

# Coping With Stress During Hard Economic Times

## Jewish Sources for Learning and Meditation

Shabbat Shekalim 5769



*"THE RICH SHALL NOT PAY MORE AND THE POOR SHALL NOT PAY LESS"*  
*Exodus 30:15*

The wealthy Rabbi Tarfon once asked Rabbi Akiva help him invest his money. Rabbi Akiva took the funds and used it instead to allow poor students to continue their Jewish education. Several days later, when Rabbi Tarfon asked to see his investments, Rabbi Akiva took him to the school and showed him the students as they recited their lessons from the Bible. When they arrived at the verse, "He gives freely to the poor; his righteousness endures forever," Rabbi Akiva pointed to the students and said, "This is the investment I made for you."

Talmud

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## Some Jewish Sources about Sustenance/Parnassah

*for discussion and exploration*

(Please note: **Boldface** is added for focus and emphasis; not in original texts.)

2. Remember the long way that Ado-nai your God has made you travel  
in the wilderness these forty years,  
that God might test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts:  
whether you would keep God's commandments or not.
3. God subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you Manna to eat,  
which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known,  
in order to teach you that **a person does not live on bread alone**,  
but that people live on that which comes out of Ado-nai's mouth.
4. The clothes upon you did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years.
5. Bear in mind that Ado-nai your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son.
6. Therefore keep the commandments of Ado-nai your God;  
Walk in God's ways and revere God.

*Deuteronomy 8: 2-6*

What did the Manna teach people – or what might it teach us? What were the people supposed to learn by the experience of hardship followed by Manna?

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*From Psalm 145, which is known as the Ashrei prayer, recited thrice daily:*

15. The eyes of all look hopefully to You, and You give them their food in due season.
- 16. You open Your hand; Your favor sustains every living thing.\***
17. Adonai is righteous/just in all ways, Loving-kind in all His/Her deeds.
18. Adonai is near to all who call, to all who call out in truth/sincerity.
19. S/He fulfills the desire of those who revere Him/Her,  
hears their cry and delivers them.

*Psalm 145: 15-19*

Interestingly, a custom developed among Jews to open their palms upward when saying this verse. Since the verse speaks of God's opening God's hands, what might be learned from this 'mutual hand-opening'?

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Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah said:

Where there is no Torah, there is no *derekh erez*/decent, cultured behavior;  
where there is no *derekh erez*, there is no Torah.  
Where there is no wisdom, there is no fear/reverence of God;  
where there is no fear/reverence of God, there is no wisdom.  
Where there is no understanding, there is no knowledge;  
where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding.  
**Where there is no *kemah*/meal/flour, there is no Torah\*;**  
**where there is no Torah, there is no *kemah*/meal/flour.\*\***

*Pirke Avot 3: 17*

\*Lack of food impairs one's mental powers..

\*\*As in Deuteronomy 8:3: "...in order to teach you that **a person does not live on bread alone**,  
but that people live on that which comes out of Ado-nai's mouth."

How would you summarize the teaching of this quote from Pirke Avot?

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Our Rabbis taught: Seven things are hidden from men:  
the day of death,  
and the day of comfort,\*  
the depth [extent] of judgment;\*\*  
and a man does not know what is in his neighbor's heart;  
**and a man does not know by what he will earn his living;**  
and when the Davidic dynasty will return;\*\*\*  
and when the wicked kingdom\*\*\*\* will come to an end.  
*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 54b*

\* No man knows precisely when he will be relieved of his anxieties.

\*\* The great commentator, Rashi (1040-1104), explained that this refers to Divine Judgment.

\*\*\* This was probably said in order to discourage those who tried to calculate the advent of the Messiah on the basis of Scripture; see Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a.

\*\*\*\* Rashi sees this as a covert allusion to the Roman Empire.

*This statement is many hundreds of years old. How might the bold phrase be understood by us today?*

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*Read the following two texts and then consider this question: What do these texts have to offer us when we wonder how we will pay our bills or feed our family in the coming weeks?*

Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedat said: "Scripture places provision for man's needs in the same category with deliverance; even as provision comes each day, so man's deliverance."  
Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman said: "It is greater than deliverance, for deliverance comes by the hand of an angel – "the angel who delivers me from every evil" (*Genesis 48:16*) – but provision for man's needs comes from the Hand of God Godself, who opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every being" (*Psalms 145:16*).  
Rabbi Joshua ben Levi declared: **"This constant provision was no less a wonder than the cleaving of the Red Sea."**

*Midrash B'reishit/Genesis Rabbah 20:9*

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*Note: In Psalm 136, God is praised and thanked for the wonders which God has wrought for Israel and especially for cleaving the Red Sea in the Exodus (vv. 13-14). But the same refrain, "for God's lovingkindness endures for ever," is applied also to the words "who gives bread to all flesh" (v. 25) motivating this teaching:*

So Hillel said that this juxtaposition showed that the two deeds of God were equal in greatness, and that **the giving to man of his daily bread was as wonderful a marvel as the cleaving of the Red Sea.** And... it is said that the same equivalence is shown by Isaiah 51:14-15, where after the words, "his bread fails not," come the words, "I am Adonai who divides the Red Sea."

*Pesikta Rabbati, 152a*

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He who created the day has also created sustenance for it. *Mekhilta, B'shallah, Va-yisu, 2*

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In every hour the *Shekhinah*\* provides sustenance for all the inhabitants of the world according to their need, and satisfies every living thing; and not only the pious and the righteous but also the wicked and the idolaters. \*The *Shekhinah* is the nurturing, Presence of God

*Mekhilta, Amalek, Yitro, 1*

*How do you understand that last statement?!*

## Traditional Daily Prayers for *Parnassah/Sustenance/Livelihood*

*In our daily prayers, concerns about livelihood/sustenance appear in a number of places and ways (please note: bold text is highlighted to draw attention to relevant phrases):*

*I. In the central "Amidah" prayer, recited three times each weekday, there is the following petition for sustenance; where the blank lines appear, it is permissible to add one's own personal request:*

Bless us, Ado-nai our God –  
Bless this year and all its many products for Good.  
*From Passover to December 4<sup>th</sup> say: "Grant blessing"*  
*From December 5<sup>th</sup> to Passover say: "Grant dew and rain for blessing"*  
upon the earth.  
**Satisfy us with its abundance,**  
**and bless our year as the best years.**

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Blessed are You, Ado-nai, Who blesses the years.

*II. In the Birkat haMazon/Blessing after Meals, the thread of praying for parnassah/sustenance is quite strong:*

The ***Raheim*** Paragraph:

Have mercy, Ado-nai our God, for Israel Your people,  
For Jerusalem Your holy city, for Zion the home of Your glory,  
for the royal house of David Your anointed,  
and for the great and holy House which is called by Your name.  
Our God, our Father –  
**Tend and nourish us, sustain and maintain us, grant us deliverance,**  
**and quickly give us relief from all our troubles.**  
May we never find ourselves in need of gifts or loans from flesh and blood,  
but may we rely only upon Your helping hand,  
which is ample, open, extended and generous,  
so that we never suffer shame nor disgrace, ever.

