

THE TEMPLE TAX - SHEKALIM

by Rabbi Dr. Azriel Rosenfeld

Every Jew is commanded to give half a silver shekel (the weight of at least 160 grains of barley) each year [for the support of the Temple, as it says "This shall they give, all those who are counted: half a shekel, an offering to Ha-Shem"¹]; this commandment applied only when the Temple existed. The annual donation was made in the month of Adar (the twelfth month); the coins were collected in every community and sent to the Temple.^a Part of the money was used to pay for the communal sacrifices, the incense and showbread, the red cow and the scapegoat, the priestly garments, the libations accompanying ownerless sacrifices, the inspection of sacrifices for blemishes, the teaching of the sacrificial laws, and scribes and criminal courts in Jerusalem. The rest was used to repair the Temple and the city; if any remained it was used to buy animal burnt-offerings.^b

1. Ex. 30:13

a. 1:1,5,8-9; 2:4

b. 4:1-4,7-9