



## HKB”H Took Out a Fiery Coin from beneath the Throne of Glory

# HKB”H Unites the Half-Shekel of Fire with the Half-Shekel of Yisrael to Unite His Intent with Yisrael’s Actual Performance of the Mitzvos

On the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh of parshas Mishpatim, we will bless the upcoming month of Adar. It is called **Shabbas Shekalim**, because we read the passage in parshas Ki Sisa related to the mitzvah of “**mAchaszis hashekel**” for Maftir. This complies with the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 685, 1 and 5) that on the Shabbas that we celebrate Rosh Chodesh Adar or on which we bless the month of Adar, we read the passage related to the mitzvah of “mAchaszis hashekel.” This ruling is predicated on the teaching of the Mishnah and the Gemara that follows it (Megillah 29a) that in the times of the Beis HaMikdash, they would announce the collection of the “shekalim” on the Rosh Chodesh Adar immediately preceding the month of Nissan (Shekalim 2a): “באחד באדר משמיעין על השקלים”.

This announcement was necessary, because starting from Rosh Chodesh Nissan, all of the communal offerings had to be purchased from coins collected for the new year. This practice was based on the elucidation of the passuk (Bamidbar 28, 14): “זאת עולת חודש בחדשו לחדשי השנה”—**this is the “olah” offering for the start of the new month, for the months of the year.** They expounded in the Gemara (Rosh HaShanah 7a): “אמרה—תורה חדש והבא קרבן מתרומה חדשה”—the Torah instructed us to renew the sacrificial service and to bring the offering from a new collection of funds. Based on a “gezeirah shavah,” the Gemara deduces that the renewal of the sacrificial service begins on the first of Nissan; from that day onward, all of the communal offerings must be purchased with new funds. The phrase “לחדשי השנה” appears in this passuk and also in reference to the month of Nissan (Shemos 12, 2).

Now, we have an established practice to begin reviewing the laws of each festival thirty days beforehand based on a teaching in the Gemara (Pesachim 6a). Hence, the appropriate time to announce the collection of the new coins is specifically on the first day of Adar—thirty days before the first day of Nissan. To commemorate this event, the sages instituted the practice to read the passage of the “mAchaszis hashekel” on either Shabbas Rosh Chodesh Adar or on the Shabbas on which we bless the month of Adar.

The Mishnah Berurah adds a key point in the name of the renowned possek, the Levush. We find the following passuk in the Navi (Hoshea 14, 3): “ונשלמה פרים שפתינו”—**let our lips substitute for bulls.** As Rashi explains, we learn from this passuk that we are able to fulfill our obligations to bring korbanos by reciting the appropriate passage related to a particular korban. Thus, by reading the passage in the Torah related to the mitzvah of “mAchaszis hashekel,” it is considered as if we actually fulfilled the mitzvah of donating a “mAchaszis hashekel.”

In light of this, every Jew should realize the importance of having this obligation in mind during the reading of the passage of the “mAchaszis hashekel.” For, throughout the upcoming year, we will mention the korbanos brought for the tzibbur in our tefilos. These will include the daily “tamid” offerings and the korbanos for Shabbas and the holidays. Perforce, we will also fulfill our obligations to bring those korbanos by means of the device of “ונשלמה פרים שפתינו”. Then, the fulfillment of the obligation to donate a “mAchaszis hashekel,” which we fulfilled by reading the appropriate passage on this Shabbas, will be combined with the obligation to offer those communal

korbanos, which we offer in our tefilos. In this manner, it will be considered as if we have a portion in the offering of all those communal korbanos just like in the times that the Beis HaMikdash was extant.

### HKB"H Showed Moshe a Sort of Fiery Coin

From Rashi's comments in parshas Ki Sisa (Shemos 30, 15), based on the Gemara (Megillah 29b), we learn that in relation to the mitzvah of "mAchaszis hashekel," it says "תרומת ה'" three times. The first time (Shemos 30, 13): "מחצית השקל תרומה לה"—**half of the shekel as a portion to Hashem.** This relates to the half-shekel HKB"H commanded Yisrael to bring when donations were collected to build the Mishkan. In this manner, the people were counted, and the silver was used to make the sockets of the Mishkan. The second time (ibid. 14): "מבן עשרים"—**from the age of twenty years and up, shall give the portion of Hashem.** Note, that here the "mAchaszis hashekel" is not mentioned; this is because this donation for the building of the Mishkan was individualized; each individual gave what he saw fit, as it is written (ibid. 25, 2): "ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי"—**and they shall take to Me a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion.** The third time (ibid. 30, 15): "העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעיט ממחצית"—**the wealthy shall not increase (give more) and the destitute shall not decrease (give less) from half of the shekel—to give the portion of Hashem, to atone for your souls.** This corresponds to the donations of "mAchaszis hashekel" used to purchase the "korbanos tzibbur" for each respective year.

