

# The Jewish Weekly

## The Precious Coin

By Rabbi Moshe Weber

Adapted by Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

The Ktav Sofer was elated. So much of his time and energy in the recent years had been involved in the fight to protect the traditional way of life, and now the government decision was finally official; the right of the religious community to their own educational system would be securely ensconced in law.

Feeling boundless joy and relief, he decided to sponsor an enormous celebration of thanksgiving, to which he invited the leading rabbis, Torah scholars and community leaders of Austria-Hungary, all those who had shared in and would benefit from the struggle.

Perhaps there had never been a comparable gathering in Pressburg throughout its glorious history as a great center of Jewish scholarship. The evening was filled with new and exciting Torah interpretations as one distinguished Rabbi after another offered his presentation. Hours passed, unnoticed. The food and drink were secondary, barely registering in the lofty consciousness of this rarefied assembly.

The excitement heightened when the Ktav Sofer rose from his seat and began to speak vibrantly. Without preamble, he announced that in honor of the occasion he wished to share something unique and thrilling with all those present; not only was it something they had never seen before, it was something they had never even imagined they would see.

With all eyes and ears continuing to focus upon him, he took out his wallet and withdrew from it a small object wrapped in silk. When he carefully removed the cover, they could see it was a small, ancient silver coin.

"Gentlemen," he said, "my elders, my mentors, my peers. You are looking at a genuine Machtzit Hashekel [half-shekel coin], such as was donated to the Holy Temple two thousand years ago for the various holy purposes that all of you know well. I inherited it from my holy father of blessed memory; it has been a prized secret possession in our family for many many generations. I don't think there is another one in the world today. I never thought to display it publicly until this evening."

The listeners all stared in amazement. An actual silver half-shekel from Temple times! Everyone wanted to touch it, feel it, examine it closely. The coin passed from hand to hand. Spirited discussions erupted throughout the room as to its weight, its shape, and the manner of its use. Voices rose louder and louder.

A soft voice penetrated the din of scholarly argument. A rabbi who had yet to see the coin up close inquired as to its whereabouts. No one could answer him. The coin had disappeared!

Everyone began searching frantically. They felt all over the floor and probed under whatever food and utensils remained on the table. The priceless coin, the artifact of inestimable value, was nowhere to be found.

Silence descended upon the crowded room. All eyes turned to their illustrious host. The Ktav Sofer was visibly upset, his face white as frost, at the loss of the unique coin which had been treasured in his family for so many generations.

He stood at his place. Casting his eyes around the room, he addressed them again. "Gentleman, G-d forbid to think that I suspect any of the honorable people in this room of transgressing an explicit commandment of the Torah. However, we were all so

engrossed in analyzing the half-shekel and its significance; it could be that by mistake someone got it mixed up with a current coin of his own and slipped it into his pocket by mistake. We have no choice: with all due respect, I must ask everyone to empty their pockets, wallets, and change-purses so that we can determine if such an accident has taken place."

Everyone quickly agreed. They well understood the delicacy of the situation. But then a voice was heard from the side of the room. It was Rabbi Yehuda Assad, one of the oldest, most respected Torah scholars present, who had been an important rabbinical leader in Hungary for over forty years. "I oppose such a search," he called out. "Better to wait a quarter hour or so, and perhaps in that time the coin will turn up."

The Ktav Sofer had great respect for the venerable sage. He agreed to his suggestion. The quarter hour passed, with noticeable tension, but without a trace of the coin.

"Alright," said the Ktav Sofer, "let's empty our pockets in front of each other, as we already agreed."

To everyone's surprise, the elderly rabbi again objected, and requested another fifteen-minute delay. The Ktav Sofer agreed, so again everyone sat impatiently, waiting for the second quarter hour to pass. The tension increased, became palpable. Several of the guests stared bitterly at the old rabbi who had caused the delay, suspecting that he had indeed pocketed the coin, and had asked for extra time in order to come up with a way to return it without being detected.

