

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

Topics discussed

Parashas Ki Savo

I

- ▶ The "I declare today" in the Bikkurim declaration
- ▶ The Bikkurim declaration and the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim
- ▶ From Yetzias Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael
- ▶ The Abarbanel: The Pesach Haggadah as a parallel to the bringing of Bikkurim
- ▶ The Jewish way of giving thanks

II

- ▶ When "meshugah" became a defense
- ▶ "She is meshugah"
- ▶ When meshugah disrupted the tochachah
- ▶ "And you will be meshugah": Curse or reprieve?

Parashas Ki Savo

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I

The "I declare today" in the Bikkurim declaration

וְהָיָה כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ נַחֲלָה וִירְשָׁתָהּ וַיֵּשְׁבָתָהּ בָּהּ
וְלָקַחְתָּ מִרְאשִׁית כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּשְׁמַתָּ בַּטֹּבָא
(דברים כו, א-ב)

"And it shall be, when you enter the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you as an inheritance, and you inherit it and settle in it. You shall take from the first of every fruit of the soil... and place it in a basket..." (Devarim 26:1-2).

Parashas Ki Savo opens with the mitzvah of Bikkurim. Upon seeing the first fruits ripen, the farmer marks them and eventually brings them to the Beis Hamikdash. There, standing before the Kohen, he makes a declaration:

הַגִּדַתִּי הַיּוֹם לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בָאתִי אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ
(שם, ג)

"I declare today to Hashem your G-d that I have come to the land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give us" (ibid).

The Ibn Ezra explains:

"הַגִּדַתִּי הַיּוֹם" 'I declare today.' The purpose is so that the children will hear; alternatively, it is a form of thanksgiving

that Hashem has fulfilled His oath, with the fruit serving as proof."

The Ibn Ezra's explanation recalls the mitzvah of **וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ**, "And you shall tell your son": recounting the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim (Exodus) in the Haggadah on Pesach night, teaching the story to the children, giving thanks to Hashem.

The Bikkurim declaration and the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim

The depth of the allusions contained in the words of Rabbeinu Ibn Ezra, one of the earliest Rishonim, will become clear through the teachings of the sages who came after him as we will explain, with Hashem's help.

The connection to the mitzvah of recounting Yetzias Mitzrayim becomes even more apparent and develops further throughout the remainder of the Bikkurim declaration:

**וְעֵינִית וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָנָי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם
וַיִּגְדֵּר שָׁם בְּמִתִּי מִעֵשֶׂת וַיְהִי שָׁם לְגֹי גָדוֹל עָצוּם וְרֵב (שם, ה)**

"You shall proclaim and say before Hashem your G-d: 'The Aramean (Lavan) sought to destroy my forefather. My forefather descended to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and numerous'" (Ibid., v. 5)

These words are immediately familiar. The "Maggid" component of the Pesach Haggadah is structured around Mikra Bikkurim. They form the central text upon which our Haggadah builds its account of Yetzias Mitzrayim. At the Seder, we recite these same words and carefully analyze their every phrase. The Mishnah establishes the structure of the Seder narrative:

**מִתְחִיל בְּגִיטוֹת וּמְסִים בְּשִׁכְתוֹ, וְדוֹרֵשׁ מֵאֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי עַד שִׁיגְמֹר
כָּל הַפֶּרֶשָׁה כְּלָה
(פסחים י, א)**

We begin with degradation and conclude with praise, expounding the passage beginning with **אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי** (*Pesachim* 10a).

The Torah's declaration of Bikkurim thus becomes the text through which generations of Jews fulfill the mitzvah of recounting the Yetzias Mitzrayim. Why?

