



A Marvelous Insight from Our Masterful Teacher the Chasam Sofer Eliyahu HaNavi Offers Korbanos in the Beis HaMikdash in the Heavens from the Spiritual Half-Shekel We Appropriate on Shabbas Shekalim

The auspicious Shabbas Kodesh that approaches is Rosh Chodesh Adar and is referred to as **Shabbas Shekalim**. So, in addition to reading parshas Terumah as the parshas hashavua, we will add an aliyah for Rosh Chodesh and the Maftir related to the mitzvah of “**mAchaszis hashekel**.” This is explained in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 685, 1 and 5) and is based on the teaching in the Mishnah (Megillah 29a) that the Maftir for parshas Shekalim is read on the Shabbas that we bless the month of Adar or on Shabbas Rosh Chodesh Adar. This reading commemorates the practice to announce the annual collection of shekalim for the korbanos of the new year.

This is explained in the Gemara as follows (Shekalim 2a): “באחד באדר משמיעין על השקלים”—**on the first of Adar, they (Beit-Din) would announce the (obligation of) “shekalim.”** On the first day of Adar, the court officials would announce that every Jew was required to donate a half-shekel to the Temple treasury for the purchase of “korbanos-tzibbur”—communal sacrifices—including the morning and afternoon “tamid” offerings and the korbanos for Shabbas and Yom Tov. With those funds, the “korbanos-tzibbur” for the entire year to come, beginning on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, would be purchased. Thus, every member of Yisrael would have an equal part in those offerings.

This is based on an elucidation in the Gemara (R.H. 7a) of the passuk (Bamidbar 28, 14): “זאת עולת חודש בחדשו לחדשי”

השנה, אמרה תורה חדש והבא קרבן מתרומה חדשה.” **“This is the olah offering for the start of the new month, for the months of the year.” The Torah stated: Renew the sacrificial service and bring the korban from a new collection of funds.** Expounding a “gezeirah shavah” related to the word “**shanah**,” the Gemara links the mitzvah of “shekalim” (in the passuk just cited) to the month of Nissan (Shemos 12, 2). Thus, they deduce that the renewal of the sacrificial service begins on the first of Nissan; from that day onward, all of the “korbanos tzibbur” must be purchased with new funds. Therefore, they began announcing the obligation to donate shekalim thirty days before Rosh Chodesh Nissan, i.e., on the first of Adar. This is similar to the practice regarding the laws of Pesach (Pesachim 6a): “שואלין ודורשין בהלכות הפסח קודם הפסח”—**“we begin to review the halachos pertaining to Pesach thirty days prior to Pesach.”**

Regarding the rationale for reading about the mitzvah of “mAchaszis hashekel” on Shabbas Shekalim, the Mishnah Berurah (O.C. 685, 2) cites the explanation of the Levush (ibid. 1): **“We substitute our lips for bulls by reading the parsha of Ki Sisa in which the matter of the shekalim is written.** In other words, by reading about the mitzvah of “mAchaszis hashekel,” it is considered as if we actually performed this mitzvah. This is based on the passuk (Hoshea 14, 3): “ונשלמה”—**“let our lips substitute for bulls.** Rashi explains

this as follows: Let the Torah-portion we recite with our lips be accepted in place of the sacrificial animals we would have offered in the Beis HaMikdash.

In this essay, we will examine the mitzvah of “m’Achaszis hashekel” as it is illuminated for us by our great luminary and teacher the Chasam Sofer, zy”a, in his Derushim and Aggados (Ki Sisa). Since he discussed the matter in brevity, I have decided to expand on his sacred insight, so that the Jewish public may fulfill the mitzvah of “m’Achaszis hashekel” more meaningfully in this day and age. May Hashem guide us on the path of “emet”!

Hashem Showed Moshe an Image of a Fiery Coin

Let us begin by referring to the pertinent passage in parshas Ki Sisa (Shemos 30, 11):

“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם, ונתנו איש כופר נפשו לה' בפקוד אותם ולא יהיה בהם נגף בפקוד אותם, זה יתנו כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל בשקל הקודש עשרים גרה השקל מחצית השקל תרומה לה', כל העובר על הפקודים מבין עשרים שנה ומעלה יתן תרומת ה', העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעט ממחצית השקל לתת את תרומת ה' לכפר על נפשותיכם.”

