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[Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim - שבת שקלים

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# Introduction

In this [study](study.html) I would like to examine the customs of the [Jews](gen-jew.html) as they relate to the [shabbat](sabbath.html) on or before [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) [Adar](feasts.html). This [shabbat](sabbath.html) is commonly called [**Shabbat**](sabbath.html) **Shekalim[[1]](#footnote-1) - שבת שקלים**.

[Festival](festival.html) Torah readings[[2]](#footnote-2) for [Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim readings:

**Torah readings:**

*Torah*: Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 30:1-38

*Haftarah*: Melachim Bet (Kings) 11:17–12:17

Shmuel Alef (1 Samuel) 20:18,42

[*Psalms*](psalms1.html): 49

*Nazarean*

*Codicil*: Matityahu 28:11-15 (17:24-27)

On [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) add Bamidbar ([Numbers](nchart.html)) 28:9 - 28:15.

On [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html): Mishle (Proverbs) Proverbs 7:1-27

[Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim occurs immediately before or on on the [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) of the month before the month of [Nisan](feasts.html) (that is, the [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) of [Adar](feasts.html) or [Adar](feasts.html) II in leap years), or on the last [Shabbat](sabbath.html) before that [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html). [Nisan](feasts.html) is the month when [Pesach](passover.html) occurs. Shekalim is read at this [time](time.html) because, according to tradition, the half-shekel census was taken on the [first](one.html) of [Nisan](feasts.html), and the reading is meant to be a reminder of the upcoming census. It is also to remind everyone to contribute their half-shekal for the daily morning and evening [sacrifice](korbanot.html).

We celebrate [Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim in conformance with the Torah [command](cmds613.html).

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***30:11-16*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *spake unto Moses, saying, 12 When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their* [*number*](nchart.html)*, then shall they give[[3]](#footnote-3) every man a ransom for his soul unto* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, when thou numberest them; that there be no* [*plague*](plagues.html) *among them, when thou numberest them. 13 This they shall give, every* [*one*](one.html) *that passeth among them that are numbered,[[4]](#footnote-4) half a shekel[[5]](#footnote-5) after the shekel of the* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*:*[[6]](#footnote-6) *(a shekel is* [*twenty*](twenty.html) *gerahs:[[7]](#footnote-7)) an half shekel shall be the* [*offering*](korbanot) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. 14 Every* [*one*](one.html) *that passeth among them that are numbered, from* [*twenty*](twenty.html) *years old[[8]](#footnote-8) and above, shall give an* [*offering*](korbanot) *unto* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. 15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel , when they give an* [*offering*](korbanot) *unto* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, to make an* [*atonement*](atonemen.html) *for your souls.[[9]](#footnote-9) 16 And thou shalt take the* [*atonement*](atonemen.html) *money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the* [*tabernacle*](mikdash.html) *of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, to make an* [*atonement*](atonemen.html) *for your souls.*

[One](one.html) of the 613 [commandments](cmds613.html) of the Torah enjoins all [Jewish](gen-jew.html) males above the age of bar [mitzva](cmds613.html)[[10]](#footnote-10) to contribute a half-shekel[[11]](#footnote-11) each year to the [Temple](temple.html). From the money that accumulates, all the public sacrifices that are brought in the [Temple](temple.html) during the following year are purchased.

The year renews itself on the [first](one.html) of [Nisan](feasts.html), the [first](one.html) month the Israelites observed, after being told to keep a [calendar](calendar.html) by the [new](new.html) [moon](chodesh.html) during the [exodus](exodus.html) [from Egypt](thebirth.html).  From the [first](one.html) of [Nisan](feasts.html), only offerings purchased from *fresh* contributions are acceptable. Thus the half shekels must reach the [hands](fourteen.html) of the overseers by this date. During [Temple](temple.html) times, an announcement to bring the half shekels was issued each year on the [first](one.html) of [Adar](feasts.html), a month prior to the due date.

# In The Targum

The Targum Pseudo Yonatan provides us with some [insights](insights.html) on a couple of these verses:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html) ***30:12-13*** *When you take the sum of the sons of Israel according to their* [*number*](nchart.html)*, they will give every man the ransom of their souls before the Lord when you* [*number*](nchart.html) *them; that there may not be among them the calamity of death when you dost* [*number*](nchart.html) *them. [*[*JERUSALEM*](city.html)*. When you take the* [*head*](body.html) *of the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of the sums of the sons of Israel.]13 This valuation was shown to Moshe in the mountain as with a denarius of* [*fire*](fire.html)*, and thus* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *He to him: So will every* [*one*](one.html) *who passes to the numbering give a half shekel of the coin of the* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*: (a half shekel is* [*twenty*](twenty.html) *manin:) the half shekel is to be the separation before the Lord.*

# Rashi’s comments

Rashi also provides us with some [insights](insights.html) on these verses:

**12 When you take** Heb. כִּי תִשָׂא . [This is] an expression of taking, as the Targum [Onkelos] renders. [I.e.,] when you wish to take the sum [total] of their [numbers](nchart.html) to [know](daat.html) how many they are, do not count them by the [head](body.html), but each [one](one.html) shall give a half-shekel, and you shall count the shekels. [Thereby] you will [know](daat.html) their [number](nchart.html).

**then there will be no** [**plague**](plagues.html) **among them** for the evil eye has power over numbered things, and pestilence comes upon them, as we find in David’s [time](time.html).[[12]](#footnote-12)

**13 This they shall give** He [God] showed him [Moses] a sort of coin of [fire](fire.html) weighing half a shekel, and He said to him, “Like this [one](one.html) they shall give.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

**who goes through the counting** [Hebrew](hebrew.html) הָעֽבֵר עַל-הַפְקֻדִים . It is customary for those who count to pass the ones who have been counted [one](one.html) following another, and so [too the word יַעֲבֽר in] “each [one](one.html) that passes under the [rod](staff.html)”,[[14]](#footnote-14) and so [the word תַּעֲבֽרְנָה in] “flocks will again pass under the [hands](fourteen.html) of [one](one.html) who counts them”.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**half a shekel according to the holy shekel** By the weight of the shekel that I fixed for you [against which] to weigh the holy shekels, such as the shekels mentioned in the section dealing with personal evaluations[[16]](#footnote-16) and [in the section concerning] inherited fields.[[17]](#footnote-17)

[**Twenty**](twenty.html) **gerahs equal** [**one**](one.html) **shekel** Now He explains to you how much it is. **gerahs** Heb. גֵרָה , a word meaning a ma’ah [a small coin]. Likewise, “will come to prostrate himself before him for a silver piece (אֲגוֹרַתכֶּסֶף) and a morsel of bread”.[[18]](#footnote-18)

[**Twenty**](twenty.html) **gerahs equal** [**one**](one.html) **shekel** for a whole shekel equals [four](four.html) zuzim, and the zuz was originally [five](five.html) ma’oth, but they came and added a [sixth](six.html) to it and raised it to [six](six.html) ma’oth of silver, and half of this shekel [of] which I have spoken to you [here in this verse], they shall give as an [offering](korbanot) to the Lord.

# In The [Midrash](orallaw.html)

The [Midrash](orallaw.html), also gives us some very significant [insights](insights.html):

[Midrash](orallaw.html) Tanchuma Yelamdenu on

Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 30:1-38

**1. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** May our masters [teach](teacher.html) us: How many times each year did the Israelites bring their offerings to the [Temple](temple.html)? Thus did our masters [teach](teacher.html) us: They brought them [three](three.html) times a year; on the [first](one.html) day of the months of [Nisan](feasts.html), [Iyar](feasts.html), and [Elul](elul.html). On the [first](one.html) day of the months of [Nisan](feasts.html) and [Iyar](feasts.html) the offerings for the [Temple](temple.html) treasury would be collected and the [priests](priests.html) would approach the altar to seek [forgiveness](forgive.html) for the [sins](sin.html) of Israel with the shekels they had contributed. But why did they do so [three](three.html) times a year? In order that all the Israelites might be involved, throughout the year, in giving their contributions. Why did they begin to accumulate their contributions on the [first](one.html) day of [Adar](feasts.html) (actually the Sanhedrin would make the announcement on the [first](one.html) day of [Adar](feasts.html)), though they did not bring it in until the [first](one.html) day of [Nisan](feasts.html)? It was done that way so that the [offering](korbanot) would not become an unbearable hardship for the Israelites. Hence they (the [priests](priests.html)) would remind the Israelites on the [first](one.html) day of the month of [Adar](feasts.html) (to prepare their offerings).

Solomon exclaimed: *The way of the sluggard is as though hedged by thorns; but the path of the upright is even*.[[19]](#footnote-19) Scripture is referring in this verse to the [wicked](wicked.html) [Esau](edom.html). Just as the thorns from a bush that cling to a man’s [garment](garment.html) will cling to another part of the [garment](garment.html) when he tries to brush them off, so the government of [Esau](edom.html) (Rome), while still collecting a crop tax from Israel, would impose a [head](body.html) tax. And even before the [head](body.html) tax was fully collected, it would impose a levy for the care of its soldiers. The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, did not do that: *For the path of the upright is even,* made level before Israel.

They announced the obligations on the [first](one.html) day of [Adar](feasts.html), and then it was collected by the [priests](priests.html) on the [first](one.html) day of [Nisan](feasts.html). How much did they collect? A half-shekel.[[20]](#footnote-20) And how much was it? It was equal to half a sela. They were collected only to make it possible to atone for the [sins](sin.html) of Israel. They would purchase the daily [burnt offering](korbanot)s with the contribution. Because the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, foresaw that in every census Israel would take in the [future](future.html), some of them would be missing,[[21]](#footnote-21) He ordained the shekel [offering](korbanot) as a remedy so that it might atone for them and no [plague](plagues.html) would befall them.

**2. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** Scripture states elsewhere in allusion to this verse: *Your navel is like a round goblet, your belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies, wherein no mingled* [*wine*](wine.html) *is wanting* (Song 7:3). *Your navel* refers to the Sanhedrin. But why did they call the Sanhedrin a navel? Just as the navel is located in the center of a man’s [body](body.html), so the Sanhedrin met in a chamber of hewn stone in the center of the [Temple](temple.html). Furthermore, just as the child, whose [mouth](body.html) is closed whilst within its mother’s [womb](thebirth.html), is sustained through the navel, so the Israelites were sustained only by virtue of the Sanhedrin. Hence, they likened it to a navel. The word *round* indicates that just as the navel is round, so the Sanhedrin sat in a semi-circular room.

