



Likkutei Sichos

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The Three Donations

A note on the translation: Great effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time striving for readability. However, the translation carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. Feedback is always appreciated!

The three donations and their eternal relevance

1. Based upon the opening verses¹ of our Parsha, our Sages tell us there were three communal donations given for the Mishkan:^{2,3}
 - *Terumas adanim* (donation for the sockets of the Mishkan).⁴
 - *Terumas shekalim* (donation of the half-shekel).⁵
 - *Terumas hamishkan* (donation for the building of the Mishkan).⁶

There is a difference between *the donation of the half-shekel* and the other two donations:

The donation of the half-shekel applied both during the times of the *Mishkan*, and during the era of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Every Jewish male was required to give a half-shekel annually for the communal sacrifices.

Even though there isn't a Holy Temple today, the donation of the half-shekel is still relevant. On the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Adar, synagogues customarily read the Torah portion of the half-shekel, to recall what was done in the times of the Holy Temple (as the *Mishnah*⁷ relates, "on the first of Adar, public announcements were made to remind all males to give the half-shekel"). Furthermore, there is a custom that before Purim, one should give half the commonly circulated local currency to charity, commemorating the half-shekel that was given in the month of Adar.⁸

By comparison the donation for the sockets was only required prior to the construction of the Mishkan in the desert, and the donation for the materials used to build the *Mishkan* was only required prior to the construction of both the *Mishkan* and Holy Temple.

However, since the Torah is eternal and relevant in all times and places, it's understood that in one's **spiritual** service, these donations for the sockets and for the building of the Mishkan are still relevant.

¹ *Shmos* 25:2,3

² The Mishkan is the Tabernacle or temporary Sanctuary in which the Divine Presence dwelled during the Jews' journeys through the desert.

³ *Talmud Yerushami* tractate *Shkalim* 1:1.

⁴ All male from twenty years and older were required to give a half-shekel for the sockets that supported the beams of the Mishkan.

⁵ All male adults were required to give a half-shekel for the communal sacrifices.

⁶ Every Jew was required to donate within their means for the construction of the Mishkan.

⁷ *Shkalim* 1:1

⁸ *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, Siman* 694.

Furthermore, if all details in Torah are eternally relevant, then certainly details pertaining to the Mishkan are. The primary objective of the Mishkan was so that “I (Hashem) will dwell among them (*besochom*).”⁹ And our Sages¹⁰ note: “the verse doesn’t read ‘within it (*besocho*),’ but ‘within them (*besochom*,)’ indicating that Hashem dwells within **every single** Jew.”¹¹ Every Jew makes himself into a spiritual Mishkan, drawing G-dly revelation into his soul through his divine service. Therefore, just as these two donations were required for the physical Mishkan, these two donations, in their spiritual form, are required for the spiritual Mishkan within every Jew.

The donation for the sockets and the donation for the building of the Mishkan in serving Hashem

2. We will understand how the donation for the sockets and the donation for building the *Mishkan* can be applied in one’s divine service by contrasting the two donations. The donation for the sockets required a half-shekel -- from every individual (symbolizing equality), while the donation for building the *Mishkan* was voluntary. People donated as much (or as little) as they wanted (symbolizing individuality), as is detailed in *parshas Vayakhel*.¹²

These two types of donations are expressed through a person’s divine service: The donation for the sockets -- the donation symbolizing equality -- relates to the divine service of complete *kabalas ol* (submission) and *bittul* (surrender)¹³ to Hashem coming from the essence of the soul in which all Jews are equal.¹⁴ On the other hand, the donation for building the Mishkan -- the donation symbolizing individuality -- refers to the serving Hashem through a person’s faculties of intellect and emotions. Each individual’s abilities are different. Therefore the “donation” -- each person’s capacity to refine his emotions through service of the mind and heart -- is unique.

⁹ *Shmos* 25:8

¹⁰ *Reshis Chochma* (towards the beginning of chapter 6 of *Shaar Ha’ahava*). Footnote 10 in the original *sicha* offers more sources.

¹¹ The verse should have used the hebrew word *besocho* -- within it, i.e. the *Mishkan*. Instead it uses the Hebrew word *besochom* -- within them, i.e. in each and every Jew, hinting to the spiritual Mishkan that exists within every Jew.

¹² *Shemos* 35:21 and on.

