

The Incredible Lesson of the Machatzis HaShekel

All of a Person's Good Deeds Only Constitute Half We Provide the Other Half with Our Desire

This coming Shabbas--on which we welcome in the month of Adar--is known as "Shabbas Shekalim." This name relates to the fact that we read the passage concerning the "Machatzis hashekel"—the half shekel--found in Parshas Ki Sisa, on this Shabbas. Based on the Mishnah (Megillah 29a), the Shulchan Aruch states (O.C. 685, 1 and 5): **"ראש חדש אדר שחל להיות בשבת קורין: — if Rosh Chodesh Adar falls on Shabbas, we read the passage discussing the "shekalim"; if Rosh Chodesh Adar falls on a weekday, we read that passage on the Shabbas preceding Rosh Chodesh.** The Gemara (Shekalim 2a) explains that in the times of the Beis HaMikdash, they would announce the collection of the "shekalim" on the Rosh Chodesh Adar immediately preceding the month of Nissan: **"באחד באדר משמיעין על השקלים".**

It was necessary to do so, because starting from Rosh Chodesh Nissan, all of the communal offerings had to be purchased from coins collected for the new year. It states in the Torah (Bamidbar 28, 14): **"זאת עולת חודש בחדשו לחדשי השנה" — this is the "olah" offering for the start of the new month, for the months of the year.** The Gemara states (Rosh HaShanah 7a): **"אמרה תורה חדש והבא קרבן מתרומה חדשה" — the Torah instructed us to renew the sacrificial service and to bring the offering from a new collection of funds.** Expounding a "gezeirah shavah," the Gemara deduces that the renewal of the sacrificial service begins on the first of Nissan; from that day onward, all of the communal offerings must be purchased with new funds.

Since we have an established practice to begin reviewing the laws of each occasion thirty days beforehand, the appropriate time to announce the collection of the new coins is specifically on the first day of Adar — thirty days before the first day of Nissan. To commemorate this event -- **"באחד באדר משמיעין על — השקלים" — we read the passage of the "Machatzis hashekel" on either Shabbas Rosh Chodesh Adar or on the Shabbas on which we bless the month of Adar.**

Hence it is only fitting that we establish a connection between the weekly Torah reading from Parshas Mishpatim and the reading from the passage of the "Machatzis hashekel." Let us begin with the passage regarding the mitzvah of the "Machatzis hashekel" (Shemos 30, 12):

"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', כל העובר על הפקודים מבין עשרים שנה ומעלה יתן תרומת ה', העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעט ממוחצית השקל לתת את תרומת ה' לכפר על נפשותיהם."

When you will take a census of Bnei Yisrael according to their counts, every man shall give Hashem an atonement for his soul when counting them, and there will be no plague among them when counting them. This is what they shall give — everyone who passes among the counted — half of the shekel, by the holy shekel, the shekel is twenty geirah, half of the shekel as a portion to Hashem. Rashi explains: **"זה יתנו" — הראה לו מטבע של אש ומשקלה מחצית השקל ואמר לו כזה יתנו" — Hashem showed Moshe a sort of coin of fire whose weight was half a shekel and told him, "They should give a coin like this."**

The source for this idea is the Midrash Tanchuma (Nasso 11); the Midrash adds that HKB"H took this fiery coin of sorts from beneath the "Kisei HaKavod"—the Throne of Glory. The commentaries question why HKB"H chose to show Moshe a fiery coin from beneath the Kisei HaKavod. Is there any shortage of half-shekel coins in this world that HKB"H could have shown him? Furthermore, how did a fiery coin in the amount of a half-shekel come to be beneath the Kisei HaKavod?