The [meeting place](settimes.html) of a Sanhedrin was called a *sahar* (“goblet”) because it resembled a *sohar* (“store”). For just as you are able to find whatever you need in a store, so the Sanhedrin decided what was pure and impure, fit and unfit, permitted and forbidden.

*Wherein no mingled* [*wine*](wine.html) *was wanting.* If [one](one.html) of the members of the Sanhedrin found it necessary to leave the meeting to satisfy his [physical](physical.html) [needs](needs.html), he would [first](one.html) look about to see if [twenty](twenty.html)-[three](three.html) members were in attendance.[[22]](#footnote-22) If there were, he would leave, but if not he would not depart. *Your belly is like a heap of wheat* alludes to the book of Leviticus, which contains the means for attaining [atonement](atonemen.html) for guilt and sinful acts. It holds a heap of [sin](sin.html) offerings and a heap of guilt offerings. He placed in the middle of the Torah, with all its offerings ([two](two.html) books of the Torah precede Leviticus and [two](two.html) follow it), with all its offerings. In that way it resembles a heap of wheat.

R. Simeon the son of Lakish said: Why is it (Israel) compared to wheat? Just as wheat piles up when poured into a measure, so the elders, the students, the wise, and the pious increase in [number](nchart.html) when a census is taken.

*Your belly is like a heap of wheat.* R. Idi said: Is not a heap of cedar cones more beautiful than a heap of wheat? Why does this verse say *a heap of wheat?* They replied: The [world](worlds.html) cannot exist on cedar cones if it lacks wheat. Hence it says: *Your belly is like a heap of wheat.*

*Set about with lilies.* Does a man ever fence in his fields with lilies? Does he not normally fence his fields with thorns and thistles, with pits and thorn-bushes? What then is the meaning of *Set about with lilies?* This refers to numerous [commandments](cmds613.html) that are as sensitive as lilies. For example, a man is extremely anxious to enter his bridal chamber, for no day is dearer to him than that day. It is the day in which he rejoices with his bride. What does he do? He spends a considerable amount of money to set up the bridal chamber and he comes to have [intercourse](marriageact.html) with her. But if she says to him: “I have seen something like a red lily (i.e. like the [blood](body.html) of her menstruation), he draws away from her. He turns his [face](body.html) to [one](one.html) side and she to the other. What compelled him to turn from her? Was it a snake biting him, a scorpion stinging him, or a thorn between them? No, only the words of the Torah, since it is said: *And you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness*.[[23]](#footnote-23) Hence it is written: *Set about like lilies.*

*They shall give:[[24]](#footnote-24)* Observe that Israel was so beloved that even their [sins](sin.html) brought them considerable benefit. If their [sins](sin.html) could do that, how much more so would their meritorious deeds. You find that when [Jacob](israelja.html) sent [Joseph](joseph.html) to his brethren, they watched him approach and said to [one](one.html) another: *Behold this dreamer comes. Come now, therefore, and let us slay him* (Genesis 37:19-20). They hurled him into the pit and said: Let us [eat](eating.html) and drink, and then we will kill him. After [eating](eating.html) and drinking, they were about to say [grace](grace.html) when Judah said to them: We are planning to take a life, yet now we would bless G-d. If we should do this, we would be blaspheming against G-d and not blessing Him. Because of this, Scripture says:

***Tehillim (***[***Psalm***](psalms1.html)***) 10:3*** *And the covetous vaunts himself, though he condemn the Lord*.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:27*** *Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and let not our* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *be upon him*. (And they all agreed.)

***Bereshit (Genesis) 37:25*** *And they sat down to* [*eat*](eating.html) *bread*.

R. Judah the son of Shalum said: This is a notable instance of many [sitting](mashal.html) down together in unity, with a single thought in mind; to sell [Joseph](joseph.html). Yet he fed the [world](worlds.html) for [seven](seven.html) years, through [two](two.html) [famines](famine.html). If despite their [sin](sin.html) he could feed the [world](worlds.html) and cause it to endure, how much more beneficial would have been the result if they had acted meritoriously. Similarly, observe what happened to the [tribes](tribes.html) in the chapter Shekalim, when they were permitted to atone for the incident of the golden calf. If the heinous [sin](sin.html) they committed could lead to the performance of a worthy act, how much more so if they had acted meritoriously.

**3. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** R. Tanchuma the son of Abba began the discussion with the verse *Sweet is the* [*sleep*](mashal.html) *of a laboring man, whether he* [*eat*](eating.html) *little or much; but the satiety of the rich will not suffer him to* [*sleep*](mashal.html)(Ecclesiastes 5:11). They said to Solomon after he [spoke](mashal.html) these words: Surely you must be jesting, inasmuch as it is written concerning you: *For he was wiser than all men* (1 Kings 5:11). And now you say: *Sweet is the* [*sleep*](mashal.html) *of a laboring man, whether he* [*eat*](eating.html) *little or much.* Is it not a fact that anyone who is hungry because he [ate](eating.html) only a little cannot [sleep](mashal.html), while [one](one.html) that [eats](eating.html) much sleeps well? He replied: I am [speaking](mashal.html) here only of righteous men and those who labor in the [study](study.html) of the [law](law.html). For example, a man who lives only [thirty](thirty.html) years may have devoted himself from his tenth year to the day of his death to the [study](study.html) of the [law](law.html) and the [commandments](cmds613.html), while another man who lives eighty years, may have devoted himself to the [study](study.html) of the [law](law.html) and the [commandments](cmds613.html) from his tenth year to the day of his death. You might say: Woe to the [first](one.html) [one](one.html), who labored only [twenty](twenty.html) years in the [study](study.html) of the [law](law.html), whilst the other devoted himself to the [study](study.html) of the [law](law.html) for [seventy](seventy.html) years. Surely the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, will give him a greater reward than He will give to him who labored in the [law](law.html) only [twenty](twenty.html) years. Hence I said: *Whether he* [*eat*](eating.html) *little or much.* For the [one](one.html) who had devoted [twenty](twenty.html) years to the [study](study.html) of the Torah might well say to the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He: “If You had not removed me from this [world](worlds.html) in the prime of my life, I would have had additional years to devote to the [study](study.html) of the [law](law.html) and the [commandments](cmds613.html).” Therefore I repeat: *Whether he* [*eat*](eating.html) *little or much,* the reward of [one](one.html) is equal to the reward of the other.

Then they said to him: You declared also that *The satiety of the rich will not suffer him to* [*sleep*](mashal.html)*.* What can this mean? Certainly it permits him to [sleep](mashal.html). In fact, a man sated with [food](food.html) falls [asleep](mashal.html) more quickly than others. Solomon replied: I was [speaking](mashal.html) about those who possess the riches of the Torah and not material possessions. For example, a man who is distinguished and wealthy in the [knowledge](knowledge.html) of the Torah will [teach](teacher.html) many students and disseminate his [knowledge](knowledge.html) among the masses, and he is satisfied in his [knowledge](knowledge.html) of Torah. And when he dies, the disciples he raised do not permit him to be forgotten. They sit and labor in the Torah, the [Talmud](orallaw.html), the [law](law.html), and the Aggadah, quoting the [law](law.html) in his [name](name.html) and recalling him to mind constantly. They do not permit him to [sleep](mashal.html) undisturbed in his grave.

R. Simeon the son of Lakish, R. Akiba, and R. Simeon the son of Yohai said: His disciples do not permit him to [sleep](mashal.html) undisturbed in his grave, as it is said: *Moving gently the lips of those that are* [*asleep*](mashal.html)(Song 7:10). Hence, *The satiety of the rich will not suffer him to* [*sleep*](mashal.html)*.* Similarly, Moses [taught](teacher.html) the Torah to the Israelites, trained them in the observance of the [law](law.html), arranged the order of the chapters of the Torah, and assigned the chapters to be read each [Sabbath](sabbath.html), on [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html), and on the holy days. And they call him to mind as they read each Torah portion.

With reference to the portion Shekalim, Moses had said to the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He: Master of the universe, when I die, I shall not be remembered. The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, replied: Be sure that just as you stand here now, giving them the portion containing Shekalim, thereby lifting their heads upright (i.e., to be forgiven), every year when they read it before Me, it will be as though you were [standing](mashal.html) in that place and lifting their heads upright. How do we [know](daat.html) this? From what they shall read concerning this matter in the verse *And the Lord* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *to Moses saying: When you are lifting up the* [*head*](body.html) *of Israel* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 30:11). “Lift up the [head](body.html)” is not said, but rather *when you are lifting up* (the [future](future.html) tense of the word “lifting” is used: “they will be forgiven.”)

**4. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** Scripture states elsewhere: *Many there are that say of my soul: “There is no* [*salvation*](salvation.html) *for him in God,” Selah. But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my* [*head*](body.html) ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 3:3-4). R. Samuel the son of Ammi and the rabbis discussed this verse. R. Samuel the son of Ammi contended that this verse refers to Doeg and Ahithophel, who were masters of the Torah. *That say of my soul* suggests that they would say to David: Can a man who captures a lamb and then kills the shepherd causing Israel to fall before the sword gain [salvation](salvation.html), since it is written: *There is no* [*salvation*](salvation.html) *for him in God, Selah?*

Then David cried out: *But You, O Lord,* as if to say, O You who are Master of the [world](worlds.html), Your [law](law.html) agrees with them, for You said: *The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death* (Leviticus 20:10). *But are a shield to me* refers to the [merits](merit.html) of my ancestors. *My glory* indicates that You have restored me to kingship; and *Lifter of my* [*head*](body.html)implies that though I was guilty of murder, You permitted me to lift up the [head](body.html), that is, to be forgiven through Nathan the Prophet, for he said: *The Lord also has put away your* [*sin*](sin.html)*; you shall not die* (II Samuel 12:13).

