



**“These are the accountings of the Mishkan . . .
overseen by איתמר the son of Aharon HaKohen”**

A Fascinating Remez regarding the Name איתמר from the Rabbi of Zidichov

This week’s parsha is parshas Pekudei. It is fitting that we focus on the opening passuk of the parsha (Shemos 38, 21): **“אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות אשר פוקד על פי משה עבודת הלויים: ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן—these are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, that were ordered by Moshe to be counted—the work of the leviim, overseen by Itamar, the son of Aharon HaKohen.**

In his commentary on this passuk, Rashi first presents an interpretation based on allusion: **The word “Mishkan” is repeated** (mentioned twice) **alluding to the Beis HaMikdash that was taken as a “mashkon” (collateral) twice in its churbans for the sins of Yisrael.** It is called the **Mishkan of Testimony, since it provides testimony that HKB”H forgave them for the making of the “eigel,” seeing as He rested His Shechinah among them.**

Next, Rashi explains the plain meaning of the work overseen by Itamar: **This refers to the accountings of the Mishkan and its implements, which was a task assigned to the leviim in the midbar—to carry, to take down, and to erect. Each individual performed the task he was assigned, as recorded in parshas Nasso. “In the hand of Itamar”: He was put in charge of them to assign to each family the work it was responsible for.**

Now, parshas Pekudei is the fifth and last of the parshiyos detailing the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels—

namely, **Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Sisa, Vayakheil, and Pekudei.** So why did HKB”H choose to inform us specifically here in the opening passuk of parshas Pekudei that He was destined to take the two Batei-Mikdash as collaterals?

The Beis HaMikdash Was Built on the Love of Yisrael

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing what the esteemed Rabbi Pinchas of Stanislav, ztz”l, presents in the sefer Ginat Egoz, in the name of the divine kabbalist Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a. He explains by dint of a fascinating “remez” why Moshe Rabeinu appointed Itamar to oversee the work of the leviim in the Mishkan. This “remez” is based on the following teaching in the Gemara (Berachos 7b): **“מנא לך דשמא גרים, אמר: רבי אלעזר דאמר קרא לכו חזו מפעלות ה’ אשר שם שמות בארץ, אל תקרי רבי אלעזר דאמר קרא לכו חזו מפעלות ה’ אשר שם שמות בארץ, אל תקרי רבי אלעזר דאמר קרא לכו חזו מפעלות ה’ אשר שם שמות בארץ.”** **From where do we know that a person’s name influences future occurrences? Rabbi Elazar said: Because the passuk says (Tehillim 46, 9): “Go and see the works of G-d, Who has wrought devastations in the land.” Do not pronounce the word “shamot” (devastations) but rather “sheimot” (names).** With this in mind, he points out that the first letters of the name **איתמר** are an acronym for (Shir HaShirim 3, 10): **תִּזְכּוּ רְצוּף: אֵהָבָה מִבְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם—the daughters of Yerushalayim.**

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to latch onto the coattails of the esteemed Mahartza of Zidichov, zy”a, and expand on his sacred remarks. Here is the pertinent quote from Shir HaShirim regarding the construction of the Beis HaMikdash (ibid.): **”אפריון עשה לו המלך שלמה מעצי הלבנון, עמודיו עשה כסף, רפידתו זהב, מרכבו ארגמן, A tabernacle for His presence has the King to Whom shalom belongs made of wood of Lebanon. Its pillars He made of silver, its couch of gold, its curtain of purple, its interior inlaid with love, from the daughters of Yerushalayim.** According to the Alshich hakadosh, Shlomo HaMelech, who built the Beis HaMikdash, reveals to us here the purpose of the Beis HaMikdash in a question-and-answer format.