Why Did HKB"H Send a Malach to Divide Up the Blood into Two Halves

We shall begin our investigation by presenting the enlightening pesukim in this week's parsha, Parshas Mishpatim,

which complete the description of the ordeal of Matan Torah; they describe the covenant of blood that HKB”H established with Yisrael (Shemos 24, 5): **“וישלח את נערי בני ישראל ויעלו עולות: וישלחו זבחים שלמים לה’ פרים. ויקח משה חצי הדם וישם באגנות וחצי הדם זרק על המזבח, ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר דיבר ה’ נעשה ונשמע. ויקח משה את הדם ויזרוק על העם ויאמר, הנה דם הברית אשר כרת ה’.”** **He sent the youth of Bnei Yisrael and they brought up olah-offerings, and they slaughtered bulls to Hashem as shelamim-offerings to Hashem. Moshe took half the blood and placed it in basins and half the blood he sprinkled upon the altar. He took the Book of the Covenant and read in earshot of the people, and they said, “Everything that Hashem has said, we will do and we will obey!” Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that Hashem sealed with you concerning all these matters.”**

Rashi comments: **“ויקח משה חצי הדם, מי חלקו, מלאך בא וחלקו”—who divided the blood in half? A malach came and divided it.** Rashi’s source is the Midrash (V.R. 6, 5), which states that a malach descended from above in the likeness of Moshe and divided the blood into equal parts. Seemingly, this is quite surprising. Why was it so important to divide up the blood into two precisely equal portions—a procedure necessitating the service of a malach?

HKB”H and Knesset Yisrael Represent Two Halves

To illuminate the matter, let us present two visionaries teaching the same idea—the holy Rabbi from Apta, zy”a, in Ohev Yisrael (Parshas Shekalim) and the holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy”a, in Avodas Yisrael (Mishpatim). They explain why it was necessary for a malach to descend from the heavens in order to divide up the blood into two equal portions. It is well-known that HKB”H and the people of Yisrael represent, so to speak, a man and wife. This is illustrated by the following passuk related to Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 17): **“ויוצא משה את העם לקראת האלקים: Moshe brought the people forth from the camp toward G-d, and they stood under the mountain. Rashi teaches us: מהגיד שהשכינה יצאה לקראתם כחתן—“היוצא לקראת כלה”—that the Shechinah went out to greet them like a bridegroom going out to greet his bride.**

Accordingly, the great Rabbi from Apta, zy”a, explains the significance of the division of the blood into two parts. A man without a wife and, similarly, a woman without a husband are

considered as only half a being—half a body. Likewise, without Yisrael, HKB”H views Himself, as it were, as only half a body. By uniting with Yisrael, He elevates Himself and becomes, so to speak, whole. Here is what he writes:

“וכביכול כביכול הבורא ברוך הוא ובברוך שמו, לגודל עוצם אהבתו לבני ישראל עם קרובו ולמען טובו וחסדו הגדול, מצמצם את עצמו כביכול וכביכול להיקרא בשם בחינת פלג גופא, ובני ישראל הם בחינת פלג גופא השני.”

Due to His great love for Bnei Yisrael and His extreme kindness, He restricts Himself, as it were, to be considered only half a body—with Bnei Yisrael constituting the other half-body.

The Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy”a, writes:

“ולפי שהמעשה הזאת היה בחמשה בסיון במזל תאומים, אשר נדבקו בני ישראל עם ה’ כתאומי צביה, ומבשרי אחזה אלוה, כמו יחוד למטה בין אהבת אוהבים, שנאמר עליהם כי הם נפש אחד ודם אחד. וכן היה הרמז כאן על גודל אהבה, כי חשוב בעיני השני” חצי הדם אשר זרק על העם, כמו החצי אשר זרק על המזבח, וזה בא מלאך וחלקו, להורות בסוד לא הוא גדול ממנה ולא היא גדולה ממנו והבן.”

This event took place on the fifth of Sivan, during the constellation of Gemini—twins. This alluded to the fact that Bnei Yisrael and Hashem were joined like twins—like the union of two human lovers. The blood alludes to the intensity of their love. The half-portion of blood sprinkled upon the people was as significant to the Blessed One as the half-portion sprinkled on the mizbeiach. Therefore, a malach came to divide up the blood into two precisely equal portions to indicate that both parties in this relationship were equal; He was not greater than her and she was not greater than Him.