At last the time was up. As before, there was no sign of the coin. The Ktav Sofer rose again. Sorrow and impatience could be heard in his voice. "Gentlemen, I have the greatest respect for our venerable, illustrious colleague. But we cannot postpone it anymore. The search must begin." Rabbi Yehuda Assad once again stood up to halt the process. This time his voice shook, and tears streamed down his cheeks. "Please, Rebbe," he addressed the Ktav Sofer, "please remember the great love of your father of blessed memory and I for each other, and let's wait another fifteen minutes. If the coin hasn't been found by then, I agree that we shall do however you see fit."

The Ktav Sofer hesitated briefly, then nodded his head in acquiescence. The tension in the room heightened again. The elderly Rabbi stood in a corner of the room, his lips moving rapidly in silent prayer. The Ktav Sofer sat at the other end, his face extremely pale and etched with worry. It appeared that he might soon faint. The guests nervously awaited the next turn of events. Many expected that the old rabbi would confess to the theft.

Suddenly, all eyes turned toward the door. Running steps could be heard in the vestibule leading to the great hall where they now sat. The door burst open and the attendant of the Ktav Sofer charged in. "Good news!" he cried out. "The coin has been found."

The emotional crowd stormed toward the attendant. Each one wanted to verify the half-shekel's presence with his own eyes. The thick tension dissolved instantaneously. Instead, voices loudly proclaimed, "Thank G-d," "Boruch HaShem," "Yashar koach," and so forth. Above all the noise could be heard the ringing voice of the Ktav Sofer, demanding of his attendant that he relate to everyone how he had found the precious coin.

The crowd fell silent. Everyone turned towards the attendant in expectancy, eager to hear his reply.

He smiled. "When I saw that everyone was so deeply involved in discussing the half-shekel, I decided to utilize the opportunity to begin cleaning up. I removed the tablecloths, and shook them out over the garbage to get rid of all the crumbs and other food remains. When I heard that the coin was missing, I worried that it might

## It Once Happened...

have been put down on one of the tables and that I had inadvertently thrown it out along with the rest of the garbage. I went to the trash pile and began to sift through a veritable mountain of refuse. Finally, something sparkling caught my eye. Here is the treasure I found in the trash," and he handed his precious find over to its owner.

Slowly the crowd quieted down and order was restored. Most of the guests returned to their seats. Rabbi Yehuda Assad requested permission to speak. Everyone turned towards the elderly sage in eager anticipation, realizing that now they had not the slightest idea why he had acted as he did to delay the Ktav Sofer's reasonable request for a search.

"Dear friends," he began, "I'm sure you are all waiting for an explanation of my three requests for postponements. I suspect you will find it wondrous. You see, in one respect our esteemed host is mistaken; his coin is not unique! I also have in my possession a genuine half-shekel coin from Temple times! - passed down from generation to generation in my family, just like in his. Today, in honor of this momentous festive gathering, I decided to surprise you by displaying it. But then the illustrious Rosh Yeshiva preceded me and showed his coin, along with the statement that it was unique in the world. I didn't want to weaken the power of his presentation, so I left my half-shekel in my pocket.

"Now, imagine to yourselves, honorable colleagues, if the search had been conducted according to the instructions of our host. The coin in my pocket would have been immediately identified, and I certainly would have come under suspicion as having stolen it. That is why I tried everything I could to delay the process, the whole time praying that in the merit of the great Chatam Sofer of blessed memory I wouldn't be subjected to such a terrible embarrassment. Thank G-d, my prayers were accepted."

Concluding his words, the venerable sage slipped his half-shekel coin from his pocket, and passed it to his enchanted audience. As it made the rounds, they were astounded to perceive that it was an identical twin to the one of the Ktav Sofer.

The exciting evening finally drew to a close. Before the concluding blessings, the Ktav Sofer rose to speak one last time. Once again, his words surprised his listeners.