He inquires: **”אפריון עשה לו המלך שלמה מעצי הלבנון”**—does HKB”H require an exquisite palace constructed from the finest wood? **”עמודיו עשה כסף, רפידתו זהב, מרכבו ארגמן”**—does the Blessed One require pillars made of silver, a couch of gold, and purple curtains? After all, the entire world belongs to Him and is His domain, as it states (Chagai 2, 8): **”לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה”**—**Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold—the word of Hashem.**

The passuk provides the answer: HKB”H did not rest His Shechinah in the Beis HaMikdash because of the structure’s external grandeur and beauty, its gold and silver. Rather, He did so because: **”תוכו רצוף אהבה מבנות ירושלים”**—its structure is saturated with the fervent love and yearning of every individual member of Yisrael, who brought his contribution with pure, overwhelming love for HKB”H.

In this manner, we can appreciate the wonderful “remez” of the esteemed Rabbi of Zidichov, zy”a, regarding the opening passuk of our parsha. To oversee the accountings, building, and operation of the Mishkan, Moshe Rabeinu opted to assign **איִתָּמָר**, whose name is an acronym for **תּוֹכּוֹ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**. With his kedushah, Itamar was able to instill and fortify the love of Yisrael for HKB”H in the beams and structure of the Mishkan that the leviim dismantled and reassembled.

We can suggest that this is implied by the depiction: **”Itamar the son of Aharon HaKohen.** Attesting to the

virtue of Aharon HaKohen, Chazal urge us (Avos 1, 12): **”הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה.”** **Be among the disciples of Aharon—love peace and promote peace, love your fellow creatures and bring them closer to Torah.** On account of his prestigious lineage, he was able to emulate his father, Aharon HaKohen, and express Yisrael’s love for HKB”H, which was ingrained in the components of the Mishkan. In the merit of this deep-seated love, the presence of the Shechinah was drawn to the Mikdash.

HKB”H Embedded Yisrael’s Love within the Beams of the Mishkan to Ward Off the Ayin HaRa of the Forces of the Yetzer HaRa

I would like to propose a wonderful reason for why HKB”H stored Yisrael’s love within the beams of the Mishkan consistent with the interpretation of the passuk above that the King Whose domain is shalom commanded to build Him a Tabernacle of wood from Lebanon, because He is not interested in external grandeur consisting of silver, gold, and purple wool. What interests Him is the deep-seated, internal love of the people of Yisrael which permeated the walls of the Mishkan akin to the description: **”Its interior was inlaid with love, from the daughters of Yerushalayim.”**

Now, our blessed sages teach us the reason that the first luchos were transmitted to Yisrael publicly at Har Sinai with thunder and lightning, as it is written (Shemos 19, 16): **”ויהי ביום השלישי בהיות הבוקר ויהי קולות וברקים וענן כבד על ההר וקול שפר”** **חזק מאד ויחרד כל העם אשר במחנה”** **it was on the third day, in the morning, that there was thunder and lightning. A heavy cloud enveloped the mountain, and there was a very loud sound of the shofar. All the people in the camp trembled.** In contrast, Moshe was commanded to receive the second luchos in private. In fact, the people of Yisrael were warned emphatically not to ascend onto Har Sinai and to not even approach the mountain. Here are the pertinent pesukim (ibid. 34, 1):

”ויאמר ה’ אל משה פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים כראשנים וכתבתי על הלוחות את הדברים אשר היו על הלוחות הראשונים אשר שברת, והיה נכון לבקר ועלית בבקר אל הר סיני ונצבת לי שם על ראש ההר, ואיש לא יעלה עמו וגם איש אל ירא בכל ההר גם הצאן והבקר אל ירעו אל מול ההר ההוא.”

Hashem said to Moshe, “Carve for yourself two luchos of stone like the first ones, and I shall inscribe on the luchos the words that were on the first luchos, which you shattered. Be ready for the morning; ascend Har Sinai in the morning and stand by me there on the mountaintop. No man shall ascend with you, and no man shall be seen on the entire mountain; the flock and the cattle, too, shall not graze facing that mountain.