However, the Rabbis held that this verse refers to the [nations](nations.html) of the [world](worlds.html). The idolaters are many *(rabim)*, as it is written: *The uproar of many peoples* (Isaiah 17:12). They said to Israel: You are a [nation](nations.html) that heard at [Sinai](stages.html): *I am the Lord Your God, you shall have no other gods before Me* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 20:3), yet at the end of [forty](forty.html) days you said of a calf: *This is your god O Israel* (ibid., 32:4). How can they enjoy [salvation](salvation.html), since it says: *There is no* [*salvation*](salvation.html) *for him in God* ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 3:3)? *But You, O Lord, are a shield about me* suggests that Israel cried out: Master of the universe, do You agree with them, since You have said: *He that sacrifices unto the gods shall be utterly destroyed* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 22:19)? *A shield about me* alludes to the [merits](merit.html) of the [fathers](fathers.html); *my glory* implies that You will cause Your Shechinah to [dwell](dwelling.html) in our midst when You said: *Build Me a* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html) *that I may* [*tabernacle*](mikdash.html) *among them* (ibid., 25:8), and *lifter of the* [*head*](body.html) indicates that instead of sentencing us to destruction, You permitted us to lift up the [head](body.html), that is, to be forgiven because of Moses, as it is said: *You lift up the* [*head*](body.html)*.*

R. [Jacob](israelja.html) the son of Yohai, in the [name](name.html) of R. Jonathan, explained the text: *And man bows down, and man lowers himself* (Isaiah 2:9). *And man bows down* alludes to the Israelites, as it is said: *And you My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are men* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 34:31), while *man lowers himself* refers to Moses, as it is said: *Now the man Moses was very meek* ([Numbers](nchart.html) 12:3). Moses cried out: Master of the universe, I [know](daat.html) that Israel lowered itself before a calf, but I too lowered myself; will You not [forgive](forgive.html) them? He replied: You will [forgive](forgive.html) them. Hence: *When you take the sum* ([forgive](forgive.html) them) [“take the sum” (lit. “lift up the [head](body.html)”) is a [Hebrew](hebrew.html) idiom meaning “[forgive](forgive.html).”]

**5. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** R. [Jonah](jonah.html) began to discuss the verse *For God is judge; He puts down* [*one*](one.html)*, and lifts up another* ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 75:8). A Roman matron asked R. Yose the son of Halfta: “In how many days did the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, create the [world](worlds.html)?” “In [six](six.html) days,” he replied, “as it is said: *For in* [*six*](six.html) *days the Lord made the* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and the earth* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 20:11).” “What has He been doing since that [time](time.html)?” she queried. “He has been uniting couples and making [one](one.html) man wealthy and another poor,” he responded. Whereupon she retorted: “I too am able to do this. I have many slaves and maid servants, and I can couple them all this very night. What He has been doing since the [time](time.html) of [creation](bara.html), I can do easily in [one](one.html) hour.” “It may appear a simple matter to you,” he replied, “but to Him it is as difficult as splitting the [Red Sea](stages.html), for it is written: *God makes the solitary to* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *in a house* ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 68:7).

He left her and went on his way. What did she do? She took a thousand [male](male+female.html) slaves and a thousand [female](male+female.html) slaves and had them stand [face](body.html) to [face](body.html) in [two](two.html) rows. This [male](male+female.html) slave, she commanded, shall take this [one](one.html) as his wife, and this shall take the other, and she continued to do this until she had coupled them all on that [one](one.html) night. When they returned in the morning, [one](one.html) had lost an eye, another had suffered a [head](body.html) wound, and a [third](three.html) [one](one.html)’s leg was broken. [One](one.html) shouted: “I do not want him as my husband,” while another exclaimed: “I do not want her as my wife.” Thereupon she summoned R. Yose. When he came to her she said: “I agree that your God is a God of truth, and that His [law](law.html) is the truth, and that everything you have said is indeed so.” He said to her: “The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, sits and joins them together even against their will. He binds a chain about the [neck](body.html) of [one](one.html) and brings him from [one](one.html) end of the earth to the other to couple him with his mate, as it is said: *God makes the solitary to* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *in a house; He brings out the prisoners into prosperity* ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 68:7).”

What does *bakosharot* (“prosperity”) imply? The [one](one.html) who is not pleased (with his mate) weeps, the [one](one.html) who is pleased sings. Hence the word *bakosharot* (from *beki,* “[weeping](mashal.html)”, and *shirot,* “songs”) is used in the text. He causes [one](one.html) to ascend the ladder and another to descend. Thus it is said: *For God is judge; He puts down this* [*one*](one.html)*, and lifts up this* [*one*](one.html)([Psalm](psalms1.html) 76:8).

R. [Jonah](jonah.html) of Bozrah and the rabbis disagreed concerning the meaning of this verse. The rabbis maintain that it refers to Aaron. Because of the word *this* (in the preceding verse) he was humbled, as it is said: *And I cast it into the* [*fire*](fire.html)*, and there came out this calf* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 32:24), and because of the word *this* he was exalted, as it is said: *This is the* [*offering*](korbanot) *of Aaron and his sons* (Leviticus 6:13). R. [Jonah](jonah.html), however, was of the opinion that this verse refers to Israel: With the word *this* they debased themselves, and with the word *this* they exalted themselves. With the word *this* they debased themselves in saying: *As for this man Moses* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 32:1), and with the word *this* they exalted themselves, as it is said: *This they shall give* (ibid., 30:13). Scripture states elsewhere: *Righteousness exalts a* [*nation*](nations.html)*; but* [*sin*](sin.html) *is a reproach to any people* (Proverbs 14:34). R. Joshua said: *Righteousness exalts a* [*nation*](nations.html)*; but* [*sin*](sin.html) *is a reproach to any people* is indicated by the fact that when Israel sinned, the [nations](nations.html) of the [world](worlds.html) turned against them and enslaved them.

R. Nahuniah the son of Hakanah maintained that *Righteousness exalts a* [*nation*](nations.html)alludes to Israel, while [*sin*](sin.html) *is a reproach to any people* is applicable to the idolatrous [nations](nations.html) that sinned against Israel. From whom do you learn this? You learn it from Mesha, king of [Moab](stages.html), for it is said: *Now Mesha king of* [*Moab*](stages.html) *was a sheep-master* (II Kings 3:4). What is meant by a *noked* (“sheep-master”)? He was a shepherd, for it is said: *And he rendered unto the king of Israel the wool of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams* (ibid.). What is meant by *the wool of rams?* R. Abba the son of Kahana said: Sheep. What did he do? He assembled all his astrologers and said to them: “I have a problem, tell me what to do. Should I wage war together with all the [nations](nations.html) against Israel and [exile](galuyot.html) them, or should I wage war alone against Israel so that the victory may be mine alone?” They replied: “Israel had a patriarch called [Abraham](avraham.html) who was given a child when he was [one](one.html) hundred years old, and he offered him as a [sacrifice](korbanot.html).” He asked them: “Was the [sacrifice](korbanot.html) completed?” “No,” they answered. He replied: “He offered a [sacrifice](korbanot.html) that was not completed and yet He performed miracles for them, how many more miracles would He have performed if the [sacrifice](korbanot.html) had been completed. Now, since I have a firstborn son who will rule in my stead, I shall offer him as a [sacrifice](korbanot.html), and perhaps a miracle will be performed in my behalf.” Hence it is written: *Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a* [*burnt offering*](korbanot) *upon the wall, and there came a great wrath upon Israel* (II Kings 3:27-28).

*Homah* (“wall”) is written here, since he prostrated himself towards the *hamah* (“[sun](hachama.html)”) (in performing the [sacrifice](korbanot.html)). *Forthwith there came a great wrath upon Israel.* The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, said to Israel: The idolaters do not acknowledge My glory, and so they rebel against Me, but you, who acknowledge My glory, rebel against Me as well.

R. Mani stated: Were it not for the [merit](merit.html) of Obadiah’s wife, Israel would have been exterminated at that [time](time.html): *Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha* (II Kings 4:1).

R. Huna said: Whatever justice and kindness the idolaters perform is as dangerous to Israel as the poison of a serpent. From whom does [one](one.html) learn this? From Berodach, who would [eat](eating.html) every day at the [third](three.html) hour of the day and would [sleep](mashal.html) until the [ninth](nine.html) hour. Once, during the [time](time.html) of Hezekiah, he was allowed to [sleep](mashal.html) through the [sun](hachama.html)’s return on its track (According to II Kings 20 the [sun](hachama.html) was made to go backwards for Hezekiah). When he awakened and discovered that it was morning, he wanted to slay all his servants. He asked them: “Why did you permit me to [sleep](mashal.html) through a whole day and night?” They replied: “The God of Hezekiah is the greatest of all the gods in the [world](worlds.html).” *Then Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, King of* [*Babylon*](bavel.html)*, sent a* [*letter*](letters.html) *and a present to Hezekiah* (II Kings 20:12). He wrote: “Peace to Hezekiah the king, peace to [Jerusalem](city.html), and peace to the great God.” As the scribes were about to depart, he became uneasy. He said to himself: “Did I not do wrong in mentioning the peace of Hezekiah and of the [city](city.html) before addressing the great God?” He arose from his throne, took [three](three.html) steps to recall the scribes, and wrote another [letter](letters.html) to replace it. This [time](time.html) he said: “Peace to the great God, peace to [Jerusalem](city.html), and peace to Hezekiah.”

The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, then said to him: Because you arose and took [three](three.html) steps for the sake of My honor, I will cause [three](three.html) kings to descend from you who will rule from [one](one.html) end of the earth to the other. They were Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodoch, and Belshazzar. However, when these came to power, they blasphemed, and so the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, destroyed them and caused others to arise in their place. The rabbis said: *Righteousness exalts a* [*nation*](nations.html)refers to the free-will gifts that Israel brought to the [Temple](temple.html). Therefore He granted them [forgiveness](forgive.html) through Moses. And He said: *When you take the sum.*

**7. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** R. Yose the son of Hanina said: This verse indicated to him that in the [future](future.html) he would bring the [first](one.html) of the [tribes](tribes.html) to the Shechinah. But which [one](one.html) was the [first](one.html) [tribe](tribes.html)? It is Reuben, as it is said: *Let Reuben live and not die* (Deuteronomy 33:6). This is what is meant by *You lift up the* [*head*](body.html) *(rosh) of the children of Israel;* i.e. he lifted up the [first](one.html) (*rishon*) of the [tribes](tribes.html).

