



Volume 2. Issue 26.

Fear of Sin

In the *Beit Ha'Mikdash* there were two treasuries - one was titled 'The Treasury of the Secret Ones', for those who feared sin would donate to it secretly and the poor, sons of good ones, would finance themselves from it secretly. The other [treasury], titled 'The Vessel Treasury', was for those donating vessels [to the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*] and one donating to it would cast his vessel into it. Every thirty days the treasurers would open up this treasury and any vessel found that could be used in the upkeep of the *Mikdash* would be kept and the rest of the vessels would be sold; their monetary value being given over to the Treasury for the Upkeep of the *Mikdash*. (*Shekalim* 5:6)

A question which arises from this *Mishnah* is the use of the term "yir'ei chet" (those fearful of sin) to describe the donors to the *lishchat chasha'im* ('The Treasury of the Secret Ones'). In this context, there is seemingly no sin to be weary of, rather a very positive *mitzvah* to be fulfilled and thus the term "yir'ei chet" seems out of place. What relevance does the quality of being a *yir'ei chet* have to do with the scenario at hand - the donation of *tzedaka* in secret?

One better versed than me in literature from the Tanaic period may be able to simply respond to this question by explaining that the term "yir'ei chet" is a common phraseology used to describe a righteous person and should not be scrutinized if its literal meaning does not fit into the given context. Nonetheless, currently lacking such knowledge I will permit myself to present other options in explanation of term "yir'ei chet" in our *Mishnah*.

It is possible that the term "yir'ei chet" is used to reveal important facts regarding the intersection of *mitzvot* and *aveirot* (sins) as understood by the donors to the *lishchat chasha'im*. It may be that these donors were unwilling to donate *tzedaka* in more public circumstances due to the possibility of infringing upon a number of *aveirot* in the process.

One such *aveira* that these *yir'ei chet* may have feared could have been the onset of pride or arrogance. The guidance of *Chazal* in *Avot* (4:4) to "be exceedingly humble in spirit" may have created an aversion within them to the idea of allowing themselves to enjoy the inflated sense of personal goodness that accompanies public knowledge of one's generosity. In their minds, to have given *tzedaka* in public may have been a case of "yatzah scharo behefsedo" (his gain was offset by his loss) due to

the consequent creation of self-pride. Furthermore, the *yir'ei chet* may have realised that their kind acts of donation may soon turn into acts of self-aggrandisement due to the esteem gained from public awareness of them. This careful guarding to prevent the onset of arrogance may have led these donors to limit their donation to the *lishchat chasha'im* and to earn the title of *yir'ei chet* for doing so.

A further reason these individuals may have decided to give *tzedaka* in secret may have been sensitivity to others' reactions to public donation. It may have been that these people did not wish others to witness their giving of *tzedaka* for fear of subsequent resentment towards them. It is well known that *halachah* forbids one to compliment a person in the presence of his enemies (see *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 30:4). The logic behind this is that such actions will only lead to further hostility towards the person under discussion from the listeners. So too here, it may have been an unwillingness to inadvertently confront onlookers who may not have donated *tzedaka* that drove the *yir'ei chet* to conceal their giving. Such actions would have been a fulfillment of *Rebbi Channinah ben Dosa's* statement in *Avot* (3:13) that "If the spirit of one's fellows is pleased with him, the spirit of the Omnipresent is pleased with him" (*Artscroll* translation).

An incident that I witnessed demonstrated this sensitivity. On a Friday afternoon about three months ago, one of the Rabbis at Yeshivat Har Etzion slipped over and was taken to hospital. He managed to return home before *Shabbat* and myself and some other boys had the privilege of having a *kiddush* with him on *Shabbos* day (which had been planned before the incident). I noticed that this Rabbi's neighbour, who is also a Rabbi in the yeshiva stepped in the doorway to this Rabbi's house, presumably with the intention of inquiring as to his well-being. Upon seeing the guests sitting around the Rabbi's table, the visiting Rabbi hastily left without people really noticing. My understanding was that this Rabbi did not want to turn his *Bikur Cholim* into a public show of his care for a friend and colleague.

Thus it seems that while appearing out of place, the term *yir'ei chet* is in fact correct in our *Mishnah*. Furthermore, this particular description of the virtuous secret donors serves to teach about the nexus between *mitzvah* and *aveira* and the great respect that *Chazal* thus afforded those with the correct sensitivity to this.

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Revision Questions

שקלים ד': ו' - ו': ו' ד'

- What was done with items that were ‘sanctified’ and given to the *Beit Mikdash* funds and were also suitable for use in the *ketoret*? (Include both opinions) (ד': ו')
- What was done with items that were ‘sanctified’ and given to the *Beit Mikdash* funds and were also suitable for use in the *korbanot*? (Include both opinions) (ו': ו')
- How does *R' Pappas* reconcile the two opinions referred to in the previous question. (ד': ו')
- What was done with wine and oil that were ‘sanctified’ and given to the *Beit Mikdash* funds? (ח': ו')
- How was the *Beit Ha'Mikdash's* supplier agreements managed in the event of market value fluctuations? (ט': ו')
- When were the suppliers paid and why? (ט': ו')
- By what other name was *Mordechai* referred to and why? (ה': א')
- Which family were experts in preparing the *ketoret*? (ה': א')
- How many treasurers (*gizbarin*) were there in charge of the *Beit Ha'Mikdash's* funds? (ה': ב')
- How many financial controllers (*amarkalin*) were there overseeing the *Beit Ha'Mikdash's* funds? (ה': ב')
- In general what is the minimum number of people that should be placed in charge of public funds? (ה': ב')
- How many *chotamot* were there and what were they used for? (ה': ג')
- Explain how one would purchase the *nechasim* required for their *korban*? (ה': ד')
- What would happen if one lost his *chotam*? (ה': ה')
- What did they do to try and combat *chotam* fraud? (ה': ה')
- What was the *lishchat chasha'im* used for? (ה': ו')
- What was the *lishchat keilim* use for and how often was it cleared? (ה': ו')
- What three things were numbered thirteen in the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*? (ה': א')
- How did they interpret the strange death of a *kohen* that was recounting a structural imperfection in the *Beit Ha'Mikdash* and what was the imperfection? (ו': ב')
- How many gates were there in the Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern faces of the *Beit Ha'Mikdash*? (ו': ג')
- Which gates had no names? (ו': ג')
- What were the marble and silver tables that were by the ramp of the *mizba'ech* used for and on which side of the ramp were they located? (ו': ד')
- What were the marble and gold tables that were inside the *ulam* used for and where were they located? (ו': ד')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
26 th February כ"ח שבט	27 th February כ"ט שבט	28 th February ל' שבט ראש חודש	1 st March א' אדר ראש חודש	2 nd February ב' אדר	3 rd February ג' אדר	4 th February ד' אדר
Shekalim 6:5-6	Shekalim 7:1-2	Shekalim 7:3-4	Shekalim 7:5-6	Shekalim 7:8 – 8:1	Shekalim 8:2-3	Shekalim 8:4-5