We will also focus on Rashi's comment on the passuk (ibid. 13): "זה יתנו כל העובר על הפקודים מחצית השקל"—**this is what they shall give—everyone who passes among the counted—half of the shekel.** Rashi comments: **Hashem showed Moshe a sort of coin of fire whose weight was half a shekel and told him, "They should give a coin like this."** Rashi's source is the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Sisa 9); the Midrash adds that HKB"H took this fiery coin of sorts out from beneath the Kisei HaKavod—the Throne of Glory.

Several issues bother the commentaries: **1)** What was so difficult for Moshe to understand? HKB"H was very explicit specifying that everyone being counted in this census

should donate to Hashem a "mAchaszis hashekel" based on a holy shekel with a value of twenty "geirah." **2)** Why was it necessary for HKB"H to produce a fiery coin from beneath the Kisei HaKavod? Aren't there enough half-shekel coins around in Olam HaZeh? **3)** How did a fiery coin weighing "mAchaszis hashekel" end up beneath the Kisei HaKavod?

### The Fascinating Relationship between the Mitzvah of MAchaszis HaShekel and HKB"H Sending a Malach to Split the Blood into Two Portions

In this week's parsha, parshas Mishpatim, we find additional details regarding the revelation of Matan Torah. Here are the pertinent pesukim (ibid. 24, 5):

"וישלח את נערי בני ישראל ויעלו עולות ויזבחו זבחים שלמים לה' פרים, ויקח משה חצי הדם וישם באגנות וחצי הדם זרק על המזבח, ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר דיבר ה' נעשה ונשמע, ויקח משה את הדם ויזרוק על העם ויאמר הנה דם הברית אשר כרת ה' עמכם על כל הדברים האלה."

**He sent the youth of Bnei Yisrael, and they brought up olah-offerings, and they slaughtered bulls to Hashem as shelamim-offerings to Hashem. Moshe took half the blood and placed it in basins and half the blood he sprinkled upon the altar. He took the Book of the Covenant and read in earshot of the people, and they said, "Everything that Hashem has said, we will do and we will obey!" Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that Hashem sealed with you concerning all these matters."** Rashi comments: **"Moshe took half the blood." Who divided the blood in half? A malach came and divided it.** Rashi's source is the Midrash (V.R. 6, 5), which states that a malach descended from above in the likeness of Moshe and divided the blood into equal parts. Why was it necessary to divide the blood up into two precisely equal portions—a procedure necessitating the service of a heavenly malach?

To illuminate the matter, we find two visionaries teaching the same idea—the holy Rabbi from Apta, zy"a, in Ohev Yisrael (Shekalim), and the holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy"a, in Avodas Yisrael (Mishpatim). It is well-known that HKB"H and the people of Yisrael have a relationship akin to a "Chasan" and "kallah." This is illustrated by the following passuk related to Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 17): "ויוצא משה את העם לקראת האלקים"—**Moshe brought the people**

forth from the camp toward G-d, and they stood under the mountain. Rashi comments: **The Torah is telling us that the Shechinah went out to greet them like a bridegroom going out to greet his bride.** And we have another passuk that states (Yeshayah 62, 5): **"ומשוש חתן על כלה ישיש עליך אלקיך"**—**and like a bridegroom rejoicing over his bride, so will your G-d rejoice over you.**

Furthermore, we are taught in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayikra 7b): **A male without a female is referred to as half of a body.** Therefore, in order to demonstrate His great love for Yisrael, HKB"H diminished Himself, so to speak, to be considered only half of a body. Hence, He commanded Moshe to divide the blood of the korbanos into two equal portions—half of the blood was sprinkled on the mizbeiach, a heavenly portion directed toward HKB"H, so to speak, and half was sprinkled on Yisrael. This procedure required a malach to descend from above and divide up the blood into two precisely equal portions.

The Apter Rav, zy"a, extends the analogy regarding the relationship of HKB"H with the congregation of Yisrael being that of a "Chasan" and "kallah" to the mitzvah of "m'achaszi's hashekel." In this regard, HKB"H views Himself, so to speak, as a mere half of a shekel, like half a body, with Yisrael being the other half. With this understanding, He requests that Yisrael give **"a half of a shekel as a portion to Hashem."** In other words, they must contribute their half to complete and forge a perfect union with HKB"H.

