

PARSHAT RE'EH
DEUTERONOMY 11:26-16:17
28 AV 5782/25 AUGUST 2022



Canzone VIII

Mixed media on canvass by Keith Morant

THE ART OF SELF-NULLIFICATION

1. You shall set aside (עָשָׂר תַּעֲשֶׂה) every year a tenth part of all the yield of your sowing that is brought from the field. (Deuteronomy 14:22)
2. Rabbi Yohanan said: Why is a double verb form used in Deuteronomy 14:22? It means to teach us: Tithe in order that you may become rich. (Talmud, Ta'anit 9a)
עָשָׂר – to tithe
עָשָׂר – to become rich
3. Year 1: First Tithe (for Levites, Deut. 14:27); Second Tithe (eaten by owner in Jerusalem, Deuteronomy 14:23)
Year 2: First Tithe; Second Tithe
Year 3: First Tithe; Tithe for the Poor (Deuteronomy 14:28)
Year 4: First Tithe; Second Tithe
Year 5: First Tithe; Second Tithe
Year 6: First Tithe; Tithe for the Poor
Year 7: Shemittah (Sabbatical Year), land lies fallow and no tithes are taken

4. The text proceeds in ascending order of difficulty. First the various tithes, all of which are matters requiring practice and training, because a person is naturally reluctant to part of their own. It then proceeds to something more counter to human nature than this: “At the end of seven years make a release.”...Then after the Shemita regulation has been imparted, an even more difficult demand is made upon one’s nature - to give something away with no intention of getting it back. (Akedat Yitzhak).

5. Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.

....

Those who fashion them,
all who trust in them,
shall become like them.

(Psalm 115:4, 8)

6. Whoever eats *chametz* on Pesach is as if he prayed to an idol. (Zohar 2:182)

Gematria of *kesef* (silver) and *Zahav* (gold) = 168 + 6 hours on day before Pesach when it is forbidden to eat *chametz* = 174. Total number of hours forbidden to eat *chametz* is 174.

7. The great hazard is that one will be filled with himself or herself, with conceit, with self-satisfaction, feelings which are nothing less than idol worship. (Teaching of Menachem Mendl of Kotzk)

8. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. (T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”)

9. As Eliot implies, the artist must become secondary to the art....As a young painter, pride in my new creation was the ego up large and the work would be completed with a very visible signature. As time passed and my confidence increased, the signature became more and more superfluous. The work itself was signatory itself. My name shrunk and became almost indiscernibly hidden in the work. (Keith Morant)