The Bikkurim declaration does not begin with Egypt. It reaches further back: **אֲרָמִי**. Before Pharaoh enslaved us, Lavan sought to destroy Yaakov. The story of our salvation therefore begins even before we became a nation. From there, the declaration proceeds through the descent to Egypt, the growth of the Jewish people, the suffering and oppression, and finally their cry to Hashem:

**וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ וַיֵּרָא אֶת עֲנִינוּ וְאֶת
עֲמָלֵנוּ וְאֶת לַחֲצֵנוּ**

"Then we cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our forefathers, and Hashem heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression" (Devarim 26:7)

Hashem responds:

**וַיּוֹצֵאנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה וּבְמַחֲרָא גָדֹל וּבְאֹתוֹת
וּבְמִפְתִּים**

"Hashem brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with great awe, and with signs and wonders" (Ibid., v. 8)

These verses of Mikra Bikkurim from our parasha form the foundation of the story we recount every year on Pesach.

From Yetzias Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael

Mikra Bikkurim does not stop there. The next words are:

**וַיְבִאנוּ אֶל הַמִּקְוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב
וְדָבָשׁ (שם, ט)**

"He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Devarim 26:9).

Here Mikra Bikkurim goes one step further. Yetziyas Mitzrayim was not the end of the journey. When Hashem promised the Avos that their descendants would become His nation, the promise included a geographic destination. We were not merely to be taken **out of** Egypt. We were to be brought **into** Eretz Yisrael.

As the Ramban's says in his explanation of הַגְדַּת הַפֵּרוֹת Through the very fruit that he has brought, the farmer declares and gives thanks that Hashem brought him to the land promised to the Avos. Hashem has fulfilled His word, and the farmer now comes to acknowledge and praise Him (Ramban, Devarim 26:3). The fruit is therefore more than an offering of gratitude for a successful harvest. It is evidence of the fulfillment of the promise.

A descendant of Yaakov now stands securely on his own portion of Eretz Yisrael. He recalls that Yaakov, his ancestor, once fled from Lavan and descended to Egypt with only a small family. Now, after planting his field and gathering its first fruits, this descendant carries them to the Beis Hamikdash. The promise has become tangible.

וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה הֵבֵאתִי אֶת־רֵאשִׁית פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתָּה לִּי
ה' וְהִנֵּחְתָּהּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ
(שם, י')

"And now, behold, I have brought the first fruit of the land that You, Hashem, have given me. And you shall place it before Hashem, your G-d, and you shall bow down before Hashem, your G-d." (Ibid., v. 10)

Abarbanel: The Pesach Haggadah as parallel to the bringing of Bikkurim

The connection between the Pesach Haggadah and Mikra Bikkurim is developed in a remarkable way by Abarbanel in his commentary on the Haggadah, *Zevach Pesach*. Abarbanel begins with a fundamental question about the very structure of "Maggid":

The Torah already contains a detailed account of the events of Yetziyas Mitzrayim in Sefer Shemos. Why, then, did the author of the Haggadah not use those verses as the primary text through which to tell the story? Instead, the Haggadah takes the much later retrospective account of those events found in Mikra Bikkurim, namely, the account of אֶרְמֵי אֶבֶד אָבִי, and makes it the framework of the Seder narrative. The verses in Sefer Shemos describing the events in detail are then brought as proof and explanation of the words of Mikra Bikkurim.

The Abarbanel answers that this choice was deliberate. On the night of Pesach, our obligation is not merely to recount what happened, but להודות להשם יתברך על כל אשר "to thank Hashem for all that He has bestowed upon us. For this purpose, Abarbanel writes, there could be no declaration more appropriate to Yetziyas Mitzrayim than the "הגדה ויחיד", the Haggadah and declaration recited by the one who brings Bikkurim.

The reason is that Mikra Bikkurim itself follows precisely the pattern that Chazal require of the Pesach Haggadah: שגם הוא מתחיל: It, too, begins with degradation and concludes with praise. It looks back to Lavan and Yaakov, proceeds through the descent into Egypt and the suffering there, and then recounts the redemption, the plagues, and the signs and wonders.

The Abarbanel thereby gives deeper significance to Chazal's choice of **אֶרְמֵי אַבְדָּא אָבִי**. Mikra Bikkurim is not merely a convenient summary of Jewish history that the Haggadah happens to borrow. It is itself a model of how a Jew expresses gratitude to Hashem.

