

Zera Shimshon

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Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter XLVII: Re'eh (Deut. 11:26–16:17)

Essay 3. Testing G-d by tithing

"הביאו את-כל-המעשר אל-בית האוצר" וכו' "ובחנוני נא בזאת" וכו' "ונהריקתי לכם ברכה עד-בליידי". יש לדקדק מהו "את-כל-המעשר" וכי סלקא דעתך שאם יתן מקצתו לא תהיה לו ברכה ואף לא יהיה לו חסרון? והא אם יתן מקצתו כאילו לא יתן כלום דמי, וכנראה מהמעשה הובא בתנחומא פרשה זו ובתוספות פרק קמא דמענית מאדם עשיר שהיה לו שדה שהיה מוציא ממנו ארץ כורין והיה מפריש ממנה מאה כורין מעשר ומת אותו האיש ונפל השדה בנד בנו ומפני רבוי המעשרות לא רצה ליתן את כולם עד שפחתה אותה השדה ועמדה על מעשרותיה.

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, and let there be food in My House, and test Me now with this—said the L-rd of Hosts. I will surely open the floodgates of Heaven for you and pour down a blessing upon you, more than enough.”¹

Question 1: One must examine: What is the meaning of “the full tithe”? Could it enter your mind that if he gives only part, there will be no blessing, and yet there will also be no deficiency?

But if he gives only part, it is as if he gave nothing at all, as appears from the incident brought in Tanchuma, this section (sec. 10), and in the Tosafot, first chapter of Ta’anit (9a), of a wealthy man who had a field producing a thousand *kor*,² and he would separate from it a hundred *kor* for tithe. That man died, and the field came into the possession of his son. Because of the great value of the tithes, a hundred *kor*, he did not want to give all that amount. He omitted the tithes altogether, and thus that field diminished and instead of producing a thousand *kor*, it produced only the amount of its tithes, i.e., one hundred *kor*. A further discussion of Question 1 appears later.

ועוד קשה מאי שנא מצוה זו מכלהו שאר מצות דשרי לנסוגי ביה הקב"ה, והא כלל גדול בינדנו לא ניתנו המצות אלא לצרף בקו את הבריות שנגמר "אמרת אלוה צרופה" וכו'. ועוד מהו לשון "עד-בליידי". ועוד קשה על מה שאמרו "ל עשר בשביל שתתעשר וכי היכן מצינו שהקב"ה נותן שכר מצותיו בעולם הזה, ומכל שכן להתנות מתחלה עשר בשביל שתתעשר.

Question 2: Furthermore, it is difficult to understand: How is this commandment different from all the other commandments, that in this one the Holy One, Blessed be He,

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¹ Malachi 3:10.

² A *kor* was a bulk measure for staples like wheat, flour, barley, wine, and oil/

permitted testing Him? For we have a great principle in our hands: “The commandments were given only to refine people,” as it is said, ‘Every word of G-d is refined.’³”⁴

Question 3: Furthermore, what is the meaning of the expression “more than enough”?

Furthermore, it is difficult regarding what [the rabbis] of blessed memory said, “Tithe, so that you will become wealthy.”⁵ I.e., Deut. 14:22 reads, “You shall surely tithe [עָשָׂר] [אָסַר תֵּי אָסַר] all the produce of your sowing that comes out [from] the field, year by year.” In a *derasha*, the rabbis interpreted this as “Tithe so that you will become wealthy,” “*aser bishvil she tit’asher*,” עָשָׂר בְּשִׁבִיל שֶׁתִּתְעָשֵׂר, turning the *sin* [שׁ] of *te’aser* into the *shin* [שׁ] of *tit’asher*.

Question 4, therefore, is where do we find that the Holy One, Blessed be He, gives reward for His commandments in this world, and all the more so that it should be stipulated at the outset: “Tithe so that you will become wealthy”?

וַיִּוָּכַח בְּמַאי דְאִמְרִינָן בְּפֶרֶק ה' דְּבִרְכוֹת אָמַר ר' אוֹשְׁעֵיָא: מַעֲרִים אָדָם עַל תְּבוּאָתוֹ וּמְכַנְיָסָהּ בְּמוֹץ שְׁלֵה פְּדֵי שְׁתֵּהּא בְּהִמְתּוֹ אוֹפְלֵת וּפְטוּרָה מִן הַמַּעֲשָׂר. וְאִף עַל גַּב דְּנִקְט בְּהִמְתּוֹ לְאוֹ דְּנִקְא אֶלְא הוּא עֲצָמוֹ יָכוֹל לְאָכּוֹל מִמֶּנָּה עֲרָאִי, כְּמוֹ שֶׁפִּסְק הֲרַמְבַּ"ם (פֶּרֶק ג' מֵהַלְכוֹת מַעֲשָׂר) וּמְכַל שְׁכָן לְפִירוּשׁ הַרְבֵּי רַבֵּי אֶפְרַיִם הִבְיָאוּהוּ הַתּוֹסְפוֹת דְּמַנְחֹת (דָּף ס"ז ע"ב) שֶׁיָּכוֹל אֶפְיֵלוּ לְאָכּוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ קִבְעָה, וְהֵהִיא דְּמַעֲרִים אָדָם אִף לְכַתְחֵלְהָ מִשְׁמַע, וְכֵן פִּתְבֵּי הֲרַמְבַּ"ם בְּפֶרֶק הַנֶּאֱמָר לְעֵיל מוֹתֵר לְאָדָם לְהַעֲרִים וְכו'.

