

# Shvilei Pinches

## Shabbos Shkolim

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### The Half Shekel is a Cure for the Sin of the Eigel by Transforming the Words "ערש דוי" to "עשר יוד"

This upcoming Shabbos kodesh, we recite the blessing for the new month of Adar; it is called "Shabbos shekolim". It commemorates the fact that during the time of the Beis Homikdash, they would publicly announce the mitzvah of the half-shekel on Rosh Chodesh Adar. This is taught in the Mishnah (Shekolim 2.): **"באחר באדר משמיעין על השקלים"**.

The gemorah (ibid.) explains that on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, they began purchasing sacrifices with the new shekolim, as per the verse (Bamidbar 28,14): **"זאת עולת חודש בחדשו"**. It was, therefore, necessary to begin announcing and collecting the new shekolim thirty days in advance, on Rosh Chodesh Adar - - in keeping with the dictum (Pesachim 6.): **"שואלין ודורשין בהלכות הפסח קודם הפסח שלשים יום"**.

In our times, due to our multitude of sins, the Beis Homikdash has been destroyed and neither Kohanim, Leviim, nor Yisroel are able to fulfill their rightful duties. As a result, on the Shabbos on which we bless the new moon of Adar, we read from the Torah about the mitzvah of the half-shekel in parshas Ki Siso; we fulfill our obligations verbally in lieu of the actual performance of the deed in the Temple - - as per the verse (Hoshea 14,3): **"ונשלמה פרים שפתינו"**. It is fitting, therefore, that we examine the mitzvah of the half-shekel:

**"וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקודיהם, ונתנו איש כופר נפשו לה' בפקוד אותם ולא יהיה בהם נגף בפקוד אותם, זה יתנו כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל בשקל הקודש עשרים גרה השקל מחצית השקל תרומה לה'".**

Why does the verse specifically mention the **"ראש"**, the head, of Bnei Yisroel? Albeit, the head is the most important part of the body; however, the entire body was counted in the census and it should have sufficed to say: **"כי תשא את בני ישראל לפקודיהם"**.

Additionally, why does the verse specify how many geirah were in a full shekel, when they were only commanded to bring a half-shekel? Thirdly, why did the Almighty command them to bring precisely a half-shekel equal to ten geirah?

We find an explanation in the Zohar hokadosh in the Raiyah Mehemnah (Ki Siso 187:) as follows: a half-shekel was equivalent to ten geirah, an allusion to the letter "yud" of the holy, four-letter name; the letter "yud" has a numerical value of ten; an entire shekel which was equivalent to twenty geirah alludes to the letter "yud" spelled out in its entirety, **"יוד"**, which has a numerical value of twenty (10+6+4). Let us try to

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understand, to the best of our limited abilities, the connection between the half-shekel and the letter “yud” of the Almighty’s name.

### The Chet Ha’egel Was a Violation of the Ten Commandments

To answer these questions, let us introduce several, holy sources to illuminate our way. We will begin with the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Siso 10) which states that the half-shekel is an atonement for the chet ha’egel: **“רבי יוחנן אמר, על שעברו על עשרת הדברות, לפיכך יתן כל אחד ואחד עשרה גרה שהוא מחצית”**. In other words, one half-shekel, equaling ten geirah, corresponds to the Ten Commandments; by sinning with the egel, it was as if they had violated all of the Ten Commandments.

We can understand the Midrash based on the teaching (Makos 24.): **“אנכי ולא יהיה לך”** **“מפי הגבורה שמענו”**. “The first two commandments were heard directly from the mouth of the Lord.” We find that these two commandments - - “I am the Lord your G-d” and “Thou shalt not recognize other gods” - - are the essence and roots of the entire Ten Commandments. So, the chet ha’egel, which was a form of idol-worship, constituted a violation of all Ten Commandments.

The verse states (Shemos 24,12):

**“ויואמר ה' אל משה עלה אלי ההרה והיה שם, ואתנה לך את לוחות האבן והתורה והמצוה אשר כתבתי להורותם.”**

What is the relationship between the “Torah and the mitzvah” to the two tablets of stone which only had the Ten Commandments inscribed on them? Rashi comments: all six hundred and thirteen mitzvos are contained within the Ten Commandments, and Rabeinu Saadyah explains that many mitzvos derive from each and every commandment.

