



Mishpatim

An Entire Shabbat Devoted to Giving

This Shabbat, in addition to reading the parsha of Mishpatim, we will read the haftarah for Shekalim.

We will be remembering a time when, in temple days, the people were commanded to give a half shekel piece. Each coin represented a person, a soul. It went towards the upkeep of the temple, to guarantee that the sacrifices could be offered on behalf of the entire nation.

I think it's truly wonderful that we devote an entire Shabbat to the concept of giving. A key message that emerges from what we will learn this Shabbat is that when we are generous, it doesn't only benefit the receiver - it also benefits the giver.

The Rambam asks an intriguing question: if you've got 100 silver pieces, should you give the entire amount towards one single major cause, or should you give each individual silver piece to 100 different causes?

It's a very relevant and debatable question but according to the Rambam, it's better to give 100 individual pieces to 100 different causes. It is his conclusion that at the receiving end it often amounts to the same thing in terms of impact. But at the giving end, if you are giving on

100 separate occasions it means that your whole character is being ennobled and enhanced by being immersed in so many acts of giving. And it has a major impact on you.

The five portions after Parshat Shekalim focus on giving, on the contributions our people gave towards the building, maintaining, furnishing, and running of the sanctuary in the wilderness.

The first of those portions is called Terumah. It comes from the root "Ram", which means "elevated". And that's because we, the givers, become elevated through our acts of giving.

In the parsha of Ki Tisa, you have the longest palindrome in the Torah: "וְנָתַתָּ" ("when you give") – reading the same forwards and backwards, indicating that when you give, you receive in turn. What is put out there always comes back to you.

So from Shabbat Shekalim let us remember: it's so important to give contributions of value for the sake of those who will receive. And, in addition, it does so much good for those who are giving.

Shabbat Shalom.