*And not long after that paragraph, there is this series of 'hopes':*

May the All-Merciful One **give us an honorable livelihood.**  
May the All-Merciful One break our yoke of exile and lead us in dignity to our land.  
May the All-Merciful One send abundant blessings  
to this house and to this table at which we have eaten.  
May the All-Merciful One send us the prophet Elijah, of blessed memory,  
who will bring us good news of deliverance and consolation.

*III. The following prayer appears in different forms in traditional prayer books, often at, or after, the conclusion of weekday morning prayer services. (It is not considered proper to recite this type of petitionary prayer on the Shabbat or festivals.)*  
*Please note that if certain ideas or idioms seem inappropriate to you, you are encouraged to rewrite the prayer so that it is more in consonance with your personal theology, particular needs, etc.*

### **Prayer for Parnassah/Livelihood**

It is You alone, Ado-nai –  
You, who made the heavens, the most exalted heavens,  
the earth and everything that is upon it,  
the seas and all that is in them,  
and You give them all life. (*Nehemiah 9:6*)  
It is You who performed miracles and great wonders, continually, for our ancestors.  
And in the wilderness You showered them with food from heaven (*Exodus 16:4*),  
from the flinty rock You drew out water for them (*Deuteronomy 8:15*),  
You provided them all their needs, their clothing not wearing out (*Deut. 8:4*).  
So, dear God, in Your abundant mercy and great *hessed*/lovingkindness,  
nourish us, sustain us, and support us;  
Supply all our needs and the great needs of all Your people, the House of Israel,  
and those of all our society and humankind,  
with fullness and relief, without travail or overwhelming labor,  
out of Your Pure Hand, and not from under mortal hands.

May it be Your will, Ado-nai my God and the God of my ancestors,  
that You prepare for me and for the members of my household all that we may lack,  
and make ready all our needs,  
every single day of our lives,  
according to our needs –  
every single hour of our hours – an adequate supply;  
and for every bone of our bones sufficient nourishment,  
in accordance with Your Good and Generous Hand,  
not according to the limits of our own accomplishments,  
or the shortness of our own *hessed*/lovingkindness,  
or the reduction of our own generosity and munificence.  
May my nourishment and the nourishment of my household,  
of my offspring and the children of my offspring,  
be committed to Your Hand, and not subject to mortal hands.

*IV. The alphabetical Ashrei prayer, which includes all of Psalm 145, is offered three times a day, twice in the morning and once in the afternoon. Please note that the verse that begins with the letter Pe, verse 16 (bolded below), is traditionally said with a special focus – some Jews turn their palms upward upon saying this verse, as if to show their openness and gratitude to Providence:*

**The Ashrei Prayer**

Happy are they who dwell in Your house;  
they will always praise You, *selah!* (Psalm 84:5)  
Happy the people who have it this way;  
Happy the people whose God is Adonai!\*\* (Psalm 144:15)

**Psalm 145**

*A tehillah/praise by David:*

1. I extol You, my God, the King;  
I bless Your name forever and ever.
2. Every day I bless You,  
I praise Your name forever and ever.
3. Great is Adonai, most worthy of praise;  
Greatness that is immeasurable.
4. Generation to generation praise Your works,  
recounting Your mighty acts.
5. On the splendor of Your glorious majesty  
and on Your wondrous deeds I meditate.
6. Of Your awe-inspiring power they speak,  
and I declare of Your greatness.
7. They express the reverberations of Your great goodness,  
and sing of Your righteousness.
8. Full of grace and compassionate is Adonai,  
Slow to anger, abounding in devoted lovingkindness.
9. Adonai is good to all;  
God's mercy is over all God's creation.
10. All Your works praise You, Adonai,  
And/but Your faithful ones bless You.
11. Of Your glorious kingdom they speak,  
They talk of Your power.
12. Letting all humanity know of Your mighty deeds,  
The glorious splendor of Your dominion.
13. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
Your rule extends from generation to generation.
14. Adonai supports all who are fallen,  
raises up all who are bowed down.
15. The eyes of all look hopefully to You,  
and You give them their food in due season.
- 16. You open Your hand  
Your favor sustains every living thing.**
17. Adonai is righteous/just in all ways,  
Loving-kind in all His/Her deeds.

18. Adonai is near to all who call,  
to all who call out in truth/sincerity.
19. S/He fulfills the desire of those who revere Him/Her,  
S/He hears their cry and delivers them.
20. Adonai preserves all those who love Him/Her,  
but destroys all the wicked.
21. My mouth speaks the praise of Adonai;  
Let all flesh bless His/Her holy name forever and ever!

And we will bless Adonai from now and forever more; *halleluyah!* (Psalm 115:18)

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*V. Finally, recall, as well, that as each new Hebrew/Jewish month approaches, we pray on the Shabbat before that New Moon:*

**From Birkat HaHodesh/The Blessing of the New Moon**

May it be Your will,  
Ado-nai our God and God of our ancestors,  
To renew our lives in the coming month, for Good and Blessing.  
Give us a long life,  
A life of peace,  
A life of goodness, a life of blessing,  
**A life of sustenance**, a life of physical vitality,  
A life of reverence of Heaven and avoidance of misdeeds,  
A life free of shame and reproach,  
**A life of abundance and honor**,  
A life guided by the love of Torah and reverence of Heaven,  
A life in which our worthy aspirations will be fulfilled for the Good,  
*Amen Selah.*



### Prayer for Sustenance (*Parnassah*)

Lord of the universe! Thou in Thy infinite wisdom didst make provision for every living creature, both small and big, and Thou causest Thy blessing to fall upon the earth in rain and in dew to sate the hungry, and to give them the comfort when they ever stand in need. Without Thy help nothing could live, and no one could have life's needs provided for. Thou didst say: "Then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth produce for the three years," (*Leviticus 25:21*) that is for the sixth, for the seventh, and for the eighth years during the Sabbatical season.

Grant, I pray Thee, that there be none in this world for whose sins Thou causest the heavens to restrain the rain and bringst famine. Implant in the hearts of mankind that willingness to be of help to one another for whose sake Thou givest both heaven and earth as an inheritance to the righteous, even as Thou didst give it to Abraham our father.

O Lord! The time of adversity humbles the soul of man, but how long, O God of Israel, wilt Thou hold out the rod of punishment toward those who are but dust and clay, who are helpless without Thy aid even as is the newly-born babe without its mother.

Cause Thy blessed *Shekhinah*\* to cast its rays of light upon me and mine so that we all be able to see the path most favored by Thee for us to follow. Thou art the only One to give strength to the weak and bread to the poor. From Thy hand, O Lord, provide the daily needs of my family. Bless the work of my husband the work of all those with whom he is associated! Let not adversity invade my home, and let not my children taste the bitterness of hunger, thirst, cold, disease and pestilence.

Answer my prayer, and grant me of Thy blessings, even as Thou didst answer Ruth, who found her kinsman's field, and became the mother of Thy anointed King David. I beseech Thee not to consider Thy servant begging for riches for its own sake; my contrite heart is poured out to Thee for the sake of Parnassah/Sustenance, which is the daily bread and home of my family. My husband doth not look forward to gain the wealth which in reality brings on poverty to the soul; he merely engages himself in a calling to be Thy messenger to provide for the needs of my home and family. Bless his endeavors, and mayest Thou bring a Redeemer to Zion, *Amen*.