"Gentlemen, I truly believe, that the inner purpose of this great gathering was that we should all gain a deeper perspective of the true meaning of the Mishna, 'Judge every man favorably.' If the search had been conducted and the coin discovered in our venerable associate's pocket, is there anyone in this room who can honestly say he wouldn't have presumed that he has stolen my coin? Especially after I had influenced you by saying there wasn't another one like it in the world.

"No, this teaching is not so simple as its wording makes it seem. The lesson of tonight is that even if all indications point to a person's guilt, we still have to presume his innocence until proven otherwise. That is the Divine Providence of the unforgettable events of this thanksgiving feast."

*Reprinted from an email of Shemu V'tchi Nafshechem.*



### Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Tzav

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:21	7:34	8:15
Tel Aviv	6:36	7:37	8:12
Haifa	6:28	7:36	8:14
Be'er Sheva	6:39	7:37	8:14



## The PURIM Night Revolution Resolution

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Each year on the night of the Purim Festival, the elderly chasid Reb Zalman would tell the following story.

Mottele was a child when he, together with his friends, was kidnapped by a group of soldiers of Tzar Nicholai the First. They were taken to serve in the Russian army [for 25 years].

In one moment the happy life of the child was ended, he was torn from his loving family, and sent to a training camp in the frozen wastes of Siberia.

At the very last moment his heartbroken mother managed to put a little bag in his hand. Inside were a pair of tefilin and a siddur. "Promise me you will stay a loyal Jew. Even if they promise you all the best of the world, and even if, G-d forbid, they cause you terrible suffering, stay a Jew," she said to him while crying desperately before she was rudely pulled away from her beloved son.

Mottele promised.

Mottele was a brilliant child. The army officer in command of the children noticed this right away. Because of this, he tended to treat him with more kindness than the other boys.

Soon though the commander found out that this favorite of his was also the hardest nut to crack. While his companions slowly acclimated to their new surroundings, Mottele refused to cease his Jewish practices. Not once and not twice was he punished severely; he was humiliated, made fun of, starved and more.

As far as following military training, Mottele did everything he was ordered to do perfectly. This was not enough to satisfy his commander. He knew that the goal was to sever the boys from their identity as Jews. As long as Mottele clung to his religion this was not accomplished.

"I don't understand why you have to be like a stone, unpliable all your life," he said to Mottele at every opportunity, "We both know that with your talents you will be able to rise to high status as an officer and the sky will be the limit. You only have to take the right step."

Close to a year passed and Mottele stayed loyal to his Jewish roots. The commander who sincerely cared for him gave him many responsible duties. Each time someone had to be sent to the nearby city on an important mission, he would send Mottele.

One day the commander decided to change his approach. He called Mottele in for a long and serious talk, trying one last time to convince Mottele to drop his attachment to his Judaism. When, as he expected, all his arguments fell on deaf ears, he changed his tone.

"I won't allow you to bury yourself all your life in your dark world," he said. "If you are incapable to make the

correct decision by yourself, I will do so in your stead."

Mottele's eyes opened wide in astonishment. The commander looked stern, even angry.

"I will no longer play games with you," the commander said. "From this moment on I will give you a certain amount of time to consider carefully and make the right decision. If you do, well and good. If not, I will find a way to force you."

Two days later Mottele was sent to the city to carry out a certain mission. As always he paid a hurried visit to the local shul (synagogue). There he learned that in three days' time it would be the festival of Purim. He was very excited to hear this and his joy knew no bounds when one of the men gave him a small chumash (Five books of Moses) which included the Scroll of Esther.

The next day Mottele was transferred to another company. He assumed that this was the first step in the plan of the commander to put pressure on him. In this new company no one knew him and he would not enjoy special treatment.

He did not know that his transfer was part of an all-encompassing plan that his commander had prearranged with the commander of the company he was sent to. The latter told the commander about the success he has in causing a group of Jewish boys to convert. The ceremony of the conversion was to take place the next day in the presence of the priest Provoslavi and the highest officers of the camp.

