



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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OU ISRAEL

This *Shabbat*, we will read *Parshat Shekalim*, one of the four special *parshiyot* which link together the days of *Adar*—beginning this *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Adar*, with the days of *Nisan*, leading up to *Pesach*.

Each of these four special *parshiyot*, introduces us to important, eternally relevant messages.

Parshat Shekalim begins with these familiar verses:

This is what everyone who is entered in the records shall contribute; a half-shekel to the Mishkan by weight—twenty gerahs to the shekel—a half-shekel as an offering to Hashem.

Everyone who is entered in the records, from the age of twenty years of age and above, shall give an offering to Hashem:

The wealthy shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less than half a shekel when giving the offering to Hashem as atonement for each of you.

The Chasidic Masters suggest many

important messages inherent within this *mitzva*.

Rebbe Chanoch Henach of Aleksander zy'a offered a particularly beautiful explanation of these verses. The word *shekel* alludes to the *neshama*. The word *shekel* is equal in *gematria* to the word *nefesh*. Each and everyone of us is given a proverbial half *shekel*, the *neshama* that is implanted within us, and each one of us must also offer up an equivalent "half *shekel*," in our *Avodat Hashem*, and *maasim tovim*.

The **Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Rebbe Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye zy'a**, explained that each person must give exactly a half *shekel* to instill within us that no one individual is truly complete or fulfilled as a lone individual, that it is only through coming together with others and helping one another, that we truly feel complete.

Similarly, the **Avodat Elazar of Kozhnitz zy'a**, points out that even one who has great wealth, must bring only the same half *shekel*, as one who is impoverished, as if to teach each of us, that no matter our means, none of us is truly complete, as an individual—we are only truly whole, when we join together with the rest of *Klal Yisrael*.

Taking this idea a step further, the **Birkat Avraham of Slonim, zy'a** points to a well known *Talmudic* teaching in *Masechet Kid-dushin 40b*:

A person must always consider as if they are half meritorious and half liable. With one maase mitzva, they bring themselves

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and the entire world to the side of merit...

The *Birkat Avraham*, explains that this *gemara* is teaching us the fundamental lesson of the *mitzva* of *machatzit hashekel*. The Rebbe explains, that not only are we as individuals only truly whole when we join together and contribute to the enterprise of the *Mishkan*, but in doing so, we are simultaneously reminded of the capacity each and every one of us has to be a conduit for good, to grow and improve as individuals, and that in so doing each one of us is simultaneously contributing to the betterment of the entire world.

Yehi Ratzon, on this *Shabbat Shekalim*, may we find *chizuk* in these powerful teachings from these great Chasidic Masters, and may we merit to look out for and give to one another, and continue to elevate each other and the entire world through our *mitzvot* and *maasim tovim*. *Chodesh Tov!* ■



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