[The first question] may be further understood through what we say in chapter 5 of Berachot (31a): Rabbi Oshaya said, “A person may act with guile concerning his produce and bring it in while still with its husk, so that his animal may eat from it and it is exempt from tithing.” Even though it mentions “his animal,” this is not precise, for he himself may also eat from it casually, as ruled by the Rambam (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Tithes, ch. 3, halacha 6), and all the more so, according to the explanation of Rabbi Ephraim, cited by Tosafot in Menachot (page 6[7]b), that he may even eat from it in a fixed manner. That teaching, that “a person may act with guile,” implies even initially. So too wrote the Rambam in the above-mentioned chapter: it is permitted for a person to act with guile, etc.

וְאִם כֵּן הוּאִיל שְׁמֹן הַדִּין יָכוֹל אָדָם לְפִטוֹר עֲצָמוֹ מִמַּקְצָת מַעֲשָׂרוֹתָיו דְּהֵינּוּ לְהַעֲרִים וְכו' וְאִינוּ חַיִּיב לְעָשֵׂר עַד שְׁיִמְרְחֶנּוּ אוֹ עַד שְׁיִרְצֶה לְאָכּוֹל אֶכִּילַת קִבְעָה, לְכֵן אָמַר הַכְּתוּב "הִבְיָאוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשָׂר" כְּלוֹמַר בְּלִי הַעֲרָמָה כָּלֵל, וּמִפְּנֵי שֶׁיֵּשׁ סְבָרָא לְבַעַל הַבַּיִת לומר לְמָה אֲנִי אֶתֵּן יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁצִּוְּתָה תּוֹרָה, הֲלֹא לְכַתְחֵלְהָ מַעֲרִים וְכו'.

If so, since by law a person may exempt himself from part of his tithes, that is, by acting with guile, etc., and is not obligated to tithe until he smooths them [i.e., processes the grain], or until he wishes to eat a fixed meal. Therefore, to further answer Question 1, Scripture said: “Bring the full tithe,” meaning, without any guile at all, since there is a reasoning for the landowner to say: “Why should I give more than the Torah commanded, for initially one may act with guile,” etc. In other word, technically one can avoid part of the tithe, and that is why the verse insists on the full tithe.

³ Prov. 30:5.

⁴ Lev. Rabbah 13:3.

⁵ Shabbat 119a.

ואפילו מי שאוסר לאכול אכילת קבע זה אינו אלא מדרבנן, שמדאורייתא היה מותר אפילו אכילת קבע. ואם אני אעשה יותר מהראוי לי לפי חובתי אפסיד ממוני ושמא לא אקבל עליה שִׁכָּר, דהא אמרינן בשלחן ערוך ארזי חיים (סימן תרל"ט בהגהה סעיף ז') וכל הפטור מן הסופה ואינו יוצא משם אינו מקבל עליו שִׁכָּר ואינו אלא הדיוטות עכ"ל. וכן אמרינן בכמה דינים כיוצא בזה. משום הכי אמר אל תיראו להפסיד ממונכם בכדי שלא ליטול שִׁכָּר וליקרא הדיוט, כי אדרבא בנה תראו האות והמופת ש"הריקתי לכם ברכה".

Even for one who forbids eating a fixed meal, this is only by rabbinic law, for by Torah law it was permitted even to eat a fixed meal. If I do more than what is due according to my obligation, I will lose my money, and perhaps I will not receive reward for it. For we say in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim (siman 639, gloss to se'if 7): "Anyone who is exempt from the sukkah and does not leave it does not receive reward for it, and is but a fool." So too we say in several other laws of this sort. Therefore, it says: Do not fear losing your money for nothing, not to take reward and to be called a fool; for on the contrary, in this you will see the sign and wonder that "I will pour down a blessing upon you."

ולפיכך קראו "ברכה" משום דאמרינן בויקרא רבה (פרשה ט"ו) הברכות מברכין את בעליהו, ואף כאן הקב"ה לא יתן לו ממתן שִׁכָּרו הגנוז לו לעתיד לבוא דשִׁכָּר מצות בהאי עלמא ליפא, רק המעשה עצמו של המצנה ישלח לו ברכה ויתעשר הרבה ויבא עשרו ממילא, וזהו "והריקתי לכם ברכה" וכו'.

Therefore, it is called a blessing, because we say in Vayikra Rabbah (section 15:7): "Blessings bless their owners." And so too here: the Holy One, Blessed be He, will not give him from the stored reward reserved for him in the World-to-Come, for the reward of commandments in this world does not exist.

Thus, to answer Question 4, it is **rather the act of the commandment itself that will bring forth blessing for him, and he will become greatly wealthy, and his wealth will come to him automatically.** That is, G-d is not directly giving a reward here, so there is no withdrawal from one's stored reward of the World-to-Come; rather, the very act of tithing activates blessing in this world. I.e., there are mitzvot that promise long life, such as honoring parents, or sending away a mother bird from its nest before taking the eggs, but these are not guaranteed in this world. Tithing is different, as the very act itself opens the channel of blessing, as will be discussed later in this essay. **This is the meaning of: "And I will pour down a blessing upon you," etc.**

והלשון "עד-בלי-די" יובן במדרש רבה (סדר במדבר פרשה ה') "אל-תגזל-דל כי דל-הוא" וכו' הנהיר הקב"ה שלא יגזול מן העניים המתנות הראויות להם בשדה כי דל הוא ודי עניותו, לא די להם לעשירים שעומדים ברינה והוא בצער אלא אף גזול ממנו מה שנתן לו הקב"ה וכו', ולכן אמר "עד-בלי-די" כלומר שלא יאמרו "די לה בעשרך" וכו' רק יאמרו "יוסיף ויחזור ויוסיף".

To answer Question 3, the language “more than enough” may be understood from Midrash Num. Rabbah (section 5:2): “Do not rob the poor, because he is poor.”⁶ The Holy One, Blessed be He, warned not to rob the poor of the gifts that are due them in the field, for he is poor, and his poverty is enough for him. Is it not enough for the rich that they stand in comfort while he is in distress, but they also rob him of that which the Holy One, Blessed be He, has given him, etc. Therefore. it says: “more than enough,” meaning, they shall not say to you: “It is enough for you, with your wealth,” etc., but rather they shall say: “Add and continue to add [even more wealth].”

