

You shall surely tithe the entire crop of your planting... And you shall eat [it] before Hashem, your G-d. (14:22,23)

Rashi comments that the *pasuk* is referring to *Maaser Sheini*, the second tithe. He also tells us that it cannot be discussing *Maaser Rishon*, the first tithe, because that tithe was given to the *Levi*. Thus, when the Torah writes that the fruits of the present tithe may be eaten in any place, it obviously must be a different *Maaser*. Later, in *pasuk* 27, the Torah writes, "And the *Levi* who is in your cities, do not forsake him, for he does not have a portion or inheritance with you." *Rashi* comments, "Do not forsake him by refraining from giving him the first tithe." This statement appears enigmatic and misplaced. Why, in the midst of teaching about *Maaser Sheini*, does the Torah interrupt with an admonition not to abandon the *Levi*?

Horav Moshe Tzvi Nahariyah, zl, explains that the Torah delves into the minds of people. By reminding us of our responsibility towards the *Levi*, specifically while addressing the laws concerning *Maaser Sheini*, the Torah is alluding to a problem which might arise resulting from a person's faulty misconception. *Chazal* teach us that *Maaser Sheini* is a catalyst for a burgeoning of one's Torah learning. The escalation and intensification of one's attachment to Torah are the result of spending quality time in Yerushalayim waiting to consume his *Maaser Sheini*. Imagine a person coming up to Yerushalayim with his wagonload of fruit or its exchange in cash. He must eat the *Maaser Sheini* or its derivative in Yerushalayim while waiting. During the time spent in the Holy City, he will certainly come in contact with great men of spiritual stature, scholars whose erudition in every area of Torah is unparalleled. He will hear lectures from prominent speakers on just about any Torah topic of his choice. During his short sojourn in Yerushalayim, as he is experiencing unparalleled spiritual fulfillment, he makes the acquaintance of an outstanding Torah scholar, whose breadth of knowledge is encyclopedic, whose oratory is spellbinding, whose piety is awe-inspiring – and this man is a *Levi*! Suddenly, a "wonderful" idea creeps into his mind: Why not use this *Levi* as the recipient of his *Maaser Rishon* fund? True, the *Levi* back home is a fine, upstanding person. He is even fairly knowledgeable in Torah, but he is simply not in the same league as this *Yerushalmi Levi*. There is no comparison! Therefore, he decides that from now on, he will lend all of his support to the *Leviim* of Yerushalayim. They are the real thing!

It does not take much brilliance to sense the tremendous harm that will result from such an "admirable" attitude. Clearly, this man means well, but he is forgetting about the *Levi* who has spent his life in the trenches, in the small towns and outlying Jewish communities – not because this is what he necessarily wanted, but because this is what was available. Then there are those who chose to practice their profession specifically out-of-town, out of reach, so that they could be of assistance to those Jews who were themselves distant from the Torah centers that are replete with an abundance of scholars. In the end, the *Levi* will move on, leave the small out-of-town community to join one of the more flourishing Torah communities.

Thus, the Torah reminds us not to forget and abandon the *Levi* who is in **our** town. He needs

our help, support and encouragement.