

WEALTH AS A REDEMPTION

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Ki Sisa A Man's Redemption By Shlomo Katz

Ki Tissa

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Today's Learning:

Keilim 7:6-8:1

O.C. 296:4-6

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 76

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Kiddushin 40

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (13:8), "A man's is the kofer (literally, 'redemption') of his soul; the poor hear no chastisement." R' Yaakov Sakly z"l (Spain; 14th century) explains: In this verse, King Shlomo

teaches the advantages and disadvantages of wealth, both in Olam Hazei ("This World") and Olam Haba. That wealth is the greatest pleasure that one can enjoy in the world is evident from the fact that the Prophets repeatedly compare the Torah to wealth (for example, in Tehilim 19:11 and 119:72 and Mishlei 8:19). Furthermore, wealth can cause its owner to be honored, even if he is otherwise a despicable person. These ideas are alluded to in one possible translation of our verse: "A man's wealth is the kofer / covering or disguise of his soul; he will not hear the chastisement he would have heard if he had been poor."

R' Sakly continues: There is a benefit to wealth in Olam Hazei in that a wealthy person can buy his way out of trouble. And, there is a benefit in Olam Haba in that some sins can be atoned for with money (for example, if one's animal kills a person).

On the other hand, there is a disadvantage to wealth, for wealthy person worries constantly about losing his riches.

Nevertheless, wealth is good because a wealthy person can use his money to give charity and perform acts of kindness, thus ensuring his success in Olam Haba. Our Sages teach, however, that charity is measured not only by the amount given, but also by the attitude with which it is given. "A man's wealth is the redemption of his soul, only if the poor hear no chastisement."

Finally, our verse may allude to the mitzvah of Machatzit Ha'shekel / giving half-a-shekel to the Mishkan, which is found in our parashah. Every person, rich or poor, was required to give the same amount. Thus, "The poor hear no chastisement," i.e., the rich man cannot say, "I gave more than you." (Torat Ha'minchah)

"Every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul . . . so that there will not be a plague among them . . ." (30:2)

Why does the verse change from singular ("Every man shall give") to plural ("so that there will not be a plague among them")?

R' Yaakov Yichizkiyahu Gruenwald z"l (Hungarian rabbi; died 1941) explains: Our Sages teach that when one person repents, the entire world achieves a certain degree of atonement on his account. Thus, even one person's charity can avert a plague that could have affected multitudes. (Vayagged Yaakov: Parashat Shekalim)

"You shall make shemen mishchat kodesh / oil of sacred anointment." (30:25)

R' Avraham Shimon Halevi Ish Horowitz z"l hy"d (mashgiach ruchani of Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin; killed in the Holocaust) writes:

Every thinking person must remember constantly the immense kindness that Hashem did for us in giving us the ability to anoint High Priests and kings with oil and thereby imbue them with a Divine spirit. We are obligated to believe that the ability to imbue objects with spirituality is not lost forever. True, the tools [for example, the anointing oil] cannot reside in our coarse world, but we must hope for the time when Eliyahu Hanavi will appear to restore such gifts to us. Faithful longing for the restoration of the shemen ha'mishchah actually brings mashiach closer; indeed, it is no coincidence that mashiach and mishchah share the same root. (Naharei Eish Ch.5)

"I have endowed the heart of every wise-hearted person with wisdom . . ." (31:6)

The Gemara (Berachot 55a) states, "Hashem gives wisdom only to the wise."

R' Zvi Yehuda Kook z"l (rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; died 1982) observes: We read similarly in Daniel (2:21), "He gives wisdom to the wise." These statements mean that there are levels of wisdom, and one who has already acquired some wisdom is given greater Divine assistance to acquire more wisdom.

