

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

The process of *maaser beheimah*, tithing of animals, is unique indeed. The entire newborn herd or flock is put into a corral with a narrow opening, and the animals are permitted to leave one by one. The owner then touches each tenth animal with a paint-daubed stick, designating it as *maaser*. This procedure is enigmatic. Why can he not simply take one tenth of his herd and give it away as *maaser*? Is this process not cumbersome?

Horav Shlomo Aharonson, zl, once posed this question to two brothers who were renown for their philanthropic work. The *Rav* had approached the brothers to contribute to an important cause. They rose to the occasion, contributing handsomely. Three days later, the *Rav* was back at their office seeking another contribution. The brothers had no qualms about showing their surprise and consternation at the *Rav's* added request. In response, he asked them this question regarding the law of *maaser beheimah*.

"My friends," *Horav* Aharonson said, "the *Torah* understands what goes on in the mind of the owner who is about to give away ten percent of his herd or flock. When deducted one at a time, ten percent of a herd can be a sizable amount. Indeed, the amount is so sizable that the owner might have second thoughts about tithing his herd. The *Torah*, in its infinite wisdom, determined that the "easiest" way to have the owner part with his *maaser* would be by counting out each animal one by one. As the owner went through this process, he would realize that the first nine animals are his! If so, is it really that difficult to give one animal to the *Kohen*? This procedure would be implemented for the entire herd. This brilliant method provided an almost painless opportunity for giving *maaser*, since it clearly demonstrated to the owner how much belonged to him and how little he was actually giving away."

"To put it all into perspective," *Horav* Aharonson said in closing, "you too, will have no difficulty in increasing your contribution once you reflect upon how much money you have earned since I was last here." The words of the *Rav* found listening ears in the two brothers, and they increased their donation.