

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

## THANK YOU FOR THE DIRT!

Our *parshah* opens with the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*, the commandment to bring one's first ripened fruits to *Yerushalayim* and give the basket of fruit as an offering to a *kohein* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Before handing the basket over, the farmer would say, "I declare today to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give us."<sup>1</sup>

*Rashi*,<sup>2</sup> quoting the *Sifri*, states that this passage is said in order that one not be considered ungrateful. How so? The *Gur Aryeh*<sup>3</sup> explains that if one were to not acknowledge the fact that Hashem brought them into the wonderful land of Israel, this person may have been viewed as an ingrate, one who is focused solely on their wants and desires, and not acknowledging the great good that others do for them.

The *Sifri*, *Rashi* and the *Gur Aryeh* need some explanation. Here we have a farmer who toiled many hours, through rain and shine, tending to his orchard. Instead of immediately taking his hard-earned fruit inside for his family, he gathers them together, and sets out on a journey to *Yerushalayim*. Once there, he presents the literal fruits of his labor to the *kohein*, as a thank-you to *Hashem*. And indeed, he is about to give his thanks for everything that led to this moment. Yet, if he does not mention that he is also grateful for the land that was given to him, he would be considered selfish! How can this be?

The explanation is that grateful people naturally tend to focus on the great good that others have given them. They don't only appreciate dinner, they appreciate the work that went into making it, purchasing the ingredients, and the money spent on the meal. Conversely, a person who is generally self-centered, though at times they will express gratitude, may miss these details, and find they are not particularly important.

With the special *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*, we are reminded to have a broader view of gratitude; not just thankfulness for what we have in front of us, but also for everything that occurred 'behind the scenes'.

**Grateful people naturally tend to focus on the great good that others have given them.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It's difficult enough to have gratitude, now you want me to be thankful for the things I don't even see or know about? How is this possible?

The truth is, if a person has a grateful personality, they will naturally tend towards focusing on the great good that has been given them, and that would include everything that is involved.

How does one work to create the 'grateful personality'? It might sound like a catch-22, but the more one focuses on the gifts that they were given, the more grateful they become.

Luckily, we have a built-in method to do this. Every day we wake up and thank Hashem for giving us another day. We don't take this day for granted, it is a gift! And then we say the *berachos*, thanking Hashem for the ability to walk, to see, and so on.

Every time we eat something, we first say our thanks. And when we are done, we show our gratitude again.

If we take these words to heart, taking a moment to focus on Who we are thanking, and the entire process that brought this apple to my table, we will change our outlook, both towards Hashem and the people around us.

1 *Devarim* 26:3

2 *ibid.* s.v. ואמרת אליו

3 *ibid.* s.v. שאינך כפוי טובה

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**The best segula is to work on  
oneself and break one's bad middos...**

- Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l,  
*Eponymous ArtScroll Biography*, pg. 193

# THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING

Everything had gone as planned. The *shiur* was a rousing success, people traveled from miles away to attend, and the participants left with good feelings and vows to return for next week.

Tzvi Zuckerman\* felt a wave of exhilaration as he sat in his car after the *shiur*. Months of preparation, discussion, and thought went into launching an organization with the purpose of educating people on the value and benefit of studying *mussar*, the area of Torah that discusses how to change and perfect one's character traits.

Even more time went into this weekly *shiur* — where should it be held, who should give the *shiur*, and what should the format be? After all of the arrangements were made, advertising sent out, and paraphernalia purchased, Tzvi Zuckerman and his partner Dovid Sassoon could only sit back and hope that people would show up.

And indeed they did! The room was filled to capacity as the participants sat attentively listening and at times asking questions. Now, thinking back on how much work was involved, Tzvi felt that there was still one more thing to do. He picked up his phone and dialed a number. It was a number he called often, but usually under much different circumstances.

As expected, the call went to voicemail. "You've reached the personal voicemail of Rabbi Barish, please leave a detailed message after the beep."

"Good evening Rebbi," Tzvi said, with a small crack in his voice. "I'm just calling to say thank-you. Tonight we had our first *shiur*, and it went amazingly well. And I think it goes without saying that since high school, you've been there for me. And there is no doubt that without your guidance and concern, my life would have turned out very differently. Therefore, I'm just calling to thank-you, as our success is most certainly your success."

A month or two later Tzvi ran into Rabbi Barish on the street. "I received your voicemail," said Rabbi Barish with a wide smile. "And I want to thank you for thanking me! In my position, I very often speak to people when they are going through challenges and difficulties. I share in their sorrow; it's not as often that I get to share in their success. So, thank you for calling me, it really meant a lot."

Tzvi and Rabbi Barish caught up a bit more, and then parted ways, mutually appreciating the other's gratitude.

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Hashem may delay goodness for a person until the person can properly appreciate his gifts.<sup>1</sup>
- The basis of *avodas Hashem* is gratitude, and if one does not have gratitude to one's peers, they will end up not having gratitude to Hashem. To instill gratitude in oneself, one should even develop gratitude to inanimate objects!<sup>2</sup>

1 *Gur Aryeh* on *Bereishis* 2:5 s.v. כי לא המטיר

2 *Sichas Avodas Levi* 33:3