

Repairing Our Temple

This week we add a special Torah reading, Parshas Shekalim. The Haftora for parshas Shekalim, tells of the triumph over idol worship and repairing the Temple.¹

The connection to the parsha is that the half shekels were given as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf, which is the triumph over idol worship. And in the Haftora it mentions that the shekalim collected would be used to repair the Temple.

The Haftora begins with an account of the aftermath of Yehoyada the Kohen Gadol's revolt against the wicked Asalya.

Asalya was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, rulers of the Ten Northern Tribes. She was married to Yehoram, heir to the throne of Yehuda, in order to form an alliance between the Northern Tribes and Yehuda. Evil like her mother, Asalya introduced Ba'al worship into the Kingdom of Yehuda, and stopped much of the services of the Holy Temple. This continued throughout Yehoram's reign and into the first year of his son Achazia's reign, when they were murdered by Yehu, king of the Northern Tribes. Asalya then had all of the royal family executed and established herself as Queen. However, Achazia had a baby son Yehoash, who was secretly saved by Yehosheva, Asalya's sister, and hidden in the Holy Temple for six years.

After Yehoyada's revolt, they destroyed the house of Ba'al and restored the Temple service to its former glory.

Now that Asalya was dead, Yehoash was paraded to the palace and installed upon the throne. He was 7 years old when he became king, he reigned for forty years, and the Haftora tells us that his mother's name was Tzivya. He went in Hashem's ways all his days, and followed the guidance of Yehoyada the Kohen Gadol.

King Yehoash noticed that the Temple needed repairs. He said to the Kohanim that they could take the money that came into the Temple for themselves, but they would have to pay for the repairs. However, several years passed and he realized that the repairs had not been done. He called the Kohanim, and asked them, "Why are you not repairing the bedek habayis (the cracks of the House)?"²

Now he took personal oversight of repairing the Temple. The Haftora continues with an account of how the money was collected, counted, and spent, on architects, carpenters, masons, wood, stone and more.

The reading of Haftoras was established at a time when the ruling power over Jews, did not allow them to read the Torah in the synagogues. In other words, a time of exile. This means, that the Haftoras are meant to speak to us, and convey a message for our time, the exile.

The Haftoras main message is about Bedek habayis, checking to find the cracks and flaws that have set in over time, and repairing them.

Now that we don't have our Temple, how do we do bedek habayis? The idea of bedek habayis only makes sense in regards to the first and second Temples, which were built by man. Whereas, Rashi tells us, that the Temple we now are waiting for, is already "Built..., and will be revealed and come down from the heavens..." It is the work of Hashem's hands, perfect, and not subject to cracks or falling in to disrepair. And what more, it will descend with the coming of Moshiach, when our service to Hashem will be at the highest level. What kind of bedek habayis will there possibly be in the time of Moshiach?

The Third Temple, will come down with out our work and effort, like a gift. When you get something without effort, it is referred to as "Bread of shame." What part will we do to earn our Temple every day, after the coming of Moshiach?

¹ II Kings 11:17-12:17.

² II Kings 12:8.

It is a mistake to think that when Moshiach comes, that we won't need effort and derive satisfaction from our daily accomplishments, our service won't end, rather it will take a different form. In exile, our service of bedek habayis is finding the physical and spiritual flaws of our actions, sins, transgressions, etc., and work on fixing them. When Moshiach comes, there will be no more sins and flaws, our service will be to reach for and attain higher and higher levels of G-dly revelation. Our bedek habayis will be, searching our state, too see if there is something more that we could do, to make our way to a higher level. There is always a higher level to attain.

Now that we will have effort after Moshiach comes, the Third Temple, and the revelations received will not be bread of shame, but rather, earned.³

May we merit to witness the Third Temple descend from heaven, with the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon

³ Hisvaduyos 5743b p. 979.