¹³ Throughout the original *sicha* the Rebbe alternates between the words *kabalas ol* -- submission, and *bittul* -- surrender (and at times, as in this case, both terms are used). Even though these terms can imply two distinct ideas, in this translation, for ease of flow we will continue with a single term, submission (*kabalas ol*).

¹⁴ The *avodah* of *kabalas ol* is an expression of self-negation, which can’t be fueled by a person’s intellectual or emotional abilities as those are intrinsically expressions of selfhood. Rather the *avodah* of *kabalas ol* is fueled by the essential bond one has to Hashem which stems from the essence of the soul.

The above also explains why the donation of the half-shekel, given equally by all, was used specifically for the sockets, and the voluntary financial donation was used for the curtain, utensils and other parts of the Mishkan. The sockets were at the bottom of the Mishkan, indicating their apparent insignificance. On the other hand they were the foundation for the entire *Mishkan*, indicating their utmost importance. This is analogous to the divine service of submission. Even though submission to Hashem lacks the overt G-dliness felt by the inner divine service of intellect and emotions, it is nonetheless the foundation and prerequisite for all divine service.¹⁵ This is why everyone donated equally for the sockets: This donation corresponds to the foundational divine service of submission rooted in the essence of the soul. From the perspective of the essence of the soul, “all (Jews) are equal and have one father.”¹⁶

In contrast, the beams, the covers, and the rest of the components of the Mishkan are analogous to serving Hashem with one’s specific abilities. The ten cubit high beams of the *Mishkan* allude to a person’s ten soul powers,¹⁷ comprised of the intellect and emotions.¹⁸ The covers of the Mishkan allude to a person’s willpower. This is why the donations for the rest of the Mishkan were according to each individual’s financial means. These donations reflect the divine service of refining one’s specific abilities, and no two people have the same willpower, intellect or emotions.

Two questions

3. The above analysis raises a question. There is another difference between the donation for the sockets and the donation for the other materials of the *Mishkan*. Only males between the ages of twenty and sixty were commanded to donate half shekels for the sockets. However, the donation for the other materials used in the *Mishkan* was made by both males and females. In fact, we are taught that “the women preceded the men in donating.”¹⁹ Even the children donated, according to *Avos D’Rabbi Nasan*.²⁰

¹⁵ See *Tanya* beginning chapter 41.

¹⁶ *Tanya* chapter 32.

¹⁷ These are the ten attributes of the soul, as described in *Chassidus*.

¹⁸ The three levels of intellect (*ChaBaD*) and the seven emotions.

¹⁹ *Shmos* 35:22, as explained by *Ramban*.

²⁰ 11:1

Now based on the explanation above²¹ it should have been the exact opposite! We explained that the divine service of submitting to Hashem is accessible to all (men, women and even children).²² The donation for the sockets, symbolizing submission and surrender, should have been accepted from all, not just the males aged twenty and higher. Conversely, donations toward the building of the Mishkan (symbolizing divine service of one's intellect, emotions and willpower) should have been restricted to adult males. Why was everyone allowed to participate in *the donation for the building of the Mishkan*?

Another difficulty: One verse describing the donation for the sockets²³ says, “the wealthy shall not give more and the poor shall not give less.”²⁴ Wealth and poverty exist in spiritual terms as well: Our sages say that “poverty connotes a lack of knowledge.”²⁵ Why would the Torah reference varying personal levels (even to negate the relevance of those variations) in connection with the donation for the sockets? After all, this donation implies submission which comes from the essence of the soul (in which all are **equal**). Shouldn't the Torah have simply instructed everyone to give a specified amount without making reference to wealth and poverty?

The paradox in a person's daily *avodah*

To answer the above questions we must analyze a person's daily divine service, that is, the construction of every person's spiritual *Mishkan*.²⁶

This daily service begins immediately upon waking in the morning with the *modeh ani*²⁷ prayer. It is said prior to the morning hand washing, while the hands are still impure. This is because²⁸ the *modeh ani* is acknowledgement of and submission to Hashem, rooted in the essence of the soul, which is beyond the reach of impurity.²⁹ This also explains why this prayer is germane to all³⁰ -- men,

²¹ Section 2.

²² As every Jew can access their essential bond to Hashem.

²³ The *tanna kamma* in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Shekalim* 1:1) says this verse refers to the *donation for the sockets*.

