

Parshat Emor Sensitivity and Submissiveness

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Emor discusses the *yomim tovim*. There is an interlude after the laws of *Pesach* and *Shavuot* where the *Torah* interjects, "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field ... for the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them..." And then the *Torah* continues with discussing *Rosh Hashana*. What is the connection to the holidays mentioned? Why is there an emphasis on "your land..." and why leave it rather than give it?

Rabbi Munk cites Rashi in explaining that the laws of *leket*/gleaning and *pe'ah*/corners are mentioned together with the Temple service for the holidays, to teach us that the person who leaves these for the poor is regarded as one who came to Jerusalem, built the Temple, and performed the Divine service there. How so? When a landowner brings the omer and the sacrifices on *Shavuot*, he thanks Hashem for his prosperity. But the *Torah* here teaches us, says Rav Hirsch, that all *Bnei Yisroel*, the landowner and the landless alike, are entitled to a dignified existence. Leaving the gleanings and the corner of the field for the poor ensures the dignity and the prosperity of both.

Perhaps *leket* and *pe'ah* are extensions of the holiday itself, suggests the *Chasam Sofer*. The Gemara teaches that one may continue to bring the *Shavuot* offering six days after the actual *yom tov*. In this context, one may view giving *tzedakah* as another way of "completing" the holiday and preserving the spiritual levels attained. The *Meshech Chochmah* notes that our acceptance of *Torah* at Sinai seems to suggest our acceptance of the spiritual *mitzvot* between Man and God, *mitzvot* we accept at face value as God's will, whether we understand them or not. We must consider the logical laws, such as helping the poor, equally God given and ultimately not a matter subject to our understanding. Without our submitting our understanding to God's will, man can descend to the level of a wild animal. Only when we accept the laws as Divinely commanded, can we retain our moral standard.

R. Salomon cites the *Shla"h Hakadosh* that each of the tablets was equal in size although

the text of the commandments between man and God, was so much longer than the text of the social laws. In addition to accepting that each side is as important as the other, we must also accept that we will invest our full spiritual essence and submission to the logical *mitzvot* as we invest in the *mitzvot* we sense as completely spiritual.

Rabbi Berger quotes Rav Shimon Shkop that the entire purpose of the *Torah* is to teach human beings to do good for others. Hillel Hazaken understood this when he taught, "That which is hateful to you, do not do unto others. All the rest is commentary." When we were in our own land, the Gemara tells us that a potential convert was taught the laws of *leket*, *pe'ah*, *shikchah*, and *maaser* – laws that inculcate within us care for others. This is precisely why these laws are introduced here, right after the laws of the service for *Shavuot* when we received the *Torah*. Further, these are the laws highlighted in *Megillat Ruth*, that we read on *Shavuot* which recounts the conversion of Ruth who fully accepted the *Torah*.

As we see, there is a deep correlation between the "spiritual" *mitzvot* and the "social" *mitzvot*. Rabbi Wolbe notes, when you open your heart to the other to form a relationship with him, you are also training yourself to open your heart to the Other and form a relationship with Him. Your *yirah*/awe of Hashem should open your eyes to *r'iyah*/seeing others.

But in finding ways to help the poor, we must always maintain their dignity, writes Tiv Hatorah. The highest form of *tzedakah* is to leave it for them, for then they will not be embarrassed. It is this form of *tzedakah* that will redeem Zion and allow us to rebuild the *Beit Hamikdash*.

As we know, on *Rosh Hashanah* we are validating Hashem's sovereignty over the world, and we coronate Hashem as King. But, says Rabbi Scheinerman citing the Seforno, Hashem is King equally over the reapers as over the gleaners. Today, we continue taking care of Hashem's children before *Rosh Hashanah* increasing our *tzedakah* and acts of *chesed*. The Be'er Moshe further develops the theme of *Malchut*, for on *Rosh Hashanah* we

proclaim Hashem's sovereignty over the world. By leaving the corner of my field for the poor, I acknowledge that the land does not really belong to me but to my Master, and as His servant, I am fulfilling His command.

In effect, explains *Emek Haparshah*, it is not the farmer who is giving to the poor, but the poor accepting from Hashem. Both the landowner and the gleaner recognize that the field belongs to Hashem and is merely on loan to the landowner. The landowner receives no recognition and the poor man retains his dignity. This condition applies to all forms of *tzedakah*. If the recipient feels embarrassed, the donor is not fulfilling the *mitzvah* properly. Connection to Hashem requires one to nullify his ego thereby creating space for Hashem to enter.

Shaarei Chaim, explains that everything we do requires preparation, especially our service to Hashem. On *Pesach* and *Shavuot* we built the structure of our relationship with Hashem. That relationship was solidified and actualized on *Rosh Hashanah*, when we coronate Hashem as King and submit to His sovereignty. In the agricultural laws we are discussing, focusing one's mind and consciously designating a corner of the field, the *machshavah*, *kavanah*, constitutes preparation, while actually walking away, leaving the gleanings and the corner field is the actualization of the *mitzvah*, the *ma'aseh*.