**9. When you take the sum of the children of Israel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:12).** The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, said to Moses: *Take the sum of the children of Israel*. He replied: My master, it is written: *And your* [*seed*](flower.html) *shall be as the* [*dust*](rock.html) *of the earth* (Genesis 28:14), and it is written elsewhere: *And make your* [*seed*](flower.html) *as the sand of the sea* (ibid., 32:13), yet you tell me now to do this. He answered: If you want to [know](daat.html) their [number](nchart.html), you need only add together the [first](one.html) [letter](letters.html) of the names of each of the [tribes](tribes.html) and this will give you their [number](nchart.html). The *resh* in the word Reuben stands for [two](two.html) hundred thousand; the *shin* in Simeon stands for [three](three.html) hundred thousand, the *yods* in the names Judah, Issachar, and [Joseph](joseph.html) total [thirty](thirty.html) thousand, the *nun* in Naphtali accounts for fifty thousand, the *zayin* in Zebulun’s [name](name.html) is [seven](seven.html) thousand, the *dalet* in Dan is [four](four.html) thousand, the *gimel* in Gad is [three](three.html) thousand, and the *alef* in Asheris [one](one.html) thousand – totaling [five](five.html) hundred and ninety-[seven](seven.html) thousand in all. The [three](three.html) thousand not accounted for were slain at the [time](time.html) of the episode of the golden calf, as it is said: *And the sons of Levi did according to the words of Moses; and there fell of the people on that day about* [*three*](three.html) *thousand men* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 33:28). Hence the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, said to Moses: You are taking the count to learn how many are missing. R. Menahem said in the [name](name.html) of R. Bebai: This may be compared to a king who had many sheep. When wolves attacked and destroyed some of them, the king told his shepherd: “Count the sheep and find out how many are missing.” Likewise, the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, said to Moses: Go, count the Israelites, and find out how many are missing.

A census of Israel was taken on [ten](ten.html) different occasions. The [first](one.html) occurred when they descended to Egypt, as it is said: *Your* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *went down* [*into Egypt*](thebirth.html) *with* [*three*](three.html) *score and* [*ten*](ten.html) *persons* (Deuteronomy 10:29). Again, when they came [out of Egypt](thebirth.html), as is said: *And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to* [*Succoth*](succoth.html)*, about* [*six*](six.html) *hundred thousand men* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 12:37). Once in the Book of [Numbers](nchart.html) (it was taken) with reference to the standards ([Numbers](nchart.html) 2:21); once with regard to the spies ([Numbers](nchart.html) 13); in the days of Joshua when the land was divided (Joshua 18:10); twice in the [time](time.html) of Saul, as it is said: *And he numbered them with lambs in Telaim* (I Samuel 14:4) and *He numbered them with pebbles in Bezek* (ibid., 11:8). What is indicated by the word *Telaim?* When they were prosperous, he counted them by means of their lambs *(telayim),* but when they were poor in deeds, he counted them with stones. What is *bezek?* It is a stone. He took a stone for each [one](one.html) of them and then totaled the stones. A census was taken in the days of David, as is said: *Joab gave up the sum, the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of the people to the king* (II Samuel 24:9); and again at the [time](time.html) of Ezra: *The whole congregation together was* [*forty*](forty.html) *and* [*two*](two.html) *thousand,* [*three*](three.html) *hundred and* [*three*](three.html) *score* (Ezra 2:14). In the [time](time.html)-to-come (a census will be taken), as is said: *The flock shall again pass into the* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *of Him that counts them* (Jeremiah 33:13), and in this instance: *When you take the sum.*

R. Menahem said in the [name](name.html) of R. Bebai, in the [name](name.html) of R. Hiyya the son of Abba in the [name](name.html) of R. Eliezer the son of Johanan: It is stated: *And the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea* (Hosea 2:1). Why were the children of Israel compared to the sand of the sea? To inform us that just as a hole dug in the sand of the sea at evening [time](time.html) fills up again by morning, so the thousands lacking at the [time](time.html) of David would be replaced by the [time](time.html) of his son Solomon, as it is said: *Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude* (I Kings 4:20).

R. Eliezer in the [name](name.html) of R. Yose the son of Zimra: Whenever the Israelites were counted because it was essential to do so, none were lacking, but whenever they were counted when there was no need to do so, some were missing. When were they counted to meet a need? When Moses took the census. When were they counted unnecessarily? At the [time](time.html) of David. *Then they shall give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 30:12). This occurred at the [time](time.html) of Moses: *That there be no* [*plague*](plagues.html) *among them* (ibid), but there was no [plague](plagues.html) at the [time](time.html) of David.

*This they shall give.* R. Menahem said: The Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, removed from beneath His throne of glory a coin of [fire](fire.html) (the size of a half-shekel coin) and showed it to Moses. Then He said to him: *This they shall give.* That is to say, everyone who passes by as the census is taken shall give something similar to them.

**10. This they shall give, everyone that passes among them that are numbered, half a shekel (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html) **30:15).** Because they had sinned at the [sixth](six.html) hour [word-play reading the word *boshet* (“shame, disgrace”) as *bo shish* (“the [sixth](six.html) hour”); thus, “The [sixth](six.html) hour came, they erected the golden calf.”], which is the middle of the day, they shall give half a shekel, which is [six](six.html) grammmata. R. Johanan declared: Because they had violated the [Ten](ten.html) [Commandments](cmds613.html) each [one](one.html) had to give [ten](ten.html) gerah, which totals half a shekel. R. Simeon the son of Levi said: Because they sold [Rachel](rachel.html)’s [first](one.html) born for [twenty](twenty.html) pieces of silver and each [one](one.html) took a coin for himself, each [one](one.html) had to give [one](one.html) coin.

R. Judah the son of Simon stated: Moses heard [three](three.html) things from the lips of the Mighty [One](one.html) that confused and startled him. When the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, said to him: *Let them make Me a* [*sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*, that I may* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *among them* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 25:8), he replied: Master of the universe, the [heavens](heaven.html) and the [heavens](heaven.html) of the [heavens](heaven.html) cannot contain You. He responded: Moses, it is not as you think. Erect [twenty](twenty.html) boards on the northern side and [twenty](twenty.html) boards on the southern side and [eight](eight.html) on the [eastern](east.html) side and [eight](eight.html) on the western side, and I will compress My Shechinah and [dwell](dwelling.html) within them; as it is written: *And there I will meet with You, and I will* [*speak*](mashal.html) *with you* (ibid., v.22).

Similarly when He said: [Command](cmds613.html) the children of Israel, and say unto them: My [food](food.html) which is presented unto Me for offerings ([Numbers](nchart.html) 28:2), Moses called out: Master of the universe, if I should assemble all the animals and all the beasts in the [world](worlds.html), they would not be sufficient for [one](one.html) [offering](korbanot), and all the trees of the [world](worlds.html) would be insufficient for a single [fire](fire.html), for it is said: *And Lebanon is not sufficient fuel, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for bunt offerings* (Isaiah 40:16). He replied: Moses, it is not as you think. You need offer unto Me but [one](one.html) lamb in the morning and not [two](two.html), for they are not meant to be [food](food.html) and drink for Me. If I had [food](food.html) and drink when you were with Me on the mountain for [forty](forty.html) days, would I not have [eaten](eating.html), and if I had [food](food.html) would you not have [eaten](eating.html)? *Only for a sweet savor, shall you observe to offer unto Me* ([Numbers](nchart.html) 28:2).

And when He said: *When shall they give every man a ransom for his soul* ([Exodus](exodus.html) 30:12), he wondered and said: Who is able to give a ransom for his soul, since it is said: *No man can by any means* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for too costly is the* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *of their soul* ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 48:8-9)? He replied: Moses it is not as you imagine. *This they shall give* indicates that they shall give something like this. R. Huna said in the [name](name.html) of Rab: *The Almighty, whom we cannot find out, is excellent in power* (Job 37:23) implies that the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, did not impose impossible burdens upon Israel. When Moses realized that, he declared: *Happy is the people that is in such a case* ([Psalm](psalms1.html) 144:15) and *Happy is he whose help is the God of* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)(ibid. 146:5).

# In The [Gemara](orallaw.html)

The [Gemara](orallaw.html) gives us the specifics:

***Megilah 13b*** *And so we have learnt: ‘On the* [*first*](one.html) *of* [*Adar*](feasts.html) *proclamation is made regarding the Shekalim and the mixed* [*seeds*](flower.html)*’.*

Notice that each person was required to give a half-shekel, no less and no more. This made each person realize that he is not a complete entity to himself. On his own, he is considered only a half, incomplete. To be complete, he can not exist alone, he must unite with others and others must unite with him. No man should be an island. There is a responsibility of the individual towards the [community](community.html) and a responsibility of the [community](community.html) to the individual. The Torah way is with [community](community.html).

When this census was taken the Shekalim were counted, not the people! This is the [halacha](walking.html): We do not count people.

Our Ashlamata for [Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim details how the Shekalim were used.

***II Melachim (Kings) 12:4-6*** *And Jehoash said to the* [*priests*](priests.html)*, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, even the money of every* [*one*](one.html) *that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man’s* [*heart*](body.html) *to bring into the house of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, 5 Let the* [*priests*](priests.html) *take it to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. 6 But it was so, that in the* [*three*](three.html) *and twentieth year of king Jehoash the* [*priests*](priests.html) *had not repaired the breaches of the house.*

In the case of this census, the item which was contributed, by rich and poor alike, was a half shekel (using the sacred shekel), the “shekel” being the coin in use at the [time](time.html), roughly equivalent to our dollar. The collected shekels, or Shekalim, in [Hebrew](hebrew.html), were then used for the construction and upkeep of the [Mishkan](mikdash.html), the portable [Temple](temple.html), which was used until the [Temple](temple.html) found its permanent residence in [Jerusalem](city.html).

The equal participation of all the People symbolizes that all [Jews](gen-jew.html) must communally share in achieving national goals, by giving up his selfish, personal interests for the sake of the [nation](nations.html). [One](one.html) who does so gains infinite benefit, because the [mission](mission.html) of Israel is dependent upon the unity of the whole.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The verses also [speak](mashal.html) in terms of [atonement](atonemen.html) that is achieved by participation in this half-shekel assessment… A solitary human being can seldom survive Divine scrutiny; what person is free of [sin](sin.html) and shortcomings? But when a [nation](nations.html) becomes [one](one.html), it ascends to a higher plane, because all its individuals merge their virtues with [one](one.html) another. This is also the reason that it is better to [pray](prayer.html) with a “minyan,” a quorum, to establish a [community](community.html), whose virtues can merge, instead of [praying](prayer.html) individually.

