

"And you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the ground... and you shall speak up and say before Hashem your G-d... When you make an end of the tithing of all the tithe... and you shall give unto the Levi, the ger, the orphan and the widow. And you should say before Hashem your G-d." (26:12,13,25)

The *parsha* refers to two *mitzvos* which applied only when *Klal Yisrael* occupied *Eretz Yisrael*. They are the *mitzvos* of *bikurim*, the bringing of the first fruits, and *maaser*, the giving of tithes to the *Levi*, the widow and the orphan. Another tithe was *maaser sheni*, which was brought to *Yerushalayim* to be eaten among family and friends in joyful celebration. The fulfillment of each of these *mitzvos* was accompanied by a *tefillah*, prayer. One was known as *mikra bikurim*, the reading of *pesukim* of thanksgiving for the first fruits; the other was known as *viduy maaser*, the confession of *maaser*.

Not only were these two prayers disparate in name, they were also distinct in context and law. The *mikra bikurim* was to be said only in *lashon kodesh*, Hebrew, in a loud voice. The *viduy maaser* was to be recited in a low, humble voice in any language known to the participant. Why were these two prayers different from each other? Were they not both expressions of gratitude? Why was one referred to as *mikra*, recital, while the other is called *viduy*, confession? Why was one said aloud in Hebrew, while the other was expressed quietly in any language?

Horav Moshe Swift z.l. addresses these questions and responds in the following manner. There are two types of blessing. One blessing is that which comes directly from Hashem, such as the blessings of nature, soil rain and crops. *Mikra bikurim* expounds Hashem's beneficence through nature. It acknowledges the goodness which we receive from the Almighty. His miraculous deeds under the guise of "nature" attest to His Divine essence. They bespeak His greatness and constant providential direction of the world. This is a holy prayer to be joyfully proclaimed publicly using the holy tongue, Hebrew, which becomes a holy message.

On the other hand, when man relates his sharing of *maaser*, he speaks of himself. One should be unassuming when speaking of his own virtue and merit. It should be expressed in a quiet and subdued voice. This concept is consistent with the *pasuk* in *Mishlei 27:2* "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth." Furthermore, does man truly know what inspires his actions? Is his motivation always sublime, or is there a tinge of self-interest in the background? Even the noblest of human endeavor may be tainted. Not all of man's deeds are worthy of being expressed in *lashon kodesh*, the holy tongue. Consequently, *viduy maaser* is recited quietly in any language.