Nevertheless, he continues, we also read (Tehilim 19:8), "The Torah of Hashem is perfect, it makes the fool wise." In general, the gift of wisdom must have a foundation on which to rest, but, through Torah study, even a fool can become wise. The mechanism through which this comes about, R' Kook added, is through attaching oneself to Hashem through the Torah. There is another mechanism through which one can attach himself to Hashem and thereby become wise, and that is Eretz Yisrael, about which our Sages say (Bava Batra 158b), "The air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise." (Sichot Harav Zvi Yehuda Hakohen Kook al Mesilat Yesharim, p.89)

"Hashem passed before him and proclaimed, 'Hashem, Hashem, G-d, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth, Preserver of Kindness for thousands of generations, Forgiver of Iniquity, Willful Sin, and Error, and Who Cleanses'." (34:6-7)

A straightforward reading of the verse suggests that G-d was the one proclaiming the Thirteen Attributes of Kindness that are listed in these verses. Indeed, that is how the Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 17b) understands the verse. Furthermore, notes R' David Luria z"l (Lithuania; 1798-1856), the ta'amim / cantillation of the verse are consistent with this reading.

Nevertheless, the midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer interprets the verse differently and states that Moshe cried in a loud voice, "Hashem, Hashem . . ." Perhaps, observes R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995), this midrash is the source of the custom that the congregation calls out the Thirteen Attributes in a loud voice wherever they occur in the prayers and selichot. (Halichot Shlomo: Mo'adim II p.3)

Thirty Days Before Pesach . . .

"Ve'hi sh'amdah / It is this that has stood by our fathers and us." (The Pesach Haggadah)

When we recite these words during the Seder, it is customary to cover the matzah and to lift the cup of wine. Why? Is not the matzah a mitzvah de'oraita / a Torah-ordained mitzvah, while the Four Cups are only a rabbinically-ordained mitzvah? Why do we seem to attribute more importance to the rabbinic mitzvah than to the Torah mitzvah?

R' Menachem Mendel Kalish z"l (1819-1868; Rebbe of Vorka, Poland) explained: What is it that has held the Jewish people together and has stood us in good stead throughout the millennia of exile and persecution? It is the Torah scholars of each generation who have ensured the continuity of halachah and mitzvah-observance, and it is our adherence to their words that has preserved us as a nation. This is why we point out a rabbinic mitzvah and say, "It is this that has stood by our fathers and us."

When R' Mordechai Rokeach of Bilgorai z"l (died 1948; father of the current Belzer Rebbe) repeated R' Kalish's explanation to his father, the Belzer Rebbe, R' Yissochor Dov Rokeach z"l (1854-1926), the latter ordered that it be written down immediately. When he was reminded that it was chol ha'moed, when writing should be avoided if possible, R' Yissochor Dov responded that such a thought is too important to forget. It must be written down, even on chol ha'moed. (Quoted in Mi'saviv La'shulchan No. 140)

This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

17 Adar: In the era of the Sages of the Mishnah, fasting was prohibited on this date in commemoration of the salvation that occurred on it. After King Yannai had attempted to murder the entire Sanhedrin, many Sages had fled to a neighboring land. However, there, too, a plot was hatched to murder them. When that plot was foiled, it was a cause of celebration for all of the Jewish People. (Megillat Ta'anit)

18 Adar: Purim Sana (Yemen), observed in commemoration of the miracle that occurred on this date. Two Arab noblemen had murdered the prince on Purim and attempted to incriminate the Jews. Three days later, on this date, the dead prince opened his eyes and identified his murderers. (Luach Davar B'ito p.643)

20 Adar: The famous story of Choni Ha'meagel, who drew a circle on the ground and vowed not to set foot outside of it until his prayers for rain were answered, occurred on this date. (Megillat Ta'anit)

Also on this date, King Uziah of Yehuda, was stricken with tzara'at when he attempted to usurp the job of the kohanim in the First Temple, as alluded to in Melachim II, chapter 15. (Luach Davar B'ito)

p.647)

23 Adar: On this date, the dedication of the Mishkan began. The Mishkan was erected for the first time on this date, but it was taken down at the end of the day. This assembly and disassembly continued for the remainder of the week until, on the first of Nissan, the Mishkan was erected and left standing.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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