

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

As part of an annual compulsory tax, the *Torah* instructs each member of *Klal Yisroel* to give a half-*shekel* towards the *korbanos tzibur*, communal offerings. The *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* explains that the requirement for half a shekel underscores the importance of unity among Jews. No Jew is complete unless he joins with others. Indeed, even the simple person has the potential to complete the most noble Jew. In the beginning of *Meseches Shekalim*, the *Mishnah* says: On *Rosh Chodesh Adar*, they (*Bais Din*) would proclaim regarding the obligation to contribute the *Shekalim* and *Kilayim*, reminding people to rid themselves of any diverse species of grain, vegetable or fruit. It is interesting to note that the *Mishnah* places *Shekalim* and *Kilayim* together. The *Mishnah* is conveying a subtle message to us.

*Menachem Tzion* suggests an important lesson, regarding the concept of unity, to be derived from here. While *achdus*, Jewish unity, is crucial to the survival of our people, it is important to remember that diverse "seeds", whose goal it is to undermine *Torah* Judaism, are not acceptable. They do not contribute to *achdus*. They are *kilayim*. The *Mishnah* teaches us that while it is important to proclaim about the *Shekalim*, encouraging unity among *Klal Yisrael*, this unity does not include those who perverse philosophy and alien perspective disparage *Torah* life.

The *Torah* enjoins *Klal Yisrael* that their contributions must be equal. The wealthy man should not increase his gift, and the poor man should not diminish his share. What is the true definition of wealth? Who is really a rich man, and who is a poor man? *Horav Eliyahu Schlessinger, Shlita*, cites the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos, 4:1* which defines a rich man as someone who is *sameach b'chelko*, satisfied and happy with his G-d-given portion in life. He does not complain or drive himself to the brink of disaster if he is not blessed with an overabundance of wealth. This *Mishnah* teaches us a lesson in character refinement, but it does not really define wealth. Perhaps one who is satisfied with what he has should be called a *tzaddik*, righteous or virtuous person. Furthermore, should we really refer to one who accepts his poverty and is satisfied with his lack of material excess as being "blessed in this world"?

*Horav Schlessinger* infers from here that wealth is not determined by the quantity of one's assets, but rather by how much he feels he is lacking. *Chazal* teach us that "one who possesses one hundred (dollars) must have two." By his very nature, man is driven to desire, he must possess more and more. The more one has - the more he wants and thinks he needs. One who has one hundred dollars wants two hundred; one who has two hundred seeks four hundred. On the other hand, one who has very little, but is satisfied with his portion, is truly wealthy, because he has what he needs. The proverbial wealthy man has it all, while contemporary man never has enough. The true *ashir* is happy with life; he has everything that he needs.

We may now render a homiletic exposition of this *pasuk*. "*The wealthy shall not increase.*" Who is truly wealthy? He who does not find it necessary to increase his assets. He has sufficient assets to suit his purposes. The man is poor, however, who always views his portion as insufficient, as less than others'; he always wants more, never is gratified with that with which he has been blessed. He is a poor man and probably also a psychologically unstable man.