

Haftorah Themes and Analysis by Gidon Rothstein: Shekalim

- Gidon Rothstein

There are 2 seemingly different views given for why we read *Shekalim* on Rosh Chodesh Adar; the first, and more simple, one is that it's when *Beit Din* was *machriz* about Shekalim, since the new fiscal year (the new *terumat halishkah*) was on 1 Nissan, so 1 Adar was a good time to warn about it. The other version has Resh Lakish saying that Hashem saw that Haman would promise 10,000 *kikar kesef*, so Hashem made sure to have the Jews shekalim precede Haman's. This connects Shekalim to Purim, but in a way that is not fully clear-- why should our yearly half shekel preclude Haman's victory?

A second topic, but one that I think leads back to the answer, is the question of who's obligated in Shekalim. The Rema paskens that the custom of *mahatsit hashekel* only obligates those above the age of 20, which fits with the pasuk that its from 20 and up. However, Rambam seems to assume the obligation is from 13 up, and Ramban is explicit. (Interestingly, the Sefer HaChinuch, who is usually completely guided by Rambam and Ramban, says 20; if you check the Rambam in the Sefer haMitsvot, there is room to suggest that the SEfer haChinuch thought the Rambam thought the *hiyyuv* was from age 20 and up).

This might seem academic, but for an issue raised by the Torah Temimah, Tsits Eliezer, and *lehavdil bein hahayyim u-vein ha-hayyim*, R. Asher Weiss in Minhat Asher (not on the Bar-Ilan and therefore not on the sheet): If boys under 20 aren't obligated in mahatsit hashekel, they are perhaps not obligated in mussaf (this is based on a Besamim Rosh, which is a forgery of Responsa in the name of the Rosh, but this one was cited approvingly by R. Akiva Eger, in which he says women aren't obligated in mussaf because they don't have to pay for korbenot tsibbur); if so, they shouldn't be able to be shaliach tsibbur, since they're not obligated.

The Tzitz Eliezer goes back and forth, mentioning a view that says that we should be mahmir for that issue, and also the possibility that really boys above 13 are obligated even according to the Gra (who seems to hold like the Rema), its just that Beit Din will not forcibly collect from them. Even so, that view would see teenage boys as in some way less fully a member of the community (for this purpose at least) than those over 20.

In the end, Tzitz Eliezer offers a few reasons for why they are clearly allowed to serve as shaliach tsibbur. What interests me more than his specific answers is the whole idea that Judaism recognized an in-between period, when boys were not children, but not fully men (also shown by the tradition that Hashem does not fully punish us for acts committed before 20, although the Tzitz Eliezer quotes a really interesting Hida, who suggests that when the Beit HaMikdash was standing, Hashem would punish those under 20, because the more manifest presence of God made it more expected that one would understand the full ramifications of his actions).

This idea of communal membership stems from the question of who has to give mahatsit hashekel, since that was what funded the korbenot tsibbur, which symbolized the national

relationship with Hashem. If so, the Jews giving this *mahatsit hashekel* can be seen as them actively fulfilling their communal obligations; it might have been that, I suggest, that was the antidote to Haman. Just like Purim is an extremely communally focused holiday (mishloach manot, matanot laevyonim)-- since that is the proper reaction to Haman's attempt-- the antidote, too, would have involved getting the Jews to emphasize their communal connections, through *mahatsit hashekel*.