The Bekorei Shemo notes, when we leave a corner of our field for the poor to take food with dignity, it is as if Hashem comes down to that field and dwells there, akin to a mini *Beit Hamikdash*. The owner's ability to 'let go' is akin to the sacrifices that they offer. Only one who feels that all he has belongs to Hashem can connect fully to Hashem. He leaves his field for the poor because it's not really his, but Hashem's. But he further understands that everything, even his body, belongs to Hashem. When he brings an animal offering to Hashem, he is metaphorically offering himself upon the altar. When one internalizes this message, one accesses the feeling of connection to Hashem, not only on the special days of *yom tov*, but every day of the year.



The Counting of the Omer Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com class by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The *Sefat Emet* and the *Imrei Emet* point out that the period of *sefirat ha'omer* is in the spring when the world awakens and begins to blossom. This parallels the spiritual reality of these seven critical weeks, when we can tap into the potent energy of rebirth and affect positive change for the rest of the year. The *Imrei Emes* explains that the *Torah* call these 49 days, seven *Shabbatot temimot*-perfect weeks. Rav Hirsh notes that *Shabbat* is the recognition of Hashem's sole sovereignty and when we submit to His will, we become perfected vessels to receive the *Torah*. The Ohr Hachaim explains that just as *Shabbat* is the soul of the week, so these 49 days are the soul that gives existence to the rest of the year. The 49 days correspond to the 49 *Shabbatot* of the year.

The days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* were

days of perfection when the Jewish people reached the state of Adam before the sin. This is why it is called *Shabbatot, yom shekulo Shabbat*- a period when they attained a state of immortality and eternal connection with Hashem as they readied themselves to receive the *Torah*. Every year at this time, there is the potential to become a *tzadik gamur*, to achieve perfection. If a person takes full advantage of this, he is judged now for the whole year. It's only if we let this opportunity slip, if we become like the Jews who failed after *Matan Torah*, that we require judgment on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*. Our goal during this time period is to become one with Hashem, to yearn to reexperience *kabalat haTorah* and what *Shavuot* can give us. Although we know we're not perfect, when we commit to remove as many barriers as possible, we can achieve connection with Hashem.

The *Sefat Emet* explains that on *Pesach* when we left Egypt and accepted Hashem's sovereignty it was a one-time commitment. Now we must make it a reality by working on refining our character traits during the 49 days of *sefirah*. On *Shavuot*, we were transformed from servants to children. We reached a level of closeness when we became *banim l'Hashem*. We can recreate this every year. Rav Hirsh explains that on the *Shabbat* that we bless *Rosh Chodesh Iyar* we say *Av Harachamim*, unlike other months when we refrain from saying this prayer. Many decrees against the Jews happened during this time and countless Jews died sanctifying Hashem's name. It's a time when we commit to Hashem and therefore He tests us to prove our loyalty. It's a time when Hashem asks us, "Are you still mine?" And we have the inherent power to say, "Yes" and become one with Him.

A Hard Day's Work 6A

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Justin Treger

I was talking to a friend once and he asked me, "I have the opportunity to bring a brand to the country which would probably dominate 20-30 percent of the market share in my industry. I'm excited about this, but I'm confused about what to do. It will require more hours of work and more overseas trips away from my family. Everyone I speak to says I'm crazy to pass this up, but I'm stuck. I know the Gemara says a person's livelihood is fixed on *Rosh Hashana* for the year. If I'm earning what has already been fixed for me, why put myself through all these extra hours of work and time away from family. What should I do?" I'd been asked this question many times in different forms in the past and I'd usually rattle off an answer I'd read in a book, but here I

was being asked by someone I really cared about and it was an answer that would affect his life. It wasn't theoretical and it silenced me because I didn't know the real answer. It sent me on a journey to reexamine what I'd learned so that the *Torah* I acquired would be accessible and applicable.

Let's study the Gemara in Beitza, "All of a person's livelihood is fixed for him from *Rosh Hashana* to the following *Yom Kippur*, except what he spends on *Yom tov*, *Shabbat* and educating his children in *Torah*." This means that if you spend less you're given less and if you spend more you're given more. The Gemara goes on to prove this with sources from the *Torah*. Then Rashi explains, the Gemara intended to tell us that what was fixed

for you refers to all expenditures besides for the three exceptions mentioned, so spend carefully because you won't get more. This Gemara has nothing to do with the question of how hard a person should work to earn his livelihood. As an aside, it's important to note that in the areas where a person would worry about money the most, such as school fees and expenditures for *Yom Tov*, Hashem assuages our fears telling us not to worry and that the more we spend the more He will give us.

How much is enough hishtadlut? How do we balance effort with what is predestined for us? I look forward to exploring these questions in further classes.