“The light of Your countenance raise up upon us, O Master, and allow me to donate the shekel in the Temple, established and exalted!”

In this manner, the Ohev Yisrael goes on to explain the rationale underlying the mitzvah of the “Machatzis hashekel.” HKB”H, as it were, views himself as a mere half-shekel in relation to Yisrael whom He views as the other half-shekel. Therefore, He requests that Yisrael bring (Shemos 30, 13): **“מחצית השקל—a half-shekel as a portion to Hashem—to raise their half-shekel in order to connect it with HKB”H. Thus, they will merit uniting HKB”H with the congregation of Yisrael in a perfect and complete union like one whole shekel.**

Accordingly, we can provide a very nice interpretation for the words of the poet (Mussaf for Parshas Shekalim):

“the light of Your countenance raise up upon us, O Master, and allow me to donate the shekel in the Temple, established and exalted!”

The commentaries are puzzled by the words: “ושקל אשא”—“and allow me to donate the shekel.” After all, the performance of the mitzvah only entails bringing a half-shekel. Yet, based on what we have just learned, we can interpret the poet’s message. As explained, the underlying rationale for the “Machatzis hashekel” is that HKB”H in His extreme humility only views Himself as half a body. He requests that Yisrael raise a half-shekel of their own in order to unite it with HKB”H—resulting in the perfect union of a complete shekel.

We know, however, that at all times, and particularly during times of galut when we lack a Beis HaMikdash, the yetzer hara rallies all of its resources to prevent a Jew from connecting with HKB”H. Therefore, we pray to HKB”H to assist us from above: “אור פניך עלינו אדון נשא”—to shine His divine light upon us from above; this will enable us to connect with Him from below: “ושקל אשא בבית נכון ונשא”—providing the missing half in order to form a whole shekel.

This obligates us, however, to scrutinize the matter more closely. At the time of Matan Torah, HKB”H revealed to us the magnificent nature of the relationship that exists between Himself and Yisrael; each party is considered a mere half. He demonstrated this equality by having the blood split up into two equal portions; half of the blood was sprinkled on the mizbeiach and the other half was sprinkled on Yisrael. So, why did HKB”H see fit to emphasize and reinforce this magnificent relationship by requesting that every Jew donate a “Machatzis hashekel,” a silver coin, annually?

It Would Have Been Preferable Had Man Not Been Created

I was struck by an intriguing thought! We can explain this entire matter based on what we have learned in the Gemara (Eiruvim 13b): “שתי שנים ומחצה נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, והללו אומרים: נוח לו לאדם שיש לו לאדם נברא, נמנו וגמרו: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, ועכשיו -- שנברא יפספש במעשיו, ויש אומרים ימשמש במעשיו.” For two and a half years, Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel debated. These argued that it would have been preferable for man not to have been created than to have been created. Whereas these argued that it was preferable for man to have been created than to not have been created. They finally took

a vote and concluded: It would have been preferable for man not to have been created than to have been created. Now that he has been created, he should analyze his (past) deeds; others say, he should consider his (future) deeds.

At first glance, the Gemara’s concluding remark is puzzling: “ועכשיו שנברא יפספש במעשיו”—and now that he has been created, he should analyze his (past) deeds. How does this fit in with the previous statement that they took a vote and concluded that it would have been preferable had man not been created? If the Gemara is saying that now that man has been created, he should at least make every effort to serve Hashem, it should have said: “And now that he has been created, he should engage in the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos.” So, why does the Gemara employ the phrase “יפספש במעשיו”—suggesting that he should reflect upon his past deeds?

