

השקלים

Shekalim

This Masechta is the only one in the Daf Yomi cycle that comes from the Talmud Yerushalmi.

Why were we required to give exactly a half-shekel coin of silver?

1. Some say it is connected with the sin of the golden calf which occurred at midday – half of the day.
2. Some say the 10 geirah value of $\frac{1}{2}$ a shekel relates to the 10 commandments.
3. R Pinchas - The brothers of Yosef each received 2 dinar, $\frac{1}{2}$ a shekel value, when they sold him (they received a total of 20 dinars).

The 10 martyrs were also cruelly slain for this sin of the 10 brothers.

However, we have a problem.

Yosef had eleven brothers. Benjamin did not participate and Reuven was not present at the sale of Yosef. Therefore, we have only 9.

However, Reuven did join in the initial conspiracy and is, therefore, perhaps culpable and could be considered the 10th.

Perhaps Yosef himself, is the 10th person, contributing to this sin because of his indiscreet behavior toward his brothers that originally aroused their envy.

הֵן נִקְרָא וְלֹא נִבְעֵת לְטוֹבָה,, כֹּל נְדִיב לֵב”

Can one read these verses without being seized with fear at the power of the evil inclination? Everyone who was good, was generous.

Ramban - These people are emphasized because they were tzaddikim, who came forward, first to donate gold and other items, and to set an example for the other people who were embarrassed to give items that had been used in Avodah Zarah.

R Yehuda ben Pazi - Everyone contributed to the sin of the Golden Calf (Ex 2:3). Everyone was uncomfortable atoning for it, until an example was set by the righteous ones.

Everyone who was generous, donated to the Tabernacle (Ex 35:22).

The power of the evil inclination made “the entire people” donate for evil, the Golden Calf, whereas only the generous, donated to the Tabernacle.

אֵין אֶת יְכוּל לְעִמּוּד עַל אֹפְיָא שֶׁל אֹמָה זוּ

The people gave gold for the Golden Calf and then gave gold for the Mishkan.
What can we learn from that?

R. Menachem Zemba - We learn that no matter what we have done in the past, we can turn over a new leaf. We can repent, we can change for the better. We all have a spark within us and we have the power to make it into a roaring flame.
It teaches us never to give in and never to give up.

אֵין מוֹנִין אֶלָּא מִנִּיסָן

We count the months starting with Nissan.

Ramban - Explains that though the year begins with the month of Tishrei, we count the months of the year beginning with Nissan, the month of the Exodus from Egypt. This is the meaning of the verse: “This month shall be for you as the head of months; it is the first for you of the months of the year.”

Ramban - Explains that we use the Babylonian names Nissan, Iyar, Sivan, etc., to remind us that HaShem redeemed us from Babylonian exile and brought us back to the land of Israel.

Chasam Sofer - Criticizes those who use non-Jewish designations of the date such as 7-1-06. However, using the names of the months January, February is not a problem.

Maharam Shick - One should not use non-Jewish dates on tombstones.

וּמְצִינֵין עַל הַקְּבָרוֹת

And we mark the graves.

Why must we erect a tombstone?

Gemara - To warn Kohanim not to come near.

Poskim - It benefits the soul to be remembered by the living. It benefits the living by indicating where the grave is, so that they may go there to pray.

Chafetz Chaim - It is of no benefit to the deceased to have an ornate tombstone. It would be better to use the excess money to aid the community, i.e., buy a set of Gemara (shas), create a g'mach, (an interest free fund).

אֵין מִמִּשְׁכָּנֵינוּ נְשִׁים וְעֲבָדִים וְקֹטְנִים

We do not take from women, slaves or minors.

Who must give the half shekel?

Any male who is no longer a minor (having sprouted two hairs).

Magen Avraham - Women are exempt.

The custom is for fathers to donate a half shekel, not only for young sons, but even on behalf of an unborn fetus and also on behalf of females.

If a father, whose custom it was to do this, passes away, the children would be obligated to continue this tradition from his estate.

