

COMPLETE DEDICATION

by Rabbi Yosey Goldstein

by Guest Contributor: Yosey Goldstein

Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish said: It was obvious and clearly known to the creator of the universe that Haman would weigh coins (To kill) the Jews. Therefore, he had their (The Jews) coins precede his coins, and that is what the Mishna, Tannaic Passage says: "On the First day of Adar we make the announcements about the giving of the yearly Shekolim/ coins to pay for the communal sacrifices in the Bais Hamikdosh (Holy Temple) (Talmud, Tractate Meggilah 13b).

Tosefos (one of the early commentators) says that the 10,000 Kikar (A specific measure) of silver offered was the same amount of silver the Jews donated for the **adanim**, the sockets for below the planks making up the walls in the Mishkon/Tabernacle which the Jews erected in the desert. (Meggilah 16a)

It seems that Haman's action of offering 10,000 Kikar of silver to King Achashverosh had an spiritual effect that "demanded" an action by the Jews to counteract. It required a donation of the Jews, Hundreds of year earlier, in the desert. to merit not being annihilated. (As Tosefos points out) It also required the yearly donation to the Bais Hamikdosh to counteract that action. The question is: Why is G-d worried about Haman giving this money to Achashverosh? What difference does this make?

Reb Sholom Schwadron said the following answer, in the name of his Rebbe, his teacher. The Medrash in Parshas Terumah tells us that Haman's entire fortune consisted of 10,000 Kikar of silver. This means that he was so dedicated to the cause of Killing the Jewish nation that he was willing to give up **everything** he owned to succeed at his task. Such dedication, the desire to succeed at **all** costs even to the cost of one's entire being and life is called Mesiras Nefesh. Mesiras Nefesh must be answered. The Satan (the adversary, a spiritual entity) himself approaches G-d and says "Haman is willing to give up **everything**" to destroy the Jews. What are the Jews willing to give up for **G-d**?" G-d must answer the demand of the Satan and he says, "My Children are willing to give up for me. In fact they have given me back in the desert, the silver sockets for Mishkon, the Tabernacle. They give me one half Shekel every single Adar" That is what G-d answers the Satan.

There are several questions concerning this thought. First of all, what difference does it make that

Haman was dedicated? Why does that have an effect in heaven? The second problem is Why did G-d choose the commandment of the Machatzis hashekel, the giving of one half a shekel per person, to counteract Haman? Why not point out the donations to build the *entire* Mishkon which was certainly a greater amount donated than one half a shekel per person? Let us just compare what Haman was willing to give up to what the Jews gave up and give up yearly. Haman was willing to give up **everything** to kill the Jews. That shows a dedication, a zeal and a passion for his cause. The Jews, on the other hand gave no more than one half a Shekel for this Mitzvah. Why is that the response to the zeal and Mesiras Nefesh shown by Haman? One more question. Obviously Haman was dedicated to his cause, but his cause was evil. Why should his dedication mean anything to G-d?

To understand the answer to the first question we should preface that the rules of nature apply in the spiritual realm. Just as what goes up must come down, every action has an equal reaction etc., so too there are rules in the spiritual realm. One of these rules is: When one is totally dedicated to a cause, he **automatically** receives Seyata Dishmaya or heavenly assistance to succeed. That is why once Haman showed his commitment and his zeal with the willingness to do **anything** to destroy Jews, G-d **had** to answer the Satan with a show of Mesiras Nefesh, a show of complete dedication on the part of the Jews. That was shown by the willingness of the Jews to give the Machatzis Hashekel. (As we will explain G-d Willing very soon).

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz ZT"L used this same line of reasoning to explain a Posuk (passage) in Parshas Balak. The Posuk says, "Bilaam awoke early in the morning and he saddled his donkey." Rashi quotes the Medrash that says; "G-d says: "You got up early to destroy the Jews. You will not succeed because their Father Abraham has already done this before you." As the posuk states; "And Abraham got up early in the morning and he saddled his donkey" (This was the story of the Akeidah, when Abraham was going to offer his son Yitzchok up as a sacrifice). Reb Chaim asks the same question we asked earlier; Why does the action of Billaam waking up early to saddle his donkey require G-d to respond with "Abraham their father has done this already"? What is so special with Billaam saddling his donkey? The answer he gives is because Bilaam was very aware of his own importance. Everything he did was **only** to further his own honor and stature in the world. Still, he was willing to forgo his honor and personally saddle his donkey so as to be able to curse the Jews and cause their annihilation. Therefore that dedication would demand that he be the recipient of heavenly assistance and success. Therefore G-d said, Abraham has already shown his dedication to me. He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, literally, and sacrifice his son. Therefore, his children are worthy of being saved because of his dedication.