We also find in the Baal Haturim’s commentary on the Ten Commandments (Shemos 20,13): **“ויש בהם תר”ך אותיות נגד תרי”ג מצוות ושבע מצוות בני נח וסימנך כת”ר תורה”** - they contain six hundred and twenty letters corresponding to the six hundred thirteen mitzvos and the seven Noahide laws, and the mnemonic is **כת”ר תורה** (=620). Similarly, the Midrash states (Bamidbar Rabbah 13,15): **“תרי”ג אותיות יש מן אנכי עד”** **“תרי”ג מצוות וז’ יתירות כנגד ז’ ימי בראשית”** -- six hundred and thirteen letters. . . corresponding to six hundred and thirteen mitzvos and seven days of creation. While in the holy seforim, it is stated that the six hundred and twenty letters of the Ten Commandments correspond to six hundred and thirteen mitzvos from the Torah plus seven that are rabbinically ordained.

The gemorah (Horiyos 8.) elucidates the verse (Bamidbar 15,22): **“וכי תשגו ולא תעשו”** **“את כל המצוות האלה, איזו היא מצוה שהיא שקולה ככל המצוות הוי אומר זו עבודת”** **“כוכבים”** - “If you err and do not perform all of these commandments,” which mitzvah is weighed against all the other mitzvos, this refers to idolatry.”

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We see that the chet ha'egel, a form of idol-worship, was tantamount to transgressing all of the six hundred thirteen mitzvos included in the Ten Commandments. Consequently, Moshe broke the luchos upon seeing the egel to teach the people this lesson: avodah zarah, idol-worship, carries the severity of the entire six hundred thirteen mitzvos contained in the Ten Commandments.

### **"From Here We Learn that a Physician Is Permitted to Heal"**

Next, let us introduce the fact that at Har Sinai, the decree of death was lifted from the people of Israel. Yet, when they sinned with the egel, the decree was reinstated (Avodah Zarah 5.):

"לא קיבלו ישראל את התורה, אלא כדי שלא יהא מלאך המות שולט בהן, שנאמר אני אמרתי אלהים אתם ובני עליון כולכם, חבלתם מעשיכם [בחטא העגל] אכן כאדם תמותון".

We need to clarify why the chet ha'egel resulted in the return of the death sentence upon humanity. We can shed light on this matter based on a verse in this week's parsha, Mishpatim (Shemos 21,18):

"וכי יריבון אנשים והכה איש את רעהו באבן או באגרוף ולא ימות ונפל למשכב, אם יקום ויתהלך בחוץ על משענתו ונקה המכה רק שבתו יתן ורפא ירפא".

Rashi comments: "שניתנה רשות לרופאים לרפאות, ולא אמרינן רחמנא מחי ואיהו מסי". The source of this is in the gemorah (Bovo Kama 85.): "תני רבי רבי ישמעאל, ורפא ירפא, מכאן שניתן רשות לרופא לרפאות".

Let us explain. Had the verse not given the physician permission to heal, one might have thought that it is brazen to try and counteract an affliction wrought by the Almighty. Tosfos (ibid.) derive a similar message from the double language "ורפא ירפא". They explain that one might have thought that a physician is only permitted to heal wounds and afflictions inflicted by humans, but not to heal a heavenly affliction, since that would seem to contradict a Divine decree; the double language comes to teach us that it is permissible for a physician to treat even these types of afflictions.

With a deeper scrutiny of Tosfos' explanation, we see that the words "ורפא ירפא" actually reveal the source and secret to human healing. Let us introduce the teaching of the Arizal in Shaar Hapsookim on the verse (Tehillim 41,4): "ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי כל" - "The Lord will let him grow strong upon his sickbed, but it is you who shall have transfigured all his lying down during his illness."

The Arizal points to the verse (Koheles 7,12): "החכמה תחיה בעליה" that clearly states that a Jew's health derives from chochmah, wisdom. When chochmah disappears, the result is death, as it is written (Iyov 4,21): "ימותו ולא בחכמה". Furthermore, we know that chochmah is represented by the letter "yud" from Hashem's name - - as stated in the Zohar hokadosh (Pinchas 132.): "י' חכמה".

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### עש"ר יו"ד to ער"ש דו"י We Must Transform

The Arizal teaches us that if a person is ill, it is a sign that he has damaged the source of his being - - the chochmah which is the "yud" of the shem Hashem, which has a numerical value of "עשר", ten. This blemish in chochmah transfigures ער"ש to עש"ר and the letter יו"ד (fully spelled out) to דו"י; as a result, he lies on ער"ש דו"י, his sick-bed.

In summary, "ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי" - - the Lord fortifies the ill person on his sickbed - - in order to nourish him with chochmah, the letter יו"ד equal to עש"ר; as a result, כל עש"ר - - the words ער"ש דו"י are rearranged to form the words עש"ר יו"ד and the person is healed - - as it is stated "החכמה תחיה את בעליה" - "chochmah preserves the lives of those who possess her."