²⁴ *Shmos* 30:15

²⁵ Tractate *Nedarim* 41a.

²⁶ As described at the end of section 1, above.

²⁷ The *modeh ani* is the first prayer said upon waking, acknowledging and thanking Hashem for returning the soul to the body.

²⁸ Footnote 28 in the original: The simple reason why the *modeh ani* can be said with impure hands is because it doesn't mention Hashem's name, indicating it is less holy. However from a deeper perspective, the reason why the *modeh ani* doesn't mention Hashem's name is because this acknowledgement is directed to the essence of Hashem which is beyond any name. This is similar to *Megilas Esther* not mentioning Hashem's name. (See at length in *kuntras inyana shel toras hachasidus* section 11).

²⁹ See *Hayom Yom* 11 Shvat.

women and children. Everyone can tap into the essence of the soul, for it is common to all.

Afterward, we begin the more inward-focused divine service of reciting the *shema*³¹ and daily prayers (prefaced by the preparatory prayers of the *pesukei d'zimra*³² and blessings of the *shema*). From the synagogue we proceed to the study hall to learn Torah.³³ This is followed by one's work or daily occupation. Following this schedule empowers a person to serve Hashem throughout the entire day.

However, there is a paradox regarding the recital of the *shema* and the daily prayers: Only men are obligated to recite the *shema*³⁴ and the three fixed daily prayer services,³⁵ indicating that this divine service is primarily individualized, focusing on a person's intellectual and emotional capacities.

On the other hand, the text of the *shema* and daily prayers are identical for all who are obligated to recite them -- adult males. Even though prayer is an individualized activity, it nonetheless has a component of equality stemming from the essence of the soul.

A similar paradox also exists in the rest of the daily divine service, including Torah study, and serving Hashem during one's work or daily occupation, as the verse in *Mishlei* teaches: "In all your ways you should know Him (Hashem)."³⁶ However, an opposite sort of paradox is evident in these activities.³⁷

The paradox of Torah study: On the one hand every Jew, including women, are required to learn Torah. It is true that a woman is not obligated to study Torah for its own sake. Rather, women are obligated to study to know how to perform the *mitzvos* applicable to them. Nevertheless, the fact that women say the blessings for Torah study prior to learning demonstrates that study for that practical objective also serves as an act of Torah study. Regarding children, the father is

³⁰ Unlike the other sections of prayer.

³¹ The *shema yisrael* passage proclaiming Hashem's oneness.

³² = Verses of song. Our Sages added a series of Psalms and praises to be said prior to the daily prayers.

³³ Tractate *Berachos* 64a.

³⁴ See footnote 34 in the original for more information regarding a woman not being required to recite the *shema*.

³⁵ This refers specifically to the obligation of praying the set liturgy three times a day. (See footnote 33 in the original for further discussion about the women's prayer obligation.)

³⁶ *Mishlei* 3:6; referring to a person's occupation.

³⁷ The *shema* and daily prayers are primarily expressions of individuality yet contain an aspect of equality, whereas the other daily activities are primarily expressions of equality yet contain an aspect of individuality.

biblically³⁸ obligated to teach his child Torah. This demonstrates that Torah study is rooted in a part of the soul that reflects equality between all Jews.

On the other hand, the required quantity and quality of learning differs from person to person. Some have the obligation to study Torah day and night and at great depth. A businessman has a lesser obligation, and there are even those who fulfill their obligation by simply saying one verse in the morning and one verse in the evening. Women are only obligated to learn to the point of knowing the subjects that apply to them.³⁹

This is also the case with regard to serving Hashem throughout the day, in observing the *mitzvos* and engaging in an occupation, based on the above-quoted verse “know Him in all your ways.” Everyone is obligated to serve Hashem and do *mitzvos*, but the exact requirements differ. Men are obligated in all positive and negative *mitzvos*, while women are not obligated to observe time-bound positive *mitzvos*. Similarly, each person’s particular circumstances and occupation result in different demands regarding his service of Hashem throughout his day.

Based on the above, we can conclude that the donation for the sockets represents the divine service of *shema* and daily prayers. Not everyone is required to say the *shema* and daily prayers, but those who are required all say the exact same words. This is analogous to the donation for the sockets, which is only for men twenty years of age and older, yet they all give an equal amount: A half-shekel. The donation for the building of the Mishkan, by comparison, is analogous to Torah study and serving Hashem throughout the day when working at one’s occupation. All are obligated, including women and children, but each person’s responsibility differs.