It appears that we can provide a solution based on the well-known chiddush of the Maharsha (Makkot 23b) regarding the Gemara’s statement: “נמנו וגמרו: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא” -- They finally took a vote and concluded: It would have been preferable for man not to have been created. When it says that they voted and concluded, it means that they took a tally of the mitzvos and realized that the number of mitzvos lo sa’aseh — which total 365 — exceed the number of mitzvos aseh — totaling 248. Therefore, after being created, it is more likely that a person will lose out and be punished than be meritorious and be rewarded. For, although he will have the opportunity to fulfill the 248 mitzvos aseh, he is more likely to transgress, chas v’shalom, the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh.

If, however, man had never been created, the following would have held true: On the one hand, he would have lacked the opportunity to perform the 248 mitzvos aseh; yet, he would have been unable to transgress the 365 mitzvos lo sa’aseh. Thus, the Gemara states: “נמנו וגמרו”. In other words, after tallying up the number of mitzvos aseh and the number of mitzvos lo sa’aseh and finding that the mitzvos lo sa’aseh outnumbered the mitzvos aseh, only then did they conclude: “נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא” — it would have been preferable had man not been created — for had he not been created, he would not have been able to transgress the mitzvos lo sa’aseh which outnumber the mitzvos aseh.

Nevertheless, the commentaries question this line of reasoning. How is it even possible to conjecture that it would have been preferable had man never been created? After all, we have an accepted principle that HKB”H created man in order to

do good for His creations. The source for this concept appears in the teachings of the Arizal: **“כשעלה ברצונו יתברך שמו לברוא את העולם כדי להיטיב לברואיו”** — **when it became His will to create the world, His desire was to benefit His creations.** So, how is it even conceivable that it would have been preferable had man not been created? Many answers to this question have been proposed and so I will also provide an answer of my own.

HKB”H Chooses the Remnants of Our Tefilos

I would like to propose an explanation based on a fundamental concept learned from the great Rabbi Uri of Strelisk, zy”a, and Rabbi Bunem of Peshischa, zy”a. They both address the formula instituted by the Anshei Keneset HaGedolah (the members of the Great Assembly) in the berachah of Yishtabach: **“הבוחר בשירי זמרה”**. There is an apparent redundancy in this phrase. A “shir” and a “zimrah” are one and the same. So, why do we state that HKB”H chooses **“בשירי זמרה”**?

They explain the matter as follows. After a G-d-fearing Jew has finished praying—offering his songs and praises to HKB”H—he pauses to reflect. Perhaps, G-d forbid, his Tefilos to the King of the Universe were lacking. Hence, he wishes with all his heart that he could pray to HKB”H all over again—this time reciting his songs and praises more perfectly. These desires and yearnings issued from a contrite heart are dearer and more valued to HKB”H than the actual songs and praises already recited. For, at this point, the person has no further recourse; he is remorseful and heartbroken for his failure to pray adequately.

Now, there is a well-known maxim in the Gemara (Kiddushin 40a): **“מחשבה טובה מצרפה למעשה”**—**He associates a good thought with an actual deed.** Thus, if a person has these sincere thoughts of remorse, HKB”H views it as if he actually recited the songs and praises in the ideal manner. This then is the interpretation of the phrase: **“הבוחר בשירי זמרה”**. The word **“שירי”**, which means “songs of,” is related to the word **“זמרה”**, meaning remnants of songs. In other words, HKB”H chooses the remnants of our songs and praises—those parts that were not actually expressed by Yisrael in their prayers but were longed for after the completion of their prayers—wishing that they had prayed more sincerely. This completes their explanation.

This allows us to better appreciate the minhag of the early chassidim. They would remain an hour after their prayers contemplating the hour of Tefilos they had just completed—seeking all of the places where their Tefilos lacked proper “kavanah.” As a

result, they were broken-hearted, yearning that if only they could have prayed better, in a more perfect manner. Due to this soul-searching introspection and burning desire to improve their Tefilos, HKB”H considered it as if they had indeed prayed in the ideal fashion. This is the implication of the phrase: **“הבוחר בשירי זמרה”**.

