

Spotlight on...Erchin!

Background:

This week we read a double parsha of Behar-Bechukotai. The end of Bechukotai teaches the laws of erchin, which are a set of specific laws pertaining to the monetary evaluation of people or property dedicated to God. In other words, they are the guidelines to follow if someone wanted to consecrate the value of their property to God. Interestingly, the Torah also gives us the guidelines for someone who wants to consecrate the value of a person to God! The Ibn Ezra explains that a person may want to pledge the value of another person to God if that person is in a desperate situation and wants to show Hashem that they're willing to do anything to fix it - even pledging the value of another person. (Remember - value, not the person themselves!)

Here's a chart demonstrating the values of people:

Age	Male (shekels)	Female (shekels)	Ratio
1 month-5 years	5	3	5:3
5 years-20 years	20	10	2:1
20 years-60 years	50	30	5:3
60	15	10	3:2

Questions:

1. Why do you think the Torah divides a person's age in this way? How would you describe each of these stages of life?
2. What are some possible explanations for the differences in the value of males and females? It's ok to answer this based on what society looked like during ancient times.

3. Which category has the least difference between the value of males and females? Which has the biggest difference? Why do you think that could be?

BONUS QUESTION: The gemara in Erchin explains the small difference in values between males and females in the 60+ category with the following saying “An old man in the house is a snare in the house, while an old woman in the house is a hidden treasure in the house and a good sign for the house.” Call up your grandfather and ask him what he thinks the gemara meant with this. Then call up your grandmother and ask her what she thinks the gemara meant. If you survive the phone call, email your answer to MaharatRuth@ostns.org!