

Any tithe of cattle or flock, any that passes under the staff, the tenth of one shall be holy to Hashem. (27:32)

Every tenth animal of those born during the current season must be consecrated as an offering to Hashem. This is *Maaser beheimah*, the tithe of cattle or flock. All of the animals are put into a large corral and allowed to leave individually. Every tenth animal is marked with a dab of paint to distinguish it from the other animals.

Horav Eliezer Gordon, zl, founding *Rosh Yeshivah* of Telshe, visited Kiev in order to solicit funds for his growing *yeshivah*. He came to the home of one of the wealthiest men in Russia and presented his case on behalf of his *yeshivah*. He asked the man for five hundred rubles. This was an enormous sum of money, and the man pointed this out to him. "Indeed," he said, "when a fire ravaged Radin, Poland, (home of the *Chafetz Chaim*), it destroyed the entire Jewish quarter. The *Chafetz Chaim* made an appeal, and, with great effort, was able to raise two hundred ruble, which was used to rebuild half the community. *Rebbe*, you are asking for more than double of that sum – and for only one *yeshivah*! You must be joking."

The *Rosh Yeshivah* replied, "No, I am quite serious. I think that you are capable of contributing this amount.

"Let me explain" began *Rav Leizer*. "I look at everything from two perspectives. This is the way we analyze a *sugya*, topic, in the *Talmud*. There are two approaches, and we decide which one to use in order to understand the given issue. The same concept may be applied to charity: how much charity one should give; and why you and I have contrasting viewpoints concerning your ability to contribute five hundred ruble to my *yeshivah*.

"The Torah teaches us the process for separating *Maaser beheimah*, whereby each animal must pass through a narrow pathway and every tenth one is marked. What does the wealthy man who has ten thousand head of cattle do? Does he stand there all day – perhaps even a few days – marking off his *Maaser*? Apparently, he does. It could have been executed in a much simpler and more convenient manner by separating one thousand animals. Why go through such a prolonged process?

"As I explained earlier, there are two ways to look at a given situation. Imagine, approaching a wealthy landowner and demanding, 'I want one thousands cows to be used as sacrifices for your *Maaser beheimah*. There is no question that the wealthy man will hem and haw in an attempt to bargain his way out of such a hefty sum. If, however, he goes down to the corral and begins to count, one for me, two for me, three for me, when he finally reaches the tenth animal, he is no longer troubled about giving away the tenth animal. After all, he retains the other nine. He has been blessed with so much. The experience might take much longer, but the lesson the wealthy man derives is invaluable.

“Likewise, you and I have discrepant approaches to your contribution to the *yeshivah*’s building fund. Five hundred rubles is no doubt a considerable sum, but why not take a moment to review all of your assets? Is five hundred rubles such an exorbitant amount?”