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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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Parashat Ki Tisa

Part of One Big Whole

Our *parasha* opens (30:12) with the mitzvah to bring the *machtzit hashekel*, the half shekel, to atone for the Jewish Nation. It continues by telling us (ibid. 15) that the wealthy should not bring more than a half shekel and the poor should not bring less.

Questions:

- 1 – The *Alshich* asks why the Torah commanded the Jews to bring only a half shekel and not a full one. All the more so, because the half shekel was an atonement for the soul, and the Hebrew word *shekel* has the same numerical value as *nefesh*, soul, implying that it atones for man's soul. Therefore, why wasn't a full shekel brought?
- 2 – He later asks why the wealthy could not bring more than a half shekel. For we understand that there must be a minimum requirement, but why not bring more if one wishes?

The Feeling of Many Good People

There are many good people out there who feel that they are perfect in their Divine service, since they are serving Hashem to the best of their ability. They act kindly and perform good deeds and therefore feel that they are on the correct path. This is as Shlomo Hamelech stated (*Mishlei* 21:2), "All of man's paths are proper in his eyes." However, our holy Torah teaches us that that every person is only "a half" and is not complete without being part of the congregation, as we will soon explain.

Explanations for the *Machtzit Hashekel* [Half Shekel]

There are many reasons given by our Sages for the practice of offering a *machtzit hashekel*: 1- The *Midrash Tanchuma* in our parasha explains that it was brought because the Jews sinned with the golden calf at the sixth hour of the day, at midday. They therefore bring a half shekel which amounts to six *grimisin*, and it would atone for their sin. 2- Rebbi Yochanan said that it was brought because the Jews transgressed the Ten Commandments; therefore each one had to bring *ten gerah* which is the amount of a *machtzit hashekel*. 3 – The *Midrash Aggadah* in our parasha explains that it was bought so that the rich should not feel superior to the poor. Therefore when commanding to bring the half shekel, the Torah states, "The rich should not increase the amount and the poor should not decrease the amount they bring." There are various reasons cited by the *Rishonim* as well.

The Creation is Comprised of Pairs

However, it seems that an additional explanation can be offered as well, which will teach us about the very essence of the Jewish Nation, and how they must serve Hashem. We will begin by quoting the statement of our Sages concerning the creation as a whole. They state (*Devarim Rabbah, Vaetchanan*) that Hashem says that everything He created, He created in pairs. Heaven and earth are pairs, the son



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and moon too. Adam and Chava were pairs, and so are this world and the World to Come. However, Hashem states that His Honor is singular, and there is none other like it in the world. The midrash cites the well-known *pasuk* of *Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad* as a source, which teaches us that Hashem is One. We find a similar statement of our Sages in *Yalkut Shimoni (Melachim 1)* where they quote Shlomo Hamelech as saying that Hashem created man in "pairs." He created him with two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two hands, and two legs. We also find a similar statement of our Sages regarding the seven days of creation (*Midrash Rabba Bereishit*). There our Sages state that Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai taught that Shabbat came before Hashem and said, "Master of the World! Each day has a pair and I don't have a pair! Hashem replied that the Nation of Israel would be the partner of Shabbat. When the Jewish Nation stood by Har Sinai, continues the Midrash, Hashem said to them, "Remember what I told Shabbat, that the Jewish Nation would be your partner – 'Remember the day of Shabbat to sanctify it' (*Shemot 20:8*). The Torah also states (*Bereishit 5:2*) that Hashem originally created man and woman together and together they were called "Adam." This teaches us that man can only be considered complete when he is married, but if men or women are by themselves they can be considered only half a body. This is as the *Zohar* teaches (*Parashat Behar*) that an unmarried man is only half a body, because the Divine Presence will not rest upon him if he is not married.

The Jewish Nation is One Soul

Now we can explain our *parasha*. The Alshich writes in the name of the Rav Shlomo Alkabetz that the half shekel was intended to teach the Jewish Nation that they are truly united, and that man should never think that he is separate from his fellow Jew. For each person is like one half, and when Jews join together, each and every Jew, they become one united whole. Therefore each Jew should bring a half shekel. He added a second reason; namely, that even one who did sin with the golden calf nevertheless must bring a half shekel because of *arvut* – meaning that each Jew is responsible for the other. The *machtzit hashekel* teaches us that each Jew's soul is united to the other and they all derive from One Source, therefore considered like one. Therefore each one should bring a half shekel, to show that all Jews are one and that each is responsible for the other. He also adds that the *pasuk* states that "The rich should not increase and the poor should not decrease ... to atone for your souls." He explains that once you have been told that you are responsible for one another because of the unity of your souls, you might wonder why the rich are being prevented from bringing more and the impoverished are laden with a burden not to decrease their donation. The answer is because "it is an atonement for your soul," and if Hashem would require the wealthy to bring more or even allow him to do so, yet be lenient with the poor, it would seem that the soul of the wealthy man is more important than that of the pauper. This is the why they must both bring the same amount, because they are equal in the eyes of Hashem. Therefore they are both included in the *pasuk*, "To atone for their souls," because they are equal.

