodesh, serving Him with love

to leave in two weeks for the renovations to start." I wished him luck and returned home with a heavy heart.

When my wife saw my face, she asked what happened. I explained that our wonderful neighbors were leaving, and that renovations would soon begin above us. "You know what renovations mean... Hashem should help us get through it easily." It reminded me how temporary everything in this world truly is.

Two weeks later, at 7 AM, loud drilling and banging began overhead, signaling the start of renovations. My kids woke up startled, and we quickly left the house. Returning in the afternoon, I faced an unpleasant surprise—the house was filled with dust. I'd forgotten to close the windows, and debris from the apartment above had filled our home. Feeling overwhelmed, we began cleaning as if it were Pesach in the middle of the year.

The next day, despite our precautions, an even bigger shock awaited us—a large crack had formed in our ceiling where we'd previously extended our apartment. Fearing the worst, I warned my family to avoid that area and rushed upstairs. The workers dismissed responsibility, directing me to their contractor, who casually explained they'd knocked down a massive concrete wall that morning, causing vibrations and the crack. I questioned his methods, but he shrugged off responsibility and disappeared into the apartment.

After consulting with my in-laws, who advised us to leave for safety reasons, we quickly moved into their home. That evening, I called the apartment owner. Coldly, he responded, "We're following engineer-approved plans. Your issues are your own," and ended the call abruptly.

Angry and hurt, I stepped outside into the woods near my in-laws' home. Reflecting

deeply, I realized my powerlessness and turned to Hashem, davening sincerely. I thanked Him for our home and asked for guidance, strength, and peace through this ordeal. Immediately afterward, feeling relieved, my father-in-law approached me. He had spoken to an engineer friend during Maariv who agreed to inspect our apartment the next morning.

The engineer arrived, recommended reinforcing the structure, and quickly arranged for the necessary repairs. My father-in-law covered the costs, and within a week and a half, we safely returned home.

After three more months of noisy renovations, everything was finally completed successfully. On Rosh Chodesh Adar II, as the new neighbors moved in, bitterness still lingered within me. I struggled even to greet them.

Discussing with my wife, she agreed it was difficult to forgive, yet emphasized the importance of good neighborly relations. Deciding to use Purim as an opportunity, we prepared a beautiful mishloach manos with heartfelt greetings for our new neighbors.

Purim morning arrived, and I discreetly delivered our gift. Later, amid our seuda, the neighbor appeared at our door, warmly shaking my hand. He apologized profoundly for the uneasy period and for his previous coldness, explaining their own challenging circumstances during the renovations, including a child's hospitalization. He also offered to pay for the damage he caused.

Touched, I reassured him that the cost has been covered already, but anyhow peace and neighborly friendship were worth any price. Spontaneously, I began dancing joyfully, celebrating the genuine light of peace, forgiveness, understanding, and the mitzvah that brings blessing and harmony into our lives.