בְּמִין מִטְבַּע שֶׁל אֵשׁ הוּצִיָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִתַּחַת פְּסָא כְּבוֹדוֹ
וְהִרְאָהוּ לְמֹשֶׁה וְאָמַר לוֹ „זֶה יִתְּנוּ”

HaShem showed Moshe a coin of fire and told Moshe, they should “give a coin like this.”

A coin is like a fire, it can do great good, give warmth and light, or harm, burn and destroy.

A man went up to Heaven. His good and bad deeds were weighed and the bad were greater. However, one of the judges noted that the man had once given a coin to a poor family and the coin had saved them. The Heavenly court decided in his favor.

Another man in Heaven had his deeds weighed and the good outweighed the bad, but one of the judges recalled that he had stolen a coin from a poor family and they all died. The man should have been condemned, yet the Heavenly judges also decided in his favor. Why?

The judges decided to concentrate on the intention of each man. The first man intended to help the family, the second man only intended to steal a single coin. He had no intent to harm a whole family and should not suffer for having done so.

וְכֹלֵן נִפְדִּין בְּכֶסֶף וּבִשְׂוֵה כֶּסֶף חוּץ מִשְׁקָלִים

All of them can be redeemed with money [or with an item of equivalent value], except for the half-shekel.

Bechoros 51a- Even Maaser Sheni can be redeemed with actual money or an item of equal value.

Chazon Ish - In the past, coins were made of precious material and had intrinsic value. Today, the coins merely represent value. Nonetheless,. they are halachically valid as currency.

For a Pidyon Haben - We do not need to use actual money. Any item of requisite value is sufficient, even paper money. However, usually one purchases silver coins (from the Kohen) to use for redemption.

וְאֵין פּוֹדֵיין בְּכֵלִים

And we cannot use utensils or other valuables instead of shekalim (to redeem).

Why are shekalim an exception and actual ½ shekel coins must be used?

Likutei Halachos - Because the ½ shekel coins represent our interdependence.
That we need one another to be complete.

Noam Elimelech - A Torah student heard there was a child sick who lived in his part of town, actually on his very street. As he rushed home, he learned to his great relief, it was not his child who was sick, but his neighbor's. "I have learned nothing" he said, "if I am relieved that my child is well but that my neighbor's is not."

לְפִי שֶׁמָכְרוּ בְּכוֹרָהּ שֶׁל רָחֵל בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף

Because he sold the first born of Rachel for twenty pieces of silver.

R. Levi - Because the brothers sold the first born of Rachel for 20 shekels of silver, today, every first born must be redeemed for 20 shekels.

However, Joseph was sold to gentile merchants and we ‘sell’ the baby to a Kohen.

Why are the tribes of Yosef, Binyamin and Reuven included, they did not participate in the selling of Joseph? They are included for solidarity within the nation.

When one sins all sin. When one suffers, all suffer. By all following the same rules, we show our interrelationships and interdependence.

Daf Digest

כָּל תְּלִמִיד חָכֵם שֶׁאוֹמְרִים דְּבַר הַלְכָה מִפִּי בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה
 שִׁפְתָיו רוֹחֲשׁוֹת עִמּוֹ בְּקֶבֶר

Whenever a Torah law is stated in this world, in the name of a departed scholar,
his lips move in the grave.

The committee told a prospective Rabbi, “Please come to our city, a great many illustrious teachers have died in our city,” and they named several great and well known Tzaddikim. “But wait,” said the Rabbi, “I know that the Taz is buried in Hemberg, the Magen Avraham in Kahkish and Rabbi Akiva Eiger in Posen, what do you mean they died in your city?” “That’s exactly the point., the committee declared, “ In their cities, their words are studied and quoted and in that sense, they continue to live. In our city, those great teachers are no longer being studied. So for all intents and purposes, they are dead and buried in our town. That’s why we need you to come to us”.

מְדַבְּרִין הָיוּ עִמּוֹ

They would converse with him.

The shekalim were gathered three times per year to buy animals for the communal sacrifices. The person who collected the tithes had to remain above suspicion that he might take some of the coins. How was this done?

