

In this week's sedra, the posuk says as follows:

הַעֲשִׂיר לֹא־יִרְבֶּה וְהַדָּל לֹא יִמְעִיט מִמַּחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לַתַּת אֶת־תְּרוּמַת ה' לַכֹּפֶר עַל־נַפְשֵׁיכֶם (שמות ל:טו)

"The wealthy shall not give more and the destitute shall not give less than half a shekel, to give the portion of Hashem, to atone for your souls."

We see that the Torah insists that everyone should give half a shekel. What was so special about the מחצית השקל?

The meforshim suggest a number of answers:

- 1) The most simple answer given by the *Chizkuni* and *Daas Zekeinim MiBaalei Hatosfos* is that this half shekel was used to count the *Bnei Yisroel*. Had every person donated differently, it would have been impossible to actually know how many *Yiden* there were.
- 2) The *Daas Zekeinim MiBaalei Hatosfos* suggests another explanation. If a rich man would donate a larger sum, he would feel that he had a larger portion in the building of the *Mishkon*, which would trigger גאווה. In order to avoid גאווה, the Torah insisted that no matter how wealthy you are, everyone should donate the same.
- 3) The *Chizkuni* and the *Ibn Ezra* answer – since the מחצית השקל was being brought to atone for the sin of the golden calf, where both wealthy people and poor sinned equally, they both had to bring the same amount for atonement.

The *Ksav Sofer* adds that even though the richer people in *Klal Yisroel* most probably donated more towards the *Eigel Hazohov* it still wasn't considered as if they had a greater portion in it, since for them it was easier to donate a large amount than for a poor person to donate a small amount. Hence, the Torah insisted that the rich man should bring half a shekel to counter balance the donation that he gave towards the *Eigel* (which he found easy). A poor person also brought half a shekel, which for him was difficult.

- 4) The *Or Hachaim Hakodosh* suggests a different explanation: Half a shekel resembles something incomplete. When *Klal Yisroel* made the *Eigel Hazohov*, they (so to speak) separated themselves from הקב"ה, hence they remained incomplete. This was the message of the מחצית השקל. The half shekel came to hint, now you are only half complete – do *Teshuva* and become complete. Had the wealthy and poor not all given the same amount, they would have lost this essential message.