

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



עַלֵּי דֵשֶׁה

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

It's All Yours

וְהָיָה כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ וְגו' וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל
פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה

It will be when you enter the Land... you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground. (Devarim 26:1-2)

Chazal expound in Sifri: "When you enter the Land - fulfill the mitzvah stated here, and as reward you will enter the Land." The *mefarshim* point out the obvious difficulty: *bikkurim* can only be performed in Eretz Yisrael, so how could its fulfillment lead to entering the Land?

Let us explore some of the halachos

One separates *bikkurim* even before taking for himself, to show that ultimately, all his possessions—even his very life—are only for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

of *bikkurim*, and how they compare to those of *terumah*, which is also referred to as ראשית, the first of one's produce.

First, both may only be eaten by *kohanim*, but the locations where they may be eaten are different: *terumah* can be eaten throughout Eretz Yisrael, while *bikkurim* is limited to Yerushalayim. Further, whereas *terumah* is only taken from produce that has been detached from the ground, and only after the owner has already taken his portion; *bikkurim* is set aside at the very beginning of its growth, while the fruits are still attached to the ground, and after the owner has eagerly awaited their growth for an entire year. As the pasuk says (Yeshayah 28:4), כְּבִכּוּרָה, בְּטָרָם קִיץ וְגו' בְּעוֹדָהּ בְּכַפּוֹ יִבְלַעְנָה (בַּפּוֹרָה) *that ripens before summer... while it is yet in his hand, he swallows it.* Fruits become *bikkurim* and are "swallowed up" at the very beginning of their existence, before their owner can enjoy his crop. Finally, until *terumah* is separated, all the produce is forbidden as *tevel*, serving as an incentive for *terumah* to be taken - but this is not so with *bikkurim*. How do we understand these differences?

By separating *terumah*, a person gives Hashem a portion of his produce. After the person's own affairs are settled, he gives *terumah*. *Bikkurim* is different. One

cont. on page 2

Under the Hay

וְבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְגו' תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא
עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבב מְרַב כָּל

All these curses will come upon you... because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant. (Devarim 28:45-47)

Our Rebbeim would often relate an explanation that the Rebbe R. Bunim would say in the name of R. Moshe Leib Sassover. It cannot be that the terrible punishments of the *tochachah* are all inflicted because of a lack of joy in one's *avodas Hashem*. Rather, it is because one lacks such joy that he stumbles in sin. The punishments are imposed for one's *aveiros*, but their root is a sullen performance of the mitzvos.

The Rebbe R. Henoch explained our pasuk with a parable. A simple villager brought his young son to be tested on the *alef beis*. The child began confidently naming all the letters and the *nekudos* beneath them. But he stopped when they reached the letter *hei*. The *melamed* asked the child, "What's under the *hei*?" But the child remained silent. Seeing his father reach for his belt, the child blurted out, "Father, do you really want me to tell what's under the hay? Under the hay is the calf you stole!"

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' doesn't only mean "because"; it also means "under." *cont. on page 3*

4 The Yiddish word for hay is *hay*, as well.

It's All Yours

cont. from page 1

separates *bikkurim* even before taking for himself, to show that ultimately, all his possessions—even his very life—are only for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

This is why *bikkurim* must be eaten in Yerushalayim. *Terumah*, taken as a gift from one's own produce for Hashem, is holy, to the extent that it must be eaten in Eretz Yisrael. But *bikkurim*, which proclaims that all we have is only for Hashem, is even more *kadosh*, and must be brought to the Beis Hamikdash and eaten in Yerushalayim.

The Mishnah¹ states that one can set aside his entire field as *bikkurim*. This is different from *terumah*, about which the Mishnah states² that when separating it one must leave over some produce so that the *terumah* can be seen as the “first” of the crop. Why doesn't the same apply to *bikkurim*? After all, the pasuk refers to *bikkurim*, too, as the first of the crop.

According to the above, the answer is clear. *Bikkurim* proclaims that a person truly has nothing of his own; whatever he possesses really belongs to Hashem. Certainly, then, one could designate his entire crop as *bikkurim*.

We may now understand the Sifri, that as reward for Bnei Yisrael's fulfillment of *bikkurim* they would enter Eretz Yisrael. It was not the *performance* of the mitzvah of *bikkurim* that would

enable Bnei Yisrael's entry into Eretz Yisrael, since that was only possible in Eretz Yisrael. Rather, when Bnei Yisrael would practice the *principle of bikkurim*, reminding themselves that *כִּי מִמֶּךָ הַכֹּל וְיְמִיֶּךָ נִתְּנוּ לָךְ* – *For everything is from You, and from Your hand have we given to You* (Divrei Hayamim I 29:14); when they would yearn for Eretz Yisrael's fruit so that they could give to Hashem before taking for themselves – they would then earn their entry into Eretz Yisrael. After all, the purpose of living in Eretz Yisrael is to internalize that everything belongs to Hashem.

