

Counting Each Person: The Mitzvah of Donating Half a Shekel

Facilitator Guide

What is the biblical commandment of donating half a shekel, connecting with the month of Adar? How can we use the values behind this mitzvah to illustrate the importance that each and every person contribute to bringing the hostages home?

FRAMING THE ISSUE

There is a commandment in the Torah which calls on every person over the age of 20 to contribute a half-shekel to the community. This commandment is read in synagogues today during the regular Torah reading cycle, with an additional reading that highlights this commandment on the Shabbat leading into the month of Adar (or Adar Bet during a leap year). How can we use the values behind this mitzvah to illustrate the importance that each and every person contribute to bringing the hostages home?

LET'S EXPLORE

This session is a text-based learning and discussion. It can be facilitated as a full group, with the facilitator inviting participants to take turns reading the sources aloud and guiding participants through the discussion questions on the source sheet, or it can be a guided hevruta/ paired learning, with the discussion happening in pairs or small groups. The facilitator can adapt, based on what best fits with their learners.



Info For Facilitator



Target Audience:

Middle School, Teens, Young Adults



Length of Program:

45-60 minutes



Materials & Prep:

- Printed copies of the source sheet (either the designed version here, or on Sefaria, [here](#)).



Tie-In Dates:

In preparation for Shabbat Shekalim, which this year (5784 or 2024) is read on 29 Adar Alef, March 9th.

TAKE ACTION!

In honor of Ta'anit Esther and the mitzvah of *machatzit hashekel*, donating half a shekel, invite participants to donate at least \$8 (the recommended amount for *machatzit hashekel* today) to the [Bring Hersh Home campaign](#) or to the [Hostages and Missing Families Forum](#) and encourage others in your community to participate. When you donate the money, state the intention that you are giving this money for the return of the hostages.

CLOSING INTENTION

Remind participants that just as each member of Bnei Israel was accountable for *machatzit hashekel*, we all share in the responsibility to bring the hostages home. Each one of us counts. Each one of them counts.



◀ The National Library of Israel felt it needed to help people around the world realize that the hostages held in Gaza are human beings, not just numbers and faces on a poster. They wanted to illustrate how there is an entire life behind each of these faces, each of these men, women and children. To do this, they decided to make use of the books that fill the library and matched a book with the interests and characteristics of each of the individuals who was taken hostage. It is on display in the entrance to the reading room.

Photo: Shai Nitzan