ומה שאמרו ז"ל "עשר בשביל שתתעשר" יובן שפיר במה שכתב מהרש"א סוף פרק קמא דסוטה על ההיא דנתאנה מנשה ליפגס לארץ בשביל לקיים המצות התלויות בארץ ולקבל עליהן שכר, דקשה דהא אמרינן אל תהיו פעבדים המשמשים את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס. ומירץ דהיינו במצנה שנתחייב בה כבר אבל הקא שעדיין לא בא לארץ ישראל שהוא מקום החיוב והקב"ה לא הנה רוצה שיבוא שם שפיר מצי לבקש משום קבול שכתב עכ"ל.

That which [the rabbis] of blessed memory said, “Tithe, so that you will become wealthy,” may well be understood by what the Maharsha wrote at the end of the first chapter of Sotah (14a) regarding that which Moses desired to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill the commandments dependent on the Land and to receive reward for them. For it is difficult to understand this, since we say, “Do not be like servants who serve the master in order to receive a reward.”⁷ He answered that this applies to a commandment in which one is already obligated, but here, since he had not yet entered the Land of Israel, which is the place of obligation, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, did not wish him to come there, it was proper for him to request on account of receiving their reward.

והכי נמי הואיל דמדאורייתא יכול להערים ולפטור עצמו ממקצת מעשרותיו כנאמר לעיל, אם פן שפיר מצי לחייב עצמו להפריש המעשר מכל תבואתו בלי שום הערמה כלל אפילו על מנת לקבל פרס, וזהו "עשר בשביל שתתעשר".

So too here, since by Torah law one can act with guile and exempt himself from part of his tithes, as mentioned above, therefore it is proper for him to obligate himself to separate the tithe from all his produce without any guile at all, even on condition of receiving reward. This is the intent behind: “Tithe, so that you will become wealthy.”

⁶ Prov. 22:22.

⁷ Pirkei Avot 1:3.

ועוד יש לומר לפי המדרש הנאמר לעיל שפשם שלא אמרת לעני די לה במה שצוני הקב"ה אלא אדרבא הגדלת המצנה שהיא תלויה למעלה מן השמש דהיינו למעלה מן העולם, כה לא יאמרו לה די במה שנוגע לתקנה ולמזלך כפי סדר העולם שאמר בו הקב"ה די, כמו שזכרנו נקרא אל שדי, ותטול עשרה למעלה מן השמש. ואמרו זה דוקא במצנת המעשר משום שפשומו פן הוא תיקון ויחוד לעשר ספירות וידוע שהן פלולות עשר מעשר עד אין סוף ומשם יקבל השפע שבע רצון.

Furthermore, it may be said according to the Midrash cited above, that you did not say to the poor man: “What the Holy One, Blessed be He, has commanded is enough for you.” On the contrary, you magnified the commandment that depends on that which is above the sun—that is, above the world, i.e., in the spiritual realm. So too, they shall not say to you: “It is enough for you regarding your portion and your fortune according to the order of the world,” of which the Holy One, Blessed be He, said “Enough” [*dai*] to stop the world’s expansion, for which reason He is called *El Shaddai*.⁸

Rather, you shall take your wealth above the sun, i.e., from the spiritual realm, transcending the natural constraints of this world “under the sun.” They said that this applies specifically to the commandment of the tithe, because as its name implies, it is a rectification and unification of the ten *sefirot*. It is known that they are comprised of ten within ten, i.e., each Sefirah contains within itself elements of all the other Sefirot, and this interinclusion continues, until the *Ein Sof*, the infinite Divine, and from there the flow of abundant favor will be received. I.e., once the mitzvah of tithing activates the structure, the channels of Divine abundance are opened from the infinite source. The blessing is not constrained by the natural order, i.e., “under the sun,” but comes from a higher source, “above the sun,” so that the person receives plentiful sustenance. Thus, tithing harmonizes the ten Sefirot, reconnects them with Ein Sof, and draws down unbounded blessing, beyond the limits of the natural order “under the sun.”

ועוד יש לומר שהטעם שאנו חייבים במעשר לפי שבזה נודע לנו שהארץ של הקב"ה היא, ומי שאינו נותן המעשרות פתיקונו הוא כופר בזה העקר, דהא אמרינו בפרק אינהו נשד (דף ע"ג ע"ב) ארעא לטסקא משעבדא, ומלכא אמר מאן דיהיב טסקא – ליכול ארעא וכו' ומאן דלא יהיב פרגא לשתעביד למאן דיהיב פרגא. והכי נמי הקרקע של הקב"ה היא ונאנחנו עבדיו "כילי בני ישראל עבדים", ונתנה לנו כדי שנתן הטסקא דהיינו המעשרות, ומאן דלא יהיב טסקא לא ליכול ארעא, ומשום הכי מי שמעשר פירותיו פראוי יהיה עשיר ומי שאינו מעשר פראוי יהיה עני.

Furthermore, it may be said that the reason we are obligated in the tithe is that through this it becomes known to us that the Land belongs to the Holy One, Blessed be He, and whoever does not give the tithes properly denies this principle. For we say in the 5th chapter of Bava Metzia, entitled *Eizehu Neshekh* [“Which is paying interest”] (page 73b): “The land is subject to tax, and the king said: whoever pays the tax may eat of the land . . . and whoever does not pay the levy shall be subjugated to the one who does pay the levy.”⁹

⁸ Chagigah 12a.

⁹ Bava Metzia 73b.