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: “When you will take a census of Bnei Yisrael according to their counts, every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul when counting them, and there will be no plague among them when counting them. This is what they shall give—everyone who passes among the counted—half of the shekel, by the holy shekel, the shekel is twenty geirah, half of the shekel as a portion to Hashem. The wealthy shall not increase (give more) and the destitute shall not decrease (give less) from half of the shekel—to give the portion of Hashem, to atone for your souls.

Rashi comments: Hashem showed Moshe a sort of coin of fire whose weight was half a shekel and told him, “They should give a coin like this.” The source for this idea is the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Sisa 9); the Midrash adds that HKB”H took this fiery coin of sorts from beneath the “Kisei HaKavod”-the Throne of Glory. What was so difficult for Moshe to

understand? HKB”H specified that the coin weigh exactly a half shekel. Additionally, how did a fiery coin weighing one half shekel end up beneath the Kisei HaKavod?

Eliyahu HaNavi Offers Korban Tamids in the Beis HaMikdash Even Today

The Chasam Sofer provides us with a marvelous explanation based on a wonderful chiddush from the divine kabbalist, the Rama of Pano, in Asarah Ma’amaros. He claims that even today, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, Eliyahu HaNavi, who is a kohen, stands in the Beis HaMikdash and sacrifices the daily Tamid offerings as prescribed—one lamb in the morning and a second lamb in the evening. The fact that Eliyahu is a kohen descending from Aharon HaKohen is based on the teaching in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Pinchas): “פינחס הוא אליהו”—Pinchas is Eliyahu.

This coincides with the teaching in the Mishnah (Megillah 28a) based on the passuk (Vayikra 26, 31): “והשימותי את הארץ—**and I shall make your sanctuaries desolate,**” implies that they (sanctuaries and synagogues) **retain their kedushah even when they are desolate** (in ruins). Elsewhere, we are taught (ibid. 10a): **אמר רבי יהושע, שמעתי שמקריבין אף על פי שאין בית... מפני שקדושה ראשונה קידשה לשעתה וקידשה לעתיד לבוא.** And Rabbi Yehoshua said: I heard (from my teachers) that we may offer korbanos (at the site of the Mikdash) **even though there is no sanctuary building standing . . . because the initial kedushah** (of Yerushalayim and the Mikdash) **sanctified for its time and for all future time to come.** Hence, it stands to reason that even at the present time, in the aftermath of the churban, Eliyahu HaNavi still stands at the site of the Beis HaMikdash and offers the korban Tamids.

Regarding this phenomenon, we find an extraordinary story in the Yitav Lev (Emor). After presenting the assertion of the Asarah Ma’amaros—that even after the churban, Eliyahu HaNavi, as a kohen, continues to offer the daily korban Tamid—he writes the following: I heard from my teacher of blessed memory, the author of the Yismach Moshe, that once, after he finished davening Shemoneh Esreh, he decided to pray wholeheartedly to be permitted to witness this phenomenon

described in the Asarah Ma'amaros. Immediately afterwards, he prayed for this to happen, and Hashem granted his request. He witnessed firsthand Eliyahu dressed in the priestly garments offering the korban Tamid.

HKB"H Took the Beis HaMikdash Up to the Heavens and Eliyahu Offers Korbanos There

So, where exactly is this Beis HaMikdash located, where Eliyahu continues to offer the daily korban Tamid even today? In Asarah Ma'amaros, the Rama of Pano proves from a passage in the Zohar hakadosh (Pekudei 240b) that our enemies did not take possession of the foundations of Yerushalayim. Here is a translation of the passage:

These stones of the foundations of Tziyon and Yerushalayim, heaven forbid that they fell into the possession of the other nations; they did not burn them, and they were not burned. Rather, they were all stored away, and HKB"H concealed them. And all the foundations of the Beis HaMikdash were stored away; not a single one of them was lost. When HKB"H will restore and erect Yerushalayim on its proper site, these foundations, the original stones, will be returned to their places.

Now, if our enemies did not gain possession of the foundations of Tziyon and Yerushalayim, it goes without saying that they did not take control or possession of the Beis HaMikdash itself. Yet, whereas those foundations were stored in the earth, the Beis HaMikdash was not buried in the earth. In contrast, HKB"H took it up to the heavens. The Rama of Pano proves this from a teaching in the Mishnah (Ta'anis 29a):

"תנו רבנן, משחרב הבית בראשונה נתקבצו כיתות כיתות של פרחי כהונה ומפתחות ההיכל בידן, ועלו לגג ההיכל ואמרו לפנינו רבונו של עולם, הואיל ולא זכינו להיות גזברין נאמנים יהיו מפתחות מסורות לך, וזרקום כלפי מעלה, ויצתה כעין פיסת יד וקיבלתן מהם."

