



Table Talk Parshat Vayakhel/Shabbat Shekalim

שמות ל': י"ד-ט"ז

כָּל הָעֶבֶר עַל-הַפְּקָדִים מִבֶּן עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְיָמָעָלָה יִתֵּן תְּרוּמַת ה' : הָעֹשִׂיר לֹא-יִרְבֶּה וְהַדָּל לֹא יִמְעֹיט מִמִּחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לַתַּת אֶת-תְּרוּמַת ה' לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם: וְלִקְחָתָּ אֶת-כֶּסֶף הַכִּפָּרִים מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָתַתָּ אֹתוֹ עַל-עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהָיָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזִכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי ה' לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם: (פ)

Exodus 30:14-16

Everyone who is entered in the records, from the age of twenty years up, shall give Hashem's offering: the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than half a shekel when giving Hashem's offering as expiation for your persons. You shall take the expiation money from the Israelites and assign it to the service of the Tent of Meeting; it shall serve the Israelites as a reminder before the Hashem, as expiation for your persons.

מדרש אגדה, שמות ל': ט"ו:א'

העשיר לא ירבה. בתרומת השקלים של אדנים, כדי שלא יתרברב העשיר על העני:

Midrash Aggadah, Exodus 30:15:1

The rich should not increase: In the gifts of Shekalim so that the rich do not give more than the poor.

"In giving the half-shekel, the Torah explicitly commands that "the rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." A half-shekel is an insufficient sum of money to pay for even one sacrifice, which, besides an animal, consisted also of a wine offering and flour offering. It certainly does not cover the sacrifices offered every day of the year. Yet, by contributing only this small sum of money — and no more — a Jew became a full partner in every one of the congregational sacrifices offered throughout the year.

Conversely, to become a partner and obtain his share in the congregational sacrifices, a Jew had to join with other Jews — for his half-shekel alone would not suffice to purchase even one sacrifice. The half-shekel therefore emphasizes the importance of the commandment, "Love your fellow as yourself." A Jew himself is only a half, incomplete; he becomes whole only when united with another Jew. Moreover, each congregational sacrifice was offered by the entire Jewish nation as one entity, not as a grouping of individuals."

- Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson: The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Let's Talk

Why do you think that everyone, rich and poor, should only give a half shekel for communal sacrifices?

How can you make everyone feel important in your life?

How are we more complete when we are part of a group?

Why do you think something so personal, like prayer, is done as a group?



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