So too here: the Land belongs to the Holy One, Blessed be He, and we are His servants, as it is said: “For the children of Israel are servants to Me.”¹⁰ It was given to us in order that we give the tax, that is, the tithes. Whoever does not give the tax shall not eat of the Land. Therefore, whoever tithes his fruits properly will be wealthy, and whoever does not tithe properly will be poor.

ואם כן מלבד מצוות המעשר שעל זה שמור השכר לעתיד, כמו כל שאר המצוות, יש הודאה ברורה ומפורסמת שהארץ של הקב"ה היא ואנחנו עבדיו. ומי שנותן המעשר מן ראוי הוא שישנה אף בחלק חבירו שאינו נותן המעשר. ומשום הכי נעשה עשיר שהרי יש לו חלק כפול. ועוד דהואיל דאמרין לישתעבד למאן דיהיב פרגא אם כן על פרחין לומר שמי שנותן המעשר יהיה עשיר ויהיה לו מעות להלות למי שאינו נותן. וקרא פתיב "ועבד לנה לאיש מלנה", ומשום הכי שאני מצוות מעשר דשרי לנסויי ביה לקב"ה.

If so, the answer to Question 2, then, is that besides the commandment of the tithe, for which the reward is reserved for the future, like all other commandments, there is also here a clear and public acknowledgment that the Land belongs to the Holy One, Blessed be He, and we are His servants.

Whoever gives the tithe, it is fitting that he should merit even the portion of his fellow who does not give the tithe. Because of this, he becomes wealthy, for he has a double portion. Also, since we say that one who does not pay the levy becomes subjugated to the one who does pay the levy, it must be said that whoever gives the tithe will be wealthy and will have money to lend to the one who does not give. The verse is written: “The borrower is servant to the lender.”¹¹ Therefore, the answer to Question 2 is that the commandment of the tithe is different, that it is permitted to test the Holy One, Blessed be He, with it.

ואף על גב דמה שאמרין ז"ל עשר בשביל שתתעשר, לכאורה אינה דרשא גמורה, משום דבגמרא דילן מציינו כמה תנאים דסבירא להו דברה תורה בלשון בני אדם ולידידהו אין מקום לדרשא זו, מפל מקום נראה לומר שחז"ל לא דרשו זה מהכפל, אלא מפשט וסוף הפסוק, אלא דאסמכיהו ארישיה דקרא. ואין הכי נמי דכולי עלמא מודו בדרשא זו משום דהוכיח סופו על תחלתו, ועוד דאפילו מאן דלא יליף מרישיה הוא מוכרח למילף מסיפיה. והיינו שנה העושר שמבטיחו בשביל המעשר עיקרו הוא דוקא בתבואות השדה והיינו מדה כנגד מדה כנגד טעם הטקא הנאמר לעיל.

Even though [the rabbis] of blessed memory said of the expression “you shall tithe a tenth,” [עשר תעשר] [*aser te'aser*] of Deut. 14:22, “Tithe so that you will become wealthy,” “*aser bishvil she'tit'asher*,” apparently this is not a full-fledged derivation [*derasha*], for in our Gemara we find several Tannaim who hold that “the Torah speaks in human language.”¹² I.e., not every doubled language needs to be turned into a *derasha* of two meanings; it could just be for emphasis, which is why English translations of such doubled verbs typically add the word “surely,” so that *aser te'aser* is translated as “You shall surely tithe.”

¹⁰ Lev. 25:55.

¹¹ Prov. 22:7.

¹² Berachot 31b.

According to them, there is no place for such a derivation, as in any case, it seems one may say that the sages of blessed memory did not derive this from the doubling of the expression *aser te'aser*, but rather from the plain meaning and the end of the verse. Only they attached [the concept that if one tithes, he will become wealthy] as a support [*asmachta*] to the beginning of the verse. It is indeed so that everyone agrees with this derivation, because the end of the verse proves the beginning. What is the relevance of the plain meaning of the beginning of the verse, and the end of the verse? As discussed at the beginning of this essay, the full verse reads, “You shall surely tithe all the produce of your sowing that comes out [from] the field, year by year.” The beginning of the verse emphasizes “all the produce.” Normally, giving away a tenth would seem to diminish wealth, but the verse stresses that even after you tithe, it is still “all the produce,” it is not lacking.

Moreover, even one who does not derive it from the beginning must necessarily derive it from the end. The end of the verse discusses the produce “that comes out [from] the field, year by year.” This means that the field will keep producing, year after year. This assurance of a steady annual yield is a blessing attached to tithing. This means that the wealth which He promises on account of the tithe is primarily in the produce of the field, and this is measure-for-measure, corresponding to the reason of the “tax” mentioned above.

וְנָהוּ שְׁסִיִּים הַכֶּתוּב "הַיֵּצֵא הַשְּׂדֵה" דְּהִיָּה לוֹ לומר הַיֵּצֵא מִן הַשְּׂדֵה, וְהַעֲנִין הוּא שְׂאֵם אָדָם יֵשׁ לוֹ שְׂדֵה הַמוֹצִיאָה בְּדָרְךָ טֹבֵעַ מֵאָה וְהוּא מוֹצִיא מִמֶּנָּה הַמַּעֲשֵׂר כְּרֵאוֹי סוֹף שְׂדֵה זֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶלְפֵי, כִּהְהוּא מַעֲשֵׂה שְׂאָדָם אֶחָד הַנִּים לְבָנוּ שְׂדֵה הַמוֹצִיאָה אֶלְפֵי וְהָבֵן פִּיחַת הַמַּעֲשָׂרוֹת וְהִיא עֵמֶדָה עַל מֵאָה כְּנֶאֱמַר לְעֵיל.