The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: When the Temple was destroyed the first time, groups upon groups of young kohanim assembled with the keys to the Heichal in their hands, and they went up to the roof of the Heichal, and they said before Him: "Master of the Universe! Since

we were not privileged to be trusted caretakers, let the keys be handed over to You." They threw them towards heaven and something like the palm of a hand emerged and received them from them. Thus, we learn from this Mishnah, that not only was the Beis HaMikdash itself stored in the heavens but even the keys to the Heichal were.

In his own, inimitable, sacred way, the Rama of Pano reconciles with his characteristic brevity a statement Hashem made to Shlomo HaMelech after he completed the construction of the Beis HaMikdash (Melachim I 9, 3):

"ויאמר ה' אליו, שמעתי את תפלתך ואת תחינתך אשר התחננת לפני. הקדשתי את הבית הזה אשר בנית לשום שמי שם עד עולם, והיו עיני ולבי שם כל הימים. ואתה אם תלך לפני כאשר הלך דוד אביך... והקמותי את כסא ממלכתך על ישראל לעולם... אם שוב תשובון אתם ובניכם מאחרי ולא תשמרו מצותי... והכרתי את ישראל מעל פני האדמה אשר נתתי להם, ואת הבית אשר הקדשתי לשמי אשלח מעל פני... והבית הזה יהיה עליו, כל עובר עליו ישום ושרק, ואמרו על מה עשה ה' ככה לארץ ולבית הזה."

Hashem said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have requested of Me. I have sanctified this House (Temple) that you have built to place My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days. And as for you—if you walk before Me as your father David walked . . . then I shall uphold the throne of your kingdom over Yisrael forever . . . But if you and your children turn away from Me and will not observe My mitzvos . . . then I shall cut off Yisrael from upon the face of the land that I have given them, and the House that I have sanctified for My name I shall dismiss from My presence . . . And this House, which will be so exalted—all who pass by it will be astonished and will whistle, and they will say, 'Why did Hashem do such a thing to this land and to this House?'"

The commentaries are perplexed by the phrase: "והבית הזה יהיה עליו"—and this House, which will be so exalted. After all, the passuk is discussing a time when Bnei Yisrael will sin, and HKB"H will destroy the Beis HaMikdash. So, how does it fit to say: "And this House, which will be so exalted" in relation to the time of the churban? Now, Rashi and the Targum interpret the passuk as referring to the Bayis that was once so exalted.

The Rama of Pano, however, interprets this differently. HKB”H was telling Shlomo HaMelech that even when Yisrael sin and are unworthy, HKB”H will not actually destroy the Beis HaMikdash. Instead: **“The House that I have sanctified for My name I shall dismiss from My presence”**—HKB”H will transport the Beis HaMikdash from Yerushalayim, the place of the Shechinah—His divine Presence; **“and this House, which will be so exalted”**—it will not fall into the hands of the enemies, but it will be in an exalted place—in the heavens. Furthermore, whoever passes by its previous location and is not privy to this secret will think that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed. This will cause them to wonder why Hashem allowed such a travesty to happen. In reality, however, the Beis HaMikdash was not destroyed; it was merely elevated to the heavens. In keeping with this scenario, Eliyahu HaNavi continues to offer the korban Tamids in the new location of the Beis HaMikdash above.

Eliyahu HaNavi Sets Aside the MAchaszis HaShekel from the Source of Plenty in Its Spiritual Form

This interpretation, however, raises a practical, halachic issue. As we have learned, the korban Tamids must be purchased from communal funds—namely with the half-shekels Yisrael donate every Adar. So, if Eliyahu HaNavi truly continues to offer these korbanos even today, how does he receive the mAchaszit-hashekel contributions from Yisrael?

