

## This shall they give – everyone who passes through the census. (30:13)

The *mitzvah* of giving *machatzis ha'shekel*, a half-*shekel*, each year applies equally to all Jews (men, twenty years old and up), regardless of their financial circumstances. All Jews are the same with regard to the donation that supports the daily *korbanos*, communal offerings, and other communal rituals in the *Bais HaMikdash*. As the *Sefer HaChinuch* explains the *shoresh*, root, of this *mitzvah*, Hashem wanted – for the good and merit of *Klal Yisrael* – that all Jews be equal with regard to the sacrifices (equal representation) that they brought regularly before Him. *Shavim b'mitzvah*, equal in the *mitzvah*, because all Jews are equal before Hashem. Every Jew has his unique, individual *tafkid*, purpose, in life, totally exclusive of his fellow. It is a purpose which only he can perform – no one else. After all, only one “you” exists.

This idea becomes more compelling after (or during) a crisis in one's life, when everything seems to come apart. One might think that the crisis counteracts his purpose in life. It is not true. He always has a purpose. He should be patient and watch how the situation plays out, and he will soon see how, even/especially in his present crisis, he is able to achieve what no one else can.

*Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates the story of *Reb Asaf-Yosef Zeiger* - who grew up in a secular *kibbutz* in Southern *Eretz Yisrael* right next to *Sderot*. He became a *baal teshuvah*, penitent, and studied for eight years in *Bnei Brak*. He then returned to his *kibbutz* and married a like-minded young woman. Now came the pressing decision: Where should they live? No religious atmosphere to speak of existed in their present location. His mentors and other distinguished Torah leaders encouraged him to return to the *kibbutz*. No one was more suited to reach out to the members of his community than one of their own. He figured that this must be his personal *tafkid* in life. It did not take long before he had established a *shul* that served as a Torah center to which Jews of all stripes came to hear the word of G-d. Even after he became gravely ill, he continued his holy work, because only he could do it. Who knows, perhaps this is why he was blessed with a *refuah sheleimah*?

One of the premier *talmidim*, disciples, of the *Baal Shem Tov* visited his saintly *Rebbe*. He was shocked to hear the *Baal Shem Tov* declare, “You have no *emunah*, faith!” Obviously shocked by this accusation, the student replied, “I spend a good part of my *avodas ha'kodosh*, religious service, working on areas of *emunah*, elevating and deepening my faith.” The *Baal Shem Tov* countered, “Yes, you have *emunah* in Hashem, but you have no faith in yourself!” This means that a person who does not “hold of himself,” who lacks sufficient self-confidence, whose belief in himself and his abilities leaves something to be desired, is guilty of the concept of *katnus mochin*, restricted consciousness, which is the opposite of *gadlus mochin*, expanded consciousness. Negativity, resentment, aggravation, and obstinateness appear to be much more powerful than they really are to the individual who is going through a period of *katnus*, literally, smallness. He becomes overwhelmed, filled with a lack of self-confidence; he is no longer able to dream, to

believe, to hope. He acts much like the *meraglim*, Jewish spies, whom Moshe *Rabbeinu* sent to reconnoiter *Eretz Yisrael*. They heard the residents of the land referring to them as *chagavim*, grasshoppers, which resulted in their own diminished opinion of themselves: *Va'nehi b'eineinu k'chagavim*, "We were in our own eyes as grasshoppers" (*Bamidbar* 13:33). Such a statement projects an utter state of uselessness and depression, which impedes a person's personal growth, thus interfering with his *emunah* in Hashem. The key to believing in oneself is to be true to oneself. Everyone has a unique good quality upon which he should focus. As a result, he should live his life consistent with his highest values and aspirations. Doing this will enable and empower him to believe in himself.

As a corollary to the *mitzvah* of *machtzis ha'shekel*, we learn the significance of attending to our personal *tafkid* in life. It is not about anyone else but us. Everyone has to worry about his personal turf, his unique *tafkid*. Do not worry about the other fellow. Worry about yourself!

The head of one of the premier *chesed* programs in *Eretz Yisrael*, a program which reaches out and helps many individuals who are in serious need of medical assistance, (and all of the antecedent issues that result from their condition) came to *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, seeking a *brachah*, blessing. Although an accomplished *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, he asked the *Rav* to bless him that he should have more time for learning and that his learning should be on a more profound level (as it used to be prior to his involvement with the *Klal*, community). The response was inspiring. "Had you approached me prior to undertaking this endeavor which assists thousands of our people and creates an enormous *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name, in the world, I would have granted you a blessing to your heart's content (to grow in learning). Now that you are so involved in your project, and *Klal Yisrael* is in dire need of your services, however, it is a clear sign from Heaven that this is your *tafkid* in life. If this is the case, I have no reason to fill your request for a blessing (to grow in Torah learning)."

If we are succeeding at something, *Klal Yisrael* is benefitting and this results in an enormous *Kiddush Hashem* – it must be our *tafkid*. So, we should go for it!