*This Tekhineh, or "Women's Prayer," was translated from the Yiddish and included in Techinah: Prayers and Religious Duties for the Daughters of Israel, a collection edited by Rabbi Simon Glazer (Hebrew Publication Company, 1930, pages 106-8). It is probably a couple of hundred years old, and clearly reflects a particular time, culture, and social reality, but nonetheless highlights many issues common to any economic crisis situation – an awareness of dependence, the need for mutual support, psychospiritual challenges, the impact on family relationships, and more. It may be helpful as is, or it may serve as a model for your own original Prayer for Sustenance.*

\*The *Shekhinah* is the nurturing, indwelling Presence of God



Jewish Board of Family  
and Children's Services, Inc.

## *Coping with Unemployment Stress: Strategies for Enhancing Emotional Resourcefulness and Behavioral Effectiveness*

Sararivka Liberman, RCSW  
(718) 435-5700 ext. 211

### *Talk Positively to Yourself*

Are you supportive, constructive, and appreciative? Are you your own best friend...or your own worst enemy? How would you coach your own child? How do you coach yourself?

### *Soar with Your Strengths*

- You are a problem solver. You've solved many problems in your life by utilizing your resources. Look for them now. Identify them. Think of what you've accomplished, both personally and professionally. What have you achieved? What makes you proud? What do you enjoy doing? What's earned you positive feedback?
- Access your strengths. Notice the skills, abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and qualities that you have already demonstrated. How can these assets become even more fully available to you? What are some of your key external resources? Who and what might be included as part of your support system right now? How can you develop, expand, and utilize these resources as well?

### *Use Your Brain Power*

- Ask productive questions. What's good about unemployment? How can you take advantage of the "silver lining?" Perhaps you have an opportunity to spend more time with family and friends, to exercise, to learn, or to pursue special interests. What's bad about unemployment? Some aspects of this experience may be beyond your control, but others may not be. What could you do, for example, to build adult company, peer stimulation, daily structure, and the use of your professional skills into your life, if you chose to?
- Avoid putting your brain to work at useless tasks. "What's wrong with me?" or "How and when will this ever end?" are questions that can keep your brain busy, but are unlikely to produce anything helpful. "What do I have of value to offer an employer?" or "What small step can I take to help myself feel better right now?" are better questions to ponder!

## *It's the Thought that Counts*

If your feelings aren't comfortable, examine the thoughts that drive them. How do you interpret your situation? What are some of your core beliefs about yourself, others, the world, and the future? Are your thoughts realistic, reasonable, balanced, and compassionate? Are you taking all of the information, all of your experience, and all possibilities into account? If someone you care about had these beliefs, would you share them or would you take another perspective? If you shared your thoughts with someone who cares about you, would they accept your interpretations, or would they suggest an alternative point of view? We are most effective when we respond to reality, not to distorted, negative scenarios that only exist in our minds.

## *Stress Solutions*

- Unemployment can be stressful. Stress management is about self care. What helps you reduce stress and increase your sense of well being? Think about times you've felt relaxed. What did you do to create that state? If self care were your top priority, what would you be doing differently?
- Experiment with stress management techniques – deep breathing, visualization, aerobic exercise, music, meditation, social support, etc. – to find your own best individual strategies. Stress management can be a lot of fun!

## *Read more about it*

Burns, David D. (1980). Feeling Good : The New Mood Therapy. New York: Morrow.

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Charlesworth, Edward A. & Ronald G. Nathan. (1984). Stress Management : A Comprehensive Guide To Wellness. New York: Atheneum.

Greenberger, Dennis & Christine A. Padesky. (1995). Mind Over Mood: A Cognitive Therapy Manual for Clients. New York: Guilford Press.

Bourne, Edmund J. (2000). The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Andreas, Steve and Charles Faulkner, eds. (1994). NLP: The New Technology of Achievement. New York: William Morrow and Company.

## Today's Torah Portion: *Mishpatim*

### Synopsis:

In this portion, Moses sets before the Israelites a self-contained code of laws often referred to as the "Book of the Covenant" (see 24:7). These laws bear great resemblance to codes of other nations of the ancient Near East, including the famous Code of Hammurabi, but there are many differences, both obvious and subtle. Among the categories are the following:

- Laws of slavery. Israelites are permitted to retain slaves but must always consider the dignity of the slave.
- Capital crimes (among them murder, kidnapping, insulting one's parents).
- Rules and penalties of theft and lending.
- Prohibitions designed to make the Israelites a "holy" people; e.g., dedicating the first born and first fruits to God, prohibitions against eating flesh torn apart by wild beasts, and against boiling a kid in its mother's milk.
- In a Sabbatical year, the land is to lie fallow, and on the seventh day, we are instructed to rest.
- The observance of the three festivals - The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of the Harvest (Shavuot) and the Feast of the Ingathering (Sukkot) - is prescribed.
- The principle of just restitution is stated (an eye for an eye, etc.). Israel is reminded to treat widows, orphans and strangers kindly because they were strangers in Egypt.

Moses repeats all the rules to the people and then writes them down. Offerings are made to seal the covenant, and the people say, "All the things the Lord has commanded, we will do." The mountain is covered by the presence of God (in the form of a cloud) for six days. On the seventh day, God calls Moses to ascend, and Moses goes up the mountain and remains there for forty days and nights.

### Issues for Discussion:

1) The word "*mishpatim*" means "judgments." Rabbinic interpretation distinguished between "*mishpatim*" and "*chukim*." "*Mishpatim*" were those laws in the Torah that could be arrived at by human reason. "*Chukim*" were the laws that were beyond the grasp of human understanding, and had to be obeyed solely because God had so demanded. The laws we read here are diverse, but many deal with moral values and are, therefore, easy to conceptualize. The laws of slavery and treatment of the stranger, for instance, are easily understood in light of the fresh memories Israel had of the experience of slavery in Egypt. By the way, the admonition not to wrong a stranger is repeated 36 times in the Torah.

- Why is this commandment given such emphasis?
- How do the experiences of an individual/nation influence their ethical and legal expectations and standards?
- Are these raised expectations part of the reason Israel is now held up to what some call a "double standard" for its behavior?

2) The Hebrew word for slave, "*eved*," is also utilized in describing free people. Moses, for instance, is called "*eved Adonai*," God's servant."

- Does this loose usage of the term indicate that even those who are supposedly free may, in fact, be an "*eved*" to something?
- What are you an "*eved*" to?