We learn from the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Sisa 31) the rationale for this change. It explains that first luchos which were given publicly were shattered, because they were affected by the “ayin hara.” To preclude this from happening again, HKB”H commanded that the second luchos be received privately. A similar explanation appears in the Midrash Rabbah (Nasso 12, 4): **When He came to give the Torah to Yisrael, He made a public spectacle . . . And (because of this) the “ayin hara” affected them and the luchos were shattered.**

We find a tremendous chiddush in the Machzor Vitri (508) compiled by Rabeinu Simchah of Vitri, a pupil of Rashi: Because the malachim were envious of Yisrael, they cast an “ayin hara” on them. He explains that this is the rationale for the sacred minhag of covering a child when he is brought to learn Torah for the first time. Here are his sacred words:

“ולמה החכם מכסה אותו תחת כנפיו, לפי שמחניכין אותו דרך צניעות ודרך ענוה, שכן מצינו בנתינת התורה (שמות כ-יז) ובעבור תהיה יראתו על פניכם לבלתי תחטאו. דבר אחר שלא לעשותו עליל ופומכי לעוברי דרכים, שלא ישלוט בו שום עין הרע ולא שום נזק, שכן בנתינת התורה, לפי שלוחות הראשונות ניתנו בפומכי גדול וקולות וברקים וקול שופר נתקנאו המלאכים, ובא שטן וערבב את העולם, וגרם העון ונשתברו לוחות ראשונות, אבל לוחות אחרונות שניתנו בחשאי הן קיימין לעולם.”

He suggests two reasons for the teacher or sage covering the child under his arms. Firstly, it is aimed at teaching the child the value of modesty and humility. Alternatively, it is so that the child will not be vulnerable and exposed to the “ayin hara” or any harm from passers-by. Both reasons relate to the giving of the Torah. Because the first luchos were given publicly with great fanfare, the jealousy of the malachim was aroused; this prompted the Satan to come and create chaos.

This led to the sin and, as a consequence, the shattering of the luchos. Hence, the second luchos were given in secrecy, unceremoniously, and have endured forever.

Now, we know that the Mishkan constituted an atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” As Rashi comments: **The Mishkan was a testimony for Yisrael that HKB”H forgave them for the incident of the “eigel,” seeing as He rested His Shechinah among them.** We can now comprehend why HKB”H ordered the construction of the Mishkan as a dwelling place for the Shechinah. Its beams were imbued with the concealed love of Yisrael, in keeping with the phrase: “תוכו רצוף אהבה מבנות ירושלים”. Thus, it was immune from the “ayin hara” of the malachim.

During the Churban HKB”H Poured Out His Wrath on the Wooden Structure to Reveal the Love and Devotion Concealed within the Wood

With this in mind, we can begin to comprehend a fascinating Midrash related to the churban of the Beis HaMikdash (Eichah Rabbasi 4, 15):

It is written (Tehillim 79, 1): “A psalm to Assaf: O G-d! The nations have entered into your inheritance.” Why is this psalm referred to as a hymn or joyous song, rather than a lament or dirge? . . . This is what they said to Assaf: “HKB”H destroyed the Heichal and the Mikdash, and you are sitting around and composing songs?” Assaf replied to them: “I am rejoicing that HKB”H poured out His wrath upon wooden beams and stones rather than upon Yisrael.”

At first glance, this Midrash is quite baffling. After all, we have learned in the Gemara (Shabbas 105b): **“המקרע בגדיו בחמתו והמשבר כליו בחמתו והמפזר מעותיו בחמתו היא”**—**if one tears his garments in his anger, breaks his utensils in his anger, or scatters his money in his anger, you should view him as one who is worshipping avodah-zarah.** That being the case, it seems inconceivable that HKB”H, so to speak, had to find a pretext for taking out His wrath on the physical structure of the Beis HaMikdash in order to spare Yisrael.

