

Hashem further instructs Moshe.

**כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֻדֵיהֶם וְנִתְּנוּ אִישׁ כְּפָר נַפְשׁוֹ לֵה בַּפְּקֹד אֲתֶם
וְלֹא־יְהִיָּה בְּכֶם גִּגֵּף בַּפְּקֹד אֲתֶם:**

“Through lifting up (or bearing) Bnei Yisroel’s heads, for their counting—and they give, each person, for the ransoming of his soul, to Hashem—to tally them. And there shall not be to them a plague in counting them.” (Shmos 30:12).

This pasuk is connected to the later pesukim about the *eigel hazahav*. This use of money to count (Shmos 30:13) is in direct contrast to the use of gold to make the gold calf. It also points to the key of the sin.

This is a request to take a census. Instead of using a word for “census” the Torah indicates it is lifting up the heads of Bnei Yisroel. It uses this term by the later census takings, too. (e.g., Bamidbar 1:2). While תִּשָּׂא seems to mean “lift” it means bear or take-on, too. It is used in לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם “do not bear/carry around Hashem’s name in vain.” (Shmos 20:7). It is used in לֹא־תִשָּׂא פְּגִי־זָל “do not uplift the poor” in a court case. (Vayikra 19:15). It is also used in וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלֶיךָ חַטָּא “do not bear upon yourself sin” by hating someone else. (Ibid 19:17).

In our case, the census is taken by collecting a half-shekel coin from every person. (Shmos 30:13). It is a “*teruma* offering” to Hashem. (Ibid 30:14). Teruma offerings, as explained in Parshas Teruma 5783, in an easy gift, given with an open heart. It is a small amount, even a poor person can ‘afford’ it. The purpose of the giving a coin to be counted is two sides of the same coin. First, it is meant as a “ransom of his soul.” (Ibid 30:12). Second, it is meant to ward off plagues (once the soul is redeemed). (Ibid). Shortly thereafter, hashem finishes instructing Moshe (ibid 31:18), the people commit the sin of the gold calf (ibid 32:8), and there is a plague (ibid 32:35).

The golden calf was opposite the command about the census because of what the people did with their money. As explained in Parshas Ki Sisa 5782, the sin was about the people wanting to replace their judge. *Elokim* is used for judge in several place (see there) and they specifically wanted to replace *Moshe* (who tarried) not Hashem. (Ibid 32:1). Aaron understood that they wanted a judge to replace Moshe. The civil laws of money and damages were taught to them prior to Moshe going up to get the *luchos*. (Ibid 21:1-24:4). He left Aharon and Chur in charge in his stead. (Ibid 24:14). Clearly, they failed and the forty days were too great a burden for them. Remember, while Moshe ascended upon Har Sinai and stayed there for forty days, he never told them that was to be his duration. (Ibid 24:18). He probably did not know himself. The forty days proved too long and now Aharon had to think of a solution to the people’s growing restlessness in monetary matters.

Aharon's brilliant, but ill-fated plan, was for them to take their money and destroy it. (Ibid 32:2). He showed them that their gold was now turned into a single mold (a calf), so no *one* had the gold. It was now a unified chunk in the possession of the whole. (Ibid 32:4). However, instead of unifying they proclaimed further division and they accused one another, "This is your judge! This is the reason *you* came out of Mitzrayim." (Ibid). He was trying to tell them that gold is the reason for their dissention but they accused one another of only wanting to leave Mitzrayim for the wealth. To remind them of their wrongdoing, Aharon said, "Let's make a holiday to Hashem, tomorrow." (Ibid 32:5). He wanted to remind them of their true Leader: Hashem, not Moshe and not their money. Without their excess gold, perhaps, they would calm down. However, they just showed they were swimming in excess by eating, drinking, and make mockery. (Ibid 32:6). They remained divisive, celebrating individually.

Hashem does not tell Moshe they *sinned*. He says your nation חָרָשׁ "corrupted" or "destroyed." Meaning, they were no longer a nation, they were now divided. They "turned from the proper path." (Ibid 32:8). "They made for themselves a molten calf, and they bowed to it and offered to it, and they said, these are your judges Yisroel, that have taken you up from the Land of Mitzrayim." (Ibid). They were blinded by their wealth, taunting each other that the *other* only went out of the Land of Mitzrayim because of money. There was no more unity. This is why the solution was to make a great nation out of Moshe. (Ibid 32:10). Instead of twelve tribes, there will just be one family. Perhaps that will keep the unity. Hashem quickly forgave the people (ibid 32:14), but did cause a plague (ibid 32:35). Hashem accepted that given the promise to the avos and the greatness of the *geula* there was yet a chance for unity. (How and why Moshe reacted differently is a discussion beyond this scope).

The half-shekel that was given *equally* by all, poor and rich (ibid 30:15) showed equality. The poor cannot pay less and the rich cannot pay more. (Ibid). The money was for the Mikdash and was used to fund the unifying service that was the basis for the nation's existence and spiritual epicenter. (Ibid 30:16).

"When bearing each Bnei Yisroel head." This census was meant to make sure that everyone in the kahal felt an equal part of the kahal. They were all a 'rosh' head in the nation. From twenty and up, each adult felt included.

"To count them." A census is important to count the nation as a whole. But each individual was counted. Each one counts (matters).

"And each person gives to random his soul for Hashem, to count them." Their life and soul were now connected to the Mishkan, their spiritual epicenter. Giving their donation was showing they had similar purpose. They were one.

"And there should not be in them a plague in their counting them." The numbers should not have to be affected by outside ill forces. A plague is something that brings people together. As we saw from Covid19 pandemic (early one, politics aside) that people stayed together, helped each other. A collective worry brings people together. Hashem did not want to have to use a plague to do that. This half-shekel collection was a better way.