

וְאִנְשֵׁי קָדֶשׁ תִּהְיוּ לִי וּבֶשֶׁר בְּשַׂדֶּה מִרְפָּה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ לְכַלֵּב תִּשְׁלַכֶּן אֹתוֹ ... (כב-ל)

Yet there is another layer to this symbolism, one that emerges from a remarkable narrative preserved in the writings of the **Abarbanel ז"ל**, and this is what he wrote: *“As for Koresh, his beginnings and deeds, Yosef Ben Gurion did not remember a single thing about him, and I saw fit to tell you here what is written about him in the books of the kings of Persia, and what the Latin writers brought in their chronicles.”* He continues and explains that according to ancient Persian chronicles, Koresh (Cyrus) the very king who authorized the rebuilding of the Temple had an extraordinary origin story. His grandfather, King Astyages, had only one daughter, who secretly married a nobleman of the realm. When Astyages discovered the truth, his fury was boundless. He saw the marriage as a political betrayal. The prince was seized and thrown into prison, where he languished until his death. His daughter, once the apple of his eye, was confined to a guarded chamber, isolated from the world. And when she gave birth to a son, the king's rage only deepened. To him, the child was not a grandson but a threat - a rival claimant to the throne, born of defiance and disobedience.

But fate had other plans. As the child cried in the stillness of the forest, a lone dog wandered into the clearing. Some versions describe her as a wild dog, hardened by the struggle for survival; others imagine her as a domesticated animal that had strayed from a nearby settlement. Whatever her origin, she approached the infant not with predatory instinct but with a strange, maternal tenderness. She sniffed him, circled him, and then lay beside him, offering warmth. When he cried from hunger, she nursed him. When danger approached, she growled and stood guard over her tiny human charge.

Because he had been raised by a dog, the chronicles say, he was called “Kyros,” a name associated with the dog in Persian. The animal that had saved him became part of his identity, a symbol of loyalty, survival, and unexpected providence. If Koresh, the benefactor of the Jewish people, bore this canine symbolism, then the dog-shaped fire of the Second *Bais HaMikdash* takes on a new meaning. It becomes not merely a symbol of diminished spiritual stature, but also a gesture of gratitude. The **Yerushalmi** teaches that one must acknowledge goodness even to a dog. How much more so to a king whose kindness enabled the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the holy Temple. The fire’s form thus becomes a subtle tribute to Koresh himself, a recognition of the unlikely instrument through which divine mercy was delivered.

R' Pinchas ben Pilta ז"ל (Bris Shalom) explains that the *posuk*, “*the money of the value of the people ... to bring to the house of Hashem,*” is meant to be understood that because Jews are never allowed to be counted, the worth of the *Machatzis HaShekel* coin was meant to be a substitute

Chazal tell us that the “*Machatzis HaShekel*” donation was given with “*money which comes from a man's heart*,” and the same coin was given whether the person was wealthy or poor. The purpose of this was to create a unity amongst the Jewish people and even though the coin itself might have been of little value, it was HOW the half-*shekel* coin was given that made all the difference.

Ultimately, the motive, not the societal class of the giver, was the deciding factor in evaluating the value of the *Machatzis HaShekel* coin.

Rashi in *Parshas Ki Sisa* on this *posuk* cites *Chazal* who explain the word "זה" in this context to mean, not merely a conceptual *shekel*, but a real physical picture of one. Because *Moshe Rabbeinu* was somewhat unsure as to what this coin was, *Hashem* showed him a מטבע של אש. Why enlighten Moshe with a fiery coin and not an actual metal coin?

Chazal say that we read *Parshas Shekalim* before *Adar*. How appropriate it is that after *Klal Yisroel* said the immortal words, “*Naaseh V’Nishma*” the week after we were “forced” to be *mekabel* the *Torah*, we dedicate ourselves with a fire and a “*bren*.” Through that zealotness, *Klal Yisroel* “re-accepted” the *Torah* on *Purim* with *simcha* and “*hislahavus*.”

משל למה הדבר דומה

The student watched in awe, expecting the *Rosh Yeshivah* to offer words of wisdom or deep perspective. But R' Moshe didn't. As the woman spoke, tears began to stream down his face. He wept openly with her, his shoulders shaking with a shared, genuine grief. After she finished speaking and he offered a few soft, heartfelt words, the woman left the room looking visibly lifted and comforted.

נמש: The prohibition against afflicting a widow or orphan is not limited to financial oppression or causing her pain of any kind. One need not always provide financial support to make a difference; rather, by simply displaying genuine kindness and sensitivity, one fulfills the profound *mitzvah* of caring for them. In the eyes of the *Torah*, a listening ear and an open heart can be just as valuable as gold, turning a moment of isolation into one of comfort. *Image of Hashem.* To disrespect a person is to criticize his or her Maker.

**INSIGHTFUL TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY
SEDRA TO LEARN AND TO ENJOY BY R' MOSHE GELFAND**

One might say that the *Torah* is teaching us a fundamental principle: spirituality is not found only in the clouds, but in how we treat our fellow human beings on the ground. The *mitzvos* of *bein adam l'adam* commanded in this *parsha* are just as essential to *Matan Torah*. As mentioned, the *parsha* concludes with the Jews' declaration of "*Naaseh V'nishma*" - we will do and we will hear (or understand). This phrase defines the Jewish approach to Divine service. By placing "doing" before "understanding," the *Torah* suggests that commitment to ethical action and Divine law precedes intellectual comprehension. It is the *mishpatim* of the *Torah* which define our character and who we are, not the other way around.

Indeed, it is the *Torah* which is the only true path to *tikkun hamidos*. There are many people who study ethics and philosophy but are far from practicing what they learn and preach. It is only the *koach haTorah* invested in the *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* that has the power to change one's essence. This is alluded to in the *posuk* "רק שבתו יתן ורפא ירפא" (שבת"ה). It is when one puts in the "שבת" - the sitting and learning *Torah* and applying its precepts into practice, that "זרפא ירפא" he may heal whatever spiritual malady and character defects he may have. In our modern lives, it is easy to separate our religious identity from our professional or social conduct. *Parshas Mishpatim* reminds us that they are one and the same. The laws of the marketplace and the laws of the *Mikdash* both originate from the same source. When we act with integrity in our business dealings and show compassion to those who need it, we are fulfilling the vision of *Matan Torah*. May we be *zocheh* to be so inspired.

**CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE
FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"l**

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