Perfecting the Mitzvah by Longing to Fulfill It More Completely

In truth, it is important to keep in mind what we have learned from the wonderful teachings of the holy master Rabbi Yehoshua of Belz, zy”a. This amazing concept of: **הבוחר בשירי זמרה**—relating to the remnants or unspoken parts of our Tefilos, applies to all mitzvos, not only to tefilah. Whenever a Jew performs one of Hashem’s mitzvos and then reflects back remorsefully that he failed to perform the mitzvah properly, HKB”H considers it as if he performed the mitzvah a second time in the perfect manner.

Explicit proof for this notion can be found in the Avodas Yisrael (Pesach 147a). He addresses the following passuk related to the mitzvah of “sefirat haomer” (Vayikra 23, 16): **“וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת מיום הביאכם את עומר התנופה שבע שבתות”**—**עד תמימות תהייתה. עד ממחרת השבת השביעית תספרו חמישים יום**—**you shall count for yourselves—from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the “omer” of the waving—seven weeks, they shall be complete. Until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count, fifty days.** Consider a person who reaches the final day of the sefirah and reflects back introspectively that he could have fulfilled the mitzvah more completely and perfectly. As a result, HKB”H combines this sincere thought of remorse with an actual deed and it is viewed as if this person fulfilled the entire sefirah on the very last day. This then is the meaning of the passuk: **“עד ממחרת השבת השביעית תספרו חמישים יום”**—**until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count, fifty days.** In other words, until the very last day, you still have a chance to count all fifty days.

Thus, we can reconcile the fact that HKB”H—Whose desire is to do only what is good for mankind—chose to create man, even though: **“נמנו וגמרו שנוח לו לאדם שלא נברא”**—the tally reveals that the mitzvos lo sa’aseh outnumber the mitzvos aseh. As explained, after the completion of a mitzvah, it is worthwhile for every Jew to consider that he could have performed that mitzvah in a more perfect, complete manner. As a result of this positive thought, HKB”H will view it as if he repeated the mitzvah in the ideal fashion. Hence, each mitzvah aseh will be

counted twice; and two times 248 equals 496. Now, the mitzvos aseih outnumber the 365 mitzvos lo sa'aseih. A person who consistently follows this practice—reflecting back after the completion of every mitzvah—deserves to have been created. For, in his case, he is more likely to be rewarded, seeing as his mitzvos aseih exceed his mitzvos lo sa'aseih.

This enlightens us and provides us with a better understanding of the sages' puzzling remark: **“למנו וגמרו נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משינוי—משינוי—they counted and concluded that it would have been preferable had man not been created than been created.”** As the Maharsha explained, they counted and found that the mitzvos lo sa’aseh outnumber the mitzvos aseh. That being the case, man is more likely to fail and deserve punishment than to be found meritorious and rewarded. Therefore, our blessed sages sought a remedy that would make it preferable than man was created: **“ועכשיו שנברא יבטל במעשיו”**. In other words, he should reflect back and find the deficiencies in the mitzvos he has performed; **“ויש אומרים יבטל במעשיו”**—in the event that he fails to find any deficiencies, he should endeavor to find a mitzvah that he can perform in a more ideal manner. By having these positive thoughts, it will be considered as if he performed the mitzvos for a second time. As a result, it will be preferable and advantageous that he was created; for he is more likely to be rewarded due to the doubling of his mitzvos aseh.