- 3) According to the text, one who insults his parents or is a kidnapper is to be put to death. The rabbis later concluded that when the Torah's phrase ends "*Mot Yumat*" ("put to death"), instead of the simplified "*Yumat*," it means that the penalty will come from God and should not be applied by a human judge.
- How does this change the intent and meaning of these laws? (Check to see which ones in Chapter 21 end in "*Mot Yumat*.")
  - From Hammurabi's code (Babylonian): "If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand."
  - From Hittite law: "If anyone kills a man or woman in a quarrel, he shall give four persons and pledge his estate as security. If he kills a slave in a quarrel, he shall give two persons and pledge his estate in security."
- 4) Jewish law prohibits punishment by bodily mutilation, so the rabbis reinterpreted the famous verse, "Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth ..." (Chapter 21) to mean that the value of the eye (tooth, foot, etc.) should be compensated for. They used a complicated formula to figure out the monetary value, taking into account a person's profession, medical expenses, disability losses and social embarrassment.
- Does the penalty of monetary retribution (or "*talion*" as it is called) achieve something that physical retribution cannot?
  - What kind of retribution would you want if someone hurt you?
  - Does this law (as interpreted) not go to great lengths to protect the weak in the face of the strong since the strong would be much better able to exact physical retribution?
- 5) From Chapter 21, Verse 15, what do you think is the Torah's attitude toward pre-marital sex?
- 6) Chapter 22, Verses 6 and 9, speak of the responsibilities of one who guards another's possessions. Jewish law states that one who guards for pay must reimburse, while one who does it for free is not responsible. The matter is actually more complicated than that (if negligence is involved), but as it is simply stated, do you feel this is a good principle?
- If you bring your dog to the kennel, and the dog runs away, is the kennel responsible? If your friend volunteers to watch the dog, and the dog runs away, is that friend responsible? Should each reimburse you equally? The Torah says no.

### Haftarah:

This Shabbat is one of the several "special" Sabbaths that occur prior to Purim and Passover, "*Shabbat Shekalim*," the "Sabbath of Funds." In Temple times, this was the time of year when the half-shekel tax was due to be paid; the Haftarah speaks of funds collected for the Temple, which had fallen into disrepair. For us, at this time of year, *Shabbat Shekalim* reminds us that our people survive only through the generosity of those who give *tzedakkah* - and that tax season is upon us!

Today we also announce the new month of ADAR, which begins Tuesday and Wednesday.  
BE HAPPY, IT'S (ALMOST) ADAR!!



When Adar arrives, we increase our joy."

(Talmud Ta'anit 29a)

*The gematria of word 'in joy' [Heb. b'simchah] is the same as that of 'year' [Heb. shanah] This means that the joy that a person is inspired to have at this time will be a source from which he can draw upon himself joy for the whole year. And so it should be God's will. (Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apt.)*

### Happiness is...

"The Constitution only gives people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself."

**-Ben Franklin**

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up."

**-Mark Twain**

"I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive."

**-Henry Miller**

"Most people would rather be certain they're miserable, than risk being happy."

**-Robert Anthony**

"Be happy while you're living, for you're a long time dead."

**-Scottish Proverb**

"Who is happy? The one who is content with what she has."

**-Talmud, Pirke Avot**

*"And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan shouted and was glad. The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor."*

*Book of Esther 8:15-16*

## The Joyous Month of Adar in Kabbalah

from the Gal Einai Institute of Israel <http://www.inner.org/index.htm>

*According to Sefer Yetzirah, each month of the Jewish year has a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a zodiac sign, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, a sense, and a controlling limb of the body that correspond to it.*

*Adar* is the twelfth month of the Jewish calendar.

The word *Adar* is cognate to the Hebrew *adir*, meaning "strength." *Adar* is the month of good fortune for the Jewish people. Our sages say of *Adar*: "Its *mazal* [fortune] is strong."

**Purim**, the holiday of *Adar*, commemorates the "metamorphosis" of the Jews' apparent bad fortune (as it appeared to Haman) to good. "When *Adar* enters we increase in joy." The festival of *Purim* marks the high point in the joy of the entire year. The Jewish year begins with the joy of the redemption of *Pesach* and concludes with the joy of the redemption of *Purim*. **"Joy breaks through all barriers."**

The joy of *Adar* is what makes the month of *Adar* the "pregnant" month of the year (i.e., seven of the nineteen years in the cycle of the Jewish calendar are "leap years," "pregnant" with an additional month of *Adar*). When there are two *Adars*, *Purim* is celebrated in the second *Adar*, in order to link the redemption of *Purim* to the redemption of *Pesach*. Thus we see that the secret of *Adar* and *Purim* is "the end is wedged in the beginning."

### ● Letter: *kuf*.

The letter *kuf* means "monkey" (*kof*), the symbol of laughter of the month of *Adar*. In accordance with the idiom "as a monkey in the face of man," the *kuf* also symbolizes masquerade, an accepted custom of *Purim*. Before the miracle of *Purim*, G-d Himself "hid His face" from His children Israel (in the entire story of *Purim*, as related in the book of Esther, His Name does not appear even once). By initially hiding one's true identity, pretending to be someone else, the innermost essence of one's true self becomes revealed. On *Purim* we reach the level of the "unknowable head" ("the head that does not know itself nor is known to others"), the state of total existential hiddenness of self from self, for the sake of "giving birth" to one's ultimate self anew.

The word "*kuf*" also means the "eye of a needle." Our sages teach us that even in the most irrational dream one cannot see an elephant passing through the eye of a needle. Yet, on *Purim* one experiences this great wonder, which, in Kabbalah symbolizes the truly infinite essence of G-d's transcendent light entering into the finite context of physical reality and revealing itself in full to the Jewish soul.

### ● Mazal (sign): *dagim* (Pisces-fish).

Fish are the creatures of the "hidden world" (the sea). So are the souls of Israel "fish" that swim in the waters of the Torah. The true identity and fortune of Israel is invisible in this world. The revelation of *Purim*, the revelation of Israel's true identity, reflects the revelation of the world to come (the miracle of *Purim* is understood to reflect in this world the ultimate miracle: the resurrection in the world to come). The word "*dag*" (the singular of "*dagim*") is interpreted to represent the "*tikkun*" (rectification) of *da'ag*--"to worry." In the Bible, the word for fish--*dag*--actually appears once written as *da'ag*: In the time of Nechemiah, certain unobservant Jews desecrated the holiness of the Shabbat by selling fish in the market of Jerusalem. Their "fish" had turned into excessive "worry" over earning a livelihood. In the opposite direction, the fish of the joy of *Purim*, the strong (though initially hidden, as fish) *mazal* of *Adar*, convert all the worry in the heart of man to the ultimate joy of redemption with the new birth of self from the "unknowable head."

### ● Tribe: Naftali.

In Kabbalah, the name Naftali is read (as two words): *nofet li*, "sweetness is to me." The *mitzvah* on *Purim* to reach the level of the "unknowable head" by drinking wine etc., is expressed, in the words of our sages, as: "one is obligated on *Purim* to become sweet, until he is unable to differentiate between 'cursed be Haman' and 'blessed be Mordechai.'"

# KI TISA

**NJPS** 11The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12When you take a census of the Israelite people according to their enrollment, each shall pay the LORD a ransom for himself on being enrolled, that no plague may come upon them through their being

**RASHI** 12 When you take a census. One does not literally "take" the count, but "receives" it (as Onkelos translates). The verse is saying, when you desire to get a count of how many of them there are, do not count each "head" (which is the literal translation of the object of the verb in this verse), but let everyone contribute half a shekel. Then count the shekels and you will know the total. **That no plague may come upon them.** For the evil eye rules over census-taking, and a pestilence might come upon them, as happened in the days of David. [A]

[A] See 2 Samuel 24.