### דו"י to Heal the יו"ד that Was Transfigured into י' רפא

This is the interpretation of the phrase "ורפא ירפא": if one wishes to cure the sick person, the secret is "ירפא" which breaks down to י' רפא, correct the damage to the letter יו"ד - - its harmful transformation to דו"י (which means seriously ill). By healing the letter י', and transforming דו"י back to יו"ד, the patient will be healed in the process. This is the meaning of Tosafos' explanation of the double language "ורפא ירפא":

"דהוה אמינא הני מילי מכה בידי אדם, אבל חולי הבא בידי שמים, כשמרפא נראה כסותר גזירת המלך, קמשמע לן דשרי".

In other words, we might have thought that a physician is only permitted to treat maladies inflicted by human hands, since they are not the result of a defect in the letter "yud," chochmah - - seeing as the human perpetrator has free will to inflict harm, chas v'shalom, even upon an innocent victim. Afflictions from above, however, that are the result of damage the ill person caused to the letter "yud," the source of his being, we might have thought that a physician is not permitted to treat. Therefore, the verse employs the seemingly redundant terminology "ורפא ירפא", to teach us that even those maladies may be treated and the method of treatment hinges on י' רפא, curing the damage caused to the letter "yud."

### The Torah Is the Source of Life

Let us explain this concept in a way that is clear to all. We recite in the beroches of krias shema at night: "כי הם חיינו ואורך ימינו ובהם נהגה יומם ולילה". We clearly state that the Torah is our source of life. This idea is reiterated both by the wisest of all men (Mishlei 3,16): "אורך ימים בימינה בשמאלה עושר וכבוד", and in the berocheh we recite after the Torah reading: "אשר נתן לנו תורת אמת וחיי עולם נטע בתוכנו".

This concept is based on the Zohar Chadash (81:) that teaches that there are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah. The Megaleh Amukot on Vaetchanan (186) explains that the name ישראל alludes to the fact that every Jew has a corresponding letter in the Torah -- יש ששים רבוא אותיות לתורה .

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The Sheloh hokadosh (Korach 1) adds in the name of the kabbalists that the six hundred thousand letters are actually the life-source for the six hundred thousand souls of Yisroel:

“ודע כי מספר בני ישראל היו ששים רבוא, ואמרו המקובלים שהם ששים רבוא נשמות היוצאות מששים רבוא אותיות התורה, שרוחניות התורה הם נשמות ישראל, והדור שקיבלו את התורה הם היו ששים רבוא הנשמות, ואחר כך הדורות הבאות אחריהם הם כולם ענפים מהם.”

The Arizal's meaning is now clearly understood. When he teaches that a Jew's life-force derives from chochmah, he is referring to none other than the chochmah of the Torah. The Zohar hokadosh states that the Torah derives from chochmah from above (Yisro 85.): “אורייתא מחכמה דלעילא נפקת” Chochmah, as we've already explained, is represented by the letter “yud” in Hashem's name; so, it is evident that the human life-force derives from the letter “yud.”

Additionally, we've learned (Yoma 72:):

“אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, מאי דכתיב (דברים ד מד) וזאת התורה אשר שם משה, זכה נעשית לו סם חיים, לא זכה נעשית לו סם מיתה.”

If a person merits to fulfill the mitzvos of the Torah properly, they constitute a **סם** “חיים, an elixir of life - - providing him with life and health deriving from the letter “yud.” Conversely, if one fails to fulfill the Torah's mitzvos, they constitute a **סם** “מיתה, a deadly poison; instead of enjoying life and health from **יו"ד עש"ר**, they are stricken by the transformation to **ער"ש דו"י**.

### The Entire Torah Is Rooted in the Ten Commandments

This provides insight into why the Almighty chose to give us the Ten Commandments at Har Sinai. As stated, the entire Torah derives from the Ten Commandments; they embody the “yud” which is equivalent to ten and, thus, represent the chochmah from which the Torah is derived: “אורייתא מחכמה עילאה נפקת.”

This also clearly explains the words of the gemorah: **לא קיבלו ישראל את התורה, אלא** - “Yisroel only received the Torah, so that the angel of death would not have power over them.” By hearing the Ten Commandments from the Almighty, the roots of the entire Torah, the essence of the letter “yud” - - chochmah - - the death decree on humanity was cancelled.

The gemorah proves its point: **שנאמר אני אמרתי אלהים אתם ובני עליון כולכם, חבלתם** “מעשיכם אכן כאדם תמותון” By sabotaging and undermining their good deeds through the chet ha'egel - - an avodah zarah tantamount to violating the entire Torah - - they damaged the letter “yud” of the Ten Commandments, transforming the **יו"ד עש"ר** to **ער"ש דו"י** - the chochmah vanished and death ensued.