Notwithstanding, it is now incumbent upon us to explore and try to comprehend this revelation. For, we see that at Matan Torah, HKB"H demonstrated that in His incredible relationship with Yisrael, they are each only considered a half. As such, the blood had to be divided up into two equal portions, so that half could be thrown on the mizbeiach and half on the people of Yisrael. Then, this wonderful relationship was fortified by the donation of the "m'achaszi's hashekel." Every Jew donates a silver coin annually worth a half of a shekel, and HKB"H, so to speak, supplies the second half to form a complete shekel.

### **HKB"H Sanctified Us with the Mitzvos that He Himself Performs**

I believe that we can provide clarification based on a teaching in the Talmud Yerushalmi (R.H. 1, 3): **"בנוהג שבכולם מלך: רצה רצה מקיימה אינו רוצה אחרים מקיימים אותה, אבל הקב"ה בשר ודם גוזר גזירה, מאי טעמא ושמרו את משמרתא אני ה', אני הוא ששימרתא מצוותיה של תורה תחילה."** אמר רבי סימון כתיב מפני שיבה תקום והדרת פני זקן ויראת מאלקיך אני ה', אני הוא שקיימתי עמידת זקן.

HKB"H Himself, so to speak, observes all the mitzvos of the Torah. This is in stark contrast to human kings; they are capricious; they may or may not comply with their own edicts, although their subjects are required to do so. Not so HKB"H; He observes His own edicts before requiring others to do so. What is the reason? Because it states (Vayikra 22, 9): **"They shall guard My safekeeping... I am Hashem"**—**I am He Who keeps the mitzvos of the Torah first.** Rabbi Simon said, **it is written (ibid. 19, 32): "You shall rise in the presence of an old person, and you shall honor the presence of an elder, and you shall have fear of your G-d—I am Hashem."** **I am the One Who first fulfilled standing in the presence of an elder.** In other words, as an example, the Yerushalmi states that HKB"H was the first to observe the mitzvah of **"מפני שיבה תקום והדרת פני זקן"**—**rising in the presence of an elderly person and honoring an elderly person.**

The Pnei Moshe, explains that HKB"H did this when he rose, so to speak, for the sake of Avraham, who was elderly when he performed the mitzvah of "Bris milah." As it is written (Bereishis 18, 1): **"וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא והוא יושב פתח האהל כחום"**—**Hashem appeared to him (Avraham) in the plains of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day.** Rashi comments based on the Midrash (B.R. 48, 7): **Avraham wanted to stand (out of respect for the Divine Presence), but HKB"H said to him: "Sit, and I will stand; and you are a foretoken (sign) for your children; for I am destined to stand in the assembly of judges, while they are sitting"; as it says (Tehillim 82, 1): "G-d stands in the Divine assembly."**

Based on this teaching in the Yerushalmi, the Bnei Yissaschar (Sivan 2, 4) explains the formula established by Chazal for Berachos recited before performing mitzvos: **"אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצונו"**—**Who sanctified us with His mitzvos and commanded us.** This implies that HKB"H sanctifies us **"במצוותיו"**—with the mitzvos that He Himself fulfills. Here is an excerpt from the Bnei Yissaschar: **"והנה כביכול השי"ת בעצמו שומר תורתו ומקיים מצוותיו, כמו שאנו מברכין על המצוות אשר קדשנו במצוותיו - מצוותיו דייקא, כביכול אשר הוא בעצמו מקיימם, וכענין שמצינו בדברי חז"ל מניין שהקב"ה מניח תפילין, מניין שהקב"ה מתפלל."** **The Almighty Himself, so to speak, observes His Torah and fulfills His mitzvos, as**



indicated by the berachah recited over the performance of the mitzvos—"אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וצונו"—"Who sanctified us with His mitzvos and commanded us." The formula specifies that they are His mitzvos—that He Himself, so to speak, fulfills. This coincides with the statement of Chazal (Berachos 6a): "How do we know that HKB"H puts on tefillin?" "How do we know that HKB"H prays?"

### HKB"H Stands over Us as a "Gadol" to Complete Our Intent

Let us expand on this notion based on the writings of the Tiferes Shlomo (Vaeschanan). He explains the concept of HKB"H praying and performing all the mitzvos He gave to Yisrael based on the Mishnah (Gittin 22b): "הכל כשרין לכתוב את הגט אפילו חרש שוטה וקטן"—all are qualified to write a "get," even a deaf-mute, an insane person, and a minor. The Gemara points out an obvious difficulty: "והא לא בני דיעה"—but they are not mentally competent. So, they are not qualified to write the "get" for the sake of the woman being divorced. Rav Huna answers: "והוא שהיה גדול עומד על גביו"—a mentally incompetent individual is permitted to write a "get" provided that a competent adult is standing over him and instructing him how to write the "get" l'shma.

