

# מעשר קומי

דברי חיזוק והתעוררות על פרשת השבוע

By Rabbi Ronen Shaharabany  
Translated by Rabbi Ozer Alport

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## *Parshas Ki Savo*

Parshas Ki Savo contains the mitzvah of maaser (tithing). The Rambam writes (Hilchos Maaser Sheini 11:1) that after a person has distributed all the tithes, he recites a declaration known as viduy maaser, in which he declares that “I have done all that You commanded me” by delivering all the tithes to their proper destinations and obeying all the relevant laws governing them, and asking Hashem to bless the Jewish people and their land as a result.

The commentators are bothered by the name of this declaration, as the term “viduy” is typically associated with the confession of sins, yet viduy maaser is a proclamation that a person has followed all the applicable commandments. Since it contains no mention of sin, why is it called “viduy” maaser? Additionally, the detailed list of all the mitzvos that the farmer obeyed appears to be an inappropriate form of bragging. Further, why are we only able to ask Hashem to bless us after reciting this passage?

In the Rosh Hashana prayers, we say that Hashem “remembers all that is forgotten.” The Kedushas Levi (Otzros Tzaddikei U’geonei Hadoros, pg. 577) explains that this means that He remembers whatever we forget, both mitzvos and sins. If we do a mitzvah but arrogantly take pride in it, Hashem will “forget” it. In the opposite direction, if we sin but constantly place our misdeed before us and strive to rectify it, He will also forget it. However, if a person does a mitzvah and promptly forgets about it, knowing that it was not done perfectly and is nothing to become haughty about, then Hashem will remember that mitzvah.

Based on this explanation, the Satmar Rebbe (Ibid.) suggests that by recounting in detail how he acted properly and observed all the relevant laws, the farmer is dwelling upon the mitzvos that he performed instead of forgetting them, which is the very sin that he is in the middle of confessing. In this sense, the declaration that he has behaved properly is actually a confession of sins, and it is therefore properly called “viduy” maaser. However, the Satmar Rebbe’s explanation raises a question: If the entire purpose of his viduy is to atone for taking pride in his mitzvah accomplishments instead of forgetting them, how can he state in the very same sentence, “I have done all that You commanded me?” Isn’t this a repetition of the sin for which he just confessed?

The truth is that in commanding us to recite this passage, Hashem is enabling us to rectify our sin. Rav Shalom of Belz (Ibid.) writes that every Jew knows that it is impossible for him to properly satisfy even a small fraction of his spiritual obligations. We are commanded to say, “I have done all that You commanded me,” but we know that this is incorrect, so we make this claim with a broken heart, which is the true “viduy.” This statement is only made after we first repent for our haughtiness over our mitzvah performance by announcing, “I have not transgressed Your commandments, and I have not forgotten,” which will ensure a truly broken heart. This is alluded to by the fact that the numerical value (1581, with the kollel) of “viduy maaser” when each letter is written out in full is the same as the gematria of זבחי אלקים רוח נשברה לב נשבר ונדכה (with the letters) – the offerings of G-d are a broken spirit, a broken and crushed heart – for this is the ultimate purpose of “viduy maaser.”

In Shaarei Teshuvah (1:23-24), Rabbeinu Yonah writes that the seventh principle of teshuvah is a lowly and subservient spirit, emanating from a recognition of how much one has sinned against Hashem. He notes that when Dovid confessed to Nossan, he said לב נשבר ונדכה אלקים לא תבוה, which teaches us that a humbled spirit and broken heart are necessary components in teshuvah. This is hinted to by the fact that the numerical value of תשובה when each letter is written out in full is the same (1201) as the gematria of לב נשבר ונדכה אלקים לא תבוה (with the kollel). Rabbeinu Yonah adds that there are many levels of humility, the highest of which is to serve Hashem by concealing one’s mitzvos and not taking any credit for oneself, by viewing one’s mitzvos as a pale comparison of what he is truly obligated to do.

With this explanation, we can now understand that viduy maaser enables us to attain the highest form of humility and subservience which are necessary for teshuvah, as we admit the pride that we took in our performance of mitzvos. This confession leads us to a contrite heart and a feeling that everything we do to serve Hashem is trivial relative to our true obligations to Him.

With this understanding, we can now appreciate why the “viduy maaser” passage concludes with the request of השקיפה ממעון קדשך, in which we ask Hashem to look down from heaven and bless the Jewish people and their land. Rashi writes (Bereishis 18:16) that the term השקיפה always has negative connotations except for its use here, for מתנות עניים שהופך מדת רוגז לרחמים – the tithes that we give to the poor transform Hashem’s anger to mercy. The Boyaner Rebbe (Otzros Tzaddikei U’geonei Hadoros, pg. 578) points out that Rashi does not refer to מתנות לעניים – gifts to the poor, but rather מתנות עניים – poor gifts. In other words, a person who views *himself* as lowly and poor has the merit to bring forth Divine bounty for the Jewish people and ask Hashem to bless them. This fits beautifully with our explanation that the goal of viduy maaser is to make a person feel poor and broken, which itself gives him the merit to ask Hashem השקיפה ממעון קדשך – please look down and bless us. May Hashem help us return to Him with appropriate feelings of subservience!

## *A Sage's Saying*

*Lowliness is a wonderful trait. However, even greater than this is the ability to tolerate this lowliness.*

*Rav Yitzchok Meir of Gur*

*It is forbidden to be excessively lowly, for this can cause a person to G-d forbid reach true lowliness.*

*Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk*

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