The parallel is therefore not merely between two texts. Abarbanel sees the Seder itself as reflecting the experience of Bikkurim. The *ke'arah* before us recalls the basket of Bikkurim, while the words we recite echo the words of the farmer who stood before Hashem and placed his blessings within the larger story of Jewish history.

This insight brings us to the heart of both mitzvos. When the Jew wishes to thank Hashem, he does not look only at the blessing immediately before him. He looks backward. He remembers where the story began, what his ancestors endured, how Hashem redeemed them, and how the blessings of the present emerged from that long history.

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The Jewish way of giving thanks

Once each year, on the night of Pesach, we retell the story of our national redemption. And once each year, with the arrival of the new fruits of Eretz Yisrael, the farmer brings his Bikkurim and recounts that same history before Hashem.

This gives us a deeper understanding about the very nature of gratitude. Chazal established the fundamental structure of the Haggadah as **מִתְחִיל בְּגִיטוֹת וּמֵסִים בְּשִׁבְחָה**, beginning with degradation and concluding with praise (*Pesachim* 116a). On the night of our freedom,

we first recall that **עֲבָדִים הָייִנוּ** and we reach back even further to remember that **מִתְחִילָה עֲבָדֵי עֲבוֹדָה** our forefathers (before Avraham Avinu) worshipped idols. Our celebration begins by remembering what preceded the redemption.

The Maharal explains that **אֵין לִשְׁבַח הַכֹּהֵן** there can be no true recognition of the good without contrasting it with its opposite. We cannot fully appreciate where we are unless we remember where we began.

This same principle lies at the heart of Mikra Bikkurim. The farmer stands in the Beis Hamikdash holding a basket filled with the first fruits of his land. It would seem that this is the perfect moment to simply thank Hashem for the bounty before him. Yet the Torah requires something more. Before he can properly rejoice in the fruit of the present, he must revisit the past. **אֶרְמֵי אַבְדָּא אָבִי**. He returns to Yaakov and Lavan, remembers the descent to Egypt, the small family that became a nation, the slavery and suffering, and the cries of his ancestors. He recalls how Hashem heard those cries and redeemed them: **וַיִּזְעַגְנוּ הָאֱמִצִּיִּים בְּיַד חֲזָקָה**. Only then does he arrive at the moment in which he now stands: **וַיָּבֵאוּנוּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן-לָנוּ אֶת-** **הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ**.

This is the Jewish way of expressing gratitude. We do not view the blessings of the present in isolation. We look backward. We remember where we began, the dangers we survived, the difficulties through which Hashem carried us, and the many acts of kindness that brought us to where we stand today. Only through that retrospective view can we fully appreciate the blessing of the present.

This is why **מִתְחִיל בְּגִיטוֹת וּמֵסִים בְּשִׁבְחָה** is more than the prescribed structure of the Haggadah. It is a method of *hakaras hatov*. This approach

gives depth and meaning to the *shevach*. The memory of what once was enables us to recognize the magnitude of what Hashem has given us now.

Mikra Bikkurim ends with the verse:

וְשִׂמְחָתְךָ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ

"And you shall rejoice **in all the good** that Hashem your G-d has given you and your household" (ibid., v. 11).

- The simcha has to be all-encompassing. When we rejoice before Hashem, we acknowledge the full magnitude of the good He bestows upon us in the present and has bestowed upon us throughout the course of our journey as a people.



II

When "meshugah" became a defense

There is a word in the *tochachah* (rebuke) of Parashas Ki Savo that has entered everyday speech:

וְהָיִיתָ מְשֻׁגָּע מִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה

"And you will be meshugah from the sight that your eyes will behold." (Devarim 28:34).

The word **מְשֻׁגָּע** meshugah, appears only once in the Torah. In Hebrew and especially in Yiddish, it means crazy or irrational, or so overwhelmed that one can no longer act normally. Here in the *tochachah*, however, it describes a mind broken by unbearable suffering: a person becomes meshugah מִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה from the terrible sights his eyes are forced to behold.

