

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
KI SAVO

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

BEARING FRUIT

This week's *Parshah* opens up with the *Mitzvah* of *Bikkurim*¹ - taking the first fruits of the harvest, and bringing them to Yerushalayim. As *Mitzvos* go, this *Mitzvah* doesn't seem to be any more central than the *Mitzvah* of *Shatnes*, the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah*, or any other *Mitzvah*. Yet, we find a surprising description of the *Mitzvah* of *Bikkurim* in the *Medrash*.

The *Medrash*² states that the world was created in the merit of three things - the *Mitzvah* of *Challah*, *Ma'aser*, and *Bikkurim*. What was so special about these *Mitzvos* that their future observance would cause the creation of the universe?

Reb Yaakov Niman³ (190?-1983) explains that *Bikkurim* holds a very special place amongst the six hundred and thirteen *Mitzvos*. Generally, he says, we don't have a problem accepting that Hashem created and runs the world. By simply looking at the beautiful world around us, it is readily apparent that there was a Creator that set this world into motion. However, when we are involved in a project, put in our blood, sweat, and tears, and then it comes to fruition, it becomes very hard to feel that Hashem is the One who actually made it all happen.

Bikkurim is a *Mitzvah* that comes on the heels of one's personal involvement, sleepless nights, and backbreaking labor. After picking rocks, plowing, planting, irrigating, fertilizing, applying pesticides, and finally harvesting, it is very difficult to say, "This was all Hashem's doing." Nevertheless, we are told to take those precious first fruits to the *Beis Hamikdash*, and thank Hashem for, "The fruits that You have given me," recognizing Hashem's mastery over all.

Bikkurim may sound like any other *Mitzvah*, but it takes a very special person to be able to perform the *Mitzvah* properly. The world was created for mankind to recognize Hashem's engagement in our lives - even when it is very hard to see it.

On Rosh Hashanah we will recite how Hashem rules the universe. It would be ideal to remember that not only does He rule over the entirety of creation, but He is intimately involved in every achievement of our lives.

1 *Devarim* 26:1

2 *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4

3 *Darkei Mussar* p. 235

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It can be very difficult to see Hashem's hand in our lives, especially when we've worked hard for something, and our efforts paid off. How are we to feel that He is one who made our efforts bear fruit?

There are two approaches, but both require that one recognize subtleties. There may have been times in our lives where we worked hard for something, but despite our best efforts, we simply could not accomplish whatever it may be. Maybe we were studying for a test, and couldn't remember the answers, maybe we were searching for a job, and couldn't land an interview. And then, without our involvement, whatever we wanted actually happened. We can use our experience to recognize that this is not an aberration but a manifestation of Hashem's involvement in our lives.

Second, there are parts of our lives that we take for granted, but remembering something that we learned, or doing well on an interview, is not to be assumed. Yes, we put in the effort, but at the end of the day, connections had to be made, and those came about because of Hashem.

The more we recognize these subtleties, the more we can bring Hashem into our lives.



Man has several types of shortcomings. Some of these can be improved by doing Mitzvos, others by studying Torah. However, some can only be improved if a person refines his Middos through Mussar.

- Vilna Gaon, *Even Shelaima* 1:10

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A LITTLE PUSH

Mr. Eitan Campbell* couldn't help but overhear his co-workers discussing their latest project. Roger Goldstein was saying, "I've been working overtime the past couple of days to get the order done. We developed the program in record time, but we were having compatibility issues with their mainframe. I'm very proud to say, after working on it for a long time, I came up with an innovative solution, and now we're back on schedule."

Eitan tried to unobtrusively walk pass the three men standing together, but it was not meant to be. "Hey, Eitan," said Roger. "You're a religious Jew - I have a question for you. I know that Jews believe that G-d is involved in our lives, even in the small stuff. These past few days have been rough, but I personally solved a problem we were facing. How do you explain how I did it without G-d's involvement?"

This wasn't the first time Roger had asked Eitan questions like this. Roger was not belligerent, and was actually sincere in his questions. Eitan wasn't always ready with an answer, and Roger was understanding of that. However, now that there was an audience, Eitan felt like he needed to give something of substance.

Eitan smiled. "You remind me of something that happened just last night. It was supper time, and my two-year-old needed to get into her high chair. She likes doing everything herself these days, so I took off the tray, and waited for her to climb up. She tried, but the chair was just too high for her. She looked at me and said, 'Daddy, help!' As she tried again, I reached down, and gave her a little push, just enough to get her into the chair. Very proudly she said, 'I did it!'"

We all think we did it - but who gave us the push?"

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**Names have been changed, based on a true story.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- We elevate ourselves by accepting Hashem as our King because we thereby fulfill the purpose of our creation.¹
- The focus of Rosh Hashanah is to develop such a close and loving relationship with Hashem that we welcome His rulership.²
- We call Hashem a "Melech," and not a "Moshel." A *Moshel* is a dictator who rules by force, a *Melech* is a king who rules with the consent of his subjects.³

¹ *Ohr Gedaliyuha, Moadim*, p. 1-3

² *Michtav M'Elياهو* Vol. 2, p. 71

³ *Even Shelaima* 27:27