

**** WE ARE DEEPLY SADDENED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE FUNERAL OF
HERBY KNOBEL, A'H, WAS ON SUNDAY APRIL 26. *****

In this parasha we are introduced to a new concept of Tzeddaka (charity). The usual manner of giving Tzeddaka is when one parts with some of his wealth, his money, and gives it to those in need. The result of this is that the recipient is grateful and the donor is filled with a sense of magnanimity. Our parasha (23:22), discusses the Mitzvot of "Leket", "Shik'cha" and "Pe'ah". These three Mitzvot all relate to the responsibility of the farmer leaving a portion of his crops to the poor. Leket- is grain which falls from the harvester, Shik'cha- is grain which is forgotten by the harvester, and Pe'ah- is a corner of the field that must be left for the needy. [Interestingly, "Shik'cha" is the one and only Mitzvah in the Torah that can be performed by "forgetting"].*****

Rashi cites the Midrash that questions why these laws are repeated, having already discussed the need to help the poor in parashat Kedoshim. Furthermore, he queries why are these laws specifically repeated in the middle of the section regarding the festivals? The Midrash answers that since the Shalosh Regalim festivals (Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot) were a time when offerings were brought up to Yerushalayim by the Jewish people, the Torah is teaching that a person who leaves for the poor his Leket, Shik'cha and Pe'ah is considered to have built the Beit HaMikdash and offered Korbanot (sacrifices) within it. The question now is why are these particular gifts, singled out from amongst the many other forms of charity? Furthermore, what is the meaning of the comparison to the building of the Bet HaMikdash and the bringing of Korbanot?

I once heard from Rabbi Zweig, that when HaShem commanded us to donate items for the building of the Mishkan, (Shemot 18:2) He did not say "Yitnu li" they should "give to me", but rather "Yikchu li"- "take on My behalf", for we cannot give anything of ours to HaShem; we acknowledge that the wealth we possess is really His, and therefore, we built the Mishkan with that which was His. This concept is true for Korbanot as well. We do not "give" a Korban to HaShem; rather, through the symbolic gesture of bringing a Korban, we acknowledge that what we have is really His.

All regular forms of charity involve "giving" to a poor person. This action makes the donor feel good about himself and he even harbors the perception that he is giving that which belongs to him. Leket, Shik'cha and Pe'ah are unique in that respect. For the landowner does not "give" anything to the poor; he is forbidden to collect the produce involved, thereby preventing him from determining who will receive it. The landowner is commanded to leave the produce where it is and allow any needy person who wishes, to take it for himself. This procedure drives home the concept to the farmer that he does not control his wealth; rather, Tzeddaka is merely the means by which HaShem distributes His wealth. When a person fulfills these Mitzvot, which are the most difficult forms of charity for they prevent the feeling of satisfaction from having "given", it is as if he built the Beit HaMikdash and offered Korbanot. He gives but he derives no pleasure or satisfaction- that is tantamount to bringing a sacrifice, and is therefore regarded as one of the highest levels of giving Tzeddaka.

Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh
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