We, too, must take this lesson to heart. Yes, we do our best to serve Hashem properly and fulfill all His mitzvos. But sometimes it might be for *our* sake that we do so. We don't want to be punished for not keeping the mitzvos, so in addition to our own pursuits, we dedicate some actions to Hashem: we daven, we learn Torah, and so on. Essentially, though, we are doing all these things for our own good. But that is wrong. After all, our entire existence in this world is only so that we can serve Hashem. A person needs to feel that “I was created only so that I can serve my Master.”³ All our feelings, our drives, our desires, and our thoughts must reflect this truth.

(בנאות דשא – כי תבא, שבת סליחות תשפ"ב)

Permanent Visitor

We daven during these days (in *L'David Hashem Ori*; Tehillim 27:4), *שְׁבִתִי בְּבֵית ה' כָּל יְמֵי חַיֵּי לַחַזוֹת בְּנֹעַם ה'* – *That I may dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold the sweetness of Hashem and to contemplate in His Sanctuary*. Understanding the words simply, we ask to live in Hashem's House permanently – all the days of our lives – and yet, to be *מְבַרְק*, to visit, His Sanctuary.

The answer given to this seeming contradiction is that our request is to reside permanently in Hashem's House, and yet maintain the freshness and excitement of one who comes only as a visitor. But how is this possible? After all, a person naturally loses enthusiasm for activities that continue for a lengthy period of time.

In order to understand this, we must look at the words preceding the request for visitor-like excitement: *לַחַזוֹת בְּנֹעַם ה'* – *to behold the sweetness of Hashem*. When one feels the pleasure and beauty of sitting in Hashem's House and serving Him, he will naturally maintain his enthusiasm for it, and will return day after day feeling as if it were his first day there.

(בנאות דשא – כי תבא תש"פ)

1 Bikkurim 2:4

2 Terumos 4:5

3 Kiddushin 82b

Under the Hay

cont. from page 1

ה' אֶלְקֵיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה means that the *tochachah* is inflicted for what lies *under* the fact that one does not serve Hashem with joy. A Yid's natural tendency is to fulfill the Torah with delight, so if somebody doesn't, that indicates some problem under the surface. The *tochachah* is a punishment for that problem.

Why did the Rebbe R. Henoah utilize this elaborate *mashal* to illustrate his point? The fact that תַּחַת means “under”

One who is immersed in *ruchniyus* becomes immune to the pull of *gashmiyus* that seeks to lure him away from the Torah

is a fairly straightforward concept. R. Henoah was not accustomed to speaking poetically; all his words contain treasures of wisdom and *avodas Hashem*.

In the explanation that my father, the Pnei Menachem, gives for our pasuk, he seems to combine these two explanations of R. Bunim and R. Henoah. Apparently, he understood that both explanations are essentially the same. How is that?

The Gemara (Menachos 29b) states that *Olam Hazeih* was created through the letter *hei*. Just as *hei* has an open bottom that one can fall through, in *Olam Hazeih*, too, one can fall into the abyss of sin.

But although there's no solid ground in this world and there is always the risk of plummeting over the precipice, one can only fall if he is under the force of gravity. One who is immersed in *ruchniyus* becomes immune to the pull of *gashmiyus* that seeks to lure him away from the Torah.

R. Henoah said that if one is not serving Hashem properly, it's because there's a problem hidden beneath the surface – and he illustrated this with the story of the hay. He meant that the issue that causes one to sin is the thing hidden *under the hei*. There's something beneath the opening of the *hei* of *Olam Hazeih* that has a gravity-like pull on this person, bringing him to sin. And what is it that hides under the *hei*? A calf. The *Chet Ha'egel*.

Indeed, the *Chet Ha'egel* is referred to as a *yeridah*, a catastrophic descent. The pasuk says (Shemos 32:7), וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה, לֵךְ רֵד כִּי שַׁחַת עַמָּךְ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלִיתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם – *Hashem spoke to Moshe: “Go, descend – for your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt has become corrupt.”* Rashi explains, citing Chazal,⁵ “I gave you prestige only because of Bnei Yisrael. Now that they have descended (from their high level), you too must descend.” With the sin of the *Egel*, Bnei Yisrael descended and fell through the gap of the *hei*.⁶

Mefarshim say⁷ that the terrible downfall of the *Egel*, which ultimately led to the breaking of the *Luchos*, was not caused by the sin itself, but rather by the fact that Bnei Yisrael danced around the *Egel*. If not for the accompanying joy, the

situation could have been saved. How can we understand this?

At its root, happiness is a *koach* of the *neshamah*; a feeling of uplift and spiritual satisfaction when one fulfills Hashem's will. When a person serves Hashem with joy, he is not pulled down by materialism, and can continue to ascend in *ruchniyus*. But the converse is also true. The *koach* of *simchah* can only be engaged in one direction, either toward *ruchniyus* or toward *gashmiyus*. Somebody who feels *simchah* with non-*ruchniyus* pursuits will find himself weighed down, his *avodas Hashem* feeling like a burden. This is all the more so if one commits actual *aveiros* with joy, *chas v'shalom*. When this happens, the gravity of *gashmiyus* pulls one forcefully through the opening of the *hei* of *Olam Hazeih*, down to the depths of oblivion, from where it is very difficult to extract oneself.