"Send this stubborn protégé of yours to me," he said to his friend, "when he will see his Jewish friends striding towards the light with joy, his obstinacy will be broken and he will follow their example."

Mottele didn't waste time getting to know his new companions. As soon as it was evening he called together the Jewish boys among them, explaining to them that this evening was Purim. He took the chumash out of his pocket, browsed till he got to the Scroll of Esther and started reading the megillah with as much of the tune as he remembered from last year, from home.

When he finished, the boys surrounding him stood quietly, deep in thought. After a while one of the boys started to speak and so opened a dam of reminiscences that deeply touched the other boys. One after the other they told with great emotion about Purim in their parents' home. Their conversation carried on till late into the night.

Before going to sleep a decision was reached: The conversion ritual that was planned for the morning was cancelled, at least on their part.

"And I," said Reb Zalman, after ending the story as he did each year on the night of Purim, "I was one of those boys, we were young children standing at the edge of the abyss. We were saved thanks to Mottele, he is our Mordechai HaYehudi, who was sent by Divine Providence to bring about our own Purim miracle."

*Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.*



A recipe for disaster: that's what happens when people always insist on getting their way. In Parshat Tzav, the Torah introduces us to the 'קרבן עולה - the burnt offering', and this is how the Torah starts the Passuk: "זאת תורת העולה - This is the Torah (law) of the burnt offering."

The sefer Vayedaber Moshe teaches a very important lesson from these words.

The term 'עלה', he says, of course means to go up, and here it can also represent an arrogant person, somebody who is always trying to raise his or her level at the expense of others – people who have an expanded view of themselves. Now, what is the 'Torah' of the 'עלה'? What is their outlook, what is their mindset? It is all centered on the word 'זאת – this'. "This is what I want." "This is what must happen." They never take no for an answer.

In Parshat Shoftim the Torah famously teaches "צדק צדק - Justice, justice you must pursue."

The term 'צדק' of course, like 'צודק' means to be correct and our Sages teach us that the term 'צדק' is repeated in order to tell us that sometimes the correct thing to do is to compromise. When one has the maturity and the responsibility to compromise, then one facilitates peace and harmony. Where there is compromise, everyone's a winner. And when there's no compromise, and when everybody strives to achieve their own aspirations without ever giving in to anybody else, there is no basis for a harmonious relationship.

So therefore in the most surprising of contexts, the Torah teaches us an important lesson about human relationships. If you wish to be an 'עלה', always raising your own importance, always striving to get your own way at the expense of others while propelling yourself upwards, ultimately you might just come tumbling down.

In this spirit may Hashem bless and watch over our people with peace, by doing Mitzvot and joining together to pray with all our hearts, for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, police officers, medical professionals, firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

*Yossi*

### The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 18  
MITZVOT ASEH: 9  
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 9

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 97 (Some sources say that TZAV has 96 pesukim.)  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1353  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5096

This year, (5784 / 2024) Parshat Tzav is a special Shabbat.

The Shabbat immediately following Purim is called Shabbat Parshat Parah. The Maftir, from Bamidbar, Parshat Chukat, (19:1-22), describes the preparation of the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer), whose ashes were used in the spiritual purification process during the time of the Bait Hamikdash. This purification was carried out at this time of the year, to ensure that everyone would be able to partake in the Korban Pesach (Pascal Lamb) to be offered on the 14th day of Nisan.

HAFTORA:  
Ashkenazim: Yechezkel 36:16-38  
Chabad & Sephardim: Yechezkel 36:16-36

**צו - פרה**

This week is sponsored in memory of  
מרת דבורה חנה ע"ה  
בת הרב מנחם מענדל שליט"א  
Who's Neshama returned  
to it's Maker two years ago today,  
כ' אדר ב' תשפ"ב