

Parashat Pekudei – Shekalim: Giving for our institutions

This Shabbat is called “Shabbat Shekalim” because, in addition to the weekly section, we will read an additional portion which tells about the offering of the “half shekel”, a contribution that was given to cover all the expenses related to the tabernacle.

The Torah says: “Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the Lord.”

It is obvious that Jewish institutions require the support of their members. However there are some of those members to whom the only mention of funds in connection with Judaism makes them think money and spirituality can't go together. But for Judaism, in opposition to other traditions, money is not inherently bad; it can be used at the service of spiritual purposes.

Money can become our master or our slave. If we allow it to become our master, we make it our idol. If we control it, using our resources in a wise way and we give with generosity to good causes, money can be a source of blessing.

The more we involve ourselves contributing in a cause the more the cause elevates us. So it is with Jewish institutions: We must not “starve” our institutions and Jewish causes if we wish to prevent “spiritual starvation” for ourselves and our future.

Shabbat Shalom!