

Parshas Ki Sisa

This week's parsha is Ki Sisa; at the beginning of the Parsha, the Jews are instructed to give a half shekel as a counting method. According to some Mefarshim, the half-shekel is a specific denomination that should be used for counting (meaning all counting needs to be done using the half-shekel). Through the counting, a plague will be averted, according to the Posuk, and Rashi explains that Ayin Hara can affect something that has been counted. Later in the posuk 16, Rashi comments on the "atone for your soul" that there could be some sin that needs atoning. Regardless of where the contributions went, the critical part is that the rich don't give more and the poor less. This teaches us a few lessons. First, every person has a required commitment to the community and needs to take responsibility for that. Another lesson is that work needs to be put into the giving of the Half Shekel. The wealthy and poor person needs effort and is therefore cognizant of the purpose of the half shekel. Poor people must figure out a way to contribute a half shekel. Wealthy people must be mindful of giving the correct denomination (and not use the money to solve the problem, which requires personal effort. Hashem levels the playing field for everyone's ego. No more or less, just what Hashem wants, and finally, a half coin that is incomplete without its 'neighbour' to make it whole. Which is something Hashem desires from us, to be Areivim with one another.

What was shown to Moshe was a coin of fire. Which metaphorically represents the fire of our soul. By giving Tzedaka, we are giving of ourselves and giving to one another. It is a metaphor for our service as a

Neshama in its journey on earth. Just as a fire can illuminate another wick without diminishing from itself, a fire of passion for serving Hashem can ignite a fire in the next soul.

Ultimately, the Rebbe explains that Hashem sees us as equal, regardless of the status and stature we believe we are on this earth. How humans act and how we are supposed to be can be two separate things. The part of us that separates from Hashem gives a place for us to see ourselves, whereas the part of our soul that yearns to cleave to Hashem is equal in the eyes of Hashem. We need both. We need to be both. This gives people the option to pursue challenges and overcome them, and in this way, further their connection to Hashem. Because ultimately, humans don't regularly see themselves as equal to one another. Hashem recognizes this about humanity but gives us a method to overcome it and have an opportunity to prevent plagues.

Good Shabbos