

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy" a, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



אמרות שמשון

A Wonderful Explanation Regarding the Three Things Moshe Found Difficult: The Menorah, the Half-Shekel, and the Sanctification of the Month

An allusion can be derived from the proximity of the final word of Parashat Terumah – which ends by saying "and all the pegs of the courtyard, of *nechoshet* (נחשת: 'bronze') – to the beginning of Parashat Tetzaveh, which starts by saying "And you shall command..."

It appears that the word "*nechoshet*" (נחשת) alludes to the three things our Sages said Moshe had difficulty understanding until HaKadosh Baruch Hu, had to show them to him. The word "*nechoshet*" (נחשת) is an acronym for:

- **Ner** (נר: 'lamp,' alluding to the **Menorah**).
- **Hodesh** (חודש: 'month,' alluding to the **Sanctification of the Month**).
- **Shekalim** (שקלים): alluding to the **Machatzit Hashekel** – the half-shekel coin).
- **Tir-eh** (תראה: 'look/see,' for Moshe Rabbeinu struggled to understand their form until HASHEM showed them to him).

From this, you will understand why the verse says here "*Ve'ata tetzaveh*" (ואתה תצוה: "And you shall command...") and not "*Vaydaber Hashem el Moshe...*" (וידבר ה' אל משה: "And Hashem spoke to Moshe...") as in other places. Thus, in the entire *Parashah*, Moshe's name is not mentioned. Moshe knew and understood that these three matters he found difficult alluded to the fact that he would die outside the Land of Israel, no living being would know his burial place, and he would not enter the Land with the Children of Israel.

Indeed, we must understand how it is possible that the understanding of how to make these things was hidden from Moshe. Moshe Rabbeinu had understood far more difficult things instantly! It seems that the difficulty he had was not because he could not understand the practical way to make them, but because these things alluded to his burial outside the Land of Israel, a fact Moshe did not yet know. Therefore, it was difficult for him to understand *why* they were made that way, as clarified below:

Moshe did not understand why the Moon would not always be at its fullness

Hodesh (חודש: 'month'): The Moon is an allusion to the Kingdom

of Israel, and Israel counts the days of the month according to the Moon. The waxing and waning of the Moon is similar to the Land of Israel, which is compared to the skin of a deer (extremely flexible): when Israel dwells in it, it is spacious, but when they do not, it is narrow (*Gittin 57a*). Furthermore, the Moon's phases allude to Israel, who are sometimes in greatness and sometimes in humiliation during times of exile.

The ancient Sages wrote that if Moshe Rabbeinu himself had brought the Children of Israel into the Land, he would have established them there forever; the government would have remained with Israel always, the Temple would never have been destroyed, and Israel would not have needed to go into exile. Therefore, the Moon would have always been at its fullness without defect. Thus, when HaKadosh Baruch Hu, said to Moshe, "*This month shall be for you...*" – implying that the Moon would not always be full but would wane and wax – Moshe found it very difficult to understand how such a thing could be. Under the assumption that he would lead Israel into the Land, there should be no reduction in Israel's sovereignty. Then, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, showed him that he would not lead them in, and for that reason, they were destined to suffer exiles.

Moshe did not understand why he was not commanded to make ten Menorot of seven branches

Menorah (מנורה: 'candelabra'): HaKadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe to make one Menorah with seven branches to weaken the power of the seven nations of the land of Canaan. Moshe struggled to understand why he was commanded to make only one Menorah; were there not seventy nations in the entire world? If they were to enter the land and conquer the 7 nations of that region, they should eventually subjugate all seventy nations. If so, it would have been appropriate to make ten Menorot, just as King Solomon later did.

As explained in the book *Siftei Kohan*, the reason why in Solomon's days all nations were subjugated under him is that Solomon reigned over both the upper and lower realms. Therefore, he made ten Menorot of 7 branches to weaken the power of all seventy nations. Moshe struggled to understand why Hashem did not command him to make ten Menorot from the start. But HASHEM showed him that he was to make only one, for he did not have the merit to lead them into the Land and subjugate all nations. Only Solomon, who merited this rectification, was commanded to make ten Menorot (totaling seventy branches) against the seventy nations of the world.

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Shekel alludes to the Name of Hashem, and Moshe struggled with why only a half-shekel was commanded

Machatzit Hashekel (מחצית השקל: 'half-shekel'): In *Gematria*, the Hebrew word "**shekel**" (שקל), according to the alphabetic transformation known as *Atbash*, is equivalent to the letters "**b'dach**" (בד"ך), which has a numerical value of 26 – the same as the Name of *Hashem*.

Moshe struggled to understand why the Children of Israel were commanded to donate only a half-*shekel* and not a whole *shekel*. By teaching Moshe the half-*shekel*, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* showed him that he would not bring them into the Land and they would not merit the complete rectification; therefore, the Name of *HASHEM* would not be

"complete" immediately. Only in the future will His Name and His throne be complete.