It is interesting to note that Rabbi Shimon Schwab in his Sefer (book) uses a very similar explanation. In the same story about Billaam, Bilaam in a dream asks G-d permission to go with the second group of messengers of Balak. G-d tells him, if they are coming to hire you and you will receive a reward for this, then go with them (Bamidbar 22:20 see Rashi). Rabbi Scwab Z"L asks why did G-d give him

permission only if he would get paid? The answer is, says Rabbi Schwab, Because then his dedication to the cause is not pure. His dedication comes from a desire to be compensated. If his dedication to the cause is anything less than pure, then he will not be deserving of heavenly assistance. He is doomed to failure. If he wants to go, no harm will befall the Jews, and G-d Himself is willing to allow him to go.

This answered **why** there was need to counteract the dedication of Haman, but the other questions still need answering. Why rely on the Half a shekel instead of the donations for the entire tabernacle, and how can the giving of one half a shekel show a dedication equivalent or better than the giving of 10,000 kikar of silver.

We can understand the answer using the following rule. The Talmud in Tractate Kiddushin tells us that one who is commanded to do a Mitzvah, a commandment from G-d is greater than one who is **not** commanded to do the Mitzvah but does it anyway. On the surface one would think the opposite is true. One who is not obligated to do a mitzvah and does it anyway, shows a greater love for G-d by doing the Mitzvah than one who is obligated to perform the Mitzvah. The Talmud is telling us that this is not so. Tosefos explains the reason for this. When a person is obligated to do something, the Yetzer Horah, the evil inclination, tries desperately to dissuade the person from doing the mitzvah. However, when a person does a mitzvah without being obligated to do so, he has very little standing in his way. After all, **he wants** to do this because **he** thinks it's right. He is doing what he desires. (Remember back to when you were a child and you were tired? As soon as your parents said "Time for bed" You suddenly had a burst of energy and had no desire at all to go to sleep.)

Knowing this, the answer is simple. Haman was dedicated to his cause. He was willing to give up everything to get what "he" wanted. To counteract this action G-d needed to show that the Jews could also perform an act that was equally meaningful and equally "powerful". That act was the giving of one half a shekel. The act of being told, "You must give one half a shekel. No more and no less" This action was one that showed dedication to G-d and his Mitzvos. The will power needed to overcome one's natural inclination **not** to want to give what one is obligated to give, is more difficult than giving up 10,000 Kikar of silver.

This concept is also apparent in the Talmud in Tractate Shabbos. The Mishna (Shabbos 9b) lists many activities that one may not do prior to Mincha time, the time for the afternoon prayers. One of the forbidden activities is to sit down to a meal. Nevertheless, the Talmud says that if one started a meal, then one does not have to stop the meal right away, for mincha. (He may continue until closer to the time for Mincha). The Talmud asks what act determines the beginning of the meal? The Talmud answers, when one removes his belt to begin eating. (They used to tie their robes around them with a belt. Prior to eating they used to remove the belt to be more comfortable when eating). The Talmud responds by asking, What is the big deal to put the belt back on? Besides, let him pray without a belt. The Talmud answers, He can not pray without a belt since the Posuk says, "Prepare yourself to greet your G-d." Tosefos (10a) Says that the Talmud only answered the second question

and did not bother with the first question. Reb Yisroel Salanter answers, that by answering the second question no answer was needed for the first question. Once the Talmud explained and proved that one was not allowed to pray without putting on the belt, then the question of, "What is the big deal to put on a belt?" is not a question. Once a person is required to put on his belt then it IS a big deal to put it back on.

Now everything makes perfect sense. In anticipation of Haman's dedication to the cause of annihilating the Jews, G-d in his mercy gave us the Mitzvah of Machatzis Hashekel, from the times of the Mishkon in the desert. This allowed us to demonstrate **our** dedication to him by giving the half a shekel to the Miskon. By serving G-d, we show our dedication. By overcoming our own natural instincts, and accepting G-d's will upon ourselves we show the greatest Mesirras nefesh, the greatest dedication to G-D and his will.

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