

# WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

## PARSHAT VAYAKHEL

### Machatzis Hashekel: We Are One With Hashem

This week, we read about the mitzvah of Machatzis Hashekel, that every Jewish male from the age of 20 to 60 had to give a half shekel coin. This was an atonement for the sin of the golden calf.

On the verses, "This is what they should give... a half shekel," the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Midrash tell us that Moshe didn't understand, so Hashem took out a coin of fire from under His throne, showed it to Moshe and said, "like this is what they should give." And Tosafos explains that Moshe knew what a half-shekel coin was; his question was: How can a person give an atonement for his soul (through a half-shekel)? As the Midrash continues, "Who can give an atonement for his soul, '... A person would give everything he has as an atonement for his soul,' and it still wouldn't be enough..." In response, Hashem "showed him a coin of fire."

In other words, the half-shekel was an atonement for the sin of the golden calf, which was idolatry. How can a half-shekel be an atonement for such a grave sin?

Mitzvahs are compared to the organs of the body. In the body, there are vital organs and non-vital organs. Then there are organs that are the most important,

the brain and the heart, in which the neshama resides, and they control or enliven the entire body. The same is true with mitzvahs; there are those that are more vital to the rest of the body of mitzvahs, and there are those that are

less vital. Then there are general mitzvahs that the whole Torah and all the mitzvahs are dependant on, like "I am Hashem your G-d," which is the belief in Hashem, and "You shall not have any gods before Me," which is the prohibition against idolatry. How could it be possible for idol worship, such a grave sin, to be atoned for by merely giving a half shekel?

Being that Moshe knew what a half-shekel was, and he wondered how is it possible that a half-shekel coin could be an atonement for the soul of a person, how did Hashem's response, showing him "a coin of fire," answer the question?

We will understand it through a parable of the Baal Shem Tov. There was a man who was a goldsmith and a silversmith, and he took an apprentice. He taught him everything there was to know about shaping the precious metals. The only thing that he didn't teach him was that he had to put a fire under the gold or silver in order to shape it, and surprise, surprise, no matter how hard he tried, he only ended up with a clump of metal.

The same is with the half-shekel. The coin itself might be of little value, but it is how they gave the half-shekel that made all the difference. They had to give it with fire, the whole fire of their being, the whole fire of their neshama, then it was an atonement.

When one does a mitzvah, the actual act of the mitzvah brings out the accomplishment that is being done by doing the mitzvah. Here he is giving a coin. How does that act show the atonement over idolatry?

By the mitzvah of Machatzis Hashekel, the Torah says, "This is what they should give... a half shekel of a holy shekel, a shekel is twenty gera, a half shekel donation to Hashem." Later, when it gives the total of the half shekels, it says that they gave "A \_bekka\_ per head, a half shekel of a holy shekel."

The Torah doesn't use extra words; however, here, it seems to go on and on. First, it calls it a half of a shekel. Then it explains that a whole shekel is twenty gera, and it continues that we have to give a half shekel. Later, it calls it a bekka and again a half shekel. Why doesn't it simply say that we should give ten gera, and it would be clear? There must be something deeper going on here.

It is clear from the verse that the fact that it is ten

### YOUR CONNECTION TO G-D RUNS DEEPER THAN ANY SIN.



gera is unimportant. What is important is that it is a half. And the Torah goes on to explain a half of what. In order to do that, it has to explain what a whole shekel is, twenty gera. Then, it makes it clear that it is a half because that is what's important.

Why is the fact that it is a half so important?

Another question. Usually, everything in Torah has to be complete, as we should give the best to Hashem. And here Hashem insists on a half and only a half, as He said, "The rich person shouldn't add, and the pauper shouldn't subtract from a half shekel." Why?

The question becomes stronger when you consider that the Torah calls it a bekka, which is a whole coin that is worth a half-shekel or ten gera. So it could have been a whole thing, a bekka. Why then, does it insist on using the term half-shekel? And if it's insisting on a half-shekel, then why mention bekka all together?

Bekka is mentioned earlier in the Torah. When Eliezer went to find a wife for Yitzchak, he found Rivka, and he gave her a nose ring that weighed a bekka. Rashi tells us that it is a hint to the half shekel.

The explanation. When Hashem told Moshe that He is going to forgive the Jewish people for the sin of the golden calf, He said that He would "cut a covenant" with the Jewish people. Why is the term "cut" used to actualize a covenant? Because it was the way of people who were making a covenant to cut animals in half, and they would pass through them, like the Bris Bein Habesarim, the "Covenant Between the Parts." The idea is that the two parties are saying that just as the two parts are one animal, so too, although they are two people, they will be as one in respect to one another.

The sign of this covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people is a half-shekel, specifically a half. Because Hashem and the Jewish people are, so to speak, two halves of one whole, as He says in Song of Songs, that we are "tamasi," that we "complete" Him. Each half is ten gera, ten is a whole number, symbolizing the ten attributes of the soul, and although Hashem is infinite and beyond this world, He compresses Himself into ten G-dly attributes. By giving a half shekel, we realize that we are half and that Hashem is our other half. In other words, we are one.

When we realize this truth, we touch our essence, which is one with Hashem. This essence is not touchable, and it is not affected by any sin, not even idolatry. When we reveal this essential oneness with Hashem, it is so powerful, that it is an automatic atonement, because in that moment there is nothing

but complete oneness, everything else falls away.

The separation that we experience between us and Hashem is only superficial. The true essence is one.

This is also true for marriage; the two are truly one, and that is why the half-shekel is hinted at in the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivka. And perhaps that is the reason that bekka is mentioned by the mitzvah of Machatzis Hashekel, because it is a reminder of the marriage between Hashem and the Jewish people, that makes us one.

If a marriage is two that is really one, then why doesn't it say Machatzis Hashekel by the marriage of Yitzchak and Rivka? Because it was before the giving of the Torah, the complete oneness wasn't revealed; however, at the giving of the Torah, our oneness with Hashem was open and revealed.

So, the half shekel reveals the essence of the neshama, which is only revealed through the fire, and it probably is the fire itself.

May we feel the oneness with Hashem once again with the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

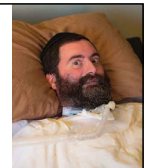
"Dear Rabbi Yitzi,

*Thank you so much for your weekly Divrei Torah. They really inspire me and help me get a better understanding of the parsha and they really inspire me to work on myself to become a better person. may you be able to continue to contribute to my life and the lives of all of those you reach for many many years."*

- Rikki Kamin, Israel

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:  
(937) 770-4802 | TORAHFROMMYEYES@GMAIL.COM

*Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.*



IN HONOR OF  
**RABBI YITZI'S 52ND BIRTHDAY!**  
WISHING HIM MANY YEARS OF HEALTH AND  
HAPPINESS!

IF YOU'D LIKE TO DO A MITZVAH IN HIS HONOR, VISIT  
[TEFILLINFORYITZI.COM](http://TEFILLINFORYITZI.COM)

SPONSOR AN EDITION OF TORAH FROM MY EYES: (937) 770-4802 | TORAHFROMMYEYES@GMAIL.COM