This is why the verse concludes: “that comes out [from] the field” (*ha-yotzei sadeh*), i.e., omitting the word “from.” Gramatically, it should have explicitly said “that comes out from the field” (*ha-yotzei min ha-sadeh*), not omitting the word “from.” The matter is that if a man has a field that naturally produces one thousand *kor*, so that one hundred *kor* should be tithed, and he separates from it the tithe properly, in the end this field will produce one thousand *kor*. This is like that story of the man who left to his son a field producing one thousand *kor*, and the son omitted the tithes, and it remained producing one hundred *kor*, as mentioned above.

וְנָהוּ פִירוֹשׁ הַכֶּתוּב "עֲשֹׂר" דְּהִיָּינוּ תַפְרִישׁ הַמַּעֲשָׂרוֹת וּבְזָכוֹת זֶה "תַּעֲשֹׂר אֶת כָּל־תְּבוּאָת וְרָעָה" שִׁיתְרַבָּה בְּעֲשֹׂר פְּעָמִים כָּל סוֹף הַתְּבוּאָה וְיִהְיֶה אֶלְפֵי, וְנָהוּ "הַיֵּצֵא הַשְּׂדֵה" דְּהִיָּינוּ סוֹף הַמַּעֲשֵׂר שְׂאֵתָה מִפְרִישׁ הוּא יֵצֵא הַשְּׂדֵה שְׂאֵם תַּפְחוֹת, תַּפְחוֹת לָהּ עֲשֹׂר פְּעָמִים כְּפִי שְׂאֵתָה פְּחָתָה אֶת הַמַּעֲשֵׂר, כִּהְהוּא מַעֲשֵׂה שְׂכֻשְׂפָחַת עֲשֹׂר לַשְּׁנָה הַבָּאָה פְּחָתָה הַשְּׂדֵה מֵאָה, וְאֵם תַּמֵּן כְּרֵאוֹי הִיא תוֹסִיף עֲשֹׂר פְּעָמִים הַכֶּפֶל שֶׁל כָּל הַסּוֹף שֶׁל הַתְּבוּאָה וּמִמֶּילָא תַתַּעֲשֹׂר, וְאֵף מִי שְׂאֵין לוֹ קַרְקַע מִתְקִיִּים בֵּיהּ שְׂפִיר עֲשֹׂר בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂתַתַּעֲשֹׂר אֵם יִהְיֶה זֶהִיר לַהַפְרִישׁ הַמַּעֲשֵׂר מִכָּל מַה שֶׁהוּא קוֹנֶה מִמִּי שְׂאֵינוּ נֶאֱמָן, וְעוֹד יֵשׁ מִי שְׂנוֹהֵג לַהַפְרִישׁ הַמַּעֲשֵׂר מִן הַרְיוּחַ וְחֻלְקוֹ לְעֻנִיִּים בְּנֵי טוֹבִים וְלַעֲמָלֵי תוֹרָה, כִּי הָרֵאשִׁי תְבוּת שֶׁל עֲשֹׂר תַּעֲשֹׂר הוּא עֲמָלֵי תוֹרָה, וּבְזֶה יַתַּעֲשֹׂר.

This is the explanation of the verse: “*Aser*”—that is, separate the tithes—and in this merit you shall “tithe all the produce of your sowing,” that it be increased tenfold the total

amount of the produce, and it will become one thousand. This is the meaning of “that comes out [from] the field,” meaning, the measure of the tithe that you separate, that is what comes forth from the field. If you diminish, it will diminish for you tenfold according to how much you diminished the tithe, like that story, that when he diminished ten, the following year the field diminished one hundred. If you give properly, it will increase tenfold, doubling the entire sum of the produce, and you will thereby become wealthy.

Even one who does not have land, it is still fulfilled in him: “Tithe so that you will become wealthy,” if he is careful to separate the tithe from whatever he buys from one who is not trustworthy. Furthermore, there are those who practice separating the tithe from profit and dividing it among poor people of good family and among those who labor in Torah. For the first letters of *aser te’aser*, viz, *ayin tav*, are the same as those of the words *amalei Torah* (“those who labor in Torah”), and through this one will become wealthy.

To review so far:

- Practically, tithing is like a tax acknowledging G-d’s kingship.
- Mystically, tithing aligns with the ten Sefirot and channels infinite blessing.
- Any wealth received is not a payment from G-d, but a direct outcome of performing the act of tithing.

ואגב אורחיו יובן הטעם למה דנקא יששכר וזבולון עשו שותפות ביניהם ולא שום אחד משאר השבטים דכתיב "שמח זבולן בצאתה" וכי, דבגמרא דפסחים אמרינן דמעוהו הבאות ממדינת הים אין בהם סימן ברכה, ופירשו הטעם משום שעובדים במקום סכנה ואם עושין לו גס מנפין לו מזכיותיו. אמנם אם נפריש המעשר מהרינו נמצא שהבעלי תורה משותפים באותם הנכסים וזכות התורה עומדת להם ועושים להם גס ואין מנפין להם, ואם כן זבולון שגפול לחלקו ימים ונהרות כדכתיב "זבולן לחוף ימים ישכן", משום הכי נשתתף ביששכר אכל האחרים לא הנה להם צורך זה.

Along the way, the reason may be understood why specifically Issachar and Zebulun made a partnership between them, and not any of the other tribes. That is, the tribe of Zebulun financially supported the tribe of Issachar, who sat and learned Torah. In turn, the tribe of Zebulun received a share of the spiritual reward gained by the tribe of Issachar.¹³

As it is written, “Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out.”¹⁴ In the Gemara, Pesachim (50b), we say: “Money that comes from overseas trade does not have a sign of blessing.” They explained the reason: because one passes through dangerous places, and if a miracle is done for him, they deduct from his merits.

However, if he separates the tithe from the profit, it turns out that Torah scholars are partners in those possessions. The merit of Torah stands for them, and miracles are done for them without their merits being deducted. If so, Zebulun, to whom fell the portion of seas and rivers, as it is written, “Zebulun shall dwell by the seashores,”¹⁵ therefore entered into

¹³ Gen. Rabbah 72:5.

