



ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר ויקרא

פרשת אמור

SERIES 2: ISSUE 29

THE PURPOSE OF THE OMER-OFFERING

Chapter 23

9) Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying:

(ט) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

10) "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: When you come to the Land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest (אֶת קְצִירָהּ), you shall bring to the Kohen an omer-measure of the first [grains] of your harvest.

(י) דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי-תָבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וּקְצַרְתֶּם אֶת-קְצִירָהּ וְהִבֵּאתֶם אֶת-עֹמֶר
רִאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן.

11) He shall wave the omer-measure before Hashem according to your will; the day after Shabbos [i.e., the day after the first day of Pesach], the Kohen shall wave it.

(יא) וְהִנִּיף אֶת-הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי ה' לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם מִמִּחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת
יְנִיפֶנּוּ הַכֹּהֵן.

22) And when you reap your land's harvest, you must not completely [harvest] the corner of your field when you reap; nor gather up the ungathered stalks of your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for converts; I am Hashem, your God."

(כב) וּבְקַצְרְכֶם אֶת-קְצִיר אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא-תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ
בְּקַצְרְךָ וְלֶקֶט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט לְעָנִי וְלִגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי
ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

Consider the following questions:

1. Why does it say (verse 10), "the Land that I am giving you," in the present tense, rather than "the Land that I will give you"?
2. Why does it say, "you reap its [the land's] harvest," rather than "your harvest"? In addition, what is the word אֶת in the phrase אֶת קְצִירָהּ coming to include (as *Pesachim* 22b states that this is generally the purpose of the word אֶת)?
3. Why does verse 11 say, "according to your will"? Obviously the person agrees with the Kohen waving his omer-offering!
4. At the end of this passage, why does the Torah once again command us to leave the corner of our fields and the ungathered stalks of grain for the poor (verse 22), when we were already commanded this in *Parashas Kedoshim* (19:9)?

There is nothing more likely to make people haughty and cause them to sin than an abundance of plenty, as *Devarim* 32:15 says: *Yeshurun [Yisrael] grew fat and rebelled*. It leads them to forget that everything comes from Hashem and say their success is entirely due to their own efforts. Such ingratitude will eventually cause them to turn away from Hashem until they are completely spiritually destroyed.

As a loving father, Hashem wished to ensure this does not happen. Thus, when the earliest crop – barley – is reaped, before we can congratulate ourselves, He commanded us to bring the Kohen an offering of an omer-

measure of barley, as a way of saying: “Before we have eaten anything from our fields, we acknowledge that it is really all Yours, Hashem, and we are not so brazen as to be ungrateful for Your great kindness.”

This is what Hashem is telling the Jewish people here: “*When you come to the Land... – you will not need to take it by conquest; rather, it will come into your hands as if you are coming into an inheritance. But be very careful not to think that the Land is now yours unconditionally. Do not say ‘It is all up to us; all we have to do is work hard, plough and sow, tend what grows and gather its ample yield.’ Rather, I am giving you this Land – on an ongoing basis, over and over again. It is a gift that needs to be renewed constantly, and if you turn away from serving Me it will be given to someone else.*” **[This answers Question 1.]**

Hashem continues: “Furthermore, do not think that what you reap is your own harvest. *You reap its harvest,*” i.e., the **Land’s** harvest, since the land is blessed – and through its blessing you yourselves will be blessed. You will not just reap produce equal to the amount of grain you sowed, you will receive a hundred times more.” This abundance is hinted at by the extra word אָת in the phrase וּקְצַרְתֶּם אֹת קְצִירָהּ (*you reap its harvest*) – it will not just be a normal harvest but a plentiful one. **[This answers Question 2.]** And then Hashem commands the bringing of *the first [grains] of your harvest* to have the people acknowledge that everything comes from Him and not be ungrateful.

But a person might object, “If Hashem was like a human king, I would understand. I would be bringing him the first produce of his vineyards and his fields so that he can enjoy them first, in return for allowing me to use his land. But Hashem (obviously) does not need to eat anything. It is the Kohen who receives and eats it, and he is a servant of Hashem just like I am. How, then, does bringing this offering show that I am acknowledging and thanking Him?” For this reason, the Torah commands that the Kohen *shall wave the omer-measure before Hashem* – up, down, north, south, east, and west – to hint that the whole world is His and that the offering is really being brought to Him. And although Hashem does not actually take the *omer*-offering for Himself, it is clear that if He did want to do so, the people would willingly give it to Him. This is what the Torah means when it says, “*He shall wave the omer-measure before Hashem according to your will*” – i.e., you would want it be given to Hashem. Hashem considers this positive thought as if it actually happened and He received it, and only then gave it to the Kohen to eat. **[This answers Question 3.]**

As to why the Torah then repeats the obligation to leave crops for the poor, the answer is that just as Hashem wanted the beginning of the harvesting process to be marked by a mitzvah and holiness, He wanted the end of the process to be marked in the same way, so that both are marked with an act of giving. **[This answers Question 4.]** Hashem also commanded that the method of giving to the poor should be done anonymously. Thus the owner of the land is not commanded to gather all the crops and give a portion to the poor; rather, he should leave their portion where it is in the field. In this way, he will not know who is gathering it.

THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508 - 1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKodosh” (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich’s true greatness.

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