As stated, all of this is alluded to in the closing word of *Parashat Terumah* and the continuation in *Parashat Tetzaveh*: "... *nechoshet ve'ata tetzaveh*": *Ner* (*Menorah*), *Hodesh* (month), and *Shekel* (half-*shekel*), *Tir-eh* (observe), and you shall command... *HAKADOSH BARUCH HU* said to him: "From these three things I had to show you, you will learn why your name is hidden in this portion." This hints that he would be "hidden" and die, and thus the complete rectification of the People of Israel would not yet occur. It says only "*And you shall command*" rather than "*And Hashem spoke to Moshe*" to hint that he would not enter the Land and would remain hidden. (Zera Shimshon, *Parashat Tetzaveh*, Art. 1)

The Origin and Meaning of Consuming "Haman's Ears" (Oznei Haman or Hamantashen)

One of the widespread customs in all the communities of Israel during Purim, to increase the joy, is to eat *Oznei Haman* - the so-called *hamantashen*, "Haman's ears" - which are triangular-shaped baked cookies filled with some type of preserve. In various books, it has been noted that an explicit origin for this custom is not found in ancient sources, and many have struggled to discover its root and deep meaning. Some even came to think it was an error or a linguistic confusion related to translations into other languages.

However, we will see below that Rabenu—who lived about three hundred years ago—explicitly mentions this custom and beautifully explains its meaning. In fact, the *Zera Shimshon* is the first known source that provides a foundation for this practice.

Rabenu says, in an ingenious style: a reason can be given for the fact that all of Israel is accustomed to preparing sweet *Oznei Haman* ("Haman's ears") on Purim. Why specifically ears, and not eyes, hands, or another organ? And furthermore: how is it possible to sweeten the limbs of Haman the wicked, who was entirely cursed, perverse, and bitter?

The answer is as follows: the verse says, "Incline your ear and your soul shall live" (*Yeshayahu* 55:3), and our Sages in the *Midrash* teach (*Shemot Rabbah* 27:9) that everything depends on the ear. Whoever inclines his ear to hear words of Torah and reproof gains life, as it is said: "The ear that hears life-giving reproof" (*Mishlei* 15:31). Until the time of Haman, Israel had not wanted to incline its ear to fully accept the yoke of the Torah. But in the days of Haman, they inclined their ear and accepted the Torah anew, and this was for their good.

Therefore, the "sweet ears" that we make and eat are not Haman's ears in a literal sense, but rather the ears of Israel, which thanks to

Haman were inclined to hear the Torah. And a custom of Israel is Torah: true Torah.

(Zera Shimshon, *Megillat Esther*, *Derush* 21; see also *Derush* 10)

A Wonderful Explanation of Why Achashverosh Suspected That Haman Wanted to Kill Him

"On that night, the king's sleep was disturbed, and he ordered to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king." (*Esther* 6:1)

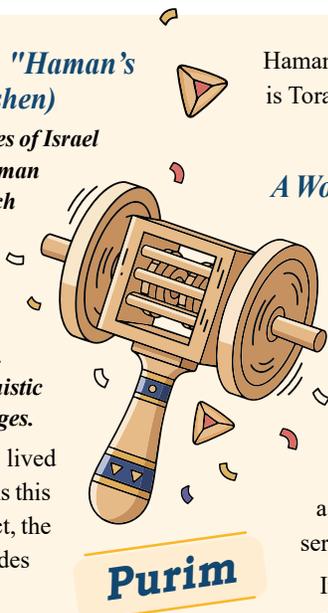
Our Sages say in the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 15b) that the thought crossed King Achashverosh's mind that perhaps Haman was plotting to have him killed. At first glance, this seems very strange: from where did such a suspicion arise, if Haman was his most faithful and closest servant?

It can be explained according to what our Sages *teach* (*Gittin* 56b): "Whoever oppresses Israel ends up becoming a leader."

The reason for this is clarified in the *Tosafot* (*Chagigah* 13b): so that it is not said that *HAKADOSH BARUCH HU* delivered Israel into the hands of a despicable nation.

Therefore, Achashverosh feared that, since Haman desired to exterminate Israel, it would not suffice for him to be considered a "head" only by his wealth or power, but rather that this would lead to Achashverosh himself dying and Haman ascending to the throne in his place. In that way, Haman would become a true and worthy "head" or "chief," and then — according to that reasoning — Israel would be destroyed through him.

This thought was what unsettled Achashverosh: for Haman's plan to exterminate the Jews to succeed, Haman had to become a "head," because only a "head" can strike against the People of Israel; thus, this implied that he (Achashverosh) had to end up dying so that Haman could rise to power. (Zera Shimshon, *Esther*, Art. 4)



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