

Leviticus 27: 1-7 Parshat B'hukkotai
Commentary by Marcia Cohn Spiegel

What is the value of a human being?

A man 20-60 = 50 shekels of silver

A woman 20-60 = 30 shekels of silver

A child 5-20 = 20 shekels of silver for a male

= 10 shekels of silver for a female

A child 1 month

To 5 years = 5 shekels of silver for a male, 3 for a female

A person 60 years = 15 shekels of silver for a male

10 shekels of silver for a female

The man is frail and elderly. His wife cooks and cares for him: she bathes him, dresses him and takes him out to sit in the sun. She gives him a cup of hot tea and some biscuits before returning to the house to strip his bed and change the linens, prepare his lunch. She feeds him, strokes his hand and comforts him when he becomes agitated; she soothes his anxiety. She reminds him of how strong and handsome he was, how dashing and romantic. She bring out photos from long ago: their wedding, their children—the happy times. "See how strong you were? Remember the fun we had?" His eyes fill with tears. He sips his tea and a few drops dribble down his chin. She wipes his face tenderly. His worth is 15 shekels. Her worth is far above rubies.