

Parshat Pekudei

Counting and the Beneficent Eye

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This week's parsha opens with the pasuk: "*Eileh pikudei hamishkan, mishkan ha'edut, asher pukad al pi Moshe*" – "These are the countings of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of Testimony, which was counted at the command of Moshe." (Shemot 38:21) The parsha continues to enumerate the amount of gold, silver and copper used in the construction of the Mishkan, and the sum of each is meticulously recorded. What is the purpose of this count and of the record that the Torah preserves of it?

Furthermore, the entire concept of counting runs counter to ideas mentioned in the Talmud, such as the axiom delineated in Ta'anit 8b, "Blessing exists only in something that is concealed from the eye." From such a teaching it can be implied that blessing did not reside in the Mishkan due to the fact its proportions, measurements, accounts, etc. are clearly revealed to us. But how can this be so? Surely the entire essence of the Mishkan was blessing, and the fact is that it was filled with Hashem's Presence?

The pasuk in Mishlei 22:9 states: "*Tov ayin hu yevorach*" – "He who has a beneficent eye shall be blessed." The Midrash (Tanchuma, Vezot Haberacha) comments that the pasuk should not be read "*yevorach* - shall be blessed" but as "*yevarech* - shall bless." This refers to Moshe, whose eye was beneficent, and who blessed Israel with four blessings. The Midrash continues to note that really Bilam should have blessed Israel seven times, corresponding to the seven alters he constructed, but he was only permitted to convey three. This was due to the fact that Hashem declared him a wicked man with a mean eye, thus making him unworthy of transmitting the remaining four blessings to His chosen people. G-d therefore transferred this honor to Moshe, as his eye was beneficent.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, in his commentary Kedushat Levi, explains the connection between blessing and the eye of man as follows: The wicked man, like Bilam, does not see the Divine might in what his eyes gaze upon, because he covets it in his mind. He measures and counts it with selfish motives. Hence, he separates it in his mind from its Divine source from the moment he lays eyes upon it. Thus, all that Bilam set his eyes upon was accursed. Conversely, a true man of G-d - wherever he looks, he sees the Divine force that is manifest in each object of Creation. He thereby attaches it to its root, consequently bringing blessing on that object from its Divine source. This applies to the countings of the Tabernacle. Since everything was counted in sanctity, and, as the Torah stresses, by the mouth of Moshe for the purpose of dedicating it to Hashem, counting did not detract from the blessing and Divine Presence within it, but intensified it.

It becomes apparent that if the counting stems from the side of holiness, blessing resides in it permanently and doesn't depart from it. This explains why the details of the Mishkan were recorded in such a meticulous manner.

A deeper message is also evident from the lesson that we have just discussed. Not only by his deeds and his speech, but even by his gaze, man has the power for good or evil. A jealous eye conceals the connection with the Divine, whereas a beneficent eye that sees the link between every aspect of creation and Hashem will be blessed.