¹⁴ Deut. 33:18.

¹⁵ Gen. 49:13.

partnership with Issachar. But the other tribes did not have this need, as they were able to earn a living without engaging in dangerous activities. Thus, their work was blessed, and they didn't need the extra spiritual protection earned by investing their tithes in the support of Torah scholars.

ובדברך זה יובן מאי דאמרין בפרק קמא דתענית ר' יוחנן אשכחיה ליגוקא דריש לקיש, אמר לו אימא לי פסוקיה, אמר לו "עשר תעשר", אמר לו ומאי "עשר תעשר", אמר לו עשר בשביל שתתעשר, אמר לו מנא לך הא, אמר לו זיל נסי, אמר לו ומי שרי לנסוי להקב"ה והא כתיב "לא תנסו אתה" , אמר לו הכי אמר ר' אושעיא חוץ מזו, שפאמר "הביאו את כל המעשר אל בית האוצר ויהי טרף בביתי ובחונני נא בזאת אמר ה' צבאות אם לא אפתח לכם את ארבות השמים ונהריתי לכם ברכה עד בלי די". מאי "עד בלי די", עד שיבלו שפתותיכם מלומר "די", אמר לו אי הנה מטינא להתם להאי פסוקא לא הנה צריכנא לך ולר' אושעיא רבך ע"כ.

In this way may be understood that which we say in the first chapter of tractate Ta'anit:

Rabbi Yochanan found the young son of Reish Lakish. He said to [the boy]: Recite to me your verse [i.e., the verse you studied today in school]. [The boy] said to him: "You shall surely tithe." [The boy] said to [Rabbi Yochanan]: But what is [the meaning of this phrase:] "You shall surely tithe"? [Rabbi Yochanan] said to him: [The verse means:] Tithe, so that you will become wealthy. [The boy] said to [Rabbi Yochanan]: From where do you [know this]? [Rabbi Yochanan] said to him: Go and test it.

The boy said to him: And is it permitted to test the Holy One, Blessed be He? But isn't it written: "You shall not test the L-rd your G-d"?¹⁶ [Rabbi Yochanan] said to [the boy] that Rabbi Oshaya said as follows: [It is prohibited to test G-d in any way,] **except in this [case of tithes], as it is stated: "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, and let there be food in My House, and test Me now with this—said the L-rd of Hosts. I will surely open the floodgates of Heaven for you and pour down a blessing upon you, more than enough."¹⁷**

What is "More than enough"? Rami bar Hama said that Rav said: [It means that the abundance will be so great] that your lips will be worn out from saying "enough." [The boy] said to [Rabbi Yochanan]: If I had reached there [to this verse,] I would not have needed you or your teacher, Rabbi Oshaya [as the verse states explicitly that one may test G-d in this instance].

- Ta'anit (9a)

¹⁶ Deut. 6:16.

¹⁷ Malachi 3:10.

ומקושים בנה קיצור שמיד כשאמר לו מנא לך הא הנה לו לר' יוחנן להשיב דכתיב "הביאו את-כל-המעשר" וכו', ועוד מה שאמר שהוא ינוקא אלו מטינא התם וכו' שאין זו מהלכות דרף ארץ ולמה הגיד לנו בעל הגמרא דבר זה שיש בו מיעוט דרף ארץ.

They raise an objection on this: briefly, that as soon as he said to him, “From where do you know this?”

Question 5: **Rabbi Yochanan should have answered, “For it is written: ‘Bring the full tithe . . .’ ”** Why did he mention Rabbi Oshaya, instead of just citing the verse directly?

Question 6: **Furthermore, that which the child said, “If I had reached that verse,” this is seemingly a rude response, not in accordance with the manners of proper conduct. Why did the author of the Gemara tell us something that contains a lack of proper conduct?**

וגיש לומר דמאי דקשניא ליה לינוקא על כפל של הפתוב היינו לפי שמסיים "היצא השדה שנה ושנה", דמשמע ד'עשר תעשר' שיהיה בכל שנה ושנה, ואיך שיהיה כפל זה בכל שנה ושנה, ובשלמא בלא סוף הפסוק הייתי אומר שביא לרמזו שלעולם יש לו לעשר אף אם לא נתברר, כמו שפסיים הפרשה "מקצה שלש שנים תוציא" וכו' "למען יברכה ה' אלהיך", דומיא למאי דאמרינו ב"העניק מעניק" אין לי אלא נתברר הבית בגללו, לא נתברר הבית בגללו מננו, תלמוד לומר "העניק מעניק", מקל מקום.

It may be said: that which was difficult for the child to understand regarding the doubling of the verse was because it concludes, “the produce of your sowing that comes out [from] the field, year by year,” which implies that “you shall surely tithe” applies every single year, with a reward every year.

How does such doubling of “*aser te’aser*” apply in each and every year? For without the end of the verse, “the produce of your sowing that comes out [from] the field, year by year,” I might have said that [the doubled expression] comes to hint that one must always tithe, even if he was not blessed.

The Zera Shimshon now provides examples of where doubled language provides a more expansive reason. **As the section concludes: “Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your yield of that year, but leave it within your settlements,”**¹⁸ “it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, **in order that the L-rd your G-d will bless you** in all the work of your hands.”¹⁹

This is similar to what we say regarding “When you set [your Hebrew slave] free, do not let him go empty-handed; you shall surely furnish him out of the flock, threshing floor, and vat, with which the L-rd your G-d has blessed you.”²⁰ It is said on this in tractate Kiddushin:

I have only [derived that a severance gift is due if] the house is blessed on [the Hebrew slave’s] account. [But] if the house is not blessed on his account, from where [is the need to give a severance gift derived]? The verse

¹⁸ Deut. 14:28.