Based on our current discussion, we can clarify Assaf's profound intent—composing a psalm celebrating the fact that **“HKB”H poured out His wrath upon the wooden beams and the stones.**” As we know, the yetzer hara is relentless; it avails itself of every opportunity to assault Yisrael. As the Gemara teaches us (Kiddushin 30b): **”יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ומבקש המיתו, שנאמר צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו, ואלמלא הקב”ה עוזרו אין יכול לו, שנאמר אלקים לא יעזבו בידו.”** **A man’s yetzer overwhelms him daily and attempts to kill him, as it states (Tehillim 37, 32): “The wicked one watches for the tzaddik and seeks to kill him.”** And if not for HKB”H, Who aids him, he would be unable to withstand it, as it states (ibid.): **“Hashem will not forsake him to his hand.”**

Therefore, when the Satan, who is the yetzer hara, recognized that Yisrael’s intense love for HKB”H was stored and concealed within the walls of the Beis HaMikdash—**”תוכו רצוף אהבה מבנות ירושלים”**—it mustered up all of its strength to extinguish that love. Based on the following Gemara, the Satan succeeded (Yoma 9b):

”מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב, מפני שלשה דברים שהיו בו, עבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים... אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצות וגמילות חסדים, מפני מה חרב, מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חינוך, ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חינוך כנגד שלש עבירות, עבודה זרה גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.”

The first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because the people were guilty of the three cardinal sins—avodah zarah, immorality and murder. These sins were not prevalent during the times of the second Beis HaMikdash; the people of that period engaged in Torah-study and performed mitzvos and acts of kindness. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of **“sin’as chinam”**—baseless hatred. This teaches us that **“sin’as chinam”** is equivalent to the three cardinal sins.

Thus, we can understand to some small degree HKB”H’s profound rationale for taking out His wrath on the wood and stones of the Beis HaMikdash. In this manner, He revealed Yisrael’s love that was stored within those walls; the wood and stones would no longer conceal their intense

love for Hashem. As a result, Yisrael’s love for their Father in Heaven was revealed specifically in galus.

We will elaborate on this notion based on what the author of the Tanya teaches us in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 18). He writes that every Jew, even the simplest, loves Hashem deep inside his heart; he inherited this love from the holy Avos—Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. For this reason, at the conclusion of Shemoneh Esrei, Rabbi Alexandri would utter the following tefilah (Berachos 17a): **”רבון העולמים גלוי—Master of the Universe! It is apparent and known to you that it is our will to perform Your will. Who prevents us from doing so? The yeast in the dough (the yetzer hara).**

To reveal this hidden love concealed within the walls of the Beis HaMikdash, HKB”H poured out His wrath on its wood and stones. This represented a symbolic gesture illustrating that the physical, material body should not constitute a barrier preventing a Jew’s love for HKB”H from being seen.

The Paradox of the Two Keruvim

With great pleasure, we can explain a paradoxical phenomenon observed at the time of the churban. We learn in the Gemara (Yoma 54b): **”בשעה שנכנסו נכרים להיכל ראו: כרובים המעורין זה בזה, הוציאו לשוק ואמרו, ישראל הללו שברכתן ברכה וקללתן קללה יעסקו בדברים הללו, מיד הזילום שנאמר כל מכבדיה הזילוה.”** **When the gentiles entered the Heichal, they saw the “keruvim” embracing one another. They took them out to the marketplace, and they said, “These Jews—whose blessing is a blessing and whose curse is a curse—should be involved in these matters?!” Immediately, they debased them as it says (Eichah 1, 8): “All who once respected her debased her, for they saw her nakedness.”**

The Shitah Mikubetzes (B.B. 99b) presents a question that confounded the Ri Migash, one of the Rishonim. This account is at odds with what we have learned elsewhere in the Gemara (ibid. 54a): **”בשעה שהיו ישראל עולין לרגל, מגלילין להם את הפרוכת ומראין להם את הכרובים שהיו מעוררים זה בזה,**

When the people of Yisrael would ascend on the festival, the kohanim would roll up the “parochet” for them and show them the “keruvim” which were joined together in an embrace. They would say to them, “Behold your fondness before the Omnipresent, like the fondness of a male and a female.”

Now, the Gemara (B.B. ibid.) notes a contradiction concerning the positioning of the “keruvim.” One passuk states (Shemos 25, 20): “ופניהם איש אל אחיו”—indicating that they faced one another. Another passuk, however, states (Divrei HaYamim II 3, 13): “ופניהם לבית”—indicating that they faced eastward toward the Heichal and not toward each other. The Gemara resolves the contradiction as follows: “לא קשיא כאן בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום, כאן בזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו של מקום”—there is no difficulty; one passuk refers to times when Yisrael are compliant with the will of Hashem, whereas the other passuk refers to times when Yisrael are not compliant with the will of Hashem (miraculously, in the latter situation, they faced the Heichal to remind Yisrael of their obligations to Hashem).

