

That you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground... which Hashem, your G-d, gives you. (26:2)

The *parsha* of *Bikurim* is unique, in presenting the celebration and pomp that accompanies bringing the *Bikurim* to Yerushalayim. In vivid detail, *Chazal* relate how everyone was caught up in this *mitzvah*. Of course, any act of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, should be publicized, so that more people will acknowledge the vital role of our benefactor, Hashem, in everything that we do. The *Mishnah* in *Meseches Bikurim* describes how the farmer would enter his field and notice a fig tree that had bloomed. He would immediately pick its first fruit and set it aside for *Bikurim*. The *Te'ainah*, fig tree, is one of the seven species with which *Eretz Yisrael* is blessed. Two others are mentioned in the *Mishnah*: the pomegranate and grape; yet the fig, which is not listed first in the sequences of the seven species, is the one which is underscored in the *Mishnah*. Furthermore, why does the *Mishnah* include the grape and pomegranate, but exclude the olive?

Horav Menachem Ziemba, zl, quotes the *Arizal* who posits that the *mitzvah* of *Bikurim* is penance for the sin of the *meraglim*, spies, who rejected *Eretz Yisrael*. The three fruits which they brought back from their expedition to reconnoiter the land were the fig, grape and pomegranate. Thus, by appropriately focusing on these fruits, we demonstrate our love of the Land and our gratitude to the Almighty for His beneficence. We still must address why the fig is the first fruit mentioned by the *Mishnah*.

Furthermore, why all the pomp? Imagine that a person whose primary vocation is accounting, yet he has a few fig trees in his backyard. He notices the fruit beginning to ripen, so he must drop everything, take leave of his job and travel to Yerushalayim. He is not alone; an entire country-side of people joins him on his/their journey. What will happen to the grocery store owner, the pharmacist, accountant, lawyer, tailor etc...? Everybody will take a leave of absence for three weeks? All of this because of a few figs? This practical question is asked by none other than the **Alshich HaKadosh**.

On the *Seder* night, we begin the *Haggadah* experience with a recounting of our natural history going back to Lavan *Ha'Arami*, the uncle of our Patriarch Yaakov *Avinu*, who made the first attempt to subvert our nation from ever coming into existence. This historical perspective is part of the farmer's declaration upon coming to Yerushalayim with his *Bikurim*. What relationship exists between *Pesach* and *Bikurim*?

In the commentary of the *Midrash Rabbah* on the beginning of *Sefer Bereishis*, *Chazal* say that the world was created in the merit of the *mitzvah* of *Bikurim*. The *Alshich* wonders what about the *mitzvah* of *Bikurim* elevates it over such worthy *mitzvos* as *Shabbos* and others.

One last question concerning another *Yom Tov*, Festival, which might seem to be completely out of line with the subject matter, is asked by **Horav Moshe Rosenblum, Shlita**. It is an accepted

custom, cited by the *Rama*, that one should not sleep on *Rosh Hashanah*. The source for this custom is a *Talmud Yerushalmi* which states: "One who sleeps on *Rosh Hashanah* – his *mazel*, fortune, for the coming year will also sleep." The question is obvious: Does this mean that for the individual who weeps on *Rosh Hashanah*, his *mazel* will also weep? May one who laughs on *Rosh Hashanah* look forward to a successful year filled with joy? What about sleeping is so compelling?

Rav Rosenblum responds to the question. The world was created for man. Everything that preceded him was created specifically for the purpose of satisfying man. Why was man created? In order that he should acknowledge his debt of gratitude to the Almighty and not be an ingrate. The *Alshich* adds that everything was prepared for man, in order that he realize the significance of gratitude and its inextricable connection to serving Hashem. One who is a *kafui tov*, ingrate, cannot possibly serve Hashem properly.