Understanding the paradox

4. The explanation for all the above:

Although the divine service of *shema* and the daily prayers are done with one’s specific intellectual and emotional faculties, it stems from the *modeh ani* said each morning, which expresses the essence of the soul’s acknowledgement of and submission to Hashem. Therefore, this sense of submission is felt during all

³⁸ Footnote 40 in the original points out: (1) The father’s responsibility to educate his child for all other *mitzvos* is only a rabbinical obligation. (2) Even though it’s the father’s obligation and not the child’s, the purpose is for the child to be able to **independently** learn.

³⁹ This aspect of Torah study clearly indicates, that even though Torah study is primarily rooted in a part of the soul that displays equality, there is certainly an aspect of individuality.

the prayers. In other words, we can be cognizant of our submission -- reflecting the essence of our soul -- while we serve Him with our individual abilities.

Prayer is obligatory only for adult males because their internal faculties, which express submission to Hashem, have reached a state of perfection, and are therefore most suited for this divine service. Yet submission is rooted in the essence of their souls, and at the essential soul level, all are equal. That is why the liturgy of *shema* and daily prayer, symbolizing our equality, is the same for everyone.

That is why the divine service (of *shema* and the daily prayer), is represented by the sockets of the Mishkan. In contributing for the sockets, "the wealthy shall not give more and the poor shall not give less." Giving more or less reflects the differences in each person's intellectual and emotional faculties, and those differences are real. Some are "rich" and some are "poor" in these abilities, and if you look at each person's divine service individually, it is difficult to recognize that their divine service stems from the (singular) essence of their soul. For that reason, the ten (disparate) soul powers of the intellectual and emotional faculties correspond to the ten *gerah*⁴⁰ given as donations for the sockets.

However, there is a unifying element that exists at the foundation of each individual's divine service, and so every person gives the same donation. In a person's divine service, while engaging his own intellectual and emotional personality, a person needs to feel the submission that comes from the essence of the soul. From this perspective, "the wealthy shall not give more and the poor shall not give less."⁴¹

The limitation of *shema* and daily prayers -- *The donation for the sockets*

5. However, in the divine service of the *shema* and daily prayers, symbolized by *the donation for the sockets*, a person's particular soul powers are engaged. Being a

⁴⁰ Ten *gerah* is the value of the half shekel in ancient currency, which was given for the donations of the sockets of the *Mishkan*.

⁴¹ Footnote 46 in the original explains how this idea offers a deeper perspective to a passage in the *Jerusalem Talmud* (*Shabbos 7:2*) The sages had an initial thought that the Shabbos prohibition of building a vessel upon a vessel can be derived from the beams being built upon the sockets. (All Shabbos prohibitions are derived from the construction of the Mishkan.) Being that the sockets symbolize divine service with specific soul powers, each of the soul powers should be considered vessels (as each soul power is considered a vessel for the soul).

The *Talmud* however concludes that the sockets should be considered as part of the earth and not free-standing vessels. *Kabalas ol* is analogous to earth as it's an expression of self negation. The *Talmud* is therefore saying one must always be cognizant of the *kabalas ol* that fuels the divine service of specific soul powers. That is, the sockets should indeed be considered as a part of the earth.

finite divine service, this triggers a finite response from Above, drawing down a limited measure of G-dly energy.⁴²

That is why the *shema* and daily prayers have a set liturgy with an exact number of paragraphs, blessings, words and letters. This illustrates a systematic internal divine service (dealing with specific capacities). The *shema* begins “**Hear**, Israel.” In this context, the word “hear” means understanding and contemplating the greatness of Hashem. This leads to the next phrase, “you should love Hashem your G-d,” which motivates the arousal of love and awe of Hashem in the heart. This divine service of mind and heart unites the person’s wisdom with Hashem’s wisdom, and unites his love with the G-dliness that is en clothed in the attribute of *chesed*.⁴³ Since this divine service is performed using a person’s specific soul powers, it triggers a G-dly light⁴⁴ from only specific G-dly attributes, and not from Hashem’s essence.

The power of the mundane - *The donation for the building of the Mishkan*

6. All daily activities function as divine service: *Shema* and prayer is followed by Torah study, observing the *mitzvos* and engaging in an occupation, based on the above-quoted verse, “know Him in all your ways.” These all serve the purpose of making a dwelling place for Hashem⁴⁵ in the confines of this world. In this way, each person is able to draw Hashem’s essence down into this material world.