**NAHMANIDES** 12 When you take a census. This commandment is given about census-taking in general. There was no need to specify that he should take a census now, since this would be self-evident from the fact that God tells Moses in v. 16 what to do with "the expiation money" collected in the census. It seems to me that Moses would not have been required to go to each person's tent to count them, as he did [A] for the census recorded in Numbers 1. Instead, he simply commanded all those who acknowledged that they were 20 or older to pay the required amount, which they brought in along with all the other contributions for the Tabernacle, "morning after morning" (36:3), just as our Sages say was done with the annual half-shekel contributions that paid for the sacrifices. David's mistake in numbering them without collecting this half-shekel [B] was that he did not know whether this was a commandment for all time or simply an ad hoc instruction to Moses during the wilderness wandering. Our Sages understood this passage to be referring to three separate contributions: [C] "everyone ... shall pay" (v. 13); "everyone ... shall give" (v. 14); "when giving the LORD's offering" (v. 15). We certainly find from "the tax imposed by Moses" (2 Chron. 24:6) that there was an annual tax (not connected with a census), commanded by Moses, for the upkeep of the Temple. According to our Sages, the same applied to the sacrifices, which is confirmed by Neh. 10:33-34, "To charge ourselves one-third of a shekel yearly for the service of the House of our God—for the rows of bread, for the regular meal offering and for the regular burnt offering, for those of the sabbaths, new moons, festivals, for consecrations, for sin offerings to atone for Israel, and for all the work in the House of our God." (One-third of a shekel in Ezra's day was worth 10 gerahs, the same as a half-shekel in Moses' time.) Our Sages relate that the coinage in which this amount was paid varied a number of times after the return from exile, and that it sometimes rose to more than the value of a half-shekel in Moses' time, but never fell to less—for less than that amount would not achieve "expiation for your persons" (v. 16).

I must say that I am surprised at Rashi's comment to v. 16. According to him, almost seven months elapsed between the two censuses, and yet not a single man died. In a population that size, one would expect some hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of deaths during that period. Someone must have died, since Num. 9:8 tells us that there were some men who were "unclean by reason of a corpse." I also do not understand how Rashi can say that people's ages were counted according to years beginning on the 1st of Tishrei. In fact, people's ages are counted according to their birthdays. According to B. Ar. 18b, all the "years" mentioned in the Bible are counted from the particular date involved in each case, not from the same arbitrary date for everyone. So all the 19-year-olds born between Tishrei and Iyar would have turned 20 in between the two censuses, greatly increasing the count. It would be more correct to say that this increase happened to be exactly balanced by the number of deaths during this period.

But in my opinion this is not really even a question. In the first census, the tribe of Levi was counted along with all the other Israelites, since they had not yet been distinguished from the rest of the people. But for the second census, God told Moses, "Do not on any account enroll the tribe of Levi or take a census of them with the Israelites" (Num. 1:49). Once this tribe was chosen as "the King's Legion," they were numbered separately. So there must have been almost 20,000 boys who reached the age of 20 in between the two censuses. Do not forget that the Israelites who left Egypt were "about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children" (12:37)—not exactly 600,000. Some died, and others reached maturity. Moreover, "men" in 12:37 may refer not to those over 20, but to those over 13.

It also seems to me that the contribution for the public sacrifices was not made through the census of Numbers 1, as Rashi says. For the Levites, who were not numbered then, are as responsible for their own sacrifices as anyone. According to our Sages, even the priests must pay for their own sacrifices (see M. Shek. 1:4). Moreover, the responsibility to pay for these does not begin at 20, but when one

[A] According to rabbinic tradition. [B] See 2 Samuel 24. [C] One to be used for the silver sockets, one to pay for the sacrifices, and a third, voluntary contribution for the construction of the Tabernacle.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS** 12 When you take a census. This is the census mentioned in Num. 1:2, starting on the 1st of Adar, to provide for the sacrifices that were to start on the 1st of Nisan (Hizkuni). "Because" you take a census (Abarbanel). **That no plague may come upon them.** In the second year, having paid their expiation money; but some interpret it to mean that their enemies would not plague them (Hizkuni). We do not know exactly how the Evil Eye causes this plague. What I think is that the eye emits some kind of vapor, which can easily penetrate (through the eyes, ears, or nose) to the brain. Notice that when the counting is done by finger, as with

**OJPS** 11And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: 12"When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, according to their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou

וַיִּדְבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 12 תִּשָּׂא אֶת-רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנָתַנוּ אִישׁ כְּפָר נַפְשׁוֹ לַיהוָה בְּפָקֹד אֹתָם

**ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS** ♦ If God has commanded Moses to take a census and collect half a shekel from each Israelite, why doesn't the text say so? ♦ If the census was not God's command, and it would cause such devastation, why didn't God simply command Moses not to count the people? ♦ Why would a plague come upon the Israelites just because a census was taken? ♦ Why would a "ransom" stop such a plague?

**RASHBAM** 12 When you take a census. When Moses gathered the Israelites in order to collect their contributions to the Tabernacle, he counted them. This is the silver that was dedicated to the service of

**IBN EZRA** 12 When you take a census. Literally, "when you lift the head"; but this is an idiom for counting. It is the custom of census-takers to record the names row after row, and to raise the total up to the head, that is, the top, of each page. Those who are trained in accounting do the same. **A ransom for himself.** As v. 16 explains, this offering is made "as expiation for your persons." **No plague.** Literally, "no injury"—by war. For one who dies in war dies before his time. But some think that anything that is counted is fated to end up falling short of the counted total. It is these people who take this word as "plague," their

whether this was a commandment for all time or simply an ad hoc instruction to Moses during the wilderness wandering. Our Sages understood this passage to be referring to three separate contributions: [C] "everyone ... shall pay" (v. 13); "everyone ... shall give" (v. 14); "when giving the LORD's offering" (v. 15). We certainly find from "the tax imposed by Moses" (2 Chron. 24:6) that there was an annual tax (not connected with a census), commanded by Moses, for the upkeep of the Temple. According to our Sages, the same applied to the sacrifices, which is confirmed by Neh. 10:33-34, "To charge ourselves one-third of a shekel yearly for the service of the House of our God—for the rows of bread, for the regular meal offering and for the regular burnt offering, for those of the sabbaths, new moons, festivals, for consecrations, for sin offerings to atone for Israel, and for all the work in the House of our God." (One-third of a shekel in Ezra's day was worth 10 gerahs, the same as a half-shekel in Moses' time.) Our Sages relate that the coinage in which this amount was paid varied a number of times after the return from exile, and that it sometimes rose to more than the value of a half-shekel in Moses' time, but never fell to less—for less than that amount would not achieve "expiation for your persons" (v. 16).