¹⁹ Deut. 24:19.

²⁰ Deut. 15:13–14.

states: **“You shall surely furnish him,”** [with the doubled form of the verb used for emphasis, to indicate that you must grant him a severance gift] **in any case.**

- Kiddushin 17b

וכן "פתח תפתח" איתא בגילקוט מנין שאם פתחת פעם אחת תהא פותח אפילו מאה פעמים תלמוד לומר "פתח תפתח".
וכן "נתון תתן" למתנה מרובה ולמתנה מועטת, לעניי עירך ולעניי עיר אחרת. "הכה תכה" בין בהכאה הכתובה בה בין
בהכאה וכו'. "הוכח תוכיח" עד מאה פעמים וכן כולם, כדאיתא בגילקוט.

Likewise regarding, **“You shall surely open [your hand]”**²¹ to help one who is needy. It is taught in the Yalkut Shimoni, Re’eh, remez 897: **From where do we know that if you opened once, you must open even a hundred times? Scripture says: “You shall surely open.”**

Likewise regarding, **“You shall surely give,”**²² which is interpreted as **“whether a large gift or a small gift, to the poor of your city and to the poor of another city.”**²³

Likewise regarding, **“You shall surely strike,”**²⁴ which is interpreted as **“whether with the punishment written there or with another striking,”** etc.²⁵

Likewise regarding, **“You shall surely rebuke,”**²⁶ which is interpreted as, **“even up to a hundred times,”** and so with all of [the instances of doubled verbs], as is taught in the Yalkut Shimoni, Shoftim, remez 613.

וכאן אי אפשר לומר מעשר דגן ומעשר פירות שהרי הכל בכלל "את כל-תבואת ורעה". ואם כן איך שייך בשנה אחת
"עשר תעשר" שהרי המעשר דבר שיש לו קצבה שאין לפחות או להוסיף עליו. ואי למעשר ראשון ושני הלא שם מעשר
חד הוא וכל היכא שלא הוציא כל מעשורתיו פראוי לא קיים המצוה, וכשיאמר הכתוב "תעשר את כל-תבואת ורעה"
משמע כל המעשורות בלא הכפל של "עשר תעשר".

Zera Shimshon considers, but then rejects, another possible explanation for the doubled language of our verse. **Here, it is impossible to explain the doubling of “*aser te’aser*” as referring to the tithe of grain and the tithe of fruit, since all of these are in the category of “all the produce of your sowing”** mentioned later in the verse.

If so, how is it relevant that in one year, “You shall surely tithe”? For the tithe is a grant, neither to be lessened nor increased. I.e., for other doubled verbs, an interpretation by *derasha* is to lessen them or broaden them, but that is not applicable for tithing.

If it refers to the first tithe and the second tithe, behold, they are one matter of tithe, and wherever a person has not separated all of his tithes properly, he has not fulfilled the commandment. Thus, when the verse says, “tithe all the produce of your sowing,” it already implies all the tithes, without the need for the doubled expression “*aser te’aser*.”

²¹ Deut. 15:8 or 15:11.

²² Deut. 15:10.

²³ Bava Metzia 31b.

²⁴ Deut. 13:16.

²⁵ Bava Metzia 31b.

²⁶ Lev. 19:17.

ומירץ לו ר' יוחנן שהכפל בא לומר שמותר לעשר בדעת זו שהקב"ה יעשירהו באותה שנה ממש בהצלחת זריעתו ולשנה הבאה תצליח קצירתו, וזהו סוף הפסוק "היצא השדה שנה שנה", שאם תעשר על דעת זו תראה מיד שתתקיים בקשתך בשנה הבאה, מה שאין פן בהבטחת הפתוב "למען יברכך" וכו' שאינו מוכרח שתבוא לו זאת הברכה תכף ומיד.

Rabbi Yochanan answered [the child] that indeed, there is a promise of reward each year: the doubling of "aser te'aser" comes to teach that it is permitted to tithe with the intent that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will enrich him in that very year, by the success of his sowing, and the following year his harvest will prosper. This is the meaning of the end of the verse: "that comes out [from] the field year by year," that if you tithe with such intent, you will immediately see your request fulfilled the following year. This is not the case with the other verse, "that the L-rd your G-d will bless you," for there it is not necessary that the blessing come to him immediately. Instead, Rabbi Yochanan was saying, the proof for an immediate reward came from *aser te'aser*, interpreted as a *derash*, "tithe so that you will become wealthy."

והיגדוקא השיב לו מנא לך הא שהברכה תבוא לו תכף ומיד לשנה הבאה, והשיב לו זיל נסי. ואין עוד להקשות הקיצור שהיה לו להשיב הפסוק של "ובתנוגי", משום שגם בזה הפסוק אינו מבוואר שתבוא לו הברכה תכף ומיד אלא שמנה הפסוק מוכח דשרי לנסוגי להקב"ה.

The child answered him: "From where do you know this," meaning, that the blessing will come to him immediately, in the very next year? He answered him: "Go and test [it]." There is no need to question further that he could have just answered with the verse, "and test Me now with this," because even from that verse it is not explicitly stated that the blessing will come immediately, but only that from that verse it is proven that it is permitted to test the Holy One, Blessed be He.

והיגדוקא השיב לו שאין הכי נמי שמנה הפסוק מוכח נמי שפיר שהברכה תבוא לו מיד, דאי לא תימא הכי איך קאמר "ובתנוגי נא בזאת" ואם בשנה שניה לא תבוא לו תכף ומיד הברכה אף אם תבוא בשנה השלישית לא תהיה הוכחה שפאה מחמת המעשר, שכשם שהשנה שניה היתה מקרה שלא באו הברכה תכף ומיד כף בשנה השלישית אם תבוא נאמר מקרה הוא או אינה זכות אחר גרם לו, וזהו לא צריכנא לך.

