

TAKING AN ACCOUNTING

by Shlomo Katz

**Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz**

**Pekudai: Taking an Accounting
Volume XVII, No. 23
4 Adar II 5763
March 7, 2003**

**Sponsored by Marla and Marty Teichman and family
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Today's Learning:

Keritot 2:3-4

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Shevuot 43

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 70

In this week's parashah, the construction of the Mishkan is completed. The parashah opens: "These are the accountings of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of Testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's bidding." The Sages say that the accounting was actually taken from Moshe! Why, asks R' Moshe Gruenwald z"l (died 1853- 1911; rabbi of Khust, Hungary), was an accounting required from Moshe? We read about the workers in the first Bet Hamikdash (Melachim II 12:16), "They did not

make an accounting with the men into whose hands they gave the money to pay out to the workmen, for they acted with emunah / integrity." Furthermore, why wasn't an accounting taken from Bezalel and his helpers? Also, Chazal teach that Moshe could not give a complete accounting, and a bat kol / Heavenly proclamation had to vouch for him. If so, what was the purpose of even beginning the accounting?

R' Gruenwald explains: The purpose of the accounting was to teach us a lesson. Many commentaries explain how the various parts of the Mishkan and its furnishing allude to different parts of man's body and to his strengths. Each of us must learn to take an accounting of himself. Are we using our organs and our abilities as intended?

In a similar vein, R' Gruenwald asks: Why do we reckon according to a lunar calendar? After all, the sun is more distinguished! Because we can learn a lesson in proper behavior from the moon. Every month, the moon waxes and wanes. So, too, we must undergo cycles of growth and contraction. Periodically, preferably every day, man must humble himself and reflect on what he has accomplished. Then he must grow some more and begin the cycle anew. (Aarugas Habosem)

"The stones were according to [literally, 'were on'] the names of the sons of Yisrael . . ." (39:14)

The names of the Twelve Tribes were engraved on the stones of the Kohen Gadol's breastplate, and the letters of those names were used by G-d to communicate with the Jewish people. The Gemara (Yoma 93b) therefore asks: "But there is no letter `tzadi' in the names of the tribes!"

The Gemara answers: "The names of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov also were engraved on the stones." (The name Yitzchak contains a tzadi.)

The Gemara then asks: "But still, there is no letter `tet'!"

The Gemara answers: "The words `Shivtei Yeshurun' / `Tribes of Yeshurun' were also engraved on the stones." (Thus concludes the Gemara's discussion.)

This Gemara presents several difficulties. Firstly, why did the Gemara remark on the absence of the letter tzadi before it noted the absence of the letter tet? After all, tet precedes tzadi in the Aleph-Bet. Moreover, if the questioner in the Gemara did not know that the names of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov were engraved on the stones, as he apparently did not, why did he not remark first that the letter `chet' was missing?

R' Yechiel Michel Stern shlita (rabbi of the Ezrat Torah neighborhood of Yerushalayim) quotes the work Pirchei Nissan, which explains as follows:

The questioner read our verse, "The stones were on the names of the sons of Yisrael," and he thought that the names of the stones were engraved on the breastplate above the names of the

tribes, like this:

Odem Pitda Bareket Nofach
Reuven Shimon Levi Yehuda etc.

Had that been the case, then all the letters of the Aleph-Bet would have been present except for tzadi.

What then is the meaning of the verse? It means that the names of the Patriarchs, Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov, were on top of the names of the tribes. The patriarchs are called "stones," as in the following verses: "From there, he shepherded the stone of Yisrael" (Bereishit 49:24). "For from its origins, I see it rock- like" (Bemidbar 23:9). "Look to the rock from which you were hewn" (Yishayah 51:1). All of these are interpreted by the sages as references to the Patriarchs, for they were the foundation stone of the Jewish people.

(Chumash Midrash Halachah)

R' Eliyahu Hakohen z"l (Izmir, Turkey; died 1729) observes that the phrase "As G-d commanded Moshe" appears 18 (chai) times in this parashah. This alludes to the fact that Bnei Yisrael were sentenced to death for the sin of the Golden Calf, but they achieved life (chaim) because of Moshe's self sacrifice. After each time that the phrase "As G-d commanded Moshe" appears, the Torah then relates that Bnei Yisrael made another part of the Mishkan. This alludes to the fact that all of their actions were possible only because Moshe prayed for them.