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**NJPS** enrolled. <sup>13</sup>This is what everyone who is entered in the records shall pay: a half-shekel by the sanctuary weight—twenty gerahs to the shekel—a half-shekel as an offering to the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>Everyone who is entered in the records,

**RASHI** 13 This. God showed Moses a coin of fire, half a shekel in weight, and told him, "A half-shekel like *this* is what everyone shall pay." **Everyone who is entered in the records.** Literally, "everyone who passes by among the enrolled." For what census-takers do is cause everyone to go

past them, one after another, as in Lev. 27:32, "All tithes of the herd or flock—of *all that passes under the shepherd's staff*, every tenth one—shall be holy to the LORD." And see Jer. 33:13, "Sheep shall pass again under the hands of one who counts them." **A half-shekel by the sanctuary weight.** Literally, "the shekel of the sacred." The shekel that I assigned as the standard to be used for sacred obligations, such as the various amounts in Leviticus 27. **Twenty gerahs to the shekel.** The text now explains how much it was. A "gerah" is a kind of coin; see 1 Sam. 2:36, where the related word *agorah* describes an amount of money. A whole shekel is worth 20 gerahs, for the shekel is four zuzim, and the zuz, or dinar, was originally worth five silver coins. But in the rabbinic period they added one-sixth [B] to it, raising it to six silver coins.

**14 From the age of twenty years up.** This teaches that no one under 20 goes to the army or is counted among the men.

[B] Of the new total.

**NAHMANIDES** reaches puberty (see M. Shek. 1:3). It was the contribution for the Tabernacle that applied to "each one who was entered in the records, from the age of twenty years up" (38:26). The remark in v. 15 that "the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than half a shekel when giving the LORD's offering as expiation for your persons" was a hint that everyone who had reached 13, the age of obligation to the commandments, should bring a second half-shekel for the sacrifices.

**13 A half-shekel.** Moses was a great king, and so naturally established coinage for the Israelites. He called it "shekel" from the Hebrew verb meaning "to weigh," for each coin contained a full weight of pure silver. **The sanctuary weight.** Rather, "the sacred shekel." Since in the case of the redemption of the first-born and similar payments the shekels that were paid would literally become sacred, the shekel by which all fixed amounts given in the Torah were paid is called "the sacred shekel." I might add that our Sages called Hebrew "the holy tongue" for a similar reason. For the words of the Torah and the Prophets and all the sacred writings were said in that language, the language in which the Holy One spoke with His prophets and His people. God's own holy names are in Hebrew, as are those of His angels, not to mention that "the holy ones that are in the land" (Ps. 16:3)—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Solomon, and the rest—have Hebrew names. Moreover, He created His world by speaking in that language. Maimonides says in *Guide* 3:8 that Hebrew is called the holy tongue because it has no words but euphemisms for the genitals and the excretory functions, but there is no need for this argument, since Hebrew is clearly the holiest of languages, as I have explained. In any case, Maimonides is incorrect, for some of the terms he cites are forbidden to be read aloud, but must be replaced by euphemisms—which shows that they are the actual terms. Besides, the term for euphemism in rabbinic literature is not "holy language," but "clean language." **Twenty gerahs to the shekel.** Rashi (in his comment to 21:32) says that "a shekel weighs the same as four gold coins, which is half an ounce according to the honest weight of Cologne." He found written in the Talmud that a sela—the Talmudic word for a shekel—was four dinars, and assumed (since in Constantinople a gold coin is called a dinar) that the Talmudic dinar was the same as is used now. But actually the gentile kings have diminished the amount of gold in the coins. Various halakhic sources make clear that the Talmudic dinar was almost one-third bigger than that of today, making the biblical shekel three-quarters of an ounce, not one-half. The problem is complicated by the fact that the Talmud actually uses the word "shekel" to refer to half a sela. So the Talmudic shekel is worth half of the shekel found in the Bible, because that half-shekel was the amount that they "weighed," *shakal*, every year. Perhaps a coin of this weight was minted to make it easier to pay the tax. When this amount became the "shekel," the shekel of Moses began to be referred to as a sela, the Aramaic word by which Onkelos translated it.

[D] God has so blessed me that, since finishing my commentary, I have been able to travel to Acre, where I found in the possession of the elders a silver coin, engraved on one side with an almond branch and on the other with some sort of jar. Both sides had inscriptions, which were shown to the Samaritans, who read them immediately. For this was the ancient Hebrew script, which the Samaritans still use (see B. Sanh. 21b). One side said, "the Shekel of Shekels," and the other, "Jerusalem the Holy." They said that the branch was the rod of Aaron and the jar was the jar of manna (16:33). We weighed it, and it came out to 10 pennyweights of sterling silver—exactly Rashi's one-half ounce. I also saw a coin of the same kind and of half the weight, which must have been the coin used for the contributions that paid for the sacrifices. So this lends great support to Rashi's opinion. [E]

[D] The following note was appended to his commentary after he reached Israel in 1267. [E] We omit some further discussion of the coinage of Acre.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS** the on-duty priests in temple times, no harm is incurred (Gersonides). For "charity saves from death" (Prov. 10:2); these payments were voluntary contributions (Abarbanel). **Enrolled.** For war (Hizkuni).

**13 A half-shekel.** The Israelites voluntarily contributed plenty of the other things needed for the Tabernacle, but the only silver they had were the shekel and half-shekel coins that they needed to buy the things brought to them by the gentile merchants of the vicinity (Abarbanel). **Twenty gerahs to the shekel.** Rashi is correct about its weight; God has chanced it that I have in my own possession a "holv shekel" coin weighing exactly one-half ounce (Abarbanel).

**OJPS** numberest them. <sup>13</sup>This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary—the shekel is twenty gerahs—half a shekel for an offering to the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>Every one that passeth among them that

**RASHBAM** the Tabernacle, as noted in 38:25, "The silver of those of the community who were recorded came to 100 talents and 1,775 shekels by the sanctuary weight."

**13 Twenty gerahs to the shekel.** The gerah was a coin of some kind.

**IBN EZRA** proof being the census taken by Joab. [A] But I think otherwise.

**13 This is what everyone ... shall pay.** This is the amount. Note that in the instructions given to Noah, "This is how you shall make it" (Gen. 6:15) refers to the specific dimensions of the Ark. **Everyone who is entered in the records.** Rather, "everyone who passes" (compare OJPS). Everyone for whom 20 years of life have already passed, that is, almost three "weeks" of years. By then he is a person of complete understanding and has reached his full growth. **Twenty gerahs.** A gerah is a *gargir*, a carob seed, in weight.

[A] See 2 Samuel 24.

**NJPS** from the age of twenty years up, shall give the LORD's offering: <sup>15</sup>the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than half a shekel when giving the LORD's offering as expiation for your persons. <sup>16</sup>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 LORD, as expiation for your persons.

**RASHI** 15 As expiation for your persons. So that you are not stricken by plague as a result of the census. Another reading: The phrase "the LORD's offering" is used three times here, in vv. 13, 14, and 15, to point to the following three offerings of silver that were made: The first was "the 100 talents of silver" (38:25) that were "for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets for the curtain, 100 sockets to the 100 talents, a talent a socket" (38:27), which came from the original offerings for the Tabernacle, a half-shekel from each. The second, another offering based on a count, came from the census (described in Num. 1:2) that was taken when the Tabernacle was erected. At this point too everyone gave a half-shekel; these were to be used for purchasing the animals for the annual public sacrifices, which would be used "as expiation for your persons." [C] In both of these offerings, rich and poor are exactly equated. The third offering is that described in 35:24, "Everyone who would make gifts of silver or copper brought them as gifts for the LORD." In this third offering they were not equal, but everyone contributed whatever his heart moved him to give.