Apparently, the Rama of Pano sensed this difficulty and suggests: **Perhaps the funds from the donations to the treasury (chamber) were stored for him, so that they would still be coming from the tzibbur.** Unfortunately, the Chasam Sofer considers this suggestion untenable. Perhaps his objection is based on the fact that the contributions of the “mAchaszis hashekel” must be collected annually to purchase the “korbanos tzibbur” for the new, upcoming year. So, what benefit would it serve to have previous treasury funds stored away for Eliyahu? The great Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen, zy”a, also sensed this difficulty and addresses the matter in his Pri Tzaddik (Shekalim 2).

Nevertheless, here is how the Chasam Sofer resolves this difficulty: **In my humble opinion, the matter is quite**

simple. He (Eliyahu) takes from the conduits of plenty that deliver the parnasah to each individual Jew. He sets aside for his needs the amount of a “mAchaszis hashekel” from which he offers lambs of fire, so it seems.

I believe that we can expand on this sacred notion based on what the esteemed Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, zy”a, brings down in the sefer Menachem Tziyon (Derushim for Pesach). He explains that in the Torah, we find two terms for “rain.” For instance, in the passuk (Devarim 11, 14): **“ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו”**—the term **“matar”** is used for rain. Yet, in the passuk (Vayikra 26, 4): **“ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם”**—the term **“geshem”** is used for rain.

He asserts that when the rain leaves the heavens, it is in a spiritual form and is called **“matar”**; when it comes down to this world, it takes on a physical form and is called **“geshem.”** Hence, we refer to things that are material and physical as **“gashmi.”**

With this understanding, we can begin to comprehend the remarks of the Chasam Sofer. As explained, even today, Eliyahu HaNavi offers the daily korban Tamid in the Beis HaMikdash above. In order for these korbanos to come from the funds of the tzibbur, he separates the amount of a “mAchaszis hashekel” from the source of plenty of the parnasah of each individual Jew while it is still in its spiritual form. They are then transformed into fiery lambs which are offered at the site of the Mikdash on a daily basis as korban Tamids.

The Chasam Sofer goes on to say that this is alluded to in the passuk: **“כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקדיהם”**. He interprets the word **“לפקדיהם”** as a type of loss or absence, as it is used in the passuk (Bamidbar 31, 49): **“ולא נפקד ממנו איש”**—**and not a man of us was missing.** Interpreted this way, the passuk refers to a time after the churban when the Beis HaMikdash will be absent. To which HKB”H insinuates to Moshe that there will come a time when it will be necessary to separate donations from **“ראש בני ישראל”**—from the spiritual source of plenty before it descends to sustain the people below. Thus, at that time: **“ונתנו איש כופר נפשו לה”**... **מחצית השקל בשקל הקודש**—every Jew will contribute his obligation of a “mAchaszis hashekel” to Hashem.

We asked above what was so difficult for Moshe Rabeinu to understand. In keeping with this discussion, we can suggest that he did not understand how Yisrael would contribute the “mAchaszis hashekel” after the churban of the Beis HaMikdash to purchase the spiritual, fiery lambs that Eliyahu would sacrifice above. Hence, HKB”H enlightened him: **“This is what they shall give.”** As the Midrash explains: **HKB”H removed a sort of coin of fire from beneath the Kisei HaKavod and showed it to Moshe. And he said to him, “This is what they shall give.”** In other words, after the churban, Eliyahu HaNavi will extract a “mAchaszis hashekel” of fire from beneath the Kisei HaKavod—i.e., from the source of spiritual plenty of every Jew before it descends to Olam HaZeh and takes on physical characteristics. These fiery coins are then transformed into fiery lambs that are offered as korban Tamids. This summarizes the fascinating insight of the Chasam Sofer with some additional clarification.

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to latch onto the coattails of the Chasam Sofer and suggest the following: Every year, on Shabbas Shekalim, we read the passage of the “mAchaszis hashekel: **כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקוּדֵיהֶם**.” According to the Chasam Sofer, this alludes to the period of time after the churban of the Beis HaMikdash. At that time, Eliyahu separates the requisite funds from the source of plenty referred to as **רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**. So, when Rosh Chodesh Adar arrives, and we are obligated to contribute the “mAchaszis hashekel” for the “korbanos tzibbur” of the new year, Eliyahu HaNavi separates a “mAchaszis hashekel” of fire on behalf of every Jew from his respective source of plenty to offer fiery lambs throughout the year at the site of the Mikdash. Thus, we comply with and fulfill the procedure of: **וְנִשְׁלְמָה פְּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ**—fulfilling our commitments to offer korbanos through our Torah readings.

