

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Shekalim 16-22

Week of 11 - 17 Teves 5759 / 30 December 1998 - 5 January 1999
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

The Marble Table

Two tables were placed outside the entrance to the Sanctuary in the *Beis Hamikdash*, in which stood the sacred Golden Table on which was displayed the *lechem hapanim* showbread. One table was made of marble, the other of gold. On the marble table, the twelve freshly baked showbreads were placed until the time came on Shabbos for the *kohanim* to place them on the sacred table inside the Sanctuary in place of the ones which had been there the entire week before. The loaves which were removed were placed on the golden table outside until they were consumed by the *kohanim*.

Why was this second table made of gold? The reason is spelled out in the *mishna*: Since they had been on the sacred golden table inside the Sanctuary, we do not demote their sanctity by placing them on a less dignified table. This is in accordance with the rule that "we ascend in matters of holiness; we do not descend." But why should we not place the freshly baked loaves on a silver table outside the Sanctuary and then elevate them to the status of the golden table inside?

A very pragmatic reason is supplied by the Sages. Silver may cause the loaves to heat up and become stale, whereas the coolness of marble retards that process.

This explanation is challenged by citing the ongoing miracle which took place in the *Beis Hamikdash* in regard to the *lechem hapanim*. Even though the loaves lay on the Sanctuary table for an entire week, they remained as fresh and warm as on the day they were placed there, a miracle which finds expression in the words of a passage in *Shmuel I 21:7*. If they miraculously retained their freshness, why was it necessary to take the precaution of placing them on a marble table to retard staleness?

The response to this challenge is the reiteration of the classic principle that "we must not rely on miracles." Man is obligated to serve Hashem with consideration for the laws of nature which He created. We must therefore be wary of the natural process of bread becoming stale, while appreciating the special love Hashem shows by repealing His own laws of nature so that the loaves miraculously remain fresh and warm for a full week.

Shekalim 17b

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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The Collection Box

When Yehoash ascended the throne after the popular overthrow of his grandmother Asalyahu, he found the Beis Hamikdash in a state of disrepair. That wicked woman and her sons had caused serious damage to the sacred building which was only 125 years old and in perfect condition until then.

In order to carry out a massive renovation project, the king needed funds. He therefore made an arrangement with the kohanim whereby all money contributed by the people for maintenance of the Beis Hamikdash would go to the kohanim, and they in turn would assume responsibility for funding the renovations. When he discovered in the twenty-third year of his reign that the kohanim had become lax in fulfilling their responsibility, he ordered the head of the kohanim, Yehoyada, to institute a new system. Contributions would no longer go to the kohanim, but directly to the Beis Hamikdash treasury, from which funds would be drawn for renovations and maintenance.

To enable the public to make such direct contributions, a collection box had to be set up in an area of the Beis Hamikdash to which all would have access. Two apparently contradictory passages relate what was done. One (Melachim II 12:10) records that Yehoyada took a box, made a slit in it to receive the contributions and placed it near the altar. Another (Divrei Hayamim II 24:8) reports that at the king's command a collection box was placed outside the gate to the House of Hashem.

Rabbi Yonasan's resolution of this conflict is that there were two boxes. In the Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael, however, a different approach was offered. Both passages refer to the same single collection box. Yehoyada had initially placed it in the Beis Hamikdash proper, next to the altar. When the king realized that this would create a problem for those who were ritually impure and forbidden to enter that area, he ordered that it be placed outside so that even they would be capable of making their direct contribution.

Shekalim 19a

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