



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

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**Latest style vs old fashioned**

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Emil W. Herman ז"ל אהב בן פנחס זייל  
who loved and supported Torah learning.

# Pekudei

## Latest style vs old fashioned

I recently read that one of the reasons men aren't interested in a second or third child is because before they have kids, they get more attention from their wives—but after the kids are born, they're no longer Number One in the house, so naturally, they're not interested in more kids so as to not get pushed into an even further corner in the house.

I must admit that this is true.

Each time we are blessed with another child, thank G-d, I get bumped down the hierarchy another number. Now, while most husbands blessed with children complain that they are Number Two or Three in the house, I'm so far down the list that I don't even count! At first I still thought that the situation would change, but as the years have gone by, I've long since given up and accepted the verdict.

But all joking aside, this Shabbos is a very special Shabbos—and if you knew in advance what was in store for you today, you might have thought twice about coming to shul in the first place.

For starters, today we complete the book of Shmos and declare, "Chazak, chazak, v'nis'chazeik!" This statement, "Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened," is recited only five times a year—each time one of the five Chumashim is completed in shul. Additionally, we are standing just before the new month of Adar Sheini. And above all that, this Shabbos is Shabbos Shekalim.

What's "Shabbos Shekalim," you ask? So I'll tell you!

In the times of the Holy Temple, the Beis Hamikdash, two sacrifices were brought every day—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. These were communal sacrifices brought for the good of the public in the name of the entire Jewish Nation. And funding for these sacrifices was collected from every Jewish person when they would donate the Machtzis HaShekel, the half-shekel silver coin, to the Temple.

The first of the month of Nissan would be considered the beginning of a new year with regards to the annual donation of the Machtzis HaShekel. Therefore, one month before that, on the first of Adar (or the first of Adar Sheini), they would “make it heard about the shekalim,” meaning, they would make public announcements to everyone to get their half-shekalim ready to be donated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar.

For this reason, the Sages established that on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Adar, the new month of Adar, we read that part of the Torah that talks about the giving of the Machtzis HaShekel, so that our reading of the Torah can be considered as if we actually carried out this mitzvah in reality.

That’s why we take out two Torah scrolls from the ark today: One is used to read the Torah portion of the week, Parshas Pekudei, and the other is used to read the mitzvah of Machtzis HaShekel.

But if you pay close attention, you’ll notice there’s a specific pattern here: First the regular Torah portion is read, and only then is the Machtzis HaShekel passage read.

Now, if I were the one to decide the order of things here, I would first read the new story we have here. After all, it’s rare, it’s uncommon, and we don’t read it the whole year. Parshas Shekalim, the “Shekalim Passage,” is new, short and interesting. It has all the reasons to be read first. So only after reading that, would I read the regular portion of the week.

In the news, the top headline is always the most dramatic, sensational and interesting. Only after you read that do you get to the less dramatic, sensational and interesting headlines.

But Halachah, Jewish law, says the opposite.

There is an axiom in Jewish law: “Tadir v’she’aino tadir, tadir kodem”—“Regular and irregular, regular comes first” (Talmud, Tractate Brachos 51b). When you have several things to do at the same time—like today, when we have to read two different sections of the Torah—first you read the regular portion, the “tadir,” and only then do you read the less-tadir, the less common, which in this case is Parshas Shekalim. In other words, in Halachah, the new headline comes last.

But this rule applies in many situations. For example, a Jewish man puts on tallis and tefillin every morning before praying the Shacharis prayer—but Halachah clearly states that one is to put on the tallis before the tefillin, because wrapping one’s self in the tallis is something that is done regularly whether it’s a weekday or a Shabbos or holiday. Tefillin, however, are not worn on Shabbos and Jewish holidays, so tadir comes before non-tadir.

In other words, even though the mitzvah of wearing tefillin is a daily obligation and the Tallis is more optional, still, since the tallis is worn seven days a week and the tefillin on six, we put the tallis first because it is a mitzvah that is tadir and therefore comes before tefillin.

Another example is eating matzah on the Seder night on Pesach, Passover.

Now, matzah is really nothing more than a kind of bread, which is why we recite on it the blessing “Hamotzi lechem min haaretz. This is a blessing we’re all familiar with. But on the night of Passover, we add another blessing on the matzah: “Al achilas matzah” (on the eating of the Matzah.)

Here too there is the question of which blessing should come first—"Hamotzi" or "Al achilas matzah."

In the Haggadah, the Rebbe writes: " 'Hamotzi' and then 'Al achilas matzah' because... tadir comes first." Since the blessing of "Hamotzi" is recited throughout the year and "Al achilas matzah" is the new blessing on the block here, we therefore put the old blessing before the new blessing.

But why indeed do we do this? What is the reasoning behind this set-up?

In our world, we find the opposite of this to be true. Everyone wants the newest, the freshest, the latest, the trendiest and the most progressive and fashionable. The news jumps out at us from the top headlines, while yesterday's news is tucked away at the bottom somewhere, or on a back page. All the newest technologies are the most popular things nowadays: Twitter, Facebook, iPad and so on, while the old computer (which just yesterday, it seems, was the hottest thing), gets thrown in the garbage so you can buy the new computer.

In our contemporary world, the new is constantly pushing out the old.

Nobody wants to be part of yesterday's world. Nobody wants to be living in the past. This applies to technology and especially to clothes—the new "must-have" styles come in and the wardrobe that was "in" just yesterday is suddenly "out" and gets tossed to make room for the new wardrobe.

So too is it, unfortunately, with people—the elderly, the old, the retired, get pushed out of the way by the young. The old gets pushed out by the new. That's why there's this false value in today's society to look as young as possible—because if you don't, you're "so yesterday" and you become irrelevant.

But along comes our holy Torah, thank G-d, and declares the exact opposite: *Tadir v'she'aino tadir, tadir kodem!* The older and more established something is, the more power and permanence it has over the new thing.

In Judaism, there's no place for the new to push out the old. In Judaism, the young do not toss out their elders. Quite the opposite—all of Judaism is based on that which is old, on things that were said 3,300 years ago at Mt. Sinai. And no new discovery can undermine this stability.

Would anyone think that because there are some doctors who claim to have “discovered” that circumcision is unnecessary that we should stop circumcising our sons as we have done for 4,000 years? Should we stop writing mezuzos by hand with ink on parchment because we have modern printing houses? Should we stop lighting Shabbos candles as we have done for thousands of years because today we have bright electric lights?

No. In Judaism, the new never pushes out the old. The son is never more important than the father. Just the opposite—parents are bigger veterans than their children, and the old are far more “tadir” than the young. Jewish history proves well that it is specifically the old ideas that have withstood the test of time—in contrast, it is specifically the new ideas that rise and fall quickly.

When it comes to priorities, this phenomenon is relevant to each and every one of us and our individual lives.

Let's say you want to go on vacation, but you remember that there's a Shabbos or holiday right in the middle of your planned vacation week. You have to remember that the Torah was here before you, and it comes first—it is our duty to get in line with the Torah, and not have the Torah get in line with us.

My dear friends: The Jewish Nation has been in existence for 4,000 years. In that march through time, many nations and movements have risen and fallen: the Romans, the Greeks, the Persians, and even the British Empire, and so on. In their day, they were what's happening. They were the new. They were the trendiest thing around. But today, they are of no concern—because we Jews know that *tadir v'she'aino tadir, tadir kodem*.

And by the way, in married life, husbands actually do come first, before the kids—because he has been around longer than the kids and therefore deserves more attention. But it's not worth trying to bargain over this, because you won't succeed in convincing anyone...

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