**16 Assign it to the service of the Tent of Meeting.** You learn that (though it is not mentioned explicitly) a commandment to count them was given when the contributions for the Tabernacle first began, after the Golden Calf incident, when they had been ravaged by plague: "Then the LORD sent a plague upon the people, for what they did with the calf that Aaron made" (32:35). It is like a flock of sheep, loved by its owner, that is struck by disease. When the disease abates, he tells the shepherd, "Please, count my sheep and find out how many of them are left," just to make clear how much he cares for them. It is impossible for the census implied here to be that of the Book of Numbers, which was commanded "on the first day of the second month" (Num. 1:1), for the Tabernacle had already been erected "on the first day of the first month" (40:2), and the silver sockets for the Tabernacle were made from the money collected through this first census; see 38:27. You learn, therefore, that there were two censuses: one at the beginning of the contributions, after the Day of Atonement in the first year of the wilderness period, and the other in Iyar of the second year, after the Tabernacle was erected. You may wonder how it is possible that Israel could number exactly 603,550 both times (38:26; Num. 1:46). After all, there must have been some 19-year-olds who were not counted in the first census but were old enough to be counted by the time of the second census. The solution to the problem is

[C] Although that census will not occur until Numbers 1, it is alluded to here in the general rules for "when you take a census."

**NAHMANIDES** 15 The rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less.

That is, both should bring exactly the specified amount. If the poor man gives less, he obviously transgresses a commandment. So, although we would naturally understand the first half of the sentence to mean that the rich man "need not" pay more, in fact he too must actually be *prohibited* from doing so. The actual procedure was to turn this money over to the Temple in batches, so that those who had not yet paid, or whose payments had been lost, could be considered to have contributed as part of the whole. The poor man could certainly be counted as one who had not yet paid, and it could simply be declared that none of the money in the current batch was from an amount over one-half shekel paid by a rich man. But I have never seen this prohibition of giving too much in any of the works that contain lists of the 613 commandments.

**OJPS** are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of the LORD. <sup>15</sup>The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of the LORD, to make atonement for your souls. <sup>16</sup>And thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for your souls."

וּמַעֲלָה יִתֵּן תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה: <sup>15</sup>הַעֲשִׂיר לֹא-יִרְבֶּה וְהַדָּל לֹא יִמְעִיט מִמִּחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לַתֵּת אֶת-תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם: <sup>16</sup>וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת-כֶּסֶף הַכֹּפָרִים מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָתַתָּ אוֹתוֹ עַל-עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהָיָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזִכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם: פ

**ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS** + Why the insistence that "the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less" (v. 15)? Wouldn't it be praiseworthy to give more if one were able?

**RASHBAM** 16 The expiation money. The money that "makes expiation for your persons" (v. 15). **To the service of the Tent of Meeting.** "The 100 talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets for the curtain, 100 sockets to the 100 talents, a talent a socket" (38:27).

**IBN EZRA** 15 The rich shall not pay more. Because this offering is given as expiation for your souls.

**16 Assign it to the service of the Tent of Meeting.** How this was done is specified in 38:27-28. For all the sockets and hooks mentioned there came from this expiation money. Saadia asks: If this is so, what need was there for the freely given silver mentioned in 25:3, "And these are the gifts that you shall accept from them: gold, silver, and copper"? He explains that this silver was used for trumpets, snuffers, and basins (as we find in Ezra 1:9), [B] even though in the Torah itself only silver trumpets are mentioned. [C] But in my opinion, because 15 of the 16 items to be contributed were voluntary contributions, the text there did not complicate matters by explaining that the silver was an obligatory contribution. I have shown you a similar phenomenon in my comment to Gen. 35:26. **A reminder.** The sockets made from this silver will serve as a reminder, for the Tabernacle could not stand without the sockets made from these expiation payments. Our Sages have passed on the tradition that all Jews are commanded to give a half-shekel every year before the month of Nisan in expiation of their persons, and that if they do not give this, there will be a plague among them. But once they give it, they need not worry if their king decides to count them—there is no need to give a second time. We have found a reliable witness to this tradition that the half-shekel contribution was annual in the question that Joash asked Jehoiada, "Why have you not

[B] Only the basins are mentioned in Ezra 1:9; but trumpets and snuffers are mentioned (together with "basins," though the Hebrew word is different from the one Ibn Ezra uses) in 2 Kings 12:14. [C] See Num. 10:2.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS** 15 The rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less. If this were to happen, it would not be possible to figure out the total count from the number of shekels (Bekhor Shor). God did not want a crude man who had become rich to be able to give more than a distinguished person who had lost his wealth, giving him "no end of scorn and provocation" (Esther 1:18) (Abarbanel). **As expiation for your persons.** Notice that the expiation takes place *before* they are counted (Hizkuni).

**16 A reminder before the LORD.** The annual contribution of one half-shekel will remind the Lord of the half-shekel.

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## Rare first century half shekel coin found in Temple Mount dirt

By Nadav Shragai, Haaretz Correspondent

A rare half shekel coin, first minted in 66 or 67 C.E., was discovered by 14 year-old Omri Ya'ari as volunteers sifted through mounds of dirt from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The coin is the first one found to originate from the Temple Mount.

For the fourth year, archaeologists and volunteers have been sifting through dirt dug by the Waqf, the Muslim authority in charge of the Temple Mount compound, in an unauthorized project in 1999. The dig caused extensive and irreversible archaeological damage to the ancient layers of the mountain. The Waqf transported the dug up dirt in trucks to another location, where it was taken to Emek Tzurim. 40,000 volunteers have so far participated in the sifting project, in search of archaeological artifacts, under the guidance of Dr. Gabriel Barkay and Yitzhak Zweig.

The project is sponsored by Bar Ilan University and funded by the Ir David Foundation with the assistance of the National Parks Authority.

The half shekel coin was first minted during the Great Revolt against the Romans. The face of the coin is decorated with a branch of three pomegranates and ancient Hebrew letters reading "holy Jerusalem." On the flip side, the letters say "half shekel".

The coin that was found in the sifting project, though it was well preserved, showed some damage from a fire. Experts believe it was the same fire that destroyed the Second Temple in 70 C.E.

Dr. Gabriel Barkay explained that "the half shekel coin was used to pay the temple taxes... The coins were apparently minted at Temple Mount itself by the Temple authorities."

The half shekel tax is mentioned in the book of Exodus (Portion Ki Tisa), commanding every Jew to contribute half a shekel to the Temple every year for the purpose of purchasing public sacrifices.

Dr. Barkay added that "this is the first time a coin minted at the Temple Mount itself has been found, and therein lies its immense importance, because similar coins have been found in the past in the Jerusalem area and in the Old City's Jewish quarter, as well as Masada, but they are extremely rare in Jerusalem."