- His clothing had no pockets or folds where a coin could be concealed.
- He was kept in constant conversation, so he could not hide a coin in his mouth.

Some suggested that he work with a mouth full of water. However, since he might swallow some without a saying a bracha, this practice was not adopted. Yet, one who swallows, not to relieve thirst, but for other purposes, needs no bracha, i.e., to take one's medication.

This practice was not adopted because he needed to make a blessing on the mitzvah of tithing and he could not do so with a mouth full of water.

זְרִיזוֹת מְבִיאָה לְיָדֵי נְקִיּוֹת

Promptness, alacrity brings (success) cleanliness from sin.

A Talmud student was awakened by a blacksmith who hammered on his anvil. The student reasoned, “If the blacksmith rises so early for mere material concerns, I most certainly should rise earlier to serve my spiritual obligations.” So he woke up even earlier.

The blacksmith came to work and heard the student learning and said, “Look how early that young man gets to his obligation even though he has no family to support. I should be more conscientious and get to my work earlier and more promptly also to do even better for my family.”

Each person stimulated the other to excellence.

אֵין מִשְׁתַּכְּרִין בְּשֵׁל הֶקְדֵּשׁ אֶף לֹא מִשָּׁל עֲנִיִּים

One may not do business with money of hekdesh or of the poor.

R. Akiva - The poor may suffer a loss if the business fails.

Rama - Because the money is tied up and not available to the poor.

Daas Sofer - Even an endowment is prohibited, although the poor will eventually benefit from the income, it is not available now.

No loan can be made with money for the poor, even if you are certain it will be repaid, because the funds are not available now.

רְבִי חֲזִיָּה בַר אָדָא אֵיתְפָּקֵד גַּבִּיָּה מְדַל דִּיתְמוּיָן וְעָבִיד בֵּין

R Chiya bar Ada had money of orphans that was deposited to his care.

He conducted business with the orphan's money.

He accepted responsibility to pay for any losses, but would divide any revenues with the orphans.

Poskim - May the profits be split or do they all belong to the orphans? The money is not readily available for use by the orphans, is this allowed?

R Moshe Feinstein - If you win a raffle, are you permitted to keep the winnings paid to you by the charitable organization? Can it be viewed as a gift from the charitable organization? Yes, if a large number of raffle tickets are sold and you don't expect to win. Can you benefit from giving charity by receiving a tax exemption? Yes.

אֵין בְּעִיַת דֵּי הֶהֱפְסְדָה דִּיֶדְךָ וְאַגְרָה דְּתַרְוִיכּוֹן שְׂרִי

If you wish to stipulate that you accept any loss, but you share the profits, it is permitted.

The funds of hekdesh may be invested if:

-The investor accepts the risk of loss and guarantees no losses of principle.

Profits may be divided without concern.

Normally, if one partner puts up the money and the other does the work and they divide the profit, we consider the profit to the one who put up the money as interest and that is forbidden. In the case of hekdesh or the money of orphans, the restriction of charging interest is not operative since Vayikra 25:37, only restricts such arrangements with ‘your money’. Consecrated funds or funds of orphans are not considered ‘yours’ and therefore, it is permitted.

Daf Digest

בְּהֵמָה לְמִזְבֵּחַ הִיא וְלִמָּה סָתַם הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה שֶׁהוּא
בְּאוֹמֵר לֹא יִהְיֶה אֶלָּא לְבִדּוּק הַבַּיִת

Why did this man consecrate his flock without specifying it was for the alter?

We can assume it was for Temple up-keep.

We see that we are able to “create” sanctity of an animal merely by calling it Kodesh through our power of speech.

Bris Avraham - This same power of speech can be used for consecrating ourselves to holy activities.

Chazon Ish - Life and death are in the hands of the tongue. This refers to not only lashon hara or the ‘stab in the back’ negative expressions that can harm, but even good, supportive and congratulatory words can save a life and help a person get on the right track.

Mohammud Ali - “You doctors can make a person sick or make him well with the words you choose to use.”

מִנֵּיִן אֶפְיָלוּ נְקִבוֹת

How do we know to include females?

