

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life


LESSONS

## A GENTLE WARRIOR

The Chofetz Chaim was once staying at an inn when a heavily built Jewish man entered and ordered a meal, which he proceeded to consume in a coarse manner. The man noticed the Chofetz Chaim approaching and tensed, expecting to be subjected to fierce rebuke.

But the sage spoke soothingly instead. "Did you serve in the Russian Army?" the Chofetz Chaim asked gently. The man had. "How did you manage to keep your Jewish identity?" the Chofetz Chaim asked. "How is it that you chose to enter a Jewish inn when you could just as easily have gone to a non-Jewish one? You are truly inspiring. Please tell me how you remained this way."

The man was moved to tears by the Chofetz Chaim's gentle approach, and the demeanor of the *gadol* persuaded him to mend his ways.

There can be no more direct way to bring others closer to Hashem and to spread *kevod Shamayim* than by giving *tochacha*. At the same time, we must take care that our words of *mussar* are an expression of love and are delivered in a sensitive manner. Otherwise, our efforts to produce a *kiddush Hashem* might, *chalilah*, have the opposite result. 

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## A SYMBOLIC CONTRIBUTION

*By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow*

In every census, the things that are counted fall under one common concept. The moment someone is counted among *pekudei bnei Yisrael*, he learns to value himself as a *ben Yisrael*. It awakens in him a sense of self-worth, and he sees himself as the embodiment of his nation.

At that moment, he learns an important lesson: His mere existence does not bring meaning and value to his life; not by the fact that he is alive does he become an integral part of the nation. The simple fact of his being does not even entitle him to his own life. Only one who contributes a half-shekel is counted; only a giver has the right to his own continuance; only he who contributes what is required of him gains a rightful place in his community. Only he who makes his contribution is entitled to be counted among the Children of Israel. The moment he seeks to be counted without giving back—at that moment, he forfeits his right to exist.


But is there anyone who meets his obligation so completely that he can claim the right to his existence for even one minute? Is there anyone

*continued on reverse side*

powerful  
PRAYER 

BARUCH SHE'AMAR:  
THE WORD OF HASHEM

When we say "*Baruch omer v'oseh*," we mean that Hashem created the world with no effort: by His word alone, it came into being. Everything in the world, all that was originally created during the Six Days of Creation, exists because Hashem has said so.

We go on to say that we praise Hashem *b'shrei David avdecha*, with the songs of His servant David. This is a reference to the fact that most of *Pesukei Dezimra* is drawn from the words of *Tehillim*. 

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*



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## AN EQUAL SHARE

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

This week we read the first of the “Arba Parshiyos,” Parshas Shekalim. To remember the mitzvah of *machatzis hashekel*, Chazal instituted this reading to stand as a replacement *zechus*. Through the *machatzis hashekel*, every Jew had a share in the *korbanos* brought all year on behalf of the nation. From Rosh Chodesh Nissan and onward, the *korbanos* would be purchased from the funds of the new *shekalim*. Whatever was left over from the previous year was used for other purposes.

No one, no matter how wealthy, was allowed to give more than half a *shekel*. The poorest of the poor were obligated to somehow get the money. Everyone had an equal share. Every member of *klal Yisrael* felt the excitement.

This mitzvah was not as simple as putting *tzedakah* in a *pushka*. On Rosh Chodesh Adar, the *beis din* would announce throughout the Jewish world that it was time to prepare one’s half-*shekel* for next year’s *korbanos*. By the fifteenth of Adar, tables were set up in every district to collect the money. Messengers were sent to the *Beis Hamikdash* with the money. How wonderful each Jew felt with the awareness that he had a share in the atonement of the *korban tamid* and *mussaf*!

Perhaps this was why it was the *machatzis hashekel* protected us at the time of Purim, as the Gemara tells us: “Reish Lakish said, ‘It was revealed and known before Hakadosh Baruch Hu that Haman was destined to offer *shekalim* against Yisrael [to destroy them]. Therefore, He commanded Yisrael’s *shekalim* in advance of Haman’s.’”

In the days of David Hamelech, the Ramban tells us, the Jewish people were supposed to come forward with a request to build a *Beis Hamikdash*. They did not do so. Only David expressed this longing to build a dwelling place for the *Shechinah*, but he was denied the privilege. The *Beis Hamikdash* could not be built by a man of war, like David, but by a man of peace, like his son Shlomo. Nevertheless, had the request to build the *Mikdash* come at the initiative of the people, perhaps even David would have been allowed to participate.

Prior to the building of the second *Beis Hamikdash*, there was a period of hunger and poverty in Eretz Yisrael. The people had despaired of rebuilding the *Mikdash*, but the *neviim* told them that as soon as they began, the crops would be blessed once again.

We have been in *galus* for so long, but we must never forget the *Beis Hamikdash*, or stop longing for its rebuilding, soon in our days. 🕯

without imperfections? Who would dare be counted without atonement?

Therefore, *zeh yitnu*. This is what he gives, not the sum of what he actually does for the common good, but a symbolic expression of what he knows to be his duty.

There is no greater distinction than to be among the *pekudei Hashem*, those G-d numbers as His own. Only one who resolves to fulfill his duty will pass into this noble circle.

However, the contribution required of each individual is symbolized by *machatzis hashekel*. Not even a perfect contribution by one person can accomplish all that must be done. The work of any individual is only a fragment; an equally devoted effort on the part of his brother is required in order to produce the whole. *Lo alecha hamelacha ligmor* (Avos 2:16); we are asked to make our personal contribution.

One *shekel* equals 20 *gerah*; the individual is expected to give 10. In and of itself, his contribution should be one rounded whole (ten, a complete unit), as complete as he is able to make it. No matter how small a fraction his contribution is, he must spare no effort in furthering the welfare of the community. Although *lo alecha hamelacha ligmor*, still, *v’lo ata ben chorin lehibatel mimena*.

*Ha’ashir lo yirbeh v’hadal lo yamit*. This reflects the symbolic nature of the contribution. The pennies of the poor are equal to the thousands of the rich. G-d measures a contribution according to the abilities of the donor.

Whoever gives his all to promote G-d’s Sanctuary has placed his *machatzis hashekel* as a symbolic contribution upon G-d’s altar. 🕯

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



## wonder WORLD

### GOOD AS GOLD



*Which metals can fight disease?*

In this week’s *parsha*, *klal Yisrael* is called upon to bring donations of materials and precious metals to build the *Mishkan*—gold, silver, and copper, among other things. Gold is considered the most malleable and ductile of all metals—a single gram of gold can be flattened into a sheet of one square meter. One ounce can be stretched into a wire 80 kilometers long. Gold does not react with most chemicals, which makes it very resistant to tarnishing and allows it to remain shiny over time. Silver, on the other hand, is the most reflective metal, which makes it ideal for mirrors. It also has antibacterial properties and is used in medical devices and wound dressings. Similarly, copper surfaces can kill bacteria and viruses, so it is often used in hospital doorknobs and handrails. 🕯

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