(Semuchin La'ad)

Shabbat

R' Yishayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the Shelah Hakadosh) writes: The Holy Shabbat! The day is sanctified to G-d. It is the root of all other days. Therefore, a person must be more exacting in his actions and more fearful lest he lose his attachment to the Blessed G-d. One should also be more stringent if he is in doubt regarding a law of Shabbat than he is regarding doubts about other laws. This is learned from the Mishnah (Demai 4:1): "If one buys produce from a person who is not trusted regarding tithing, and he (the buyer) forgets to tithe them, if he asks the seller on Shabbat whether he tithed, he (the buyer) may believe him (the seller)." [Tithing is prohibited on Shabbat.] R' Ovadiah of Bartenura explains why the otherwise untrustworthy seller is believed under these circumstances: "The awe of Shabbat is upon him, and he is afraid to sin or to lie on Shabbat more so than on a weekday." [The Shelah Hakadosh continues:] If even an unlettered person is more afraid of sin on Shabbat than on a weekday, how much more so one who has been granted wisdom and

understanding, one who understands the holiness of Shabbat and the secret of the neshamah yetairah, one who seeks holiness. Then he will connect himself to his nefesh, ruach and neshamah [i.e., three parts of the soul of which kabbalists speak].

Shabbat is the root of all days, and they are offshoots of Shabbat. Shabbat, together with the other days, may be seen as a menorah -- three branches on one side and three branches on the other side, all pointing to the center, which is the body of the menorah. In the same way, there are three days before Shabbat, when one sanctifies himself and prepares himself for Shabbat, one day each for the nefesh, ruach and neshamah. Also, there are three days after Shabbat, when the memory of Shabbat lingers in the nefesh, ruach and neshamah. Then the cycle begins again. Therefore, a person should search within each day for that day's share of the sanctity of Shabbat. It also follows that it is not enough, on Shabbat, to experience the sanctity of the day itself. One must resolve to carry that sanctity into the days and weeks ahead.

To attain these levels -- sanctifying nefesh, ruach and neshamah -- one must sanctify his deeds, his words, and his thoughts. All of his tools, i.e., his organs, must be holy and removed from any sin or hint of sin. This is the "Sur mai'ra" / "Turn from evil" aspect. Next, a person should practice "Asai tov" / "Do good," i.e., that he should use all of his organs to perform mitzvot. After that, one must sanctify his speech, guarding his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceitfully. Even when it comes to everyday speech, which is not sinful, I have found nothing better than silence. Finally, one should sanctify his thoughts, having none that are repugnant, but only holy thoughts that cause one to cling to Hashem. There is no mitzvah that does not include the elements of deed, word and thought. When one does any mitzvah, he should say, "I hereby perform this mitzvah whose laws are such and such." [In other words, one should review the mitzvah's laws as he performs the mitzvah.] Also, one should have in mind the kavanah / meaning of the mitzvah and its secret, to the extent he is able. In this way, he combines deed, word and thought.

(Quoted in Musarei Ha'Shelah p.1)

R'Mordechai Wulliger z"l

R' Mordechai Wulliger was born in Bustino, in the Maramarosh region of Hungary on 9 Cheshvan 5666 / 1895. His father, R' Moshe, was one of the leading students of R' Zalman Leib Teitelbaum, the rabbi of Sighet and a leading chassidic rebbe. As a teenager, young Mordechai studied under R' Moshe Gruenwald (the Arugas Habosem) and under the Veitzner Rav. However, R' Wulliger's primary teacher was R' Zalman Leib's grandson, R' Chaim Zvi Teitelbaum, rabbi of Sighet and author of Atzei Chaim. (One of the responsa in She'eilot U'teshuvot Atzei Chaim is addressed to R' Wulliger.)

In 1938, R' Wulliger settled in the United States with his family. For approximately 50 years, he served as part of the administration of Yeshiva and Mesivta Torah Vodath in Brooklyn. (His official title was Chairman of the Students Advisory Board.)

R' Wulliger authored a number of Torah works, beginning with Pardes Mordechai, published in 1927. In 1962, he published Otzar Hashas, an encyclopedia of Talmudic topics. He also left about 7000 pages of manuscripts covering many areas of Torah. (Some of his works have recently been republished in PDF format and are available on the internet.) R' Wulliger died in his 100th year on 2 Adar 5755 / 1995.

In Tefilat Mordechai (p.139), R' Wulliger writes: Our parashah states (39:43), "Moshe saw the entire work [of the Mishkan], and behold! They had done it as Hashem had commanded, so had they done. And Moshe blessed them." The Midrash adds, "What was his blessing? 'May it be G-d's Will that the Shechinah will rest on your handiwork'."

R' Wulliger explains the significance of Moshe's blessing as follows: The Gemara teaches that one may not praise G-d except using the formula that the Sages established. If a person would begin to praise G-d on his own, he could never stop, for we would ask him, "Have you exhausted all of your Master's attributes?!" The Mishkan was intended as a place for man to come close to G-d through prayer and service, but how can man do that? He can never praise G-d enough! The answer is that it is proper etiquette not to praise someone excessively to his face. Thus, when the Shechinah is present in the Mishkan, one can begin to praise G-d and stop. In answer to the question "Have you exhausted all of your Master's attributes?" he can respond that it is not proper to recite all of G-d's praises to His Face, so- to-speak.

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