If not specified, an animal that is consecrated goes to serve as an olah sacrifice. The word ‘cattle’ includes females, so if the unspecified animal that is consecrated is a female, it also goes as an olah.

What if you had a male animal in mind? A mistaken sanctification, hekdesch b'taous, has no sanctification and such a declaration has no validity.

There may be similar concern regarding tzedaka. A person pledges the money he has in his pocket to charity thinking he has \$10 dollars, but discovers he has \$20. This pledge was made with a mistake. Everyone agrees he does not need to give the \$20. However, if his declaration has no validity. is he also absolved of giving his intended \$10 dollars? Yes, he is absolved.

וְלֹא רָצוּ לְלַמֵּד

They did not want to teach.

They did not want to teach others their methods but wanted to keep the knowledge in their family.

It is improper to refrain from teaching Torah to others.

It is prohibited to teach an unworthy student.

One must teach a student, even if he possesses only average abilities.

One who fails to teach will ultimately forget his Torah knowledge.

The only exception to this rule is, if he needs his time for his own study or to review his learning.

מַפְסוּלַת שֶׁל לוחות הַעֲשִׂיר מֹשֶׁה

The shavings of the Tablets (on which the 10 commandments were written) enriched Moshe Rabbeinu.

The first set of ‘luchos’, tablets, were entirely from HaShem. The second set were carved by Moshe; only the writing was through the Divine Hand.

The wealth of Moshe is his spiritual wealth.

“Who is wealthy? He who is happy with what he has.”

לֹא הָיָה אֵיִת בְּנֵי נֶשׁ דִּילְעוֹן בְּאוֹרְיִתָא

Certainly they could have used their money to support poor people who are learning Torah.

If a community has funds, what is more important to build a synagogue, or to support those who study Torah?

To build a synagogue or to beautify an existing one, fulfills one mitzvah, that of “Zeh Keli V’Anvehu”, “this is my Lord and I will exalt Him.”

Supporting poor scholars is a more valuable activity. Since every word of Torah they learn is another mitzvah.

Some well meaning people choose to give their money to build a Shul which is merely similar to making a crown for a Sefer Torah. They reason that since they can’t support all the poor scholars with money, they can instead create something for the community, that all could use. However, it is better to support the poor scholar and save one, than to create a building that provides enhancement for the name of the donor, instead of the enhancement of God’s name.

שְׁנֵי אֲרוֹנוֹת הָיוּ מֵהַלְכִין עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר

Two Aron's accompanied the nation of Israel in the desert.

Where should we store old and worn out Sifrei Torah? Usually in the same Aron HaKodesh that stores the useful and functional Sifrei Torah. The reason given is, that is where the broken pieces of the Tablets were stored.

Noda B'Yehuda questions this reason: Those pieces were created by God's hand and perhaps they warrant greater respect and therefore, were placed in the Aron. There also is the opinion in Devarim 10:11 (Rashi) that there might have been two Arks (Arons), as our Gemara says.

However, the usual custom in Klal Yisroel, is to place worn out Sefarim in the Aron Hakodesh and this is appropriate.

הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה
נִתְּנָה לוֹ אֵשׁ לְבָנָה חֲרוּתָהּ בְּאֵשׁ שְׁחוּרָה

The Torah that HaShem gave to Moshe:

He gave him white fire inscribed with black fire.

The positive commandments are the white fire. They embody the Divine attributes of love and kindness. They need to be etched out by black fire, which is the fear of HaShem and self restraint.

עָלוּ לְרֹאשׁ גְּגוֹתֵיהֶן וְנָפְלוּ וּמָתוּ

They went up to the roof jumped off and died.

Suicide - Violates God's will.

A person who commits suicide is not mourned, eulogized, nor does one tear one's garments for him.

A person who commits suicide because he fears that if captured alive, he will be tortured, abused or killed, or one who kills his children for these reasons, is to be treated with the same respect as everyone.

One who commits suicide because of intense sadness and worries, is not considered to be a person who committed suicide.