The child answered him that indeed, from that verse it is also properly proven that the blessing will come immediately. For if you do not say so, how could it say: "And test Me now with this"? If in the second year the blessing would not come immediately, then even if in the third year it were to come, there would be no proof that it came because of the tithe. For just as in the second year the blessing did not come immediately, so in the third year, if it comes, one could say it was by chance or that some other merit caused it. This is what he meant by: "I would not have needed you."

The answer to Question 6, then, is not that the boy was being rude, but rather he recognized that the test must yield an immediate blessing, or else it wouldn't be a valid test.

ומה שאמר לר' אושענא רבך, יש לדקדק דלפי האמת מה הידוש לנו ר' אושענא אם הפסוק אומר בפירושו "ובחנוני נא בזאת" משמע "בזאת" ולא בשום מקום אחר. וצריך לומר שלפי שפתי שכתוב "ובחנוני נא" שיהיה לו לומר "ובחנוני בזאת" בלא "נא" הנה סלקא דעתך לומר שרק באותו הפעם התיר הכתוב לנ[ס]ות את ה' ולא לדורות, וקא משמע לן ר' אושענא שמלת "נא" לאו דוקא, דאם פן לא הנה צריך קרא לומר "בזאת" רק "ובחנוני נא", אלא ודאי דלעולם קאמר דשרי לנסוי.

As for what he said, "I would not have needed you or your teacher, Rabbi Oshaya," we need to check this, because according to the truth, what did Rabbi Oshaya innovate for us, if the verse explicitly says, "and test Me now with this," which implies: "with this," and not in any other matter? It must be said that since it is written "and test Me now with this," whereas it should have said "and test Me with this," without the word "now" [נא] [na], one might have thought that only on that one occasion Scripture permitted testing the Holy One, Blessed be He, and not for all generations.

Therefore, the answer to Question 5 is that Rabbi Oshaya taught us that the word "now" is not to be taken literally. For if so, Scripture would not have needed to say "with this," but only "and test Me now." Rather, certainly, it means for all time—that it is permitted to test Him.

והינוקא אילן לשיטתיה דאמר לעיל דממשמעות הכתוב מוכח שפיר שתבא לו הברכה תכף ומיד, דאי לא הכי לא הנה ניכר שבת הנסיון, ולפי זה דייק קרא לומר "נא בזאת" ד"נא" משמע תכף ו"זאת" חוץ מזו, וזהו לא צריכנא לה ולר' אושענא רבך.

The child went according to his reasoning, which he stated earlier, that from the plain meaning of the verse it is properly proven that the blessing comes to him immediately. For if not so, then the virtue of the test would not be recognizable. According to this he was precise in the verse, "now with this," for "now" [נא] [na] has the meaning of "immediately," and "this" means that it is prohibited to test G-d in any way, except in this case of tithes. This is what he meant by saying: "I would not have needed you or your teacher, Rabbi Oshaya."

ובדרך זה יובן המדרש גלקוט על פסוק "עשר תעשר" ו"ושמחת בכל הטוב", אין טוב אלא תורה, כמה דאיתמר "כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם", לפיכך משה מזהיר את ישראל "עשר תעשר" עכ"ל.

In this way, one can understand the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni on the verse "You shall surely tithe":

"And you shall rejoice in all the goodness that the L-rd your G-d has given you"²⁷ There is no "goodness" except Torah, as it is said: "For I have given you good instruction; do not forsake My Torah."²⁸ Therefore, Moses warned Israel: "You shall surely tithe."

- Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, Re'eh, remez 892

²⁷ Deut. 26:11.

²⁸ Prov. 4:2.

וּכְבֹּר צְנוּחוֹ בֵּיהֶם קִמְאֵי וּבִתְרָאֵי. וּלְדִיּוֹן גִּרְאָה פְּשׁוּט דְקִשְׁיָה לִיהַ עַל פְּסוּק "וְשִׂמְחָתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב" וְהָא שְׂכָר מִצְוֹת בְּהָאֵי עֲלָמָא לִיכָא, מְשׁוּם הָכִי פִירָשׁ אִין טוֹב אֶלָּא תוֹרָה, וְאִם תֵּאמַר כִּי צַד נַעֲשֶׂה לִישֵׁב בְּשִׂמְחָה אִם אִין עוֹשֶׂר וּשְׂכָר מִצְוֹת בְּהָאֵי עֲלָמָא וְהָעִנִי לְעוֹלָם יֵשׁ לוֹ "לִבְנִשְׁבֵּר וְנִדְפָה", מְשׁוּם הָכִי סִיִּים לְפִיכְךָ מִשָּׁה הַזֶּהִיר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל "עֲשֶׂר תַּעֲשֶׂר" בְּשִׁבִיל שְׂתַתְּעֶשֶׂר שְׂבִמְצוֹת מַעֲשֶׂר שְׂרִי לְנִסּוּיֵי לְהַקִּב"ה, וְעֵינִין לְקַמֵּן בְּסִמּוּד.

Upon this, many of the early and later commentators cried out. But for us it seems simple: the difficulty they had was with the verse “and you shall rejoice in all the goodness,” for the reward of commandments is not in this world, but in the World-to-Come. Therefore, [the author of the Midrash] interpreted “goodness” as nothing but Torah.

But if you ask: how is it possible to rejoice, if there is neither wealth nor the reward of commandments in this world, and the poor person will always have “a broken and contrite heart”²⁹? For this reason, he concluded: “Therefore, Moses warned Israel, ‘You shall surely tithe,’ ” i.e., in order that you may become wealthy in this world. For with the commandment of tithes, it is permitted to test the Holy One, Blessed be He, and then one will become wealthy and will truly have reason to rejoice.

See further below, in the next essay.

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²⁹ Ps. 51:19.