Jewish history has known periods in which the *tochachah* seemed to unfold before our eyes, tragically epitomized by the horrific Holocaust of our own times. Against that backdrop, Mrs. Pearl Benisch a"h, a friend of

my mother a"h who helped rebuild Yiddishkeit among young women survivors in the Frankfurt-Zeilsheim displaced persons camp, related a story that gives this word an unexpected dimension. She recorded it for the Rabbi Leib Geliebter zt"l Yizkereim project.

"She is meshugah"

Mrs. Benisch, a student of Sarah Schenirer in the Beis Yaakov Seminary of Krakow, was imprisoned in the Plaszow forced labor and concentration camp. In 1942, she worked in the Madritsch factory, sewing German military uniforms. Beside her worked her friend, later to become Mrs. Rivka Pinkusevich. Nearby sat another Jewish prisoner, Emma, who had begun showing signs of depression. Still, she continued working because, as Mrs. Benisch put it, "You had to work to exist."

One day, Jon, the Nazi Oberscharführer, entered the factory. Mrs. Benisch describes him as "this beast in human skin." Every morning, he arbitrarily singled out prisoners, recording their numbers for execution.

When the foreman ordered everyone to stand at attention, all obeyed except Emma. Mrs. Benisch kicked her and whispered, "Emma, get up! Get up! Get up!" But Emma did not respond. Jon noticed, approached her, and drew his handgun.

Then, Mrs. Benisch relates, "in a flash," Mrs. Pinkusevich stood between Jon and the seated prisoner.

"Herr Oberscharführer," she said, **זי איז נישט שולדיק. Sie ist meshuge.** "She is not at fault. She is meshugah."

She could not find the German word for insanity, and Jon did not understand the Yiddish word "meshugah." Apparently stunned by her audacity and baffled by what she was saying, he lowered his hand, returned

the gun to his pocket, and ordered, "Weitermachen," "continue working." Then he left.

"Nobody would dare to do something like what that young girl did," Mrs. Benisch recalled. "She saved the life of Emma."

When meshugah disrupted the *tochachah*

Emma's condition seemed almost a living illustration of the Torah's words. Surrounded by starvation, brutality, terror, and death, she had become unable to respond even when her survival depended upon it. What she had seen and endured had overwhelmed her. Then another prisoner had done something that, by every ordinary calculation of survival in Plaszow, seemed equally meshugah. Mrs. Pinkusevich had stepped between her fellow prisoner and the gun of a murderous Nazi officer. Her action appeared irrational, yet that very courage gave Emma a chance to live.

Courage alone, however, may not have saved them. Had Jon understood her words, he might have shot both prisoners. Instead, she used a word he did not understand. Before him stood one prisoner who inexplicably refused to rise and another who inexplicably dared to confront him, insisting that the first prisoner was meshugah. For a moment, the man who controlled everyone around him faced something he could not comprehend.

The normal order of Plaszow was disrupted. Jon, who inspired terror, was taken aback. He put away his gun and said, "Weitermachen."

The word the Torah uses for a mind overwhelmed by suffering had become the word that stopped a gun. Perhaps it also reveals a deeper spiritual meaning.

"And you will be meshugah": Curse or reprieve

Becoming meshugah is part of the *tochachah*. Yet within this terrible *kelalah* there may also be a measure of *rachamim*: a *limud zechus* for the person whose *da'as* has been shattered by suffering. The *meforshim* explain the *shigaon* of the *tochachah* as a loss of *da'as*. The Abarbanel describes a mind overwhelmed by successive calamities, an unsettled mind. The *Tzeror HaMor* speaks of **חסרון דעתו מדברים שיראה**, the diminishing of *da'as* through what a person was forced to see. The *Netziv* calls it **נצא מדעתך**, you will lose your *da'as*, the capacity for rational thought and sound judgement.

The Torah emphasizes not only the condition but also its cause: **מִמְרָאָה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה**. Some experiences are so terrible that they overwhelm a person's capacity for judgment and awareness. This principle also has halachic significance. Human responsibility depends upon *da'as*, and when *da'as* is profoundly impaired, halachah places it in the category of *shoteh*, one who is not a *bar da'as*. This does not mean that anyone referred to as "meshugah" has that halachic status. It does establish, however, that shattered awareness affects the degree to which actions can be attributed to a person.

