

Half a Dollar of Fire

Giving the Half Shekel

Exodus 30:12

"ונתנו איש כפר נפשו לה"

"Then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul to G-d"

Maimonides: Positive Commandment #171

The 171st *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to give a half *shekel* every year.

The source of this commandment is G-d's statement (exalted be He), "Each man shall give an atonement offering for his life," and, "[Everyone included in the census] shall give [a half shekel.]"

It is clear that women are not obligated in this *mitzvah*, since the verse says, "Everyone included in the census" [and only men were in the census].

The details of this *mitzvah* are explained in the tractate devoted to this subject, i.e. tractate Shekalim. There it is explained that this *mitzvah* applies only when the Holy Temple is standing.