

Ki Savo
Bikkurim - Bringing Together All Beginnings
by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Devarim 26:1-11 we read of the Mitzvah to bring *bikkurim*, first fruits. The mitzvah applied specifically to the seven species that the Torah praises Eretz Yisroel for in Devarim 8:8 which are wheat barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. The first fruits that blossomed were identified and marked with a string and when they ripened they were brought to the Bais Hamikdash in a basket. These *bikkurim* fruits had the status of *Terumah*, the first portion of grain set aside for the Kohanim, and were eaten by the Kohanim in accordance with the same rules as *Terumah*. When the *bikkurim* were brought, the owner would make a special declaration with the words the Torah provides for us about how we were enslaved in Mitzrayim, redeemed from there and given the good land whose fruits were presently being brought for Hashem. The reason for this declaration was to show our appreciation of how Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, brought us to this good land and enabled us to do the Mitzvos that were specifically commanded for us to do in Eretz Yisroel. The land and the privileges to do Mitzvos with it were never to be taken for granted. The rich brought their first fruits in gold and silver baskets and the poor brought them in straw and wicker baskets. Interestingly, the rich got their baskets back but the poor did not. The Sifre states that the poor usually had smaller amounts of fruits for their *bikkurim* so the inclusion of the basket made it more of a worthwhile gift or as Chazal say, *kedai nesinah*.

Overall, the *bikkurim* required seven things: a basket or vessel to hold them, bringing the *bikkurim* to Yerushalayim, the declaration [cited above], Korbbon, song, waving and staying in Yerushalayim overnight. They were brought in an orderly fashion with each species being laid out distinctly. The mode of presentation was very important. When we give gifts such as fruit platters to our friends, much attention is given to the layout and presentation. So when we give gifts to Hashem we are certainly required to be concerned with the appearance. From verse 26:11 which states, *vesamachta bechol hatov*, And you shall rejoice in all the good that Hashem gave you, we understand from our mesorah that we bring a *korbon shlomim* as the same phrase *vesamachata bechagecha*[Devarim 16:11 and 15] also

means a *korbon shlmomim*. Tov in our *parshah* is referring to song as we find in Tehillim 33:3, Sing to Hashem a new song, *Heteevu Nagen Bisruah*, play tunes on the trumpet. Staying overnight is understood from Devarim:16:7, And you will turn in the morning and return to your tents which Chazal understood to mean that all turnings away from the Bais Hamikdash are to be the morning after.

Among the commentaries on Chumash there is a common understanding that the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, as a whole, is a mitzvah to show our appreciation for what Hashem has given us. The fruit of our labors tends to make one feel arrogant and say "I made or created this." By bringing the very first fruits to the Bais Hamikdash we show Hashem our cognizance that Hashem gives us all that we have and that we value all that Hashem does for us.

Rabbeinu Bachaya develops this idea of appreciation a little further in his commentary on Chumash. Before every *Parshah*, Rabbeinu Bachaya quotes a verse in Mishlei and connects it to the beginning of our *Parshah*. In the case of our *Parsha*, Ki Savo, Rabbeinu Bachaya quotes Mishlei 3:9 which states, 'Honor Hashem from your resources [*honcha*] and from the beginning of your grain; and your granaries will be filled to satiation and your winepress will burst forth.' Rabbeinu Bachaya explains that Shlomo Hamelech is telling us we have to honor Hashem with all of our resources and give to the poor from our best and never worry. Hashem will surely bless us and contrary to our thinking, charity saves us from many evils and also guarantees that Hashem will give us more. The same idea holds true with any talent or resource one has. For example, if one has a nice voice, it should be used to sing praises to Hashem. If one is a scribe or has beautiful penmanship, let him write sifrei Torah or other works to honor Hashem. Each one of us is commanded to use his/her own possessions and gifts to do Mitzvos and honor Hashem in his/her own unique way.

Rabbeinu Bachaya then states that since Yisroel is called *Reishis*, beginning in Yirmiyahu 2:3, it is truly fitting that the *reishis*, meaning the *bikkurim* should belong to Hashem. In this way Am Yisroel recognizes Hashem as the ultimate *reishis*, beginning of all beginnings. Moreover, this takes place in the Bais Hamikdash which is the foundation, the *reishis* of the

world. By giving the *bikkurim* to the Kohanim, Hashem's ministers in his house, situated at the *reishis* foundation of the world, we further this idea of bringing together all beginnings.

May we all be privileged to see the Bais Hamikdash rebuilt and be fortunate again to bring our *bikkurim* to the Bais Hamikdash and be a part of this beautiful Mitzvah being done to honor and glorify our king. Amen