Accordingly, the Tiferes Shlomo explains, in reality, it is difficult for mere mortals to study Torah and perform mitzvos l'shma—without distractions and ulterior motives. Therefore, it is essential that they connect with HKB"H. Thus, even if we lack competence—and feel like a deaf-mute, a fool, or a minor—HKB"H acts as an adult looking over our shoulders to guide us and teach us how to study Torah and perform mitzvos with proper intent. The same applies to the concept of HKB"H performing all the mitzvos. He acts like a supervising adult, providing Yisrael with the influence necessary to perform all of His mitzvos l'shma, without distractions and ulterior motives.

With immense pleasure, we will now add a practical teaching from the Yismach Moshe (Vayeitzei). We have learned in the Gemara (Kiddushin 31a): "גדול מצווה ועושה ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה"—someone who is commanded and does is superior to someone who is not commanded and does. Because when one performs the mitzvos, because he was commanded

to do so by HKB"H, he is doing so with the authority and approval of HKB"H, Who knows the proper intent expected for all of the mitzvos.

Every mitzvah has a unique purpose and has ramifications and effects that are beyond comprehension. They are only known to a select few in each generation—the likes of Moshe Rabeinu and Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and his colleagues. So, when one performs a mitzvah that Hashem has commanded us to perform, He is able to rectify matters that are beyond human comprehension—this is implicit in the formula "אשר קדשנו במצוותיו"—Who has sanctified us with His mitzvos. The mitzvos are HKB"H's and involve matters that often only HKB"H is aware of. If, however, a person only performs mitzvos based on his own intellect and comprehension, then he can only rectify what he is able to grasp intellectually. This is why: "גדול מצווה ועושה"—one who performs a mitzvah after being commanded to do so, even without fully understanding all that it entails, accomplishes so much more on a spiritual level and in the heavenly realms than he realizes.

This would explain why HKB"H first fulfills the mitzvos above in the ideal and perfect manner: (a) to enable us down below to fulfill the mitzvos without interference, and (b) to enable us below to fulfill the mitzvos with intentions and focus that would otherwise be beyond our abilities—as intended by HKB"H, Who already performed all of the mitzvos above. Thus, we fulfill the mitzvos with the knowledge and intent taught by Rashbi, the Arizal, the Baal Shem Tov, and other holy teachers.

This emphasizes the importance of performing all of the mitzvos with HKB"H in mind; this enables us to perform the mitzvos below as He has already performed them above—ideally. This is the deeper meaning of the formula we recite prior to performing a mitzvah: "אשר קדשנו במצוותיו". In other words, He sanctified us by initially performing the mitzvos Himself; this enables us to subsequently perform the mitzvos with His exalted intent.

### An Incredible Insight from Rabbi Zusha and His Brother Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk

Returning to the subject of the "m'achazis hashkel," we explained above that HKB"H provides the missing half of the shekel with a fiery coin that He takes out from beneath the Kisei HaKavod. We will refer to a fundamental principle

gleaned from the immaculate teachings of Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli, zy”a. In his own, inimitable way, he elaborates on the statement of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair in the Gemara (Chullin 7b): “ישראל קדושים הן, יש רוצה ואין לו, ויש שיש לו ואינו רוצה”—**the people of Yisrael are holy; there is the person who wants to share but lacks sufficient resources; then there is the person who has sufficient resources but does not sincerely want to share.** Tosafos ask an obvious question. If the latter individual possesses the resources to share with others but does not wish to do so, why is he considered holy? They answer that the Gemara is referring to someone who does not really wish to share with others; yet he invites others to share his food due to his sense of shame. This still begs the question: Why he is referred to as holy—“kadosh”?

Rabbi Zusha explains that when a person gives tzedakah reluctantly, only out of shame, his mitzvah was not whole; it only generated the body of a malach but not its neshamah. In contrast, the person who wishes to give tzedakah but lacks sufficient funds to perform the mitzvah generates the neshamah of a malach; for, he sincerely desires and intends to fulfill the mitzvah. Now, since HKB”H wants the mitzvos of Yisrael to be complete, in His infinite mercy and kindness, He combines the rich person’s deed with the poor person’s sincere intent. Together they form a complete, holy malach, containing both a body and a neshamah.

