

# Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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וְכֶסֶף פְּקוּדֵי הָעֵדָה מֵאֵת כֶּכָּר וְאֶלֶף וְשִׁבְעַת מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה וְשִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל... מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל... לְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף וְשִׁלְשֵׁת אֲלָפִים וְחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשִּׁים. וַיְהִי מֵאֵת כֶּכָּר הַכֶּסֶף לְצִקֵּת אֶת אֲדָנֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֶת אֲדָנֵי הַפְּרָכֶת... וְאֶת הָאֶלֶף וְשִׁבְעַת הַמֵּאוֹת וְחֲמִשָּׁה וְשִׁבְעִים עֶשֶׂה וַיַּעֲשֶׂה וַיַּעֲמִידֵם וַיַּצֵּף רָאשֵׁיהֶם וַיַּחֲשֶׁק אֹתָם. (פרק לח' בה-כח)

*The silver of the census of the community was a hundred talents, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels... ...half a shekel... ...for the six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty (men). The hundred talents of silver were to cast the sockets of the Sanctuary and the sockets for the Curtain... And from the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five (shekels) he made hooks for the (Courtyard) pillars, covered their tops and banded them.*

The Artscroll Stone Edition Chumash editors, as usual, give us a wonderful synopsis of this passage: "(It) lists only the silver that was accumulated through the head tax of a half-shekel, which was used to count the adult males. The bulk of it was used... to cast the ninety-six sockets that supported the forty-eight planks of the Tabernacle walls and the four sockets that supported the four pillars that held the Partition-curtain in front of the Holy of Holies. The remaining silver was used for the accessories needed for the (Courtyard) pillars."

An enigmatic Midrash Rabba: "When Moshe Rabbeinu completed the *Mishkan*, he said to the people, 'Come and I will make a reckoning before you,' as it says *וַיַּעֲמִידֵם* / *These are the counting of the Mishkan* i.e., such and such was expended. While he was sitting and calculating, he forgot the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five *shekels* from which he crafted the hooks for the *Amudim*. He began sitting and wondering in despair and said: 'Now (the Children of) Israel will find justification to say that Moshe took them.' What did Hashem do? HKBH enlightened his eyes, and he saw that they were crafted into hooks for the *Amudim*. At that moment, all (the Children of) Israel were satisfied regarding the labor of the *Mishkan*." Moshe forgot? Hashem helped him remember? Rav Meir Simcha proceeds to help us understand this *מִדְרָשׁ פְּלִיאָה*.

He begins with Rashi in *עירובין* who tells us that one of the determining factors of a *רשות*, a public domain, is that on any given day, six hundred thousand people traverse it. This is derived from the number of Jewish travelers in the *Midbar*. Rabbeinu Tam is bothered by this, for if we include the women, children and the *עָרֵב רַב*, the number of travelers is considerably larger? Tosafos answers that *לא גמרינן ממשכן אלא מילתא דכתיבא* i.e., we derive from the (generation of the) *Mishkan* only numbers which are declared in the Torah. Asks Rav Meir Simcha: And yet we know that there were in fact six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty men, as detailed in our pasukim? He explains that with regards to the travelers in the *Midbar*, the number is listed as six hundred

thousand e.g., במדבר י"א בא, *six hundred thousand footsoldiers*. It seems that the Torah felt that the three thousand five hundred fifty men were not significant enough a number and rounded it to the nearest ten thousand, referred to as רבוא. Thus, the well known שִׁשִּׁים רְבֹוא. Note that these three thousand five hundred fifty donated *half-shekalim* represented the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five *shekels* that Moshe used to make the silver accessories for the *Amudim*. Rav Meir Simcha proposes that Moshe used them to ornament the *Amudim* because relative to the אֲדָנִי קֹדֶשׁ, which received the *one hundred silver talents* (the equivalent of three hundred thousand *shekels*), they were less significant. The less substantial number for the less significant purpose. Rav Meir Simcha uses this to explain a rule cited in ברכות מט: "In a group of ten thousand people, a רבוא, the one reciting the *zimmun* says: 'אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ'." Why the reference to the רבואים? Rav Meir Simcha feels that תי"ל "saw" that just as with regards to the אֲדָנִי קֹדֶשׁ, any *shekels* less than a רבוא were not considered significant enough to use for the קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשִׁים, which contained the רבואים, it would similarly be appropriate to mention the יוֹשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים when there is a gathering of a רבוא or more to bless Him!

Returning to our Midrash and Moshe's forgetfulness. It would be understandable for those people whose *half-shekel* were used for the *Amudim* to be quite upset. Why was their donation designated to adorn these less significant structures? Did it reflect on *their* lack of worth relative to those whose *half-shekel* went for the אֲדָנִי קֹדֶשׁ? Did Moshe make other unilateral decisions regarding how to use the donations to the *Mishkan*? This is precisely why Hashem made Moshe forget for what purpose he used the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five *shekels*. The decision was not intentional or personal-for that would be something Moshe would just not forget i.e., that he believed some of the people were better than others; but just a simple mistake-he forgot. And so Hashem reminded him by lighting up the *Amudim*. And that is also why the Midrash tells us that "at that moment, all (the Children of) Israel were satisfied regarding the labor of the *Mishkan*." Why such a broad inclusion of *all* the labor and not just a pacification with regards to how Moshe used this silver? Rav Meir Simcha feels that if Moshe had not *been made to forget* the *Amudim*, the insinuations and accusations from the people would have been much more far reaching than just the silver of the *half-shekels*, it would have been pointed at the construction of the entire structure itself! A מִדְרָשׁ פְּלִיאָה returns to being "just" a Midrash!

For those who appreciate reading the Meshech Chochma itself, you will notice an anomaly: this piece is not to be found on our pasukim but rather in ויקהל פרק לו' ו. Intentional or printer's error? We will have to wait and ask the author himself.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ר' ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל  
 לזכר נשמת אמי מורתי רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור ע"ה  
 לזכר נשמת חמי מורי ר' יעקב נתן בן ר' ישראל שלמה ז"ל  
 ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן ר' אברהם שמחה (קופרמן) זצ"ל  
 מחבר הגהות על ספר משך חכמה