
[Millions, Billions, Trillions--That's Real Money!--Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel](#)

Submitted by mdangel1 on Tue, 02/01/2022 - 00:00

The late Senator Everett Dirksen once quipped about the American budget: “A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money.” And that was in the 1960's. These days, we're talking about trillions of dollars...not merely billions.

We are so accustomed to hearing of allocations and projects that entail millions, billions and trillions of dollars, we sometimes forget that these dollars are “real money.” They represent our tax payments, our government's growing debt levels. Money is allocated as though it has no human component to it.

The Torah refers to money as “damim”—blood! Money represents human labor, time, and investment. It is not neutral. Each dollar represents a bit of our lives, the time and energy it took us to generate that dollar.

We learn of the government's allocation of several hundred million dollars to this project, billions to another project, and more than a trillion for yet another massive endeavor. It has recently been suggested that all student debt—totaling over a trillion dollars—should be forgiven. But what about all the hardworking people who have conscientiously repaid their student loans? Should the government reimburse them? Apparently that isn't under consideration.

While vast public expenditures are inevitable—and often necessary—we are presented with huge dollar amounts as if the money simply comes from the air. The numbers become disconnected from the actual human beings who are providing the dollars for the budgets.

As governments and organizations deal with the public's money, they are responsible for spending the money as wisely and fairly as possible. They are duty-bound to prevent wasteful use of funds. They need to realize that each dollar has a human component, that public funds represent the “damim” of all who pay into the system.

Senator Dirksen pointed to the difficulty of dealing with large sums of money. When speaking of billions or trillions of dollars, it's easy to think of the money as anonymous numbers. It's easy to forget that these dollars are the product of real human beings.

When allocating public funds, decisions must be made as to what is best and most needed by constituents. There will obviously be different budgetary opinions and calculations. And not every constituent will agree with every decision. Nevertheless, the process of allocating funds must be conducted with a keen sense of responsibility to the stake-holders. This is true not only for government, but for all organizations that collect funds from the public.

Tax payers and contributors to organizations deserve to have their money spent responsibly and fairly. When allocating public funds, we're not just speaking of real money: we're speaking of real human beings who have generated that money.

- [Log in](#) or [register](#) to post comments