A person’s occupation is the primary vehicle for creating this dwelling place for Hashem. There are no limitations⁴⁶ on the type job or occupation, because the objective is to transform this world -- in its current state. A person’s profession is to be utilized for a G-dly purpose, to “know Him (Hashem) in all your ways.”⁴⁷ It is a task relevant to every single Jew, because it involves **action** and enterprise,

⁴² Everything a person does triggers a reciprocal response from Above. When a person performs divine service with their finite capacities it will trigger a finite response from Above.

⁴³ *Chessed* -- kindness -- is one of Hashem’s ten attributes. Our ten soul powers stem from the ten attributes. Love is an expression from the soul power of *chesed*; it therefore triggers a response from the attribute of *chesed*.

⁴⁴ I.e. divine revelation and influence.

⁴⁵ Not just a limited G-dly light.

⁴⁶ Footnote 51 in the original points out: This is why the donation for the building of the Mishkan included every primary category in creation: The inanimate, vegetation, animal kingdom, and mankind via their generosity in donating. Showing how all aspects of the world are meant to become a dwelling place for Hashem.

⁴⁷ The difference between these two objectives are explained in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 3 pg. 907 and 932. See as well in vol. 10 pg. 104.

albeit one that requires a “generous heart.”⁴⁸ That implies acting with excitement and enthusiasm.

The donation for the sockets, a necessary prerequisite for the donation for the building of the Mishkan

7. The Mishkan was constructed out of 13 (or 15)⁴⁹ materials coming from the general donation for building the *Mishkan*. The spiritual counterpart to this donation occurs when each person goes about his physical affairs while adhering to the Torah, thereby drawing the essence of Hashem down into this world.

Yet this divine service is only possible following the donation for the sockets, done by those aged twenty and above. This divine service utilizing individual soul powers, is founded upon submission to Hashem, which stems from the essence of the soul. This submission gives **every** Jew the strength and ability to draw down the essence of Hashem through the divine service of the donation for building the *Mishkan*.

We see this in our daily divine service. The service of a person in possession of fully developed, mature faculties reciting the *shema* and daily prayers empowers every Jew to make a dwelling place for Hashem throughout the entire day.

Moshe must initiate the process

8. Just as the foundation of a person’s daily divine service, making himself a **spiritual** *Mishkan* for Hashem, is the *modeh ani* -- expressing submission that comes from the essence of the soul -- so too in divine service of the **physical** *Mishkan*, a similar foundation was required.

Before Moshe relayed Hashem’s command to the Jews to build the Mishkan, he gathered the entire nation.⁵⁰ Seemingly, he should have first gathered the adult males and instructed them to donate for the sockets, as the sockets are the first step in the construction of the *Mishkan*. Only then should he have gathered the entire nation, including the women, and instructed them to donate toward building the *Mishkan*!

However, the purpose of Moshe gathering the entire nation was to awaken the essence of their souls, which exists equally in every Jew. Everyone was needed

⁴⁸ The Torah (*Shmos* 25:2) describes the *donation for the building of the Mishkan* as donations coming from a generous heart.

⁴⁹ There is a difference of opinion how many kinds of materials were brought for the Mishkan.

⁵⁰ *Shmos* 35:1.

for this -- men, women, and children. Once the essence of their souls was aroused, they could be informed of the command to build the *Mishkan*. The first step would be the donation for the sockets. In spiritual terms, this represents submission to Hashem, stemming from the singular essence of the soul. Yet each individual's divine service was permeated with his disparate soul powers.⁵¹ Only afterwards the general donation for the building of the *Mishkan* would be made.

Indeed, in every generation the essence of our souls is stirred by the Jewish leader, "the extension of Moshe in each generation."⁵² Each leader is like the head and brain of the generation. With the strength of the leader supporting him, each Jew can transform this world into a dwelling place for Hashem through his divine service by utilizing his individual soul attributes, as well as his efforts in *shema* and daily prayer, studying Torah, observing mitzvos, and serving Hashem throughout his daily affairs.

-From a *sicha* delivered Shabbos *parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei* 5723 (1963)

⁵¹ As discussed in section 4.

⁵² *Tekunei Zohar* 469