



Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Emor | Sichah 3

The Verse:

In the middle of a discussion about the holidays, after detailing the sacrificial obligations of the holiday of *Shavuos*, the Torah interrupts to reiterate an agricultural mitzvah:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not completely remove the corner of your field during your harvesting, and you shall not gather up the gleanings of your harvest. You shall leave these for the poor person and for the stranger. I am G-d, your L-rd.” (*Vayikra 23:22*)

The Rashi:

When you reap — Scripture repeats this law again [even though it was commanded earlier, in *Vayikra 19:9*] so that one who violates it transgresses two negative commands. Rabbi Avdimi the son of Rabbi Yoseph says: Why does Scripture place this law in the very middle of the laws regarding the Festivals, with Pesach and Shavuos on one side, and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the Sukkos on the other? To teach you that whoever gives לְקַט — gleanings, שְׂכָחָהּ — forgotten sheaves, and פְּאֵה — the produce at the corner of the field, to the poor in the appropriate manner, is considered as if he had built the Holy Temple and offered sacrifices within it. (*Toras Kohanim 23:175*)

The Questions:

- 1) Why does Rashi — whose practice is to present a straightforward approach in his commentary — offer an aggadic explanation for the placement of this law and not the pragmatic, straightforward explanation of Ibn Ezra — that because Shavuos is the wheat-harvest

season, the Torah took the opportunity to repeat this command as a reminder, to ensure that the laws concerning the harvest would not be forgotten?

- 2) Why does Rashi address two different issues — the repetition of the harvest laws, and their placement in the middle of the holidays — in the same comment?

The Explanation:

Rashi is not initially perturbed by the placement of these laws, because it fits the general theme of the chapter, which discusses the laws of the grain harvest, beginning with the *omer* offering (verse 10), and continuing with the grain offerings of Shavuot. The mention of further laws concerning the harvest, therefore, is not out of place.

Rashi was bothered by the Torah repeating this law. Rashi explains, “so that one who disobeys transgresses two negative commands.” (Ibn Ezra’s explanation is not tenable in the plain sense of Scripture, for we do not find that Torah reiterates a command to prevent forgetfulness.)

But if the only purpose for the Torah repeating this law is to make the transgression more severe, then the placement becomes puzzling. Why repeat this law in the middle of the holidays, sandwiched between the laws of Shavuot and the High Holidays? It cannot have been placed here due to a thematic connection of the High Holidays to the laws of the grain harvest, because the High Holidays do not feature any laws related to the harvest.

To address this issue, which arises directly from his first comment, Rashi cites Rabbi Avdimi: “To teach you that whoever gives *תקל* — gleanings, *שכחה* — forgotten sheaves, and *פאת* — the produce at the corner of the field, to the poor in the appropriate manner, is considered as if he had built the Holy Temple and offered up his sacrifices within it.”

In other words, these gifts to the poor taken from the harvest are thematically linked to the chapter as a whole which discusses holiday

sacrifices offered in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Specifically, the effort that is invested in achieving a successful harvest is comparable to the effort it takes to build a *Beis Hamikdash* and to offer one's own possessions to G-d. More specifically, these gifts to the poor are unique in that the giver does not choose the recipient (rather, grain is left in the field for any needy person to collect) — a higher form of charity than in a case where the giver chooses who he gives to. This is similar to the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*, where the “recipients” are the entire Jewish people without exception. (This is also why Rashi adds the *mitzvah* of forgotten sheaves, which is not mentioned in the source, *Toras Kohanim*, because this *mitzvah* exemplifies the idea of giving without knowing the identity of the beneficiary.)

This is also why Rashi continues: “*You shall leave* — Leave it before them and let them gather it. And you shall not help any of them gather it.” This further underscores the message of this verse — that it is given in the purest fashion, without any intervention of the giver in choosing a recipient.

Advanced Question:

An astute student may ask: Why is giving in such a manner so powerful that it draws a comparison to building the *Beis Hamikdash*?

Rashi alludes to the explanation by citing the author of this teaching. The *Jerusalem Talmud* relates that Rabbi Avdimi was known for his teaching that when a person gives *tzedakah*, he should prioritize his own townspeople — those who are close to him. (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Shvi’is* 8:5) Thus, the idea behind this verse — that the highest form of giving is when the giver does not know or choose the recipient — is a novel idea for Rabbi Avdimi. To give in this way requires great self-restraint and humility, and is therefore considered by Rabbi Avdimi to be a great act, comparable to building the *Beis Hamikdash*.

The Lesson:

Rashi’s explanation highlights the importance of performing a *mitzvah* for its own sake, without the slightest hint of self interest, even the satisfaction

a person receives from choosing his own charitable causes. This also emphasizes the value of self-restraint and denying one's natural instincts — in this case, by giving to strangers and not only to those who are close to us.