1. In the Boob of Vayikra, in the passage where the Torah first mentions the major festivals of the year, we find the intrusion of a seemingly irrelevant verse, one which seems out of context in this list of great holidays. Our Rabbis already wondered at the fact that after the mention of Pesach and Shevuot, and before the mention of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot, the Torah introduces an extraneous verse, one which seems to have nothing whatever to do with the MOADIM, or holidays.

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When reaping the harvest, you may not meap the whole field, but must leave a "peiah," a corner of the field unreaped; and the "leket," the gleanings of the harvest, the ears of corn which fell to the ground were to be left there. And this LEKET & PEIAH, the gleanings and the corner, were to be left for the poor man and the stranger, for the needy and the alien who have not their own fields.

Our Sages, contemplating the mention of PEIAH & LEKET in the context of the Holidays, ask:

Why did the Torah see fit to mention LEKET & PEIAH in the middle of the portion of the MOADIM, with Pesach and Shevuet on one side, and R.H. & Y.K. on the other?

Many answers have been offered to this question posed by the Rabbis. All of them are worthy of deep study. This morning, however, I invite you to consider what I believe is the intention of the Torah in this juxtaposition of the Mitzvot of TZEDAKAH (for LEKET & PEIAH re really forms of TZEDAKAH or charity-giving) and the Festivals.

2. We live in an age which has an unusual flare for the dramatic and the spectacular. Our interest are directed almost solely to headlines and lead-articles. The big things in life, the flashy glamors, they attract us, while them prosaic, everyday matters are regarded as too dull to merit our consideration. In an age of space-travel, only that which goes farthest fastest is deemed worth discussing, and yesterday's missile is passe. As one wit in the Pentagon is supposed to have informed his subordinates concerning rockets, "If it works - - it's obsolete!"

In this kind of world, only a draing rescue becomes a virtue, while a kind helping hand is worthless. Only a dramatic act of courage is worth emulating, not an unspectacular deed of generosity. And at the same time, only the violent acts of murdedr or pillage must be avaided, not the samll sins which attract no public comment. In this kind of culture, we read the best sellers, but neglect the classic literature which does not strike us as sensational. We devour every new report about the mysterious Dead Sea Scrolls, even the some of us have yet to read thru the far older and more important Bible for the first time. We have, in other words, decided to live on the peaks of life, and have neglected thefertile plains below

And nowehere is this attitude more pernicious and more dangerous than when it comes to Religion and religous observance. For here too are we inclined to bring our worship of the big and dramatic and spectacular. Here too we may emphasize the great acts and cavalierly dismiss the trivial, to stress the glotious break-throughs of the spirit and demean the constant, slow struggle of the human heart and mind and soul to rise upwards. Thus do we American Jews tend to concentrate on the so-called High Holidays and overlook the leas dramatic Shevues - - we call it a "minor" holiday - - andcertainly Shabbos. We hear of Adult Courses on "Customs and Geremonies" which deal with the great turning pojnts of life of birth and marriage and death, and which leave all imbetween forgotten and neglected. We begin to think that Judaism consists of Bris and Chuppah and Shivah, but that we may ignore such details as Teffilin and Talmud Torah

and Taharas Hamishpachah, which are marked by quiet dignity and unobstrucive modesty.

And it is to forewarn us against this concentration upon the big issues to the exclusion of the seemingly trivial that the Torah inserts the mention of LEKET & PETAH imbetween the great festivals of Judaism. Remember, the Torah tells us, that no matter how important the big holidays are - - they are meaningless unless the Jew pays attention to the daily requirements as well, the simple things as LEKET & PEIAH. Yes, the themes of the MOADIM are world-shaking - - Revelation on Shevuot, Redemption om Passover. Judgment on R.H., Repentance on Y.K. Yet all of these lofty themes are to naught if the poor man remains outside, cold and hungry and forlorn, because you choose to neglect the prosaic and plain and paltry and petty mitzvah of LEKET & PEIAH. The great things are great indeed, the Torah means to tell us, but a man stands and falls on the small things. What determines the success or faliure of the spiritual life of the Jew are not his grasp of the grea theological concepts or even his participation in the synagogue festival service o High Holidays - - but his everyday LEKET & PETAH, his daily Jewishness; not his rare splurge of kindliness as much as his constantcy in TZEDAKAF not by his conduct in great public events, as juch as by his tefillin and tefillah. even in the privacy of his parlor, by his consideration for wife and children and neighbors, by his kasjrut and his study of the Torah. In a word, the Torah counsles us to beware of the spectacular only and to concentrate as well on the substantial.

- 4. And O how history has proven the importance of the little things, the LEKET & PEIAH amidts the MOADIM. The generation of Noah was destroyed by the flood because, Tradition teaches of GEZRL PACHOS MISHAVEH PERUTAH, petty pilfering! The whole Egyptian exile began because of a mere 2 "slaim" worth of silk which Jacob gave his favpite Joseph more than his brothers, thus incurring their jealousy. The founder of Christianity began with a tiny sin rejecting NETILLASYADAYIM. Reform started its career of truncating our Tefillah by eliminating only the Yekum Purkun.
  - 5. Todaywe read from the Torah the ASSERESS HADIBROS, the Ten Commandments. There was a time, when the Temple was on Zion's heights, that they were recited daily as part of the service Why do we not recite them hus today during our regular daily services? The Talmud answers that the Sages revoked this requirement, and actually forbade it because of TAAROMESS HAMINIM, because of the heretics - - they, the heretics, probably the early Christians, said they were going to observe only the big things, only the Ten Commandmets, but that therest wasunimportant. Have you not heard that in our own day? "I'm religious enough - - I observe the Ten Commandments." Aside from thefact that Shabbos is one of the Ten Commandmenst, and usually not observed by people who are satisfied with only ten of the 613 commandment, this is a typically Christian attitude. It palys up the hig, and dismisses the trivial. Murder, adultery, stealing are acknowledged as evils. But what of the minor sins - - what of this wilfull ignorance of Judaism? what of this unJewish diet and vocabulary and whole pattern of unJewish living? So what our Rabbis told us about the Ten Commandments that we read on Shevuos - - that better not to read them at all if that is going to be all of our Religion, that better no Ten Commadnmnets if we are going to neglect less dramatic mitzvos, that s just what the Torah meant when after Shewwos in the list of Moadim it mentioned in the unglorious but extremely vital mitzvos of LEKET & PEIAH. The Yiddish writer Peretz put it in his own way:no man ever stubsnhis toe against a mountain. It's the little things that bring a man down. So it is with us friends. None if us will ever commit murder. But someone may casually wound the pride of a friend by a word of LASHON HARA. No one here will ever how to an idol. But someone may deny a smile to a neighbor who is starved for friendship. No one here is going to rob a bank. Butsomeone may neglect to provide the LEKET & PEIAH for a needy family. And it is these unspeactacular little things, rather than the giant themes of the MOADIM or Ten Commandments, which ultimately decide our fate. That is why such seeming trifles are of such concern to the HALAKHAH - for trifles make perfection - and perfection is no trifle.

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