So far, some 3,500 ancient coins have been discovered in the Temple

Mount dirt sifting, ranging from earliest minting of coins during the Persian era all the way up to the Ottoman era.

An additional important archaeological discovery in the sifting project was another well preserved coin, minted between 175 and 163 B.C.E. by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, against whom the Hasmoneans revolted. This revolt brought about the re-dedication of the Temple after Antiochus seized the Temple's treasures and conducted idol worship in it. The coin depicts a portrait of Antiochus the Seleucid King.

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# His foundation plundered, Elie Wiesel again rebuilds on ruins

By Bob Minzesheimer, USA TODAY

NEW YORK — The Elie Wiesel Foundation has reported that it is among "the victims" of Bernard Madoff, having lost nearly all its assets in what may be the largest investment fraud in history.

But "victim" is not a word that Wiesel, the 80-year-old writer and humanitarian, likes to apply to himself.

A survivor of the Nazi death camps and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Wiesel vows that his foundation, which deals with questions of global ethics, will survive.

"All my life has been about learning and teaching and building on ruins," he says. "That will not change."

In his book-lined office in Manhattan, Wiesel, whose latest novel, *A Mad Desire to Dance*, arrives today, avoids naming Madoff, who's accused of a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme. Madoff, who faces criminal charges, has promised not to contest civil claims that his investment firm was a fraud.

"I don't want my name linked with that crook," Wiesel says, as soft-spoken as ever. "I don't want to be known as one of his victims. I want my name linked to peace and literature and human rights."

Wiesel would rather discuss his new novel, part psychological mystery, part love story. Its main character, the son of a Jewish Resistance fighter from France, asks, "In a mad world, isn't the madman who is aware of his madness the only sane person?"

But it's hard to avoid Madoff's financial madness and its link to Wiesel.

## 'It's not about me'

Wiesel and his wife, Marion, started the foundation in 1986 with a portion of his Nobel award. In December, it reported it had \$15.2 million, "substantially" all its assets, invested with Madoff.

Authorities have identified 13,000 of Madoff's investors, including Wiesel's foundation, which sponsors conferences of Nobel laureates and centers in Israel for refugees from Ethiopia and Darfur.

The irony has been noted: "It takes an extraordinarily heartless conman to swindle a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald and Nobel Peace Prize winner out of all of his charitable funds," wrote James Bone in *The Times* of London.

Wiesel shrugs and says, "People ask, 'How could he do it to you?' To me! As if I'm the only one. It's not about me."

Nor, he says, is it a particularly Jewish question, despite the fact that Madoff is an Orthodox Jew and that most of his investors were Jewish.

Wiesel says that in the past 20 years, he met Madoff only twice and briefly. "I was introduced by friends — friends that he also betrayed. It's repulsive."

He answers most questions about Madoff with his own questions that are left unanswered: "Was he a crook because he was a Jew? Was Ponzi a crook because he was a Christian?"

Since the foundation's financial loss was reported, Wiesel says, it has been flooded by unsolicited contributions — "big and small, from young

and old, Jew and non-Jew. It's an expression of their outrage."

He says the foundation has received about \$200,000 in such contributions — enough to keep its programs going. Among those who have offered to help, he says, is "my good friend Oprah Winfrey."

In 2006, Winfrey's book club chose *Night*, Wiesel's Holocaust memoir. In his office is a small photograph of him and Winfrey, huddled against the cold in the ruins of Auschwitz, which they visited for her show. In 2007, the Wiesel Foundation awarded its annual Humanitarian Award to Winfrey.

"The question is how she'll help," Wiesel says. "Should I go on her program? Or should we do something else? But when she says she'll do something, she means it. She's a great lady." (Winfrey, through a spokeswoman, declined to comment.)

### Moments of redemption

As an author, Wiesel is best known for *Night*, published in French in 1958 and English in 1960. It recounts how at 15, he was packed in a cattle car and sent to a series of concentration camps, where his parents and younger sister died, and how he struggled with survivor's guilt.

In it, he writes, "Never shall I forget that night, the first in a camp, which has turned my life into one long night."

Asked about his hometown in Transylvania, Wiesel offers a lesson in European history: "When my father was born, it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When I was born, it was Romania. And when I was deported, it was Hungary."

Behind his desk is a photo of the farmhouse in Sighet where he was raised. It's now a museum. He likes the photo because "it reminds me of where I came from, not to be taken in by all this fame."

After the war, Wiesel was placed in a French orphanage and, although he speaks fluent English, he continues to write in French ("it's my language") and rely on translators.

He moved to New York in 1956 as a correspondent for an Israeli newspaper and was advised to see the rest of the country. He was shocked and shamed by the segregation he saw in the South.

"For the first time in my life, I felt shame — not because I was a Jew, but because I was white."

He thought of that last month at President Obama's inauguration: "In my own lifetime, I've seen history trying to redeem itself. What a beautiful gesture America has given to itself."

The first black president could pave the way to another first, he says: "My son or grandson will live to see the first Jewish president. It's harder now for anyone to say, 'It can't happen.'"

Wiesel became a U.S. citizen in 1963. "It was the first time I had a passport. Before then, I was stateless. I was unwanted, even as a journalist. I still carry my passport, even though I don't travel much anymore. I'm proud to have it."

He has written more than 50 books, fiction and non-fiction, but says only about five deal predominantly with the Holocaust, although the horrors of his childhood hang over most of what he writes.

His new novel features a 60-year-old scholarly European Jew living in New York, who seems incapable of relationships with others, especially women.

Doriel Waldman is haunted by the memory of his parents, who died in a car accident shortly after World War II. His mother joined the Resistance; his father did not. In the novel, he explains, "she was blond and attractive. She could easily pass for Aryan, whereas he, with his brown hair and sad brown eyes, looked more Jewish."

In desperation, Waldman goes to a therapist. He mostly argues with her, much as he has argued with God. At one point, the therapist, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, questions whether Waldman's memory is lying to him.

"This can happen even to people who are healthy psychologically," she tells him. "With the years, the past becomes blurred. We forget real events and 'remember' dreams or imaginary episodes."

### One of the last survivors

That prompts a question for Wiesel about whether recent cases of Holocaust memoirs that were falsified are examples of just that.

"I don't know. I don't understand that," he says. "If you want to write a novel, then write a novel." But, he adds, "I favor survivors."

In 1997, he wrote a glowing blurb for *Misha: A Memoir of the Holocaust Years* by Misha Defonseca, who vividly described fleeing the Nazis and eluding capture by hiding with friendly wolves.

It turned out that the part about the wolves and other dramatic elements in the memoir were a hoax.

Wiesel asks: "Who am I to question and interrogate survivors? It's an act of faith. They deserve it. Haven't they suffered enough?" But he also fears that when any Holocaust survivor exaggerates or lies, then "someone can say that all of us are liars."

Wiesel, who teaches religion and philosophy at Boston University, is among a dwindling number of concentration camp survivors: "We're an endangered species. Someday, there will be just one left. I don't want to be that person. It would be too heavy a burden to have the last word, the last memory."

But, he says, "I tell my students and my readers that whoever reads or listens to a witness becomes a witness."

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