



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

SH'KALIM

This Shabbat we read the first of the Four Parshiyot - Parshat Sh'kalim.

Specifically, the Parsha is read as Maftir from a second Sefer Torah, following the reading of Parshat HaShavua - Mishpatim. It consists of the first six p'sukim of Parshat Ki Tisa - Sh'mot 30:11-16.

The Mishpatim-Sh'kalim combination occurs almost 60% of years.

Sh'kalim partners with Vayakhel 26.3% of years, with P'kudei 10.53% of years, and extremely rarely (last year) 3.31% of years.

Two reasons are given for our reading of Parshat Sh'kalim -

The first mishna in Masechet Sh'kalim states "On the first of the month of Adar a proclamation is made about the [giving of the] sh'kalim..." The silver half-shekels were collected around the country during the month of Adar, so that the Mikdash treasury would be ready for the fiscal year of communal offerings and activities by the first of Nissan. Our reading of Parshat Sh'kalim is a commemoration of the mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel - and a hopeful prayer for its restoration with the building of the Beit

HaMikdash - Bimheira V'yameinu, Amein.

The other reason for Parshat Sh'kalim at the beginning of Adar, specifically - shortly before Purim, is that our mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel is the antidote for, the vaccine against, Haman's sh'kalim. Haman offered Achashveirosh 10,000 silver talents for permission to wipe out the Jewish population of the kingdom. It is, as if, our annual gift to the Mikdash of sh'kalim protects us from our enemies who would pay many sh'kalim to facilitate our destruction. There are even sources that say that a silver talent was the equivalent of 30 shekel, making 10,000 talents equal to 600,000 half-shekels, the iconic number of adult males of Bnei Yisrael at the Exodus.

The Sh'kalim reading is a commemorative of the Mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel, and is d'Rabbanan. **(Zachor in two weeks is d'Oraita; Para's status is disputed, HaChodesh is d'Rabbanan.)**

The mitzva of Machatzit HaShekel applies only in the time of the Beit HaMikdash - today, it is commemorated with the reading of Parshat Sh'kalim and also with the giving of **ZEICHER L'MACHATZIT HASHEKEL** (emphasis on the word **ZEICHER**) some time before Megila reading.

When applicable, the silver half-shekel was a required tax for men from 20 years old and up - and

voluntary for women. It was not accepted from non-Jews. It is a membership rite for AM YISRAEL.

It follows that a man who refused to do this mitzva was declaring that he wanted nothing to do with the Jewish People. Very serious, indeed.

A significant feature of the mitzva is the insistence that HE-ASIR LO YARBEH V'HADAL LO YAM-IT, that a wealthy person cannot give more, nor a poor person less, than the silver half-shekel. For the communal offerings in the Mikdash - we are all equal.

Another message of Machatzit Ha-Shekel is in the "half". If a person had a whole bunch of p'rutot that were equal to a silver half-shekel, he had to have it changed into an actual silver half-shekel coin. So too, the person who had a larger coin could not give it and ask for change. All had to give the half-shekel.

And don't think it was just for the ease of counting the population. That could have been done by taking the amount collected and calculating how many half-shekels in the total, and that would give the count, as well.

There is great symbolism and an important message in the mitzva being done specifically with half-shekels.

Half means, not whole. Half means part of something. The mitzva of

Machatzit HaShekel announces that we are all in this together. We are all part of Klal Yisrael.

Although the mitzva is in temporary suspension until the building of Bayit Sh'lisi, its messages are still with us.

Being all in this together should be our challenge and our goal... in our very own time.

This is why we read the maftir and haftara this Shabbat. This is why we will give Zeicher L'Machatzit HaShekel. This is why Jewish Unity is so important. **PTDT**