Perhaps, then, we can say that "you will be Meshuga" signifies more than punishment. The loss of *da'as* remains a terrible *kelalah*, but the Torah's recognition of its cause may itself be a *limud zechus*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Who knows the limits of the human mind, knows that someone whose *da'as* has been impaired by suffering cannot always be judged as though he were acting with normal freedom and judgment.

As the *tochachah* continues after the state of *shigaon*, this becomes even more haunting:

וְאָכַלְתָּ פֶּרִי בִטְנֶהָ בְּשׂוֹר בְּנִיךָ וּבִנְתֶּיךָ...

"You will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and your daughters..." (Devarim 28:53).

How could a parent descend to such an unimaginable act? The Torah has already prepared us for the answer. Before describing the horrors of siege, starvation, and destruction, it tells us that a person may become meshugah from what he has seen. The Torah thus bears witness not only to the act, but to the shattered human being who may be driven to it by suffering.

This brings us back to Plaszow. Standing before a Nazi officer with his gun drawn, Mrs. Pinkusevich offered no elaborate explanation. She simply said:

זי איז נישט שולדיק. זי איז משוגע

"She is not guilty. She is meshugah."

The second statement likely explained the first:

Emma had seen what no human being should ever have to see. Her inability to rise was not defiance; her *da'as* and will to live had been overwhelmed by *מראה עיניה אשר ראתה* by what her eyes had been forced to witness.

Mrs. Pinkusevich was pleading with a Nazi for *rachamim*, but she was also expressing the *limud zechus* contained within the Torah's words: Look at what this person has seen. The *tochachah* says, "You will be meshugah" but immediately explains: "from the sight that your eyes behold." Even as the Torah foretells the shattering of the mind, it bears witness to the suffering that caused it. Within the curse itself lies an explanation, and perhaps a measure of *rachamim*.

In Plaszow, that *limud zechus* was expressed in the simplest possible words:

זי איז נישט שולדיק. זי איז משוגע

And those words saved a life.

Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Hashem's immense kindness toward those who do His will

A Jew is commanded to bring his *bikkurim*, the first fruits of his produce, to Hashem. And thus does our parashah open:

וְהָיָה כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה, וִירָשָׁתָהּ וְיָשָׁבְתָּ בָּהּ. וְלָקַחְתָּ מִרְאשֵׁיטָהּ כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּבְרֵא מֵאֲרֶצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ

"And it shall be, when you enter the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you as an inheritance, and you inherit it and settle in it. You shall take from the first of every fruit of the soil that you bring from your land, which Hashem your G-d is giving you..." (Devarim 26:1-2).

Rabbeinu, the Maharal Tzintz, points out two oddities in these *pesukim*. A. In *pasuk alef* it says, *נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה*, "giving you as an inheritance." This appears to be self-contradictory: is the land a "gift," which one receives from another, or an "inheritance," which belongs to one by right from the heritage of his forefathers? B. *Pasuk beis* says, *מִרְאשֵׁיטָהּ כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה*, "from the first of every fruit of the soil." Here too, an explanation is required. "The first" denotes a small

portion, whereas “every” implies the entire yield of the soil. How can the Torah combine “the first” with “every”?

This leads Rabbeinu to two novel conclusions regarding the manner in which Hakadosh Baruch Hu calculates the reward of His people when they do His will. These two ideas complement one another, as follows.

1. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu grants reward, He does not deduct it from our account.

Rabbeinu taught us earlier, in Parashas Eikev, that when a person does Hashem’s will, Hakadosh Baruch Hu provides all his material needs but not as payment for the mitzvos he has performed. None of his merits are diminished by anything he receives. Rather, his entire reward is preserved for him in the eternal world, as it says, **וַיִּשְׁמַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ**, “Hashem your G-d will preserve for you,” meaning that He will preserve the reward for Olam Haba. All the money and possessions that a person receives in this world are given because Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves us and wishes to give to us. He therefore regards the land as though we inherited it from our forefathers. Without a doubt, this type of calculation is very “worthwhile” for us.