In other words, when Yisrael comply with Hashem’s will, all of their efforts are directed toward HKB”H. As it were, HKB”H reciprocates by facing them like a mirror image. In this situation, the “keruvim”—reflecting the relationship between HKB”H and the congregation of Yisrael—faced each other adoringly: “ופניהם איש אל אחיו”. On the other hand, when Yisrael do not comply with the will of Hashem, they turn their faces away so as not to face HKB”H. In reciprocal fashion, so to speak, HKB”H turns His countenance away from them. To reflect this situation, the “keruvim” down below adopt a similar attitude: “ופניהם לבית”—rather than facing each other, they face the Heichal. So, why were the “keruvim” embracing at the time of the churban? Undoubtedly, the churban was the result of Yisrael failing to comply with the will of the Almighty. This is what confounded the Ri Migash. He answers that it was a miracle to demonstrate the great love and affection HKB”H has for Yisrael even in galus.

HKB”H Arranged for the Two Keruvim to Be Removed from the Beis HaMikdash to Demonstrate that the Purpose of the Churban Was to Reveal the Concealed Love

We have learned that HKB”H directed His wrath against the wood and stones of the Beis HaMikdash in order to reveal the love concealed within them, as depicted by the phrase “תוכו רצוף אהבה מכנות ירושלים”. This helps us comprehend why HKB”H orchestrated from above for the goyim to remove the “keruvim” from the Beis HaMikdash in a state of embrace.

Indeed, those wicked interlopers intended to mock Yisrael. HKB”H, however, wished to convey a vital message to every Jew. The churban was meant to reveal the profound love that exists between HKB”H and Yisrael. Rather than remaining concealed within the walls of the Beis HaMikdash, it needed to be revealed for all to see. This love was portrayed by the two “keruvim” that the goyim took out of the Kodosh HaKodashim to disparage and mock Yisrael. This informed Yisrael that it is now incumbent on us to reveal and demonstrate our “ahavah” for HKB”H even in the darkness of galus and its attendant “hester panim.”

It is apparent that after the churban, this special love is revealed in the four cubits of halachah. The Gemara expresses this fact as follows (Berachos 8a): “מיום שחרב—בית המקדש אין לו להקב”ה בעולמו אלא ארבע אמות של הלכה בלבד”—since the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, HKB”H only has four cubits of halachah in His world. Chazal are teaching us that anyone who studies Torah and is occupied with the four cubits of halachah is revealing the special, unique love that permeated the walls of the Beis HaMikdash as per the description: “Its interior is inlaid with love, from the daughters of Yerushalayim.” This provides HKB”H a tremendous consolation in the aftermath of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash.

In conclusion, we can now appreciate why HKB”H opened parshas Pekudei with a message related to the destructions of the two Batei Mikdash alluded to by the words: “אלה” פקודי המשכן משכן העדות”. Recall that Rashi explains that the

repetition of the word "משכן" alludes to the two times the Beis HaMikdash was taken as a "mashkon"—a collateral—on account of Yisrael's iniquities. In this manner, HKB"H wanted to provide us with moral strength after the destruction of the Batei Mikdash.

To emphasize this message, the Torah goes on to inform us that Moshe Rabeinu appointed **"Itamar the son of Aharon HaKohen to oversee the work of the leviim."**

ר' איתמר was appointed to fill this crucial role, because his name is an acronym for מ'יבנות י'רושלים א'הבה ר'צוף ר'זכו ת'. In other words, he possessed the skill to imbue the walls of the Mishkan with the "ahavah" of Yisrael. Subsequently, at the time of the churban, HKB"H poured out His wrath on the wood and stones of the Beis HaMikdash to reveal Yisrael's love and devotion without any concealment through Jews' occupation with the four cubits of halachah.



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