מִזְבֵּחַ הַזָּהָב הָיָה נִתּוּן בְּאֶמְצַע הַבַּיִת

The golden bimah was in the middle of the Temple.

The bimah in a shul should be in the center.

It compares to the golden altar in the Temple.

We read the Torah from the bimah, which is considered a form of offering and serves as an atonement for sin.

Rambam - A center bimah allows everyone to hear.

Kesef Mishnah and Ma'aman Mordechai - Have the custom of the bimah in front nowadays; since the shuls are small.

Netziv and Chasam Sofer - Suggests that our 'mikdash meat,' small synagogues, should not deviate from the pattern of the actual Bais HaMikdash and should keep the bimah in the center.

מְעוֹת שֶׁנִּמְצְאוּ בֵּין הַשְּׁקָלִים לְנֶדָּבָה

Money that is found between the “shekalim” area and the “nedavah” area.

What should one do with that money?

Similar problems arise in regard to charity matters:

- A pushka that no one retrieves.
- Charity boxes in one's home that have coins in them.

What should be done with those monies?

R Menashe Klein - Set it aside until Eliyahu arrives.

Other Poskim - The money may be given to other worthy causes.

Ideally, when a charity box is accepted, a stipulation should be made as to when it will be picked up and if it is not retrieved, what should be done with the funds.

קְרוֹב לְשֵׁקָלִים וְפָלוּ לְשֵׁקָלִים

If it is closer to the shekalim, put it into the shekalim.

A coin is found between the box for shekalim and the box for charity.
How do we decide which box to put the money into?

We should put the coin into the closest box. This is much like the Eglar Arufa, where, if a body is found between two cities, we approach the elders of the closest city to atone for the situation.

Another decision could be to put the coin into the box that has the most coins in it, suggesting that majority rules and we follow the majority. However, how do we know that when the coin was placed, the box that now has the most coins in it, had the most coins then?

In most cases, closeness supersedes majority, ‘korov’ versus ‘rov’. However, if the coin is equally close to both boxes, then the majority would rule.

וַיֵּצֵא לְבַיִת הַשְּׂרִיפָה

The fire of passion can be conveyed and can light a fire in another place and in another person.

A luke warm attitude, when shared, merely becomes even more cooled down.

A fire remains a fire and can spread and light up others. What ever comes in contact with fire, itself becomes a fire.

A luke warm attitude has no power to make anything warmer and soon it is cooled down completely.

הַמְצִיל מִיַּד הָאֲרִי מִיַּד הַגִּיּוֹס

One who retrieves an item from a lion or an army.

One who retrieves an item from a lion or an army; the item belongs to him.
We assume the owner of the item gave up all hope of the item every being returned to him.

Two conditions are required for an item to be considered ‘hefker’, abandoned property:

1. The owner has abandoned all hope of recovering the item (yeush).
2. The owner has no one who will retrieve it for him.

May a firefighter take items from a fire? No, there are laws that prohibit it.

גוֹזְמָא

The Mishnah was exaggerating.

The Gemara suggests that exaggerating is not considered lying.

Chullin 90b - Rami says “The Torah was exaggerating.”

Rashi - Often times, people speak without being precise.

Chafetz Chaim - Language is critical. People speak imprecisely because they do not pay sufficient attention when listening to others. It is a fault and conveys false information.

On certain occasions exaggerating it is acceptable, but only in matters where it is common to be imprecise, i.e., ‘the wedding is called for 6pm.’

הדרן עלך כל הרוקין

We shall return to you Masechet Shekalim.

The name of this Masechet is Shekalim, in the plural, yet we only donate one-half a shekel, why is it not called ‘chatzi shekel’?

When Moshiach comes it will be our duty to donate a full shekel, as the Torah says (Shemos 30:13), “The half shekel will be a holy shekel” (see Rashi).

The words ‘B’ Shekel HaKodesh’ has the same gematria (#839) as the words, ‘B’vios Moshiach ben Dovid’, alluding to the future when we may donate a full shekel.

Hadran Alach Masechet Shekalim. We shall return to you Tractate Shekalim.