Bikurim is that *mitzvah* which imbues man with *hakoras hatov*. Indeed, gratitude is its sole purpose. Man drops everything – his business, livelihood, family – everything – Why? He is going up to Yerushalayim to say, "Thank you, Hashem." He took us out of Egypt, liberating us from a physical bondage that had lasted over two centuries. We were redeemed amid incredible miracles and wonders, unprecedented and unrepeated throughout the annals of history. We were brought to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. We arise in the morning, and – even before we wash our hands – we recite *Modeh Ani* – "Thank You Hashem." Why? Because this is the reason that Hashem created man.

Man was created on the sixth day of Creation, which was *Rosh Hashanah* (considering that the first day of Creation was *Elul 25*). Man was the purpose of Creation; thus, the goal of Creation is to imbue *hakoras hatov*. The first day of the year, the day on which man was created for *hakoras hatov*, is *Rosh Hashanah*. It, therefore, makes sense that this day should be replete with gratitude, singing Hashem's praises and thanking Him for all that He has given to us.

Now that we acknowledge what should have happened that day, let us focus on what really took place on that fateful day. The *Midrash* relates the sequence of events, hour by hour, on the day on which Adam *HaRishon* was created. At the ninth hour of the day, Adam was commanded not to eat of the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge. On the tenth hour, he ate the fruit. The eleventh hour was his judgment, and, on the twelfth hour, the verdict of continued life was rendered. Hashem said to Adam, "This shall be a sign for your offspring: as you stood before Me in judgment and were cleared, likewise they, too, will stand before Me on this day (*Rosh Hashanah*) and be cleared."

What was Adam's sin? Actually, it was two sins in one. First, he ate of the tree's fruit. Second, he blamed it all on Chavah. Essentially, he told Hashem, "It was the woman whom You gave me that put me up to this." *Rashi* comments: "Here, Adam was ungrateful." Not only did he not thank Hashem for giving him a wife, he pointed the blame for his sins on his wife and laid the blame at Hashem's feet. All this took place on *Rosh Hashanah* – the day on which *hakoras hatov* should be intensified. Adam appears to have done just the opposite.

Ingratitude is the root of the problem. *Chazal* say that ultimately Adam was banished from *Gan Eden* for his ingratitude. The Jewish People angered Hashem with their ingratitude. This, explains the **Sefas Emes**, is the reason that the *Parshah* of *Bikurim* precedes *Rosh Hashanah*. *Rosh Hashanah* is when we coronate Hashem and accept His monarchy over us. Without exhibiting gratitude, one cannot accept the yoke of Heaven. The two go hand in hand.

Now, let us return to our original question and note how everything fits into place. The **Maor Va'Shemesh** writes that the *mitzvah* of *Bikurim* atones for Adam's sin in eating of the *Eitz Hadaas*. He quotes the *Mishnah* in *Bikurim*, "A man goes into his field and sees a fig tree that has bloomed." The *Talmud Berachos* 40 contends that the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam was – a fig. Indeed, the Torah writes that, following the sin, Adam and Chavah realized that they were unclothed. They wrapped themselves in fig branches. Why? *Chazal* say that no other tree – other than the one concerning which they sinned – was willing to give them its branches. Now we understand the significance of the fig tree, which helps man to atone for the sin of ingratitude of primordial Man regarding his wife.

Next, the **Noam Elimelech** wonders how the serpent was able to interact with Chavah without her husband's awareness. He quotes *Chazal*, who say that Adam was sleeping! Now we understand why we should not sleep on *Rosh Hashanah* – the day set aside for *hakoras hatov*. Imagine, repeating Adam's sin over again. He slept, so, in turn, we must not sleep.

One last question: What about *Arami oveid avi*, "the Aramean sought to kill my father (Yaakov)"? What is the relationship between the *Bikurim* declaration and *Pesach*? Simple. When we say, "Thank you," it must be all encompassing. We must go back to the source, the origin of our debt of gratitude. We were redeemed from Egypt – but did it all start there? No! It began with Lavan. If that *rasha* would have had his way, there would be no *Pesach*, no *Eretz Yisrael* and no *Bikurim*. Now that we have it all, we must acknowledge its Source and pay our due to Hashem. May this be our merit for the coming year.