**“If you seek it like silver”
— Always Yearning for Twice as Much**

Following this line of reasoning, let us provide an intriguing explanation for HKB”H’s choice of the “Machatzis hashekel” as a means to express the amazing relationship between Himself and Yisrael—illustrating that each party by itself only constitutes a half. Let us refer to a statement from the wisest of all men (Mishlei 2, 4): **“אם תבקשנה ככסף וכמטמונים תחפשנה, אז תבין: יראת ה' ודעת אלקים תמצא”**—**if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of Hashem and discover the knowledge of G-d.** Let us endeavor to understand why he compared the quest for Torah and mitzvot to the quest for money and silver. It appears that we can provide an explanation based on a statement from Chazal in the Midrash (Koheles Rabbah 1, 32):

“אין אדם יוצא מן העולם וחצי תאוותו בידו, אלא אן אית ליה מאה, בעי למעבד יתהון
if a person—תרתין מאווין, ואן אית ליה תרתין מאווין, בעי למעבד יתהון ארבעה מאה”
possesses one hundred, he wants to turn it into two hundred; if he
has two hundred, he wants to turn it into four hundred.

Thus, we can suggest that this is why Shlomo HaMelech compared the quest via Torah-study and the performance of mitzvos in the following terms: **“If you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasures.”** He is teaching us that in the performance of any mitzvah, it is essential to long to fulfill the mitzvah twice. After actually performing the mitzvah once, it is worthwhile to engage in an introspective, soul-searching process and consider that the mitzvah could have been performed in a more complete manner. By longing to fulfill the mitzvah a second time in the ideal fashion, HKB”H acknowledges this positive thought and associates it with an actual deed—viewing it as if the person actually performed the mitzvah a second time perfectly.

This is the message conveyed by Shlomo HaMelech: **“If you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasures.”** Every time you perform a mitzvah, you should long to actually perform it a second time like a person seeking money; if he has one hundred, he wants two hundred; if he has two hundred, he wants four hundred. Only **“then you will understand the fear of Hashem and discover the knowledge of G-d.”** For as a result of your longing to perform the mitzvah more completely, HKB”H will consider it as if you performed the mitzvah a second time in the perfect, ideal manner. This then is the meaning of the statement in our Shabbas zemiros (Baruch Kel Elyon): **“ואשרי כל חוכה לתשלומי כפל—praiseworthy is everyone who awaits double-payment—** by yearning to rectify and improve on the performance of each and every mitzvah, a person will merit double-payment.

**“One thing has G-d spoken,
these two have I heard”**

In this manner, we can provide a nice interpretation of the following statement by Yisrael's sweet psalmist (Tehillim 62, 12):

“אחת דיבר אלקים שתיים זו שמעתי כי עוז לאלקים, ולך ה' חסד כי אתה תשלם לאיש כמעשהו”—one thing has G-d spoken, these two have I heard: that strength belongs to G-d; and Yours, O Lord, is kindness, for You repay each man according to his deeds. In other words: **“One thing has G-d spoken**—when G-d spoke at Matan Torah regarding the fulfillment of all of the mitzvos, He only spoke of the initial performance of each mitzvah in actual deed.

In truth, however: **“These two have I heard”**—I understood that it is necessary to fulfill each mitzvah twice—by reflecting after the actual deed that one could have performed the mitzvah more completely and ideally. By doing so, HKB”H will associate the positive thought with an actual deed: **“That strength belongs to G-d”**—only G-d has the power to view a good thought as an actual deed; **“and Yours, O Lord, is kindness, for You repay each man according to**

his deeds—so He credits a person for his fulfillment of the mitzvah in thought as if he fulfilled the mitzvah in actual deed.

This then is the significance of the mitzvah of the “Machatzis hashekel.” It teaches us that we are only fulfilling half of the mitzvah in actual deed. It is essential to view the performance of a mitzvah like a silver coin; a person always wants twice as much as what he has. So, too, the performance of a mitzvah, should be viewed as a “Machatzis hashekel.” He must always reflect back after the performance of a mitzvah and long to have performed the mitzvah in a more complete manner. As a result, HKB”H will value this good thought--this sincere longing--and associate it with the actual performance of the mitzvah. Thus, HKB”H provides the second half of the shekel, completing the mitzvah by producing a whole shekel.

