

## Shabbat 05 March 2016 – Vayakhel

This Shabbat is special- it has a special name- Shabbat Shekalim named after the distinctive portion that we read this week coming for the Maftir from the first portion of Ki Tissa.

What's it all about? The Jews were in the desert – they receive a command from G-d that each person – every male 20 years and over should bring a half a Shekel- this would be used for a double purpose; to count the B'nai Yisrael; to take a census and ascertain how many Jews there were by counting the Shekalim collected. These shekalim would be utilised for the upkeep of the Mishkan and for purchasing the sacrifices.

The question is obvious... If you're going to count Jews why don't you just count how many people there are? Why do you have to take from every single person a Half Shekel. Would it not have been easier if they would have simply counted each Jew as they passed by?

By the way this tradition still stands we do not count Jews. When you want to know how many Jews there are- we don't count the numbers by the heads but instead we take a verse from the Torah like **Hoshiah et amecha** or **Hamotzi lechem min haaretz** - both of which have ten words, and then we know whether or not we have a Minyan-Why is that? - Because we do not count Jews. Why is that? Because it is not our numbers that has made the Jewish people great.

Don't try this but if you've ever read any anti semitic literature one of the main accusations against the Jews has been that the Jews are everywhere and they control everything. The Jews are the communists- the Jews are capitalists- the Jews control government, the banks, business, industry.

Even Islamic fundamentalist literature portrays the Jew as being the omnipresent enemy. One would have thought that we are vast...

But the truth is the following: we as a people are tiny; at most there are maybe 14 million Jews throughout the world. Compare that with the number of Catholics- one billion or Muslims- 1 ½ billion. In the words of Chief Rabbi Sacks the Jewish world population is the amount of a statistical error on a Chinese population census.

There is only one single little Jewish state in the world; Israel-whereas there are over forty Islamic countries- and even then we are constantly challenged about our right to exist- it's outrageous!

So we are a very small people. And that is the point. We are not counted according to our vast numbers, but according to the contribution that we make.

Now we know why we do not count Jews- because every Jew counts.

It is not the quantity that is important but the quality. Have a great Shabbos that counts!!