

## **Every valuation shall be in the sacred shekel. (27:25)**

Voluntary contributions to the Sanctuary were a significant source of funding for the maintenance of the Temple. One would think that the laws concerning such valuations would be placed earlier in *Sefer Vayikra*, which deals with the Temple offerings. **Horav S.R. Hirsh, zl**, explains that these gifts were excluded by design, lest one think that his contributions replaced *mitzvah* performance. Voluntary contributions do not atone for laxity in *mitzvah* observance.

The above *pasuk* teaches us that every evaluation is to be measured in *Shekel ha'Kodesh*, sacred *shekel*. **Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita**, renders this *pasuk* homiletically to teach us a valuable lesson concerning how we are to give *tzedakah*, charity. Even the most philanthropic Jew must be acutely aware that charity must be given on a scale commensurate with the degree that one spends on himself. In other words, the percentage which he feels he is capable of doling out for his personal needs and pleasures should be balanced by a similar percentage for *tzedakah*. Likewise, in the same manner that he expects for himself, he should do for others. This does not mean that he must purchase an Armani suit for the indigent and those in need, but there is a vast difference between polyester and Armani: We must factor in the emotional needs of those we help, as well as their financial requirements.

When we contribute to organizations, *shuls*, *yeshivos*, etc, we often become incredibly creative with a litany of excuses that would rival some of the most prolific authors of fiction. “My money is tied up”; “I am just not that liquid right now”; “I just took a big hit in my investment portfolio,” etc. While these excuses might even be partially true, we would expect this person to exhibit some restraint in his personal spending, as well. This is, of course, not the case. When someone’s financial portfolio takes a hit, the first ones to feel the pinch will be those who are beneficiaries of his charitable contributions.

Thus, the Torah teaches us “every valuation” – every penny that you spend on *erkecha*, your personal needs – shall be determined with the same measuring stick that you apply to the “sacred *shekel*.” When you feel “tight” concerning *tzedakah*, you should likewise feel the pinch regarding your own needs. If you do not have for one – then you do not have for the other. Interestingly, when people apply this measuring device, they suddenly discover money which they “thought” they did not have. By all means, take that trip; purchase that suit; make that lavish celebration, but please remember those in need. They would also like to celebrate.