The Chasam Sofer’s Incredible Calculation

Based on what we have discussed, the Chasam Sofer attempts to reconcile the comments of the Tosafos (Megillah 16a) related to a passuk in Megillas Esther (3, 9): **אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדָּם וְעִשְׂרָת אֲלָפִים כֶּסֶף אֶשְׁקוּל עַל יְדֵי עוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה לְהַבִּיאַם אֶל גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ**—**if it pleases the king, let it be recorded that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand kikar**

of silver into the hands of those who perform the duties, for deposit in the king’s treasuries. The Tosafos write: **I heard that ten-thousand kikar of silver amount to a half-shekel for every member of Yisrael, who numbered 600,000 when they departed from Mitzrayim. So, he (Haman) promised that he would pay Achashveirosh their entire ransom fee.**

All the commentaries find this perplexing. After all, we find an explicit passuk in parshas Pekudei (Shemos 38, 25): **וְכֶסֶף פְּקוּדֵי הָעֵדָה מֵאֵת כָּכֶר**—**the amount of silver of the accountings of the assembly amounted to one hundred kikar.** Rashi provides the following calculation: **The total of half-shekels of 600,000 people amounts to one hundred kikar—three thousand shekels per person. How so? 600,000 half-shekels equal three thousand whole shekels, which equals one hundred kikar.** This is clearly at odds with the comment of Tosafos that claimed that Haman offered to pay Achashveirosh **“ten thousand kikar”** corresponding to the 600,000 half-shekels contributed by Yisrael for the Mishkan. In fact, **“ten thousand kikar of silver”** is one hundred times more than the **“one hundred kikar”** contributed by Yisrael with the “mAchaszis hashekel” campaign for the Mishkan.

However, based on what we have learned, the Chasam Sofer reconciles the comment of the Tosafos magnificently. To do so, he teaches us a valuable concept. It is impossible to receive the plenty from above in the exact amount that it exists above. Because when it is still in the heavens in its spiritual form, it is actually more spiritual and more abundant. But when it descends, not only does it become more material and physical, but it also decreases in amount. So, how much does the plenty decrease during its descent?

The Chasam Sofer says that when the plenty from above reaches Eretz Yisrael, it only amounts to one-tenth of its original amount. This explains why when Yisrael entered the promised land, they only inherited seven of the seventy nations of the world—i.e., one tenth. In galus, we receive even less, because we only receive the bare essence of the plenty from Eretz Yisrael. Hence, we only receive one one-hundredth of the original, spiritual plenty before it began

its descent to Eretz Yisrael. Thus, when Eliyahu HaNavi contributes a “mAchaszis hashekel” on behalf of every Jew in galus, while it is still in its full, spiritual, heavenly form, it equals exactly one hundred times the value of a “mAchaszis shekel” down below.

Now, the comment of the Tosafos can be explained very nicely: **I heard that ten-thousand kikar of silver amount to a half-shekel for every member of Yisrael, who numbered 600,000 when they departed from Mitzrayim. So, he (Haman) promised that he would pay Achashveirosh their entire ransom fee.** In other words, Haman HaRasha, due to his extreme malice, offered Achashveirosh the equivalent of a “mAchaszis hashekel” for 600,000 Jews corresponding to what Eliyahu HaNavi contributes from the source of plenty before it descends down below. For, as explained, that amount is one hundred times the material amount that actually arrives below. Since a “mAchaszis hashekel” for 600,000 people equals one hundred kikar, the corresponding amount in the heavens is one hundred times that—i.e., “ten

thousand kikar.” This concludes the expanded version of the Chasam Sofer’s explanation.

So, now, let us address the statement of Haman HaRasha: **“If it pleases the king, let it be recorded that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand kikar of silver into the hands of those who perform the duties, for deposit in the king’s treasuries.”** Why did the wicked Haman specify to Achashveirosh that the money be taken to “the king’s treasuries”? Shouldn’t Achashveirosh himself have designated where he wanted the money deposited?

Let us suggest an answer based on what we learned from the Chasam Sofer. Haman HaRasha was emphasizing the fact that he was not offering the amount of 600,000 “mAchaszis hashekel”s as they would be given by Yisrael below but rather their equivalence in the heavens in **“the treasuries of the supreme King,”** HKB”H, before being sent down below. Since that amount is one hundred times the actual amount given below, the correct equivalent is **“ten thousand kikar of silver.”**



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