Now, this enlightens us with regards to the meaning of the Midrash: **“כמין מטבע של אש הוציא הקב”ה מתחת כסא הכבוד והראהו למשה, וזוהי תנו, ואמר לו זה יתנו, וזוהי תנו”**—**HKB”H took out the likeness of a fiery coin from beneath the Kisei HaKavod and showed it to Moshe. He said to him: “This is what they should give; like this they should give.”** We posed the question: How did a coin of fire come to be there? Based on our current discussion, we can provide an answer. In this manner, HKB”H revealed to Moshe the secret of the “Machatzis hashekel.” It is essential that a person realize that his actual performance of the mitzvah only represents a “Machatzis hashekel”; as a result, he will long to complete the mitzvah. This sincere longing generates a fiery coin beneath the Kisei HaKavod in keeping with the notion of (Yoma 86a): **“גדולה תשובה שמגיעת עד כסא הכבוד—great is teshuvah that it reaches the Kisei HaKavod.** This is the significance of the fact that HKB”H took out a “Machatzis hashekel” of fire from beneath the Kisei HaKavod; He was completing Yisrael’s mitzvah in its ideal form.

“Half a shekel as a portion to Hashem” to Rectify the Half We Performed

Accordingly, it appears that we can explain why HKB”H commanded us to bring: **“מחצית השקל תרומה לה”**—**a half-shekel as a portion to Hashem.** Because the second half of the mitzvah which a person fulfills only in thought—longing to have performed the mitzvah more perfectly—in reality, belongs to Hashem—Who associates the thought with an actual deed. Yet, in His infinite mercy and kindness, HKB”H credits man with having fulfilled the mitzvah completely—seeing as the mitzvah was completed as a result of man’s yearning and desire.

This teaches us, however, that the actual performance of the mitzvah, which is represented by the “Machatzis hashekel,” requires tikun. For, the yetzer hara intervenes in the performance of any mitzvah by introducing improper thoughts in the person’s mind—thoughts that are not l’shmah. The “Machatzis hashekel,” however, which comes from HKB”H does not require any tikun. It represents the notion of: **“הבוחר בשירי”**—**HKB”H unites a person’s sincere thoughts and yearning to fulfill the mitzvah more completely with an actual deed.** This person is broken-hearted and sincerely regrets that he failed to perform the mitzvah properly; he yearns for a second chance. As such, this “Machatzis hashekel” does not require any further tikun; it is beyond reproach.

Therefore, HKB”H commanded us to bring: **“Machatzis hashekel’ as a portion to Hashem”**—to atone for the first “Machatzis hashekel”—the actual performance of the deed of the mitzvah. Even that half should be elevated to Hashem; so that it can be joined with the “Machatzis hashekel” which HKB”H completes as a result of man’s sincere desire to fulfill the mitzvah more completely. By uniting these two halves, the mitzvah is completed and a whole shekel is formed.

We can now appreciate why HKB”H chose to reveal the magnificent relationship that exists between Himself and Yisrael in terms of the “Machatzis hashekel.” The concept of the “Machatzis hashekel” can be grasped more easily when compared to a silver coin. It makes no difference whether a person is rich or poor; every person wishes that he had twice as much in his hand as he actually does. The same should hold true regarding our service of Hashem. We should **“seek it like silver,”** longing to perform the mitzvah a second time in its full glory.

In this light, we can understand the covenant of blood HKB”H established with Yisrael at the time of Matan Torah. A malach came and divided the blood of the korbanot into two precisely equal portions. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the mizbeiach, as if it was being sprinkled on HKB”H, so to speak; the other half was sprinkled on Yisrael. This procedure illustrated the constant relationship and partnership that exists between HKB”H and Yisrael. Yisrael fulfill one half of the mitzvos by performing the actual deeds; HKB”H completes the mitzvos, rendering them perfect and whole, by means of Yisrael’s longing to fulfill the mitzvos ideally.

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