

"It will be when you enter the land... and you shall take of the first fruit of the ground." (26:1,2)

The *parsha* begins with the laws of *Bikkurim*. It is juxtaposed upon the previous *parsha* of Amalek, in which we are enjoined to blot out forever the name of our archenemy, Amalek. Is there a relationship between these two *parshios*? Can we glean a message from the juxtaposition? **Horav Avraham Weinberg, zl**, who distinguished himself as a student of the *Avnei Nezer*, posits that there is a serious connection between the two. In fact, Amalek battled to destroy the basic doctrine of *Bikkurim*.

What is the message of *Bikkurim*? In order to answer this basic question, *Horav Weinberg* addresses the reason that a *ger*, convert, brings *Bikkurim* but does not recite the accompanying ritual. This same *halachah* applies to one who owns a tree, but does not own land. The *Torah* says that in both of these cases it would appear false for him to say the ritual (hzjn treaf). Why can he not read the words, just as someone who is reading from the *Torah*?

Horav Weinberg responds that to permit either of these two individuals to recite the *Bikkurim* ritual would undermine the underlying motif of *Bikkurim*. Upon bringing *Bikkurim*, one affirms his belief in the premise that man's "raison d'etre" on this world is to serve Hashem, to be a source of *nachas* to Him. Although he is currently involved in mundane earthly matters, such as preparing the earth, raising and harvesting crops, his soul is bound up in the opportunity to perform the *mitzvos hatluyos ba'aretz*, that are connected to the land. Thus, he is able to raise the most mundane endeavor to sublime spiritual heights.

The concept that one can serve Hashem even from the material perspective is entirely Jewish. Amalek is willing to "accept" that the members of *Klal Yisrael* can surround themselves in a spiritual utopia, encompassed by the Pillar of Cloud, sustained by the manna. Amalek can understand that *Klal Yisrael* is encamped in close proximity to the *Mishkan* in order to devote themselves entirely to *avodas ha'kodosh*, holy endeavor. To raise *gashmius*, materialism, to a level of *ruchnius*, spirituality, to literally have a "*sulam mutzav artzah, v'rosho magia ha'shomaymah*," ladder standing on earth with its summit reaching Heavenward, seemed an impossibility.

This is the essence of Amalek's relentless war with *Am Yisrael*. Whenever we attempt to consecrate the material, to sanctify the mundane and physical, Amalek is present, prepared to denigrate our every action. Amalek is the symbol of *sheker*, falsehood, and will, therefore, ferret out any vestige of insincerity in his quest to prevent our triumph over the *olam ha'gashmi*, world of materialism. Yaakov/*Am Yisrael* is the symbol of *emes*, truth. We must continue to demand that every aspect of our *mitzvah* observance be the paragon of veracity.

Thus, an individual who does not own land -- or the convert who is not in the position to claim that this is "*the land of our fathers*" -- should not recite the ritual, since it does not appear completely

accurate. This slight suspicion of deceit gives Amalek a foothold in the *mitzvah* and renders it unacceptable.