

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 26

Pekudei, Sicha 2

The Context:

In parshas Pekudei, Moshe takes a detailed inventory of all the metals used for the construction of the Mishkan, with one peculiar caveat. While he lists in detail how much copper and silver were used for each component, he only lists the total amount of gold raised for the Mishkan, without a detailed accounting of what the gold was used for.

The Kli Yakar offers an innovative explanation: Moshe counted the copper and silver immediately when the construction was completed, but he did not include the gold in the inventory because some of it was still to be used to make the Priestly garments. Yet before those garments were completed, the Midrash relates, a Heavenly voice declared that Moshe was trustworthy and had not misappropriated any of the donated gold. Therefore, there was no longer any reason for Moshe to make a detailed inventory of

what the gold was used for, since Heaven itself attested to his honesty.

The Question:

If this was the case, why did Heaven wait to declare Moshe's honesty until after the silver was counted, why not make this declaration prior to Moshe counting anything, and avoid the unnecessary inventory? Furthermore, the inventory of copper comes after the verse which, the Midrash says, is Heaven's testimony about Moshe's trustworthiness; why, then, did he have to make a detailed account of the copper?

The Explanation:

G-d's presence in the Mishkan was a public testimony that G-d had forgiven the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf. Therefore, it was necessary that the Mishkan unequivocally belong to the entire Jewish community, without any trace of private ownership, so that the atonement would be clearly given to the community as a whole. When the craftsmen took the materials and fashioned the Mishkan, they acquired some semblance of ownership over their work. This is not to say that they

had any legal claim over it, but their names were attached to the work, it was known who had built what, and therefore the items became associated with the people who had made them.

In order to dissociate the Mishkan from any private individual, Moshe performed a detailed accounting of the materials. In so doing, he reiterated that the Mishkan belonged to the entire community, which, as the leader, he represented. Furthermore, Moshe was not even present at the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, making him the only member of the people to not have any implication in the sin (Aharon and the elders did not participate, yet they did not prevent it from occurring). Therefore, Moshe had no personal investment in the Mishkan's atonement, and could represent every Jew equally. Any other individual would have a personal, vested interest in the Mishkan to atone for himself, and so they could not reasonably represent the entire nation.

The Priestly garments, however, were not considered part of the Mishkan's construction, and therefore, not crucial to the atonement it affected. Therefore, there did not need to be this emphasis on the communal ownership of the garments (even though they, too, belonged to the community). This is why Moshe did not take a detailed inventory of the gold used for the garments, because it was not crucial that he "repossess" the gold in the name of the community.

This also explains the sequence of the opening of the reading: First the Torah

declares that Moshe took a detailed counting of the Mishkan: "These are the numbers of the Mishkan... which were counted at Moses' command..." Then the Torah interrupts and informs us who made the Mishkan: "Bezalel, son of Uri... With him was Oholiab..." And then the Torah begins the counting. The interruption seems out of place, but based on the above we can suggest that the Torah is explaining why Moshe had to take this detailed counting. Since Bezalel and Oholiab and others did the actual work of building the Mishkan, Moshe had to repossess the items through the counting so that it would be clear that the materials were communally owned.

The Deeper Dimension:

A deeper reason why Moshe had to personally count the Mishkan's materials is because the Mishkan was unique in that it is eternal. Unlike the two Batei Hamikdash which were destroyed, the components of the Mishkan were hidden and preserved. This eternality was the result of the Mishkan being the product of "Moshe's hands," because Moshe is eternal, his handiwork is eternal. Therefore, Moshe had to take inventory to establish a personal connection with the Mishkan.

This leads to a deeper idea about the counting taught by the Alter Rebbe. He writes that the word Pekudei is sometimes used to refer to the act of intimacy between husband and wife. Thus the verse can be read as saying that Moshe created a unity between G-d and the world through the

Mishkan, or even that Moshe became one with the Mishkan.

Taking both the literal and mystical interpretations together, we have a still more profound allusion: the act of counting reckons only with the most external aspect of the thing, its number, not its soul.

Counting also is an act of limiting, telling us how much something is and isn't. The Mishkan was thus a place that infused the idea of intimacy with G-d, in the place of constriction and limitation. The essence of G-d was manifest even in the material objects and space of the Mishkan.