[***Jerusalem***](city.html)[***Talmud***](orallaw.html)***, Shekalim Chapter 1*** *If a person commits a grave transgression and forfeits his life to the government, can he ransom himself with money? And even if there were a monetary ransom for* [*one*](one.html) *found guilty before a king of flesh and* [*blood*](body.html)*, is there a monetary ransom for* [*one*](one.html) *found guilty before the King of Kings, the Holy* [*One*](one.html) *Blessed-be-He? And even if he were able to ransom his life with money, could he do so with some small coin? And Israel was found liable to a death penalty before the King of Kings, but G-d bade them only to give half-a-shekel !*

*Moshe was perplexed and could not understand this matter. How could this small coin suffice to be a life ransom for those who bowed down to the calf, and said to it: ‘This is your god, 0 Israel, which has brought you forth from the Land of Egypt?’ Rabbi Meir said: ‘G-d brought forth the likeness of a fiery coin from underneath the Throne of His Glory: He showed it to Moshe and said to him: ‘This they shall give.’ The likeness of this they shall give’.*

A [Jew](gen-jew.html) himself is only a half, incomplete; he becomes whole only when united with another [Jew](gen-jew.html). Moreover, each congregational [sacrifice](korbanot.html) was offered by the entire [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [nation](nations.html) as [one](one.html) entity, not as a grouping of individuals.

# From My [Teacher](teacher.html)

His Eminence Hakham Dr. [Yosef](joseph.html) ben Haggai gives us the following commentary for [Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim and Matityahu (Matthew) 17:24-27:

1. *¶ When they arrived into K’far Nakhum, the collectors of the half shekel [the* [*temple*](temple.html) *tax] went up to Shimon HaTsefet bar* [*Yonah*](jonah.html) *and said, Does not your Rabbi pay the half shekel?*
2. *HaTsefet answered, Yes. And* [*coming*](coming.html) *into the house,* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *anticipated him, saying, What do you suppose, Shimon? From whom do the kings of a land collect duties or tribute--from their own sons or from the outsiders?*
3. *And when HaTsefet said, From the outsiders,* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *said to him, Then the sons are indeed freemen.*
4. *However, in order that we may not ensnare them, go down to the waters and throw in a hook. Take the* [*first*](one.html) *fish that comes up, and when you open its* [*mouth*](body.html) *you will find there a shekel . Take it and give it to them to pay the* [*temple*](temple.html) *tax for me and for yourself.*

Comments:

For the [Midrash](orallaw.html) specialist, Hakham Matityahu (Matthew), the occasion for the collection of the Holy Half shekel brings the perfect [time](time.html) to explain the metaphorical meaning of this solemn Torah requirement. According to our Sages, the meaning of the Half shekel is to [teach](teacher.html) us that personal Judaism is a lie, since Judaism is by essence communal, and therefore the shekel is not complete until [two](two.html) [Jews](gen-jew.html) agree together to observe the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) ([commandments](cmds613.html)) and create a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [community](community.html).

The Master adds here a further and most profound [insight](insights.html). For our Master a [Jew](gen-jew.html) has the unescapable vocation to become a Torah [teacher](teacher.html). And therefore, he either earns a lot of money to pay yearly the half shekel or he finds Torah disciples from amongst the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) who will pay the half shekel for him. The waters here are a picture of the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) and the fish is a symbol of a [Gentile](gen-jew.html) who has a calling to become a Torah Disciple.

There is in this narrative an expectation that the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) who comes to learn Torah will have in his [mouth](body.html) what is required to economically support his Torah [teacher](teacher.html). If this is not the case, then it is obvious that the [Gentile](gen-jew.html) who is learning Torah is by his non-payment not partaking of the “sap” of the good olive tree. The [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) owe an immense debt to the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people, firstly because it is through the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people that the [salvation](salvation.html) of the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) is achieved, second, it is through the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people that the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) can [know](daat.html) the revealed will of G-d as is in the Bible. Thirdly, even to this very day, without [Jewish](gen-jew.html) hermeneutics and [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [Codes](codes.html) of [Law](law.html), and [Jewish](gen-jew.html) masters to [teach](teacher.html) it , it is impossible to fully perceive and understand the depth and great hidden riches of the writings of the Nazarean Codicil. For these [three](three.html) chief reasons, the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) who come to adhere to the Master of Nazareth (the King of the [Jews](gen-jew.html)) owe it to the Master to support [Jewish](gen-jew.html) Torah Scholars.

Therefore, in the grand picture of the Governance (Kingdom) of G-d, the [commandment](cmds613.html) of the Half shekel [teaches](teacher.html) us that [Jews](gen-jew.html) are to [teach](teacher.html) the Torah to the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html), and conversely the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html) who are [taught](teacher.html) in the Torah are to support the Torah scholar [teaching](teacher.html) to them as a outward [sign](signs.html) of an inner work: - i.e. that he/she has been grafted into the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) olive tree and brought near to the Commonwealth of Israel.

Hakham Shaul, therefore rules:

*1 Corinthians 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own wages at any* [*time*](time.html)*? Who plants a vineyard and does not* [*eat*](eating.html) *of its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not* [*eat*](eating.html) *of the milk of the flock?*

*1 Corinthians 9:8 Do I* [*speak*](mashal.html) *these things according to man, or does not the* [*Law*](law.html) *say these things also?*

*1 Corinthians 9:9 For it has been written in the* [*Law*](law.html) *of Moses, “You will not muzzle an ox treading out grain” (Deut. 25:4). Is it that it matters to God as to oxen?*

*1 Corinthians 9:10 Or, does He say it altogether because of us? It is written because of us, so that the* [*one*](one.html) *ploughing ought to plough in hope, and the* [*one*](one.html) *threshing in hope to partake of hope.*

*1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sowed* [*spiritual*](physical.html) *things to you, is it a great thing if we reap of your fleshly things?*

*1 Corinthians 9:12 If others have a share of the* [*authority*](authority.html) *over you, should not rather we? But we did not use this* [*authority*](authority.html)*, but we endured all things, so that we might not give a hindrance to the Mesorah of* [*Messiah*](mashiach.html)*.*

*1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not* [*know*](daat.html) *that those labouring about the holy things of the* [*temple*](temple.html)[*eat*](eating.html)*? Those attending on the altar partake with the altar.*

*1 Corinthians 9:14 So also the master ordained those proclaiming the Mesorah to live from the Mesorah.*

And also:

*Gal 6:6 But let the* [*one*](one.html) *being* [*taught*](teacher.html) *in the Torah share with the* [*one*](one.html)[*teaching*](teacher.html)*, in all good things.*

But of course, this kind of discipline requires that they [walk](walking.html) in and according to Emunah – i.e., faithful obedience. If there is no Emunah, then this and other [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the Torah will very unlikely be kept.

# Further Commentary

By Hakham Dr. [Yosef](joseph.html) ben Haggai

[One](one.html) of the major problems that Christianity has faced and is presently facing is [one](one.html) which lacks theological explanation on the key Scriptural concepts of “obligation,” “partnership,” and “national consciousness as a people of G-d.” And for that matter, neither is there a clear differentiation made in any respected treatise of systematic theology between abstract and applied Theology. In fact, if [one](one.html) opens any theological work either by Luther, Calvin, Wesley and others these concepts are totally ignored, and sadly are only dealt with in tomes for the legal profession.

This week we celebrate the obligation of the Half-shekel, the concept of partnership and as well the idea of national consciousness as a distinct people from all other peoples and nationalities – the consciousness of being the people of G-d. These themes are all part of [Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim.

[Two](two.html) plus weeks prior to [Purim](purim.html) there is a [command](cmds613.html) to announce the obligation we have incurred as being the people of G-d to contribute the half shekel, also [known](daat.html) as [Temple](temple.html) Tax. Every [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [male](male+female.html) above the age of [twenty](twenty.html) is obliged to bring this [offering](korbanot) before [Nisan](feasts.html) 1. It is important to note that this [Temple](temple.html) tax is called “the ransom of his soul to Ha-Shem,” and it is not a full [one](one.html) [Temple](temple.html) silver Shekel but half of a [Temple](temple.html) silver Shekel.

The Half [Temple](temple.html) Silver Shekel therefore [teaches](teacher.html) us that we have communal obligations by virtue of being the people of G-d, and G-d’s people are obligated to pay Torah taxes if they so wish to be considered part of the people of G-d in good [standing](mashal.html). But the half Shekel also [teaches](teacher.html) us about something that pervades throughout the whole Torah the concept of partnership – partnership in [marriage](mashal.html), partnership in Torah [study](study.html), partnership in the professions, partnership with the [community](community.html), and partnership with G-d. In fact, the Torah couches all of our obligations to either G-d or fellow in terms of partnership.

This idea of partnership in the [study](study.html) of Torah and in effective and lasting ministry is made clear by the words of the Master in the [Midrash](orallaw.html) of Matityahu 17:27 – *“Take the* [*first*](one.html) *fish that comes up, and when you open its* [*mouth*](body.html) *you will find there a shekel. Take it and give it to them to pay the* [*temple*](temple.html) *tax for me and for yourself.”* The fish could have easily coughed up only a half shekel to pay for the Master, but it brought up [one](one.html) shekel to pay for [two](two.html) persons – i.e. the idea of partnership!

In fact the idea of partnership starts in Bereshit (Genesis) when G-d partnered with [Adam](adam.html) in prophecy and let [Adam](adam.html) give names to every animal and plant. Then the idea of partnership is followed when G-d makes out of [Adam](adam.html) a suitable partner for him as it is written: “but for [Adam](adam.html) there was not found a help meet for him. And [HaShem](hashem.html) God caused a deep [sleep](mashal.html) to fall upon the man … etc”.[[26]](#footnote-26)

And then we come to the [study](study.html) of Torah, a labor in which all human beings have an obligation to participate to the best of their abilities daily. Our Sages instruct how this holy endeavor must be performed:

***Pirke Abot 1:6*** *Yehoshua ben Perachyah and Nittai of Arbel received [the oral tradition] from them. Yehoshua ben Perachyah says: “Provide yourself with a master; acquire for yourself a colleague; and judge every person favorably.”*

In other words, we can [study](study.html) as much Torah as we like but the obligation is not fulfilled nor can G-d bless the holy endeavor, unless we [study](study.html) from a Torah Master, and we [study](study.html) Torah with a colleague. He/she who is not meeting these requirements in the [study](study.html) of Torah, is prone to much error, haughtiness, and above all has not fulfilled the [commandment](cmds613.html) before G-d! Why? Because in all endeavors G-d saw fit from the very beginning that all must be done in terms of partnership in order to receive G-d’s blessing.

