

This shall they give – everyone who passes through the census – a half-shekel of the sacred shekel. (30:13)

Why was *Klal Yisrael* commanded to contribute a half-*shekel* coin? Would it have been so difficult to give a whole *shekel*? This question has been treated extensively by the various commentators. The gist of their commentary focuses on the need for each individual Jew to view himself as a mere half. No Jew is whole, alone and in and of himself. *Horav Yoshiyahu Pinto, Shlita*, offers a powerful insight into the half-*shekel* requirement. He explains that a Jew should view every occurrence, every circumstance, every issue that he faces, as being only half of the story. Another side to the story always exists. Whatever he might be going through right now is only part of a larger picture. With *emunah* and *bitachon*, faith and trust, in Hashem, he will understand the “rest of the story”.

Numerous stories and parables have received written and oral expression, which emphasize this verity. I have selected a classic culled from the *Kisvei*, writings, of *Horav Chaim Vital, zl*, which he redacted from his revered *Rebbe*, the holy *Arizal*. A story of this caliber from such a source increases its authenticity and should enrich and ennoble our *emunah*.

Yosef was a young married man who, together with his younger brother, would visit their widowed mother after *shul* on Friday night. They entered the house to notice their mother reading a *Tehillim* that had belonged to their father, who had passed away two years earlier. When their mother looked up from the *sefer*, they noticed that her eyes were damp from crying. Yosef looked at her and said, “*Imma*, two years have passed since our father left us. Why are you still crying? It is enough! *Imma*, it is time to move on. Hashem made a decision. We must abide by it.” Their mother rose from her chair and said, “Yosef, you are right, but I cannot forget. I cannot stop crying. I miss him so much. I will make a special attempt especially for you to put a smile on my face and live with joy.”

They spent some time together and bid one another *Gutt Shabbos*. The mother retired to bed in a much better mood than she had been in some time. Soon she began dreaming of an exquisite garden filled with the most beautiful, fragrant flowers. As she stood there in awe, an old man with a long, white beard appeared and asked if she wanted to see her late husband. “Certainly,” she said, and she followed him to a clearing where a large group of (what appeared to be) righteous men were listening intently to a *shiur*, lecture, being rendered by a young man. She looked closely and was shocked to see that the young *rebbe* was none other than her late husband.

“My husband, why did you leave me at such a young age? How are you able to teach Torah to the righteous ones in *Gan Eden*?”

“Let me explain to you,” he began. “The world in which you live is but a place where *gilgulim*, transmigrated souls, are sent to complete the spiritual repair of their lives. The real world is up here. During my first sojourn in life, I was a great Torah scholar. Because of my overriding desire to

learn Torah, I refused to marry and raise a family. It would be too time-consuming. When I came here I was told that I had failed to fulfill the first *mitzvah* of the Torah. Thus, I was compelled to return to marry and have a family – but only long enough to set my sons straight on the path of Torah. Once this was achieved, I was called back.”

“Why does our son not have good fortune in his business ventures?” she asked. “Do you remember that Yosef was involved in a *din Torah*, litigation, with another Jew? Well, although he won, the other fellow was very angry and was about to take revenge against Yosef. My prayers on Yosef’s behalf succeeded in sparing him, but at the expense of his financial success. The decree against him will have reached its designated time in one more year, when his ventures will take an about-face.”

“Why does our son, David, have such difficulty in finding his appropriate match?” she asked. “His *zivug*, match, is presently only thirteen years old. She will move to your city in five years, at which time they will ‘meet’ and become engaged.”

“One last question: Why did our youngest die at the age of three at the hands of a gentile alcoholic? This was such a tragedy for us. Why?” she asked.

“Our youngest son was the *gilgul* of a great *tzaddik* who, at birth was kidnapped from his parents and raised by gentiles. Later on, he was redeemed and grew up to be a Torah luminary. Those few years during which he had nursed from a gentile, however, prevented his soul from ascending to its rightful position in *Gan Eden*. It was necessary for it to return in the body of our son, to nurse from a righteous woman, for which position you were chosen.”

“But why did his death have to come through such tragic circumstances?” she asked. “Our son was destined to die at a young age regardless,” he explained. “A great decree against our community was decreed in Heaven which would have annihilated it. Our son’s *neshamah* was chosen to serve as atonement, thereby averting disaster for our community.” He concluded his dialogue, saying to his wife, “You must move on. An appropriate match has been proposed for you. You should marry him, and you will be blessed with a happy, long life. Your suffering is over.” She woke up from her dream with a new, refreshed feeling, understanding that it was truly time to move on. This is not an isolated incident, but one, which occurs constantly to each and every one of us. We just require greater insight and belief in order to confront the challenges of life.