

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Emor, 5782
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה

Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

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Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Emor

AGRICULTURAL TZEDEKAH

The laws of agricultural tzedekah seem out of place, located between Passover and Shavuos on one side, and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos on the other. They are placed in the middle of the holiday sacrifices to teach us that these laws – leaving the gleanings and the corner of the field – are equivalent to building the Temple. We must sweat and toil to produce the harvest, and yet leave the gleanings and corner simply because G-d commanded it. We must sweat and toil to build the Temple, without a thought of personal satisfaction. We must sweat and toil to change our natures, thus bringing Moshiach.

Every aspect of Torah is significant. Each element, whether the name of the Torah reading, a grammatical anomaly, or the choice of a particular word or phrase, provides an instruction for daily life. Many laws derive from small nuances.

In turn, the lesson in halachah (Jewish law) is the source for a lesson in Redemption. Halachah tells us what to do in a given circumstance; from there, Chassidus not only tells us how to work with our inclinations, subduing and redirecting them, but also instills deeper meaning, more spirituality and G-dliness into everything we do. Halachah is the methodology of mitzvos; Chassidus is the methodology of Moshiach, since Moshiach is going to bring awareness of G-dliness into the world.

In this week's Torah reading, Emor, one of the laws appears to be out of context. The Torah, while describing the sacrifices required for the various holidays, interrupts itself. After explaining the sacrifices for Passover and Shavuos, the Torah suddenly changes the subject, repeating a law of agricultural *tzedekah*. It says, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field . . . and the gleanings of the harvest you shall not gather; for the poor and

the stranger you shall leave them. I am the L-rd your G-d." The Torah then continues with its description of the sacrifices for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

Such a narrative peculiarity calls attention to itself, raising several questions. The laws of agricultural *tzedekah* have already been stated in an earlier Torah reading. Why repeat them here? If they must be repeated here, with the laws of the holiday offerings, why not earlier, after the laws of the Omer? That would make more sense. The Omer, a sheaf of wheat brought from the new harvest, was an agricultural offering. If the laws of agricultural *tzedekah* must be here, logically they should follow the law of bringing the Omer. The order should have been Passover, Omer, agricultural *tzedekah*, Shavuuous. Why is it Passover, Omer, Shavuuous on one side, with Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos on the other, with agricultural *tzedekah* precisely in the middle? It seems to be the balance, of equal weight with the holidays.

Also, gleanings – that which falls by the wayside during harvest – and the corners of the field are not the only laws of agricultural *tzedekah*. There are several others. Why are only these two repeated here?

Finally, of course, what is the inner meaning of the interruption? What do we learn about our personal service, about preparing ourselves and the world for Moshiach?

Let's answer the easiest question first. The laws of agricultural *tzedekah* are not placed next to the command concerning the Omer offering for a simple reason: they are not related. True, the Omer offering involves the harvest; and the directive to leave the gleanings and corners to the poor also involves the harvest. But they are not the same. The Omer offering is time-bound and part of the cycle of sacrificial services. The Omer is brought between the Passover sacrifices and the Shavuuous sacrifices, connecting the two. The commandment to abandon the gleanings and corners of the field to the poor applies at all times. It is a law of *tzedekah*, not sacrifice.

This brings us to the next two questions: why repeat the laws of agricultural *tzedekah*? And why repeat just these two – the law of gleanings and corners?

In answer to the first question, Rashi quotes a midrash that it repeats them to make the transgressor answerable for two negative commands. But this just leads to another question! What's so special about the gleanings and the corners of the field? Why is one doubly liable? Further, there seems to be only one commandment, not two. Isn't the Torah just saying the same thing twice?

Question upon question! To answer one, we have to answer another. Why did Torah place the law of agricultural *tzedekah* in the middle of the festivals, Passover and Shavuous on one side, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos on the other? We know why not after the Omer offering, but why here?

One of the Talmudic sages answered thus: "To teach you that whoever gives gleanings, forgotten sheaves and the corners to the poor in the proper manner, such a person is considered as if he built the Temple and presented his offerings therein."

The connection between the sacrifices and *tzedekah* is obvious: in both cases possessions are relinquished to fulfill a Divine command. But the comparison isn't between the sacrifices and *tzedekah* in general. The comparison is between building the Temple and agricultural *tzedekah*. What differentiates the gleanings and the corners of the field from all other forms of *tzedekah*? What makes them unique among the gifts to the poor?

(As an aside, we should note that building the Temple is associated with Moshiach. Therefore, agricultural *tzedekah* must also have an association with Moshiach.)

Other forms of *tzedekah* may come from a variety of sources. The money donated may be acquired through inheritance, through a business venture, or other non-laborious means. But *tzedekah* in the form of gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners, as mandated by the Torah, requires great personal exertion. Plowing, sowing, reaping – the land yields its produce only through the sweat of man's brow. And the result of this strenuous effort he is commanded to give to the poor!

The comparison becomes clear: just as one must sweat and toil to produce the agricultural *tzedekah* – the gleanings, forgotten sheaves and

corners – so one must sweat and toil to build the Temple. Other types of *tzedekah*, even from an agricultural source, do not require the same constant effort and exertion.

Furthermore, this agricultural *tzedekah* provides no pleasure for the giver. With *tzedekah* in general, the donor gives away the “life of his soul,” money or material he could use to satisfy himself. While being generous, one usually has at least the pleasure of choosing the recipient. But such personal enjoyment does not apply to agricultural *tzedekah*. One cannot choose who receives the gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners. They, like the Temple, belong to all Israel.

Still, what is the great merit of giving *tzedekah* without enjoyment? Is an undifferentiated *tzedekah* so phenomenal that it compares to building the Temple? Normally, one **should** have the pleasure. If nothing else, it’s natural to take care of one’s own first. Logically, I should give precedence to a poor person I know.

But in building the Temple, in bringing Moshiach, the usual standards don’t apply. Here, there are two commandments. Not only should we not reap the corners of the field, we may not have the pleasure of selecting or helping the recipient.

To perform the mitzvah in the most proper manner, in a way that it resembles building the Temple, the ego must be removed. One must subdue and redirect the inclinations. Even the small satisfaction expected from performing an easy mitzvah, like leaving a corner of the field or a couple of sheaves, must be eliminated.

Even in small things, we must transform ourselves, subdue our inclinations. Done properly, the “small” mitzvah of agricultural *tzedekah* is likened to the “big” mitzvah of building the Temple. Similarly, the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, must be completely subdued. We must sweat and toil to produce the harvest, and yet leave the gleanings and corner simply because G-d commanded it. We must sweat and toil to build the Temple, without a thought of personal satisfaction. Similarly, we must sweat and toil to change our nature, to act out of devotion, not desire. To make the world a fit and proper dwelling place for G-dliness,

we must work the land, build the Temple and transform ourselves. Then we will again leave the gleanings and the corners, and bring the holiday offerings with our righteous Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 17:255-266)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Mrs. **Rina** bat Reb **Moshe Yosef** עי"ה **Aaron**
Passed away on Lag B'Omer - 18 Iyar, 5775

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