Please note the language of this [Mishna](orallaw.html), [one](one.html) must make provision to have a Torah Master, but above all the text says that [one](one.html) ought to acquire, that is even buy if necessary a [study](study.html)-partner. In other words, no meaningful [study](study.html) can ever take place unless it is in the context of a partnership. In the same way that no [legitimate](legitimate.html) child can ever be born without there being a [male](male+female.html) and a corresponding [female](male+female.html) partner to produce it, and rear it.

Equally when it comes to ministry observe the deeds of the Master – he sends them [two](two.html) by [two](two.html). In other words, the Biblical idea of leadership is collegiate. Even with Moshe our [teacher](teacher.html), G-d put a limit to Moshe’s leadership by making his brother Aharon the [Kohen](kohen.html) Gadol ([High Priest](priests.html)), and therefore the leadership became collegiate with Aharon sharing the load with Moshe, and each with distinct responsibilities. And when we go to the Nazarean Codicil we see highly effective and most productive partnerships like that of Markos (Mordechai - Mark) with Hakham Tzefet (Peter), and that of Dr. Lukas (Hillel - [Luke](luke.html)) with Hakham Shaul (Paul).

And so as we come to this section of the [Temple](temple.html) tax, or rather, part of the Biblical ministry tax, a holy obligation upon all males over the age of [twenty](twenty.html) that belong to the people of G-d, reminding us that when we tithe or we give an [offering](korbanot) we become partners with G-d. And we also announce that in the Kingdom of the [Heavens](heaven.html) there is no room for solo flights and solo virtuosi, all recognized labor in the [name](name.html) of G-d is collegiate.

On this [Shabbat](sabbath.html) Shekalim, I challenge you to make the Mishnah of Pirke Aboth 1:6 a reality in your life. Provide yourself with a Torah Master, and acquire a [study](study.html) partner to [study](study.html) Torah with, and see how fast you will grow [spiritually](physical.html), intellectually, and the many blessings with which G-d provides to them that take upon themselves seriously the obligations of His [commandments](cmds613.html) which are collectively called the Yoke of the Torah – the Yoke of partnership with the Holy Word of G-d! We do it G-d’s way or our way, knowing that doing it our way is the best route straight to Gehinom. May we and all Yisrael find the courage to become real and genuine partners with G-d and our fellow, amen ve amen!

# The Nature Of Money

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## Soul Money

[One](one.html) of the 613 [commandments](cmds613.html) of the Torah enjoins all [Jewish](gen-jew.html) males above the age of bar [mitzva](cmds613.html) to contribute a half-shekel each year to the [Temple](temple.html). From the money that accumulates, all the public sacrifices that are brought in the [Temple](temple.html) during the following year are purchased.

The year renews itself on the [first](one.html) of [Nisan](feasts.html), the [first](one.html) month the Israelites observed, after being told to keep a [calendar](calendar.html) by the [new](new.html) [moon](chodesh.html) during the [exodus](exodus.html) [from Egypt](thebirth.html).  From the [first](one.html) of [Nisan](feasts.html), only offerings purchased from fresh contributions are acceptable. Thus the half shekels must reach the [hands](fourteen.html) of the overseers by this date.

During [Temple](temple.html) times, an announcement to bring the half shekels was issued each year on the [first](one.html) of [Adar](feasts.html), a month prior to the due date. Reminiscent of this custom, we read the Torah section, in the [annual](annual.html) lectionary, that contains this [commandment](cmds613.html), the [first](one.html) chapter of Parshat Ki Tisa, on the [Shabbat](sabbath.html) just before [Rosh Chodesh](chodesh.html) [Adar](feasts.html).

Rabbi Meir said, “The Holy [One](one.html) pulled out a coin of [fire](fire.html) from underneath his glorious throne and showed it to Moses”.[[27]](#footnote-27)

There was apparently something very difficult about this [commandment](cmds613.html) that required G-d to make a personal demonstration to Moses before he could grasp the significance of this half shekel. What could be difficult about grasping a [commandment](cmds613.html) that involves the donation of a simple coin?

We find another strange reference to these half shekels in the Book of [Esther](esther.html):

[***Esther***](esther.html) ***3:9*** *If it pleases the King, let it be recorded that they be destroyed; and I will pay* [*ten*](ten.html) *thousand silver talents (shekels) . to the Kings treasury.*

Resh Lakish said: “It was [known](daat.html) to the [One](one.html) Who [spoke](mashal.html) and brought the [world](worlds.html) into being that [Haman](esther.html) would expend shekels to destroy Israel, therefore he made sure that their ([Jewish](gen-jew.html)) shekels preceded his ([Haman](esther.html)’s) shekels. It is written that on the [first](one.html) day of [Adar](feasts.html) an announcement is issued regarding the bringing of shekels”.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Thus in some way, our shekels need to balance [Haman](esther.html)’s shekels, otherwise we are lost. What does all this mean?

## The Shekel As A Symbol

The shekel is the symbol of money. Although a phenomenon of the [physical](physical.html) [world](worlds.html), money has a nearly [spiritual](physical.html) quality to it.  Money is the commodity that unites society. According to social contract theory, the formation of societies is a survival device. Without social concourse, each human individual would have to worry about [food](food.html), shelter, clothing, security, educating children, and entertainment for himself, clearly an impossible task. But by gathering into groups, each person can specialize thus allowing all people to survive. [One](one.html) worries about [food](food.html) another is placed in charge of shelter and so on. But this requires a principle of exchange. There must be some way to determine how much [food](food.html) is the equivalent of how much clothing, and what is a fair return for providing security or entertainment. In turn, this requires a medium of exchange, hence money.

The word shekel in [Hebrew](hebrew.html) also means “weight.” The relative weight of all things is decided by the monetary value attached to them, and this determination allows for social harmony, provided all people are in substantial agreement. If soldiers for example, feel that their services are undervalued, and they are not receiving a fair exchange for their contribution, there is a great danger that society will implode. The army is likely to rebel, and destroy social harmony.

Social harmony is a function of widespread satisfaction with the reliability of the monetary system and its ability to assign the proper weight to goods and services, so all people receive a fair exchange for their contribution to society. Alternative systems that have been attempted throughout  history, such as communism, where compensation was separated from the value of the individual’s social contribution, simply have not worked. Only the free market translation of goods and services into money has worked as a principle of social unity over the ages.

## Determining [Spiritual](physical.html) Value

But while money has always functioned efficiently to unify the [physical](physical.html) [world](worlds.html), it has never worked well as a determinant of [spiritual](physical.html) value. The great moral models of history have never been compensated for the inspiration they have provided society by a fair return for their services. Great artists have frequently subsisted at the very edge of starvation even while composing masterpieces that have enriched the rest of the [world](worlds.html). Even today, the free market has not learned how to assign proper value to anything [spiritual](physical.html). Thus great paintings can either be picked up for pennies before the artist becomes famous, or can only be obtained for absurdly astronomic sums after their works have come into fashion.

Because spirituality is not a necessity of life in a secular society, this lack of efficiency does not have serious affects on the social harmony. But suppose we were to organize an entire society for purely [spiritual](physical.html) aims. Money would obviously be a very poor way to unify such a society.

[Jewish](gen-jew.html) society was organized for precisely such a [spiritual](physical.html) purpose. In the prelude to the [Covenant](covenant.html) of [Sinai](stages.html), God declares:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 19:5-6*** *And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My* [*covenant*](covenant.html)*, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire* [*world*](worlds.html)*. You shall be to Me a kingdom of* [*priests*](priests.html) *and a holy* [*nation*](nations.html)*.*

Indeed, we find that the great Sages of Israel were often poverty stricken. For example:  Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa,[[29]](#footnote-29) Rabbi Yehoshua[[30]](#footnote-30) and Rabbi Akiva.[[31]](#footnote-31) There must be an alternative device available to manage social exchange and generate unity.

In a society organized around social contract theory, distribution of wealth should correspond somewhat with the level of goods and services that individuals provide society. Thus greater contributors of goods and services to the social welfare will end up with greater wealth than those that contribute less. Therefore wealth is also associated with status, as people with greater amounts of wealth tend to make greater contributions to the welfare of all human beings and are therefore deserving of greater honor. Wealth, status and honor tend to coincide.

In a society organized around spirituality, wealth and status are totally divorced from [one](one.html) another. In fact, generally [speaking](mashal.html), people who excel [spiritually](physical.html) tend to be uninterested in money, and there is even a loose negative correlation between money and status in such a society. When Israel was [spiritually](physical.html) healthy, there was absolutely no [connection](connection.html) between a person’s wealth and his position in society.

## Understanding [Haman](esther.html)’s Shekels

We have now set the stage to properly understand the significance of [Haman](esther.html)’s shekels. [Haman](esther.html) rose to prominence under the rule of King Ahasuerus, the ruler of the Midian (Persian) Empire that extended over 127 countries. This same King Ahasuerus was not of royal lineage. Although he was not in line to [inherit](inherit.html) the throne, he bought his way into power with money.[[32]](#footnote-32) The Book of [Esther](esther.html) begins with a description of the party he threw in the [third](three.html) year of his reign, whose purpose was to impress his subjects with his vast wealth.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Later in the story, this same monarch elevates [one](one.html) of his ministers, [Haman](esther.html), to such lofty heights, that a [command](cmds613.html) is issued mandating everyone to bow down to him.[[34]](#footnote-34) The [Midrash](orallaw.html) explains that Ahasuerus elevated [Haman](esther.html) because of his immense wealth. He was [one](one.html) of the wealthiest men that ever lived. (The refusal of Mordechai to bow to [Haman](esther.html) was the provocation that ultimately led to the edict that the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people should all be destroyed.) In short, money was a very valued commodity in Ahasuerus’ kingdom.

We have pointed out many times in the course of these essays that the Torah does not discuss the plans and ambitions of primitive people, nor does it treat the ignorant with respect. The people described here created the background for a potential Holocaust which was only aborted miraculously; we still celebrate the defeat of [Haman](esther.html) after all these centuries on the [Festival](festival.html) of [Purim](purim.html). We can be sure that neither Ahasuerus nor [Haman](esther.html) were primitive or stupid.

