

DIVING DEEP

by Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden

Parshas Ki Savo

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"When you have finished tithing every tithe of your produce...you shall say before G-d your L-rd, 'I have removed the holy things from the house and I have also given it to the Levite, the convert, the orphan and the widow according to whatever commandment You have commanded me; I have not transgressed any of your commandments and I have not forgotten.'" (Devarim/Deuteronomy 26:12-13) At the end of the three-year tithing cycle, after ascertaining that all tithes were indeed distributed, all Jewish landowners are commanded to go to the Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple in Jerusalem) and proclaim that all the tithes were given as we were commanded. This process is referred to as the "Confession of the Tithes." The verse appears to be a simple statement of compliance with the will of the Master of the Universe by saying that we have done everything that He commanded us to do. How can this be called a confession?

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Rosh Yeshiva at Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore) offers an insight into what we should be doing at this time of the year so close to the Day of Judgment.

We read in Eichah/Lamentations (3:40) "Let us search and examine our ways and return to G-d." What does it mean to "search our ways"? Some have a tendency of looking at themselves and saying, "I'm a pretty good person. I'm kind to people and stay away from sin." This is a conclusion readily reached with shallow introspection, looking only at the surface. However, by delving deeper (as uncomfortable as it may be) we will find numerous of flaws. Even if at one level of depth all appears to be "clean", we must always dig deeper and find those small ways that we can be better. This process is called "searching our ways."

A careful analysis of the text of the confession of the tithes finds this point embedded there as well. The proclamation is not "I did every commandment You commanded me." Rather the text states, "according to whatever commandment You have commanded me". This implies, "Although I gave out all the tithes within my obligation, I may not have given them in the best way. Perhaps I was late,

or perhaps not with the best smile so the poor person feels dignified." There is always room for improvement. Thus it is the "confession of the tithes."

The month of Elul that precedes Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year) is a time dedicated to introspection and taking spiritual inventory. No one of us enjoys having to admit to a friend that we wronged them; how much greater is the discomfort in confessing our misdeed before our Father, our King. We must maintain our focus on our goal - the continued growth and strength in our relationship with the Creator of the Universe - and the end result - the most sublime pleasure available: a relationship with the Divine!

Have a good Shabbos!

Please forward your questions for Rabbi Gilden to RabbiGilden@MilwaukeeKollel.org

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