

The wealthy shall not increase, and the destitute shall not decrease, from half a shekel. (30:15)

The *mitzvah* of *machatzis ha'shekel*, half a *shekel*, as outlined by the Torah ensures equality in contributing to the *korbanos tzibur*, communal offerings. However, *Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Lishensk* sees a deeper meaning in its spiritual symbolism. It is a message that applies to every Jew – he who is spiritually wealthy and has performed a treasure trove of *mitzvos*, and his destitute brother, whose spiritual achievements are lacking.

The poor, representing those who feel spiritually deficient due to their errant behavior, are reminded not to despair. Even if they personally feel themselves to be distant from Hashem, He still loves them and will embrace and welcome them back. The half-*shekel* teaches that they have something meaningful to contribute. Through *teshuvah*, they can reclaim their “seat at the table.”

Conversely, the wealthy man, whose spiritual journey thus far has met with huge success, should not allow his achievement to go to his head. The half-shekel signifies that he has only achieved part of what is expected of him. His spiritual accomplishment is but a fraction of his potential. This awareness spurs him to strive further and higher. He is not there yet.

In summation, whether one is “poor” or “rich” spiritually, no one stands alone in his service of Hashem. The half-*shekel* reflects the balance between humility and responsibility – reminding the “wealthy man” not to allow success to go to his head, and the “poor” not to despair by underestimating his value. When we each contribute a half – we are all one before Hashem.