

PARASHAT KI TAVO- 2014, 5744- A MESSAGE :THE FOUR REISHIT

The Midrash in Parashat Bereishit states: 1- The world was created for the sake of that which is called “Reishit”[meaning first]. 2- The world was created for the sake of the nation of Israel who is called “Reishit”.3- The world was created for the sake of Torah, which is called “Reishit”. 4- Finally, the world was created for the **sake of the Mitzvah of Bikkurim**, which is called “Reishit”.

The Alshich (R’ Moshe Alshich, 1508-1600) is bothered by the inclusion of Mitzvat Bikkurim, the Mitzvah of bringing the first fruits to Jerusalem as found in our parasha (26:1-11) together with Creation of the World, the Jewish Nation and the Torah. He suggests therefore, that it does belong there because the Mitzvah of Bikkurim contains within it the fundamental element of a human being- the obligation to express HaKarat HaTov (gratitude). This element is so basic that the entire world’s creation was actualized just for this Mitzvah, which teaches and trains us in the significance of HaKarat HaTov.

In Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (Chaper 7) it is written: “There is nothing more difficult for HaShem to live with than an ungrateful person. The reason Adam HaRishon was expelled from Gan Eiden was due to his ingratitude. His sin was not merely eating from the Eitz HaDaa, for which he could have been forgiven but his main sin was his response: The woman that You gave me, she gave me the fruit and I ate it”. G-d presented him with Chava (Eve) as a precious gift and Adam complained that she caused him to sin. Adam was being ungrateful! The Midrash continues that our ancestors in the Midbar (Wilderness) also angered G-d with their failure to recognize His Goodness toward them. They cried over the loss of the melons, cucumbers and garlic that they had in Egypt, and complained about the Mann given to them in the Midbar, and even had the audacity to refer to Mitzrayim (Egypt) as a land of “Milk and Honey” In conclusion, the Midrash states that one who is ungrateful to HaKadosh Baruch Hu will be ungrateful to his fellow man, and one who is an ingrate to his spouse, his parents, his friends and his neighbors will eventually come to deny the favors of HaShem.

Our Gedolim were very meticulous about the Mitzvah of HaKarat HaTov. I heard from Rabbi Yissachar Frand about a yeshiva student who was habitually lax in attending the Minyan. The faculty tried all kinds of threats to force him to attend the Minyan, but to no avail. They finally went to the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, and asked him whether they could expel the boy from the dormitory. Rav Yaakov gave his consent to throw him out, but he also said he wants to speak with the student. When the young man appeared, R’ Yaakov asked him, where are you now going to sleep? He answered that has no idea. Rav Yaakov told him, “I want you to sleep in my house.” The boy was shocked and asked, “Why on the one hand the Rosh Yeshiva threw me out of the dormitory and on the other hand he was inviting me to stay in his house?” R’ Yaakov explained, your grandfather used to give money to the Kovno Kollel where I learned, so I was a beneficiary of his support. I therefore, owe him and you a favor out of appreciation