

This parasha begins with the Mitzvah of bringing *bikkurim* [first fruit] to the Beit Hamikdash, along with the declaration of the farmer in which he thanks HaShem for the goodness He bestowed upon him- as an individual and as a nation. The pesukim [26:1-11] discuss the national problems and ultimate success of the nation, culminating in the entry into Eretz Yisrael. It also discusses the happiness the individual should feel with the fruit that has grown in his field along with the other blessings he has received.

The Torah then continues in a different direction, moving to the very harsh section of the *Toh'cha'cha*, the rebuke and curses the nation could incur for sinful behavior. One of the sins is “because you did not serve HaShem, with happiness and a good heart from an abundance of all”. [28;47]. Rashi explains this to mean, that after having so much, it is sinful not to properly express *hakarat hatov* [appreciation for the good one receives]

This particular *aveira*[sin] has plagued us since the beginning of time. Adam HaRishon **when** confronted by HaShem for transgressing the command against eating from the Eitz HaDaat, shrugs off the guilt by claiming it was partially Gd's fault for “The woman whom You gave to be with me-she gave me of the tree, and I ate” [Bereishit 3:12]. Rashi notes, here we find the first instance of ingratitude in the world. Imagine, Gd gave him a beautiful gift, a wife to be with him, and instead of expressing gratitude to HaShem, he blames HaShem for his shortcoming. For that he was ejected from Gan Eiden.

In days of Moshe, in the wilderness, Gd presented our people with a miraculous food, the Mann, which satisfied everyone's taste and wishes, so what could be better than that? Yet, our people cried and complained, saying, “Who will feed us meat? We remember [while in slavery] the fish we ate [in Egypt], the cucumbers...But now, our life is parched, there is nothing but the Mann [Bamidbar 11:4-6]. Again ingratitude! Are we any different today, in the 21st century?

Our parasha, which is so relevant for the month of Elul is teaching us about the Mitzvah of Bikkurim. The Mitzvah is **MEIVI VE'KOREI**, not only to *meivi*- bring fruits but to *korei* declare our gratitude to Hashem. Gratitude must be expressed and verbalized, loud and clear and as often as possible for our personal and national benefits.

On a personal level there is so much to express thanks for, starting with being alive, having our health, being able to walk, talk, eat, see, smell, smile, and the list goes on and on. And even if we are not in perfect health and are limited in some areas, look at all things we are not lacking. Look not at the empty parts of the glass, but to its full parts. On a national gratitude we must express thanks for having a viable Medinat Yisrael, a “Land that HaShem seeks out, the eyes of Gd are always upon it, from beginning of the year to year's end” [Devarim 11: 12], a strong Israeli army and an opportunity to learn Torah and observe Mitzvot to the highest level than ever before. This year let us not fail in the Mitzvah of Gratitude to HaShem. Life is short; appreciate every day-**VE'KOREI!**

Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim
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