This then is the message conveyed by Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair: **“Yisrael are holy!”** In other words, when the two types of Jews are joined together, they form a holy union. He explains how this works: **“There is the person who wants to share but lacks sufficient resources”—**his good intentions generate the malach’s neshamah; **“then there is the person who has sufficient resources but does not sincerely want to share”—**yet he gives out of embarrassment; his act, albeit insincere, generates the malach’s body. HKB”H graciously combines the insincere deed with the sincere thought to produce both a complete mitzvah and a complete malach. As a result of this partnership: **“Yisrael are holy!”**

This incredible idea is also taught by his esteemed brother, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy”a, in Noam Elimelech (Metzora). Here is an abbreviated translation:

**It is taught in the Gemara (Kiddushin 40a) that HKB”H combines a good thought with an actual deed**

**. . . Undoubtedly, when a person plans to do something, it is without ulterior motives. So, if a person intends to perform a mitzvah or study Torah and neglects to do so on account of some unforeseen circumstance, but another person studies Torah or performs a mitzvah without pure intentions, HKB”H combines this (impure) deed with the intent of the tzaddik, and it is viewed as if the latter performed that deed.**

In this light, the Noam Elimelech goes on to interpret the teaching in the Gemara (Pesachim 50b): **לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ומצוות אף על פי שלא לשמה, שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה**—a person should always engage in the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos even though his actions are not purely motivated—not l’shma; because from these activities that are not purely motivated, he will eventually come to learn Torah and perform mitzvos for its own sake, with the purest of intentions—l’shma. Hence, a person should not question the value or purpose of performing mitzvos not l’shma, since they do, indeed, serve an important purpose. For, as we just learned, HKB”H takes the act of the mitzvah that was performed **“not l’shma”** and brings it to a tzaddik whose intentions are **“l’shma,”** who only wishes to serve Hashem. This is the implication of the words **“בא לשמה”**.

### **HKB”H Combines His Fulfillment of the Mitzvos Spiritually with Yisrael’s Actual Performance of the Mitzvos**

With immense pleasure, I would now like to combine what we learned from the Yerushalmi—that HKB”H performs all of the mitzvos first—with what we learned from the Tiferes Shlomo—that HKB”H stands over us while we are performing a mitzvah to complete the mitzvah in the ideal fashion. With the utmost reverence and respect, I would like to propose that HKB”H joins Yisrael by fulfilling the mental, spiritual aspect of the mitzvah, while Yisrael in Olam HaZeh perform the mitzvah with an actual deed—such as placing Tzitzis on the four corners of their garments and donning tefillin on their arms and heads.

Thus, the performance of mitzvos involves a wonderful partnership between HKB”H and the people of Yisrael. HKB”H fulfills all the mitzvos of the Torah spiritually and with ideal focus and intent, while Yisrael in Olam HaZeh perform the

actual deed of the mitzvah. Let us apply this interpretation to the statement in the Gemara: "מחשבה טובה מצרפה למעשה". The **"good thought"** of HKB"H, Who fulfills all of the mitzvos intellectually and spiritually, HKB"H **"combines with the actual deed"** of the mitzvos performed by Yisrael down on earth. As a result, it is considered as if HKB"H together with Yisrael fulfilled all of the mitzvos perfectly.

We can now appreciate the difficulty Moshe Rabeinu had with regards to the mitzvah of "m'achasiz hashekel." He was bothered by the fact that HKB"H was only asking each of them to give a half of a shekel rather than a whole shekel, which would seem to be more honorable. This prompted HKB"H to provide him with a definitive response and demonstration. By removing a fiery coin from beneath the Kisei HaKavod, HKB"H demonstrated to Moshe that He Himself would supply the

second half of the coin by fulfilling the mitzvos spiritually and with ideal intent.

This also explains very nicely the passuk in our parsha cited above: **"Moshe took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that Hashem sealed with you concerning all these matters'"**—and Rashi's comment: **"Moshe took half the blood." Who divided the blood in half? A malach came and divided it.** This ceremony alluded to the magnificent partnership of HKB"H and Yisrael regarding the fulfillment of mitzvos. As a result of this partnership, the mitzvos are performed completely and perfectly. Therefore, we recite the following formula in association with the performance of mitzvos: **"אשר קדשנו במצוותיו"**—acknowledging that HKB"H also performs all the mitzvos, and as a result of this extraordinary partnership, we accomplish perfection in the performance of mitzvos.



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