



Parshas Ki Tsavo 2022, fact of life

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, & in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bas Gittel, Edward Ben Efraim.

Our Parsha continues Moshe's final address to the Jewish people. He begins by teaching the laws applicable once the Jewish nation settles down in Israel. The first commandment is Bikurim, bringing the first fruits of each harvest to the Beis Hamikdash.

Each year, people from across Israel would join the procession of farmers bringing their fruits to G-d. They would sing, dance, play musical instruments and accompany the farmers as they performed this special Mitzvah.

Moshe continues with the Mitzvah of Massar, giving a percentage of one's produce to the Kohanim, Levites, and people in need. There is also a Masser that a person must give, which can only be eaten in Jerusalem.

However, a question comes to mind: When bringing Bikruim, a person must wave the basket of fruit and say a special prayer. After concluding the prayer, they must kneel and bow before leaving the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. The Pasuk writes (26:10) וְהִנַּחְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֶלְבָּקִים וְהִשַּׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לִפְנֵי ה' אֶלְבָּקִים - "You shall place it (the basket of fruit) before the Lord your G-d and bow before the Lord your G-d." But there aren't many Mitzvahs that require bowing to complete the obligation. So why is bowing a part of completing the unique Mitzvah of Bikruim?!

One of the many answers given is that kneeling and bowing are required before exiting the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. Just as people bow their heads and curtsy before a king or queen, we must bow prior to leaving the home of the King of Kings.

This custom is still practiced in England and countries where monarchies still exist. When people come in the presence of the monarch, they are required to incline their heads as a sign of respect. Since the farmers were in G-d's presence, they must bow as a sign of respect.

However, the Alter Rebbe, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe whose birthday was yesterday on the 18th of Elul, gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that we bow specifically by Bikurim because that is how we show genuine and sincere gratitude.

The Jewish definition of gratitude is acknowledging that we lack the ability to complete our mission and duty without assistance. Whether it is encouragement from our friends or support from family, appreciation is recognizing their hand in our success.

The Alter Rebbe explains that we bow by Bikurim specifically, for it represents that we realize that G-d is our source of success. He is the true and only reason we have fruits to give and blessings to share with the world.

The Alter Rebbe's powerful lesson about the underlying truth of gratitude is practical now more than ever. Since we live in a world that values immediate gratification because how they feel now is more important than their ultimate goals. Rather than realizing the importance of gradual but sustained happiness and success, they seek instant pleasure and bliss.

However, the Jewish idea of gratitude is recognizing that I am not in charge, entirely contradicting the notion of selfishness. Jewish gratitude is admitting that I need G-d to give me life constantly. I need a spouse to complete my G-dly soul. I need the light of the Torah to pave my path in this dark world. I need friends and family to motivate me to stay on the right course. **I need G-d because, without Him, I am nothing.**

"It is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful."

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*