## The Story Of King Ahasuerus

Ahasuerus came to power [seventy](seventy.html) years after the destruction of the [Temple](temple.html). The prophets had foretold that the [Babylonian](bavel.html) [Exile](galuyot.html) would last for [seventy](seventy.html) years and then the [Jews](gen-jew.html) would be [redeemed](redemption.html). The [world](worlds.html) waited but the redeemer never arrived.[[35]](#footnote-35) Observing this, Ahasuerus decided that this was the opportune [time](time.html) to unite the [world](worlds.html) around a [new](new.html) concept.

G-d was the predominant force in human history up until this [time](time.html). The worship of G-d and the interest in spirituality that was its inevitable companion dominated human ideas. Mankind was united by the principle of G-d worship. The fact that each people had its own unique way of worshipping G-d was unimportant. All men were focused on the same goal, to interrelate successfully with the Divine.

But this [world](worlds.html) was now at an end. G-d had abandoned the [physical](physical.html) [world](worlds.html) for good. Indeed, He has never returned to rest His Presence (Shechinah) among men, to communicate with people through prophecy, to openly manifest His presence in the [physical](physical.html) [world](worlds.html). It was the right [time](time.html) to introduce a [new](new.html) unifying principle, the secular social contract whose unifying principle would be money. The underlying idea of this unifying principle was that man does not need G-d. If all men pool their resources together intelligently, man can provide for all his own [needs](needs.html), by exploiting the bounties of nature with ever-increasing productivity. Money is such a superb unifying principle that man [needs](needs.html) no other. (In counter-balance to this idea, [one](one.html) of the most striking aspects of the American greenback is the motto ‘In G-d we trust.’)

The human symbol of the [new](new.html) order was the [world](worlds.html)’s richest man, who rose to dizzying heights through his own creative drive, [Haman](esther.html). He was the person who would embody this modern [dream](dreams.html). These [events](feasts.html) in the secular [world](worlds.html), ran parallel to an upheaval of major proportions among [Jews](gen-jew.html). As Nachmanides explains,[[36]](#footnote-36) the [Jews](gen-jew.html) of Persia had decided that the [covenant](covenant.html) made at [Sinai](stages.html) had come to its conclusion. G-d had kicked the [Jews](gen-jew.html) out of Israel, and in their circumstances in [exile](galuyot.html), the observance of the [commandments](cmds613.html) was not practical. In a secular [world](worlds.html), the [Jews](gen-jew.html) had to adjust to a [new](new.html) reality.

Shmuel said: “[Ten](ten.html) representatives came and sat before the prophet. He told them, ‘Repent.’ They answered him, ‘A slave that was sold by his master, or a wife who was divorced by her husband, do they have any attachment left to each other?’ G-d said to the prophet, ‘Tell them: Where is your document of divorce that I sent you, or where are the creditors to whom I sold you. It was for your [sins](sin.html) that you were sold, and for your rebelliousness that you were sent away’.[[37]](#footnote-37) What you are thinking will never come to pass:  That you say, “We will be as other [nations](nations.html), like the families of the earth, we shall also serve trees and stones.” By my life, says [HaShem](hashem.html) G-d, “If I will not rule you with a strong [hand](fourteen.html) and an outstretched arm, and pouring anger if need be”.[[38]](#footnote-38) This problem has plagued the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people ever since. In a [world](worlds.html) that does not offer us the protection of the Divine presence, it has always been difficult to remain an observant [Jew](gen-jew.html). Many [Jews](gen-jew.html) have left the confines of observance over the ages on the grounds of practicality.

Mordechai symbolizes the Torah [Jew](gen-jew.html) who remains steadfast to Torah values in a changing [world](worlds.html). His refusal to bow to [Haman](esther.html) represents his refusal to adjust to the [new](new.html) [world](worlds.html) order. As Mordechai was a leader of his people who, to their great credit, neither rejected him or made any attempt to officially distance themselves from him, [Haman](esther.html) decided that the entire [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people would have to go so that the [new](new.html) [world](worlds.html) order could be successfully implemented.

## The Fiery Half-Shekel

We finally come to the [commandment](cmds613.html) of the half shekel. The saving [grace](grace.html) of a [spiritual](physical.html) society is that it does not value people according to the amount of material goods and services they contribute to the social welfare. People are valued according to their [spiritual](physical.html) contribution.

In [Hebrew](hebrew.html) the numerical value of the word shekel, meaning “weight” or “money”, is 130, equivalent to the numerical value of the word “nefesh,” meaning “soul”, which is also 130. Thus, we understand that the [commandment](cmds613.html) of the half shekel is to give it as an [atonement](atonemen.html) for [one](one.html)’s soul.[[39]](#footnote-39)

This is the idea that Moses found conceptually difficult. What do money and soul have to do with each other? Spirituality and money seem mutually exclusive. And the giving half a shekel is hardly a great [sacrifice](korbanot.html), so how can it possibly be understood as the equivalent of giving up [one](one.html)’s goods in exchange for benefit to [one](one.html)’s soul? Furthermore, how can it be an [atonement](atonemen.html)?

The image of a fiery coin from beneath G-d’s throne was in answer to Moses’ bewilderment.  The [commandment](cmds613.html) of the half shekel is actually a dismissal of money as the principle of unity. In a society where a person is valued according to the size of his contribution in goods and services, people do not weigh the same. People are always taxed according to their means. As goods and services are valued in terms of money, the wealthy possess a greater share of the social pie. When society as a whole has to pay for something, the wealthy must naturally contribute a greater share. If there was a [spiritual](physical.html) tax in a democratic society to conscript common resources for the communal [sacrifice](korbanot.html), no doubt this tax would be graduated like any other.

G-d told Moses that He [wants](needs.html) people to understand that in His [eyes](body.html) people are [fire](fire.html). The word nefesh, “soul”, stands for “Ner”, “lamp”, “shemen”, “oil”, and “psilo”, “wick”, each person’s soul is a repository for the Divine flame that originates in G-d’s throne. A lamp is only a vehicle to hold the flame; the humblest lamp is more worthy than the most expensive [one](one.html) if it gives off a brighter flame. All [Jews](gen-jew.html) are lamps; they each carry the Divine flame. The social unity is the addition of all the individual flames into a tremendously bright light that can dispel the darkness of the [world](worlds.html). The goods and services associated with its maintenance cost only half a shekel, yet, you cannot have a [fire](fire.html) without the lamp to sustain it.

Our present Diaspora is extremely similar to the [one](one.html) described in [Esther](esther.html)’s day. We live in an extremely materialistic society that measures the quality of life in terms of the goods and services at [one](one.html)’s disposal.

The students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked him: “Why did the [Jews](gen-jew.html) of that [generation](toldot.html) deserve to be placed under an edict of destruction?” He told them: ”You [know](daat.html) the answer”. They told him: “Because they went to enjoy the party of Ahasuerus”.[[40]](#footnote-40)

[Jews](gen-jew.html) are the repositories of G-d’s flame. Our job is not to lose ourselves in the enjoyment of the meal provided by a wealthy materialistic society. Our job is to light up the materialistic darkness with the bright light of G-d’s [spiritual](physical.html) flame. When we sit with abandon at Achashverosh’ table we risk our own destruction. Our half shekels take precedence over [Haman](esther.html)’s only as long as we refuse to bow to his values.

## The Nazarean Codicil and The Half-Shekel

In Matityahu 17:24-27 we encounter the following enigmatic passage:

***Matityahu (Matthew) 17:24-27*** *And they having come to K’far-Nachum, those who receive the half-shekel came to Tzefet and said, Your Rabbi, does he not pay the* [*Temple*](temple.html) *tax? He (Tzefet) said, yes. And when he entered into the house,* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *anticipated him saying, What do you think Shimon? The kings of the earth from whom do they receive custom or tribute, from their sons or from the strangers? Says Tsefet to him, from the strangers.* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *said to him, Then indeed free are the sons. But that we may not offend them, having gone to the sea cast a hook, and the* [*first*](one.html) *fish* [*coming*](coming.html) *up take, and having opened its* [*mouth*](body.html) *you will find a shekel; that having taken give to them for you and me.*

Before we enter into any commentary or elucidation of this interesting passage, let us be reminded that we are dealing here with a Midrashic text, where the rules of [Drash](remez.html) Hermeneutics apply, and also where what is written is not to be interpreted literally but rather what we have here before us is a sophisticated [Jewish](gen-jew.html) parable.

Now here, [His Majesty](yeshua.html) King [Yeshua](yeshua.html) makes a distinction between Israelites and “Sons of G-d” or Hakhamim. This indeed is important because technically [speaking](mashal.html) all Nazareans are supposed to be/become “Hakhamim” since this is their primary vocation in life. A Nazarean that is not studying the Torah, and making the necessary preparation in his life to become a Hakham is in the [first](one.html) place is not worthy of the sublime adjective “Nazarean.” In this sense we can define the Nazarean movement as a mass Yeshivah[[41]](#footnote-41) movement, since it is chief pursuit is to provide each of its members with Rabbinical instruction and qualifications equal or even above the very high standards required to day to become a Hakham. Every Nazarean person is a Hakham in the making, if not already a Hakham. Those who find this calling and vocation to be contrary to their goals in life should then become part of generic [Jewish](gen-jew.html) Orthodoxy rather than be associated intimately with other Nazareans and [His Majesty](yeshua.html) King [Yeshua](yeshua.html) the [Messiah](mashiach.html).

[Jewish](gen-jew.html) Orthodox Nazareanism is not a movement seeking the conversion of many souls to the truth, no matter how noble that exercise might be, but [first](one.html) and foremost our goal is [one](one.html) of making it possible for everyone wishing to become a Nazarean to achieve the vocation in his life which that calling represents. This is not a movement seeking to have large [numbers](nchart.html) of members or great [synagogues](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\synagog.html), no, but rather it is a movement engaged in the pursuit of training all its members to become Hakhamim no matter how long it takes and no matter what background that person comes from. If we fail in this endeavor we would have miserably failed in our calling and would have missed the boat altogether. We are called to rule and to [teach](teacher.html) with [His Majesty](yeshua.html) King [Yeshua](yeshua.html) the [Messiah](mashiach.html), and to do that we need to prepare themselves to that role and devote our lives to that effect.