This applies, however, only to one who possesses merits and is worthy of inheriting the land. Hakadosh Baruch Hu then regards everything he receives as an inheritance, without deducting anything from his merits. This is the meaning of the *pasuk* here: When a Jew is worthy of having the words **אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ**, “which Hashem your G-d is giving you,” applied to him, meaning that his conduct makes him worthy of receiving reward from Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Hashem performs a kindness for him and gives him his reward as a **נַחֲלָה**, an inheritance. He thereby gains that nothing is deducted from his merits. Instead, **וַיִּרְשָׁתָהּ**, **וַיִּשְׁבֹּתָ בָּהּ**, “you shall inherit it and settle in it.” The land becomes his as an inheritance.

2. One who gives Hashem — i.e., does for Hashem — what is incumbent upon him is considered to have given all his possessions to Hashem.

Let us begin with a *pasuk* from Parashas Re'eh:

עֲשֹׂר תַעֲשֹׂר אֶת כָּל תְּבוּאֹת זֵרְעֶךָ... וְאָכַלְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ... מֵעֲשֹׂר דָּגְנְךָ

“You shall surely tithe all the produce of your seed... You shall eat before Hashem your G-d... the tithe of your grain...” (Devarim 14:22–23).

Rabbeinu explains that once a person fulfills **עֲשֹׂר תַעֲשֹׂר**, “you shall surely tithe,” by giving a tithe from the produce of his field, it is considered as though he tithed **כָּל תְּבוּאֹת זֵרְעֶךָ**, “all the produce of your seed,” and gave it to Hashem. Consequently, even the produce that remains in his possession and that he himself eats is regarded as **מֵעֲשֹׂר דָּגְנְךָ... וְאָכַלְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ**, “you shall eat before Hashem your G-d... the tithe of your grain.” He eats it, yet Hakadosh Baruch Hu considers it as though he has given it to Hashem as a tithe. Because the only thing that matters before Hakadosh Baruch Hu is that His will be fulfilled, and when we fulfill His will, the entire world becomes ours.

The Yerushalmi in *Berachos* (6:1) derives an even greater principle concerning the power of a *berachah* from the *pasuk* **טוֹבָתִי בְּלִי עֲלֶיךָ**, “You have said to Hashem, ‘You are my L-rd; my goodness is not incumbent upon You’” (Tehillim 16:2):

We know that it is forbidden to derive pleasure from this world without first reciting a *berachah*. Only after the *berachah* does Hakadosh Baruch Hu allow us to enjoy His world. The Yerushalmi therefore interprets the *pasuk* as follows: “If you ate and recited a blessing, it is as though you ate from what was your own.” After a person fulfills the mitzvah of reciting a *berachah*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu does not merely “give” the food to him. Rather, Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells him, “It is yours!” If **אָמַרְתָּ לֵה' אֲדֹנָי אַתָּה**, “you said to Hashem, ‘You are my L-rd,’” meaning that you recited the blessing, “Blessed are You, Hashem,” then immediately, **טוֹבָתִי בְּלִי עֲלֶיךָ**, “My goodness is not incumbent upon You.” That is, you are no longer required, so to speak, to acknowledge it as something belonging to Hashem, because the food has become your own. In other words, not only when a person gives a tithe, but even when he merely recites a *berachah*, he immediately “deserves” the entire world.

This is alluded to by the words **מִרְאשִׁית כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה**, “from the first of every fruit of the soil.” If you but gave the first portion, it is considered as though you gave all the fruit of the soil. You then become, so to speak, its owner. It is considered **אֲשֶׁר תָּבִיא מֵאֶרֶצְךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ**, “that you bring from your land, which Hashem your G-d is giving you.” The land that Hashem gives you is yours, by virtue of your merit.

In summation, a person gives Hakadosh Baruch Hu a small portion of his possessions, and then Hakadosh Baruch Hu regards him as though he had given all his possessions. Hashem's beneficence is then granted to him not merely as a kindness, but by right, as though he had inherited it from his forefathers.

Do what is incumbent upon you, and the entire world is yours!



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