Explanation of the Chida for the Sin of the Golden Calf



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According to this, we can add an amazing explanation of *Maran* the Chida for the cause of the golden calf and how it was rectified. In his sefer *Pnei David*, in this week's parasha, he writes that the Jewish Nation made a mistake. For when Hashem commanded the Jews with the first commandment, "I am Hashem your G-d" - since Hashem said it in the singular expression, they thought it was not meant for all of them. This is as Moshe Rabbeinu exclaimed after the sin, "Did Hashem only command me to worship Him exclusively, and not you?" Therefore afterwards they were commanded to fulfill the mitzvah of *machtzit hashekel*, to show that they were all considered to be like one. This is the intention of the *pasuk*, "To atone for your souls"; In other words, because you thought of yourselves as many and not as one united soul, therefore you felt that the singular expression did not apply to you. Now you must atone for this misperception and bring the *machtzit hashekel* to show that you are all one unit, and that each one of you is only half a body.

Sound Advice to Succeed in the Service of Hashem

When an individual realizes that perfection can only be attained when he is joined to the congregation and realizes that all of his deeds affects the Jewish people as a whole, this is the greatest of all ways for a person to succeed in *avodat Hashem*. This is as the *Shelah* writes (*Asarah Maamarot*) based on *Chazal* (*Kiddushin*) that man should always view the world as having an equal amount of mitzvot and aveirot. Therefore if he does a mitzvah he places the world on the side of merit, but if he sins, he places the world on the side of guilt. Knowing this, man must be fearful with every potential deed that comes his way. Whether it be a positive commandment or a negative commandment, severe or light, he must view the word as if it has an equal amount of mitzvot and *aveirot*, and that even the smallest deed will tilt the scales. With this type of fear, he will be scared to transgress even the most minor transgression, even the slightest trace, so as not to put the world on the side of guilt. The same thing applies the other way, he should always look, at every opportunity, to perform mitzvot, chessed and tzedakah, in order to place the world on the side of merit. Even if he has already done many mitzvot he should always think that maybe now the world is in a "half half" state. Then he will be careful not to put the world on the side of guilt, and will run to pace it on the side of merit. This is all included in fear of sin, for one who violates a sin is called a sinner, and one who refrains from fulfilling a mitzvah is also called a sinner. This is an excellent piece of advice, writes the *Shelah*.

How One Mitzvah Tips the Scales

After quoting our Sages aforementioned words in *Kiddushin* the Chafetz Chaim (*Igrot U'maamarim*) quotes the following story which illustrates how one deed can be so influential: It states in the *Sefer Chareidim* that once, Rabbeinu Yosef Gikatilia was very ill and near death. He saw two men weighing his transgressions and merits on a scale, and they were exactly even. He suddenly woke up, took his *tefillin* and immediately put them on. Instantly, he started to feel better and his health was restored. This was because he did a mitzvah to tip the scale in his favor and it put him on the side of merit.



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Words of Mussar

We have learned sound council to succeed in Divine service. The most assured way is by man instilling in himself the recognition that he is only a half and will not reach perfection on his own. This applies to one's marriage, his interaction with his congregation, and regarding the Jewish Nation as a whole. This is because Hashem created each aspect of the world in a way where one item needs another in order to truly be complete. This applies all the more to the Jewish people who are truly one soul and are responsible for one another. By being aware of this, man will realize that each individual is truly part of the larger Jewish populace. With each deed, he can affect, for better or worse, the whole Nation. It is only by believing this that man will succeed in his Divine Service and achieve his purpose in life. By doing so he will ensure that peace reins both in general as well as in his life, congregation, his Divine service, and in every aspect of his life. Only through the *machtzit hashekel* could the Jews atone for their souls. For then they felt and lived the true meaning of the *machtzit hashekel*, which constitutes the proper path, so fundamental to *avodat Hashem*.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka