



# דרכים בפרשה

תורה-זכור



**ומלאת בו מלאת אבן ארבעה טורים אבן**

***You shall fill it with stone filling, four rows of stone (28:17)***

In Parshas Tetzaveh, the Torah goes into great detail in describing the stones that were set inside of the choshen. Rashi explains (parshas Terumah) that because they make an indented setting for them in gold and put the stones there to fill the indentation, therefore they are called “filling stones”.

When thinking into it, this name has always troubled me. I will try and explain this in two different ways:

Firstly, if one thinks of a diamond ring and its setting, one makes the following observation. Yes, the pointers, baguettes and little stones or gems that are used to make up the setting are typically very nice, but they will not necessarily enter into the main topic of conversation when discussing the diamond ring. What people will be talking about is the actual diamond itself that is displayed prominently for all to see. As for the other stones, they are just “filler stones” taking up some space. Accordingly, the name **אבני מלואים** is not all that flattering.

Even if we were to answer that perhaps, today we are used to using that term in a non-flattering context, but it may not have always been like that, there is still a second issue with the name. The Torah indeed names each and every stone. The midrashim and commentaries are endless in discussing their actual colours and the powers ascribed to each individual stone (see Rabbeinu Bachya

amongst the many). If one thinks of a concert night featuring the greatest performers, each one with his/her own talent, the likes of which have not been seen, one can be certain that the playbill will not just refer to most of the performers as time-killers. Rather, some creative noteworthy name for each group which alludes to its greatness will be thought of and used. However, when it comes to these precious stones, instead of giving a name which focuses on the powers of the stones, the Torah uses the seemingly insignificant name, “filling stones”, because their function is that they fill settings.

In Parshas Shekalim, we have read about the *machtzis hashekel* which we will give this week on the Fast of Esther in anticipation of Moshiach’s coming when we will be able to give it again for the korbanos hatzibur. The question that is asked is why does every Jew give a half shekel and not a whole shekel? The gemara in Mesechta Megilah (16a see Tos.) says that HaShem saw that the wicked Haman would offer Achashveirosh 10,000 talents of silver which was calculated to equal all of the half shekels given in the desert by the Jews. Therefore, we were instructed already before Haman’s days to give the half shekel in order to counter his effort. Somehow, ours was the antidote to keep us safe from Haman’s offering the equivalent of all of ours together.

Amalek tries telling us, “You know what is valuable? When you accomplish great things! 10,000 talents of silver! Wow, that is *chashuv* and holds value.” A half shekel? A phone call to someone to see how they are doing? A kind word to someone? A smile? A chapter of Tehillim? A Mishna or a few more lines of gemara? MEH! What’s it worth?!?

**אשר קרך בדרך** - If one happens to bump into someone on the road - that is no big deal. But if you set up a meeting prior, then it is noteworthy. Amalek tries to cool us off this way by telling us that these small things have no real value. But that is not the hashkafa/outlook of a Jew. There is no such thing as something small, and surely nothing is insignificant. This is why we are giving the half shekel exactly now. We are countering the attitude that stifles so many people. How many people have given up before they have even started because they see the total project and think to themselves that they can never reach the finish line, so what is the use anyway? Rebbe Tarfon taught us (Avos 2:16) לא עליך המלאכה לגמר, -ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה *It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.* The Torah does not expect of us to finish a job. We do what we can, but we also cannot just throw in the towel. Amalek tries to get us to give up before we even start.

Coming back to the Avnei Miluim, I believe we now have a beautiful approach to answer our question: The premise of the question was based on the way we tend to view the

function of things that fill up space. By focusing on its function of filling and not the individual function of each stone, the Torah is pointing out that this is a great mistake. Filling a void as small as this may seem is in it of itself a great accomplishment, perhaps even greater than any individual feat any of the stones could have accomplished.

As we enter into Shabbos of Parshas Zachor and the days of Purim, let us “remember and not forget” that Amalek tries to cool us down by making small seemingly insignificant things become irrelevant when in fact they are what make up the main event.

*Have a wonderful Shabbos and ah freilichen Purim,*

**מרדכי אפפל**



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