The remedy came in the form of the half-shekel, equivalent to ten geirah. We saw this in the Midrash quoted above: **על שעברו על עשרת הדברות, לפיכך יתן כל אחד ואחד עשרה**

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.גרה שהוא מחצית". We also cited the Raiyah Mehemneh's explanation that the ten relates to the letter "yud" in Hashem's name and the half-shekel is a cure for the defect created in the "yud," representing chochmah, and the need to transform ער"ש דו"י back to עש"ר יו"ד.

### The Head of the Sick Person Corresponds to the Damaged "Yud"

We've now paved the path to explain the Almighty's words to Moshe Rabeinu: **כי תשא** "When you count the heads of the children of Yisroel." We will refer to the verse in parshas Vayechi (Bereishis 47,31): **"ויושתחו ישראל על ראש המטה"**, where Rashi comments:

**"על ראש המטה, הפך עצמו לצד השכינה, מכאן אמרו שהשכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה – he turned himself toward the shechinah, we learn from here that the shechinah is found above the head of the sick person."** The source for this idea is found in the gemorah (Shabbos 12:):

**"מנין ששכינה סועד את החולה, שנאמר ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי. תניא נמי הכי הנכנס לבקר את החולה, לא ישב לא על גבי מטה ולא על גבי כסא, אלא מתעטף ויושב לפניו, מפני ששכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה, שנאמר ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי."**

The gemorah teaches that the shechinah helps the infirmed regain his strength and that the shechinah is positioned above his head.

Let us try to understand (a) how do our sages derive from the verse: **ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי** that the shechinah stands above the sick person's head? And (b) what is the significance of the fact that the shechinah stands above his head:

We can suggest an explanation based on the Zohar hokadosh (Bo 42.). The name havaya b"h is found in all living creatures. The circular head resembles the "yud"; the five fingers of the right hand correspond to the first "heh"; a person's upright body is in the shape of a "vav"; the five fingers of the left hand correspond to the second "heh." This structure is meant to serve as a constant reminder of our Creator.

It turns out that when a sick person has created a defect in the letter "yud," and has transfigured the words **עש"ר יו"ד** into **ער"ש דו"י**, the defect affects his head which corresponds to the letter "yud." As a consequence, he becomes ill, since his life-source draws from his head and the corresponding letter "yud." Therefore, the shechinah stands above his head, specifically, to assist the infirmed to heal the defect in the letter "yud."

### The Shechinah Above the Head of a sick person to Assist the Repair of the Letter "Yud"

Hopefully, we stand enlightened and can begin to solve the sages' riddle: **"שכינה למעלה מראשותיו של חולה, שנאמר ה' יסעדנו על ערש דוי"**. We posed the difficulty that there is no reference in the verse to the fact that the shechinah stands above the sick person's

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head. Now, however, we can suggest that the sages are referring to the fact that Hashem is assisting in the remedy of the letter “yud” that was transformed into ער”ש דו”י, a sick-bed. It stands to reason, then, that the Almighty would sit above the sick person’s head, because the head, corresponding to the “yud,” is what needs to be healed - - health needs to be restored from chochmah, the letter יו”ד עש”ר, so that he may rise from his sick-bed, his ער”ש דו”י.

We now have a wonderful explanation why Hashem tells Moshe Rabeinu: **כי תשא את ראש בני ישראל לפקודיהם**. You have to focus on the “ראש”, the head, which corresponds to the letter “yud,” chochmah, that was damaged by the chet ha’egel; they violated not only the Ten Commandments, but the entire Torah that derives from the heavenly chochmah.

The remedy for this defect is: **“ונתנו איש כופר נפשו לה’ בפקוד אותם”**. Each person is obligated to give atonement for his soul in the name of Hashem, whose letter “yud” was affected. The verse continues: **“ולא יהיה בהם נגף בפקוד אותם”**. By doing so, you will prevent the plague that results from transfiguring יו”ד עש”ר into the words ער”ש דו”י - - the source of all illness and death.

What form should this atonement take? **זזה יתנו כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל**. Twenty geirah would correspond to the letter “yud” spelled out entirely, יו”ד (numerical value 20= 10+6+4); however, since the primary defect is only in the first “yud,” the Almighty only commanded an atonement of a half-shekel, ten geirah. **“מחצית השקל תרומה לה”** - - this donation of a half-shekel, dedicated to fix the “yud” of Hashem’s name, will, thus, heal the defect in the shem Hashem.