This is what R. Henoah meant that “under the hay is the calf that you stole.” The calf is the *middah* of the *Egel* – a joy in the pursuit of *gashmiyus*. That is what lies beneath the *hei*, exerting a pull upon people toward a life of materialism. And that is exactly what R. Bunim meant, too, that without joy in *avodas Hashem* one will be led to every manner of sin. The reason he cannot feel joy in serving Hashem is because he feels happiness in *gashmiyus*, and he is therefore pulled toward sin. These two explanations are two sides of the same coin.

(בנאות דשא – כי תבא תשי"ב)

5 Berachos 32a

6 We may add that the word שַׁחַת, as in לֵךְ רֵד כִּי שַׁחַת עַמָּךְ, has the same letters as שַׁחַת, hay.

7 See *Alshich hakadosh*

Doubtful Ownership

וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הִבֵּאתִי אֶת רֵאשִׁית פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר
נָתַתָּה לִּי ה' וְגו' וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכֹל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ
ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ

And now, behold! I have brought the first fruit of the ground that You have given me, Hashem... You shall rejoice in all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you and your household. (Devarim 26:10-11)

The Gemara (Gittin 47b) deduces from the word וּלְבֵיתְךָ – *and your household*, that a person may bring his wife's *bikkurim* and recite *mikra bikkurim* over it – even though he must proclaim that the fruit are *the first fruit of the ground* that You have given me.

It would seem that this refers to *nichsei milug*, which is property that a wife brings into the marriage, but is not contracted in her *kesubah*. The halachah is that the wife retains ownership of the *guf* (actual property), while the husband gains possession of the *peiros* (usage). Seemingly, a husband can bring *bikkurim* from the fruit of such a property.

But *Tosafos* and other *Rishonim* question this: since the institution of *nichsei milug* is only *mid'Rabbanan*, how could this be the intention of our the pasuk, when it states וּלְבֵיתְךָ?

The Meiri cites early authorities who explain that the pasuk refers not to *nichsi milug*, but to *nichsei tzon barzel*. This, as well, is property that a wife brings into the marriage, but this form of property is stipulated in her *kesubah* as given to the husband. The halachah is that it is

considered entirely in the husband's possession. Since this arrangement is effective *mid'Oraisa*, this is our pasuk's intention.

The Meiri points out that this too is problematic, since the Gemara compares one who brings his wife's *bikkurim* to one bringing *bikkurim* from land which he owns only for its *peiros*. Since *nichsei tzon barzel* are entirely in the husband's possession, they would not seem to be comparable. The Meiri answers that since the Rambam rules⁸ that the husband cannot sell his wife's *nichsei tzon barzel*, they are seen as still in her ownership, so the husband's possession of them is considered ownership of *peiros*. However, other *Rishonim* disagree with this ruling of the Rambam. Accordingly, it would seem that *nichsei tzon barzel* could not be considered as owned by the husband only for their *peiros*. If so, what kind of property of one's wife can a person bring *bikkurim* from?

The Mishnah (Bechoros 52b) lists various transactions that are not reversed at *Yovel*. Among them is *nichsei milug* that a husband inherits from his wife.⁹ Although generally, inheritance is anyway not reversed at *Yovel*, a husband's inheritance of his wife is only *mid'Rabbanan*, so it could have been considered like a sale, and reversed at *Yovel*. The *Chachamim* therefore stipulated that it is considered like actual inheritance and is not reversed.

*Beis Yaakov*¹⁰ deduces from the Mishnah's wording that this applies not only to *nichsei milug*, but to *nichsei tzon barzel*, as well. If they are inherited by the husband, they too do not return at *Yovel*. But *Chazon Ish*¹¹ disagrees: *nichsei tzon barzel* do return to the wife's estate at *Yovel*. This is not only so where the husband inherited them with his wife's death; even while she is still alive, her *nichsei tzon barzel* are returned to her at *Yovel*.

Following this opinion of *Chazon Ish*, *nichsei tzon barzel* essentially maintain the status of a regular land sale: they are owned by the “buyer,” but returned to the “seller” at *Yovel*. During a period when *Yovel* is observed, any land sale is considered sold only for its *peiros*, since its *guf* is returned at *Yovel*. If so, it would seem clear that *nichsei tzon barzel* are, in fact, owned by the husband only for *peiros*. Why, then, don't *Tosafos* and the other *Rishonim* say that our Gemara means to allow a husband to bring *bikkurim* from his wife's *nichsei tzon barzel*? After all, it would fit neatly with the Gemara's comparison to a case of ownership of *peiros*.

Perhaps these *Rishonim* maintain that the Gemara's reference to one's “wife's *bikkurim*” could not mean *nichsei tzon barzel*, since ultimately, they are considered owned by the husband.

(בנאות דשא – כי תבא תשי"פ)

8 *Hilchos Ishus* 22:15

9 See *Bava Basra* 139b

10 91:4 s.v. *Od* (2)

11 *E.H.* 75:11