

PARSHA WITH

Rabbi Shmuel Brazil



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תשפ"ד RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS KI SAVOH

BIKKURIM AND THE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

The sense of entitlement can get in the way and place a hurdle and restraint to the feelings of acknowledging warranted gratitude. מגיע לי is the Hebrew expression of selfish entitlement, void of any consideration of מגיע לו that one owes a response to the giver of the present or favor. Where do these feelings of entitlement and the lack of appreciation come from? The *meforshim* explain that it is driven by haughtiness and arrogance. Moshe Rabbeinu had every right to feel entitled to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He was the redeemer of *Am Yisrael* from *Mitzrayim*, he saved the nation from annihilation at the *chait* of the *Aigel*, he brought them the second *Luchos*, he erected the *Mishkan*, in his merit the Manna descended from heaven, etc. Yet when he *davened* to enter *Eretz Yisrael* for the sole purpose to fulfill its *mitzvos* he *davened* to Hashem to allow him so in the form of an unearned gift מתנת חנם as the *passuk* uses the word ואתחנן as Rashi explained. The Midrash says that the word ואתחנן comes in the form of תחנונים which is translated as an appeal to Hashem's grace. Rav Yochanan said from here you see that no creature has any worth to the Creator for even Moshe only asked Hashem with an expression that denotes asking for an act of grace.

The words of Rabbe Yochanan can be deduced also from the following. The Ramah at the beginning of the *Shulchan Aruch* brings the *passuk* לנגדי תמיד שויתי ה' לפני that I have placed Hashem before me all the time. However the word שויתי can also be translated as I possess a worth and a value when Hashem is opposite me always in my focus. If this is not the case, then I have no worth to my creator. Who could honestly say that they are truly in this spiritual state and consciousness 24/7. Not even Moshe Rabbeinu. So how can anyone feel entitlement from Hashem for anything. Furthermore, to let this גאווה feeling stand in the way of immense required gratitude for every breath you take על כל נשימה ונשימה תהלל יה is tremendous audacity to feel מגיע לי? One's every breath in this world is a gracious gift that you can never repay even if you lived a gezillion light years.

Chazal say that the reason behind the mitzvah of *Bikkurim* is *Hakaras Tovah* – gratitude to Hashem for His bestowal of goodness and plenty that He sent to *Am Yisrael*. One should not think that his success in business or in agriculture was because of himself but rather it was Hashem who made it all happen. Therefore one must go the Nine Yards plus, out of his way and journey to *Yerushalyim* with his first fruits and bring it to the *Beis Hamikdash* and be involved with the Kohen and his wavering of the fruit basket etc. in order to express his gratefulness for Hashem's graciousness and non entitled gift. In the word בכורים we find the letters of מכיר and the letters of בני which add up to טוב with the kollel.

Now we can understand the juxtaposition of last week's *parsha* that ends with Amalek and this week's *parsha* which begins with the mitzvah of *Bikkurim*. Amalek is also called ראשית as the *passuk* says ראשית עמלק גויים עמלק. They had the middah of גאווה. their Zaidy Aisav felt entitlement for the berachos that Yaakov "stole" from him even though there was no way that Aisav would have received the berachos because Hashem would have never agreed to it (see Bereishis 48,8 Rashi). עמלק is *gematriah* רמ which means גאווה. The way Moshe and Yisrael fought Amalek was to follow Moshe's hands. When they were up it symbolized the opposite of את החיל הזה that we realized that our hands don't really accomplish anything worthy and therefore it is Hashem alone who can save us from our enemies such as Amalek. When

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Moshe's hands were down it symbolized that *Am Yisrael* felt a degree of entitlement why they should win the battle because of their merits which in itself weakened their power over Amalek.

It is here that we must understand the depths of *Hakaras Tovah* and its unique difference from the mitzvah of *Tzedaka*. In the act of the *chesed* of giving *tzedakah* the more that this mitzvah is fulfilled with *tznius* the greater is the mitzvah. For it is through this *middah* of *tznius* that the recipient doesn't get embarrassed. This is in contrast from giving a present to someone where it is more meritorious to let the recipient realize how much you love and care for him. Rav Yeruchan ztl the Mirrer Mashgiach writes it is therefore an **obligation** to give gratitude to the giver in order that he will receive in return the gratitude, acknowledgement, and your appreciation of his love and respect. If one fails to give full gratitude then he is deemed stealing the gift that was given to him because you defeated the purpose and intent of his gifting to you.

As we say in *davening* on Shabbos *Shacharis* שכן חובת כל היצורים לפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותנו להודות להלל לשבח לפאר לרומם להדר לברך לעלה ולקלס על כל דברי שירות ותשבחות.

It is an obligation for all creation to give nine forms of gratitude to Hashem. It doesn't mention for what we are giving gratitude but merely because Hashem created us דיינו. The acronym of שכן חובת כל היצורים is the word שכחה to forget. One tends to forget that he must constantly be grateful to Hashem just because he was created and placed in this world.

Chazal say that the first word of the Torah is בראשית and it means because of *Yisrael* and *Bikkurim* and Torah who are all called ראשית, the world was created. If we see that the bringing of *Bikkurim* into the world requires gratitude and acknowledgement of Hashem's *tovos*, so too *Yisrael* and the Torah that were gifted to us and which is learned out from the same word, requires praise and gratitude to Hashem for creating them.

In the thank you that we give to Hashem during the *Bikkurim* ceremony we thank Hashem for redeeming us from *Mitzrayim*. It was this redemption that created us anew as *Am Yisrael*. In the same vein every morning we thank Hashem גוי עשני giving gratitude to Hashem for graciously giving me to have the incredible opportunity to be part of this holy nation of *Am Yisrael*.

Thanking Hashem for the Torah is also hinted in the *Bikkurim* offering. The first fruits are waved in a טנא a basket which is *gematriah* 60 corresponding to the sixty *Mesechtos* in *Shas* the Torah *Shebeal Peh*. In Sotah 66 the mitzvos are called פירות. Included in our gratitude for *Bikkurim* which is called "*Raishis*" we include a gigantic thank you for the Torah which is also called the fruits of *Raishis*. The *Birkas Hatorah* includes אשר אשר מכל העמים which is a *Birkas Hodaah* to Hashem for giving us the Torah. It could very well be that the *Chazal* which says על מה אבדה הארץ על שלא ברכו בתורה תחילה that the reason for the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* was because they did not say the beracha over the Torah, it was referring to the second *beracha* of appreciation for the Torah. For if one does not show appreciation it is as if you stole the gift from Hashem as we said above. An allusion to this interpretation is that the *gematriah* of לא ברכו תחילה equals אשר בחר אשר בחר the *beracha* of הודאה. And the reason why the second *beracha* of *hodaah* is called תחילה is because *Am Yisrael* were chosen as a nation before the actual day of *Matan Torah*.

Once one stole the Torah because of lack of appreciation towards it, he caused a מצוה הבאה בעבירה that this is not called learning Torah that usually protects a person from harm. This then was the catalyst in the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the missing of the second *beracha* of gratitude.

Gut Shabbos,
Rav Brazil