Now concerning Hakhamim[[42]](#footnote-42) the Shulchan Aruch[[43]](#footnote-43) states:

“[One](one.html) who is [known](daat.html) to be a Torah Scholar in his [generation](toldot.html), that is, he is competent to discuss topics of the Torah, and comprehends most of the places in the [Talmud](orallaw.html) and the [codes](codes.html) of [Law](law.html), and [study](study.html) of Torah is his main occupation, even if he has some profession of business from which he earns just enough to support his family but not to amass wealth from it, and whenever he is at leisure, he studies the Torah, such a man is, according to [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [law](law.html), exempt from all kinds of taxations and assessments, even though he may be rich. Even the personal tax which every individual is bound to pay, should be paid for him by his townsmen. And it is up to the discretion of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [community](community.html) leaders of the town”.[[44]](#footnote-44)

The collectors of the Half-Shekel then were so mean that they, knowing that [His Majesty](yeshua.html) King [Yeshua](yeshua.html) was a Rabbi, asked of him to pay the [Temple](temple.html) tax even when [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [Law](law.html) obliges the [community](community.html) or town where he resides to pay for this [Temple](temple.html) Tax for him. [Messiah](mashiach.html) replies to Hakham Tzefet in a rhetorical Midrashic style: **“But that we may not offend them,** having gone to the sea cast a hook, and the [first](one.html) fish [coming](coming.html) up take, and having opened its [mouth](body.html) you will find a shekel; that having taken give to them for you and me”. Note, that though he was in his right to demand the town to pay for his tax, he says **“that we may not offend them”.**

This is a principle that we have to remember as Nazarean Orthodox [Jews](gen-jew.html). We may have a Torah right on paper to many things and services in our local [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [communities](community.html), however, in order **“that we may not offend them”** we may well choose and are advised to make our own. We may have a right for example to the communal [mikveh](forty.html) in the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) locality where we live but in order **“that we may not offend them”** we will make our own. We may have a Torah right to send our children to local [Jewish](gen-jew.html) schools, however, in order **”that we may not offend them”** will either build our own or seek other ways in which we may fulfill these [needs](needs.html). In other words, even though from [HaShem](hashem.html)’s point of view we are very much part of K’lal Yisrael, of any [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [community](community.html) wherever it might be, yet in order **“that we may not offend them”** we need to become self-sufficient and our Nazarean [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [communities](community.html) need to be in all respects concerning Torah practices “self-reliant”.

Thus, as [Jewish](gen-jew.html) Orthodox Nazareans we need to be very much aware of this key principle that [Mashiach](mashiach.html) [taught](teacher.html): **“that we may not offend them”** and become as Nazarean [communities](community.html) self-sufficient and self-reliant, noting this, that our [communities](community.html) unlike the rest are [communities](community.html) of Torah students attempting to become Hakhamim, and therefore it’s organization and outlook is different from the average ”[Jewish](gen-jew.html) [Community](community.html)” because of its ultimate aim and purpose. In other words, A Nazarean [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [community](community.html) does not exists for the purpose of housing Nazarean Orthodox [Jews](gen-jew.html) and providing services to them, but rather it exists as would any other educational institution for the purpose of providing Torah education from the cradle to the grave, and thus resembling college campuses more than ordinary [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [communities](community.html) per se, since our aims in life are different.

Further [Mashiach](mashiach.html) states: “having gone to the sea cast a hook, and the [first](one.html) fish [coming](coming.html) up take, and having opened its [mouth](body.html) you will find a shekel; that having taken give to them for you and me.” The “sea”, as described in the book of Revelation, is a symbol of the [nations](nations.html), which we need to Talmudise.[[45]](#footnote-45) In other words here we have a veiled enunciation of what we quoted above from the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*. The disciples of a Torah Scholar are obliged to help him with the payment of his taxes and communal capitation fees. By the way, this **does not** oblige his disciples to pay for his tithes. Since the basic [command](cmds613.html) of Nazareans is to go and Talmudise (i.e. [teach](teacher.html) them [Mishna](orallaw.html) and [Gemara](orallaw.html) = [Talmud](orallaw.html)) the [Gentiles](gen-jew.html), their Torah students then should pay for the taxes of their Torah [Teacher](teacher.html).

## An Analysis Of The Parasha

Why does the Torah [command](cmds613.html) us to collect a **half** of a shekel? After all, once a collection is being made, it would definitely be more logical (and profitable) to collect a whole shekel instead of half! This special [law](law.html) that each member of Klal Yisrael must bring a **Machatzit HaShekel** (a half of a shekel) suggests that the very concept of a “Machatzit” may be significant. The standard (and I think correct) explanation is that by giving a ‘fraction’ of a value - as opposed to whole - the individual shows that he is an integral part of a more complete entity. Each individual [Jew](gen-jew.html) is not an entity by himself; rather he is a fraction or segment of **Klal Yisrael**.

Using a ‘tree’ parable, the nature of the relationship between the individual and the group can be understood in [two](two.html) ways:

**1)** The **individual** acts as a single tree, while the group could be compared to a forest.

**2)** The group itself is like a tree, while the individuals could be compared to the various parts of the tree, such as the leaves, roots, twigs, branches, etc.

Hence, our explanation above of “Machatzit hashekel” suggests that we use the latter example to explain the relationship between **Klal Yisrael** and each individual [Jew](gen-jew.html). At the [spiritual](physical.html) level, all members of Klal Yisrael are interdependent. Based on this understanding, we can advance a possible reason for giving a “Machatzit hashekel” when taking a census. Should we count each person individually, we focus on the independent nature of each individual. On the other [hand](fourteen.html), by counting the [nation](nations.html) collectively, each person giving a “Machatzit hashekel,” we focus of the collective nature of the [nation](nations.html). Considering that G-d has given Am Yisrael[[46]](#footnote-46) a Divine purpose as a collective group, i.e. to become G-d’s special [nation](nations.html), then G-d may judge each individual more leniently **in order** that he can fulfill that Divine purpose.

Moreover, counting each person individually may reflect a lack of understanding of the collective nature of Am Yisrael, thus invoking G-d’s anger (see 30:12 - “v’lo (and not) yihiyeh (shall be) ba’hem (among them) **negef** (a [plague](plagues.html)) b’fkod (when counting)otam (them) ...”).

[It is interesting to note that the money collected from “Machatzit hashekel” is used to buy the **korbanot tzibur**, the collective [offering](korbanot) brought each day in the [Temple](temple.html).]

**\* \* \***

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1. Machatzit hashekel [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lectionary [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rashi: **This they shall give** He [God] showed him [Moses] a sort of coin of fire weighing half a shekel, and He said to him, “Like this one they shall give.” -[from Tanchuma 9; Tanchuma Buber, Naso p. 35; Pesiqta deRab Kahana 19a; Midrash Psalms 91:1; Yerushalmi, Shekalim 1:4] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rashi: **who goes through the counting** Heb. הָעֽבֵר עַל-הַפְקֻדִים . It is customary for those who count to pass the ones who have been counted one following another, and so [too the word יַעֲבֽר in] “each one that passes under the rod” (Lev. 27:32), and so [the word תַּעֲבֽרְנָה in] “flocks will again pass under the hands of one who counts them” (Jer. 33:13). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rashi: **half a shekel according to the holy shekel** By the weight of the shekel that I fixed for you [against which] to weigh the holy shekels, such as the shekels mentioned in the section dealing with personal evaluations (Lev. 27:1-8) and [in the section concerning] inherited fields (Lev. 27:16-21). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The sacred shekel was twice the weight of a regular shekel. Bechorot 5a [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rashi: **Twenty gerahs equal one shekel** Now He explains to you how much it is. **gerahs** Heb. גֵרָה , a word meaning a ma’ah [a small coin]. Likewise, “will come to prostrate himself before him for a silver piece (אֲגוֹרַתכֶּסֶף) and a morsel of bread” (I Sam. 2:36). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Rashi: **from the age of twenty and upward** [The Torah] teaches you here that no one under [twenty](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\twenty.html) years old goes out [to serve] in the army or is counted among men. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Rashi: **to atone for your souls** That they should not be struck by a plague because of the counting. Another explanation: [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Age [thirteen](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\thirteen.html) (13). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The word **שקל** (shekel), in [Hebrew](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\hebrew.html), also means “weight”. In Hebrew the numerical value of the word shekel is 130, equivalent to the numerical value of the word “nefesh - “, meaning “soul,” which is also 130. Thus, we understand that the commandment of the half shekel is to give it as an atonement for one’s soul. (See Exodus 30:12.) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. II Shmuel (Samuel) 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. From Tanchuma 9; Tanchuma Buber, Naso p. 35; Pesiqta deRab Kahana 19a; Midrash Psalms 91:1; Yerushalmi, Shekalim 1:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Vayikra (Leviticus) 27:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 33:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Vayikra (Leviticus) 27:1-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Vayikra (Leviticus) 27:16-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. I Shmuel (Samuel) 2:36 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Mishle (Proverbs) 15:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. the head-tax for the [Temple](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\temple.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. As a punishment for the census – since there is a prohibition against taking a census of [Jews](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\gen-jew.html); see Yoma 22b and II Samuel 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The judicial court, also called a small court, consisted of twenty-three members; all had to be present at a trial [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Shemot (Exodus) 30:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, cited in the ArtScroll Stone Edition of the Chumash. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:20-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Jerusalem [Talmud](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\orallaw.html), Shekalim, 46b [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Talmud, Megilah 13b [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. see [Talmud](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\orallaw.html), Brachot 17b [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. see Talmud Brachot 28a [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. see Talmud, Ketubot, 63a [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Talmud, Megila, 11a. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See Esther 1:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. See Esther 3:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See [Talmud](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\orallaw.html), Megilah 11b. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In Sabbath 88a [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Isaiah 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Sanhedrin 105a, Ezekiel 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Exodus 30:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. [Talmud](file:///D:\Word\Torah%20Readings\orallaw.html), Megilah 12a [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Rabbinical Academy [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Torah Scholars [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Brief summary of Jewish Law [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, by Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried, translated by Hyman E. Goldin, New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1996, Chapter 144:6, Vol. IV, p.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Matityahu (Matthew) 28:19-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The noble people of Israel [↑](#footnote-ref-46)