

## The Kohen shall take the basket from your hand”

# The Kohen Places His Hand beneath the Owner’s and Waves to Teach Him to Dedicate All of His Actions Solely to Hashem

In this week’s parsha, parshas Ki Savo, we learn about the mitzvah of bringing “bikkurim” to the Beis HaMikdash to the Kohen officiating at that time. Therefore, it is fitting that we explore this magnificent ceremony. The Kohen would place his hand beneath the owner’s hand and wave the offering. Let us review the relevant pesukim (Devarim 26, 1):

“וְהָיָה כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ נַחֲלָה וִירְשָׁתָהּ וְיָשַׁבְתָּ בָּהּ, וּלְקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנִי מֵאֲרָצְךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ וְשָׂמַתָּ בַטֵּנָא, וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם, וּבָאתָ אֶל הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו, הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ כִּי בָאתִי אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ, וּלְקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטָּהוֹר מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ.”

**“It will be when you enter the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance, and you take possession of it, and dwell in it, that you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose, to make His name rest there. You shall come to the Kohen who will be in those days, and you shall say to him, ‘I declare today to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give us.’ The Kohen shall take the basket from your hand, and lay it before the mizbeich of Hashem, your G-d.”**

Rashi comments: **A man goes down into his field and sees a fig that has begun to ripen; he wraps a reed-grass around it as a sign, and declares: “This is hereby bikkurim.” . . . “The Kohen shall take the basket from your hand,” to wave it. The Kohen places his hand underneath the hand of the owner and waves.**

Rashi’s source is the Sifrei (Re’eh 11) regarding the passuk (Devarim 12, 6): **“וְהָבִאתָ שְׂמָה עֹלֹתֶיכֶם וְזִבְחֵיכֶם וְאֵת מַעֲשְׂרֹתֵיכֶם וְאֵת — תְּרוֹמַת יִדְכֶם וְגִדְּרֵיכֶם וְגִדְּבוֹתֵיכֶם וּבְכוֹרוֹת בְּקָרְכֶם וְצֹאנְכֶם — and there shall you bring your olah-offerings and your sacrifices, and your**

**tithes and that which is elevated with your hand, your vow offerings and your free-will offerings, and the firstborn of your cattle and your flocks.** Rashi explains in the name of the Sifrei that **“תְּרוֹמַת יִדְכֶם”** is a reference to **“bikkurim”** — the first fruits--about which it is said, **“The Kohen shall take the basket from your hand.”**

We shall endeavor to explain why the Torah refers to bikkurim as: **“תְּרוֹמַת יִדְכֶם”** — **“that which your hands elevate.”** Seemingly, the essence of the mitzvah is to wave the bikkurim; however, it is impossible to elevate the bikkurim without raising one’s hands. That being the case, why does the Torah emphasize the raising of the hands rather than the raising of the bikkurim? Additionally, what is the practical significance of the waving ritual — the **“tenufah”**? As we learned above, the Kohen places his hand beneath the hand of the owner and waves the bikkurim.

## The Bikkurim Offering Is Designed to Acknowledge Hashem’s Kindness

Let us begin to shed some light on the matter by referring to Rashi’s comment on the passuk above: **“וּבָאתָ אֶל הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו”** — **“You shall come to the Kohen who will be in those days, and you shall say to him.”** He comments based on the Sifrei: **“And you shall tell him that you are not unappreciative.”** We learn from here that the mitzvah to recite the passage of bikkurim is a vehicle to express our appreciation of Hashem’s kindness. This understanding coincides amazingly with the remarks of the Chinuch (Mitzvah 606); he explains the rationale for this mitzvah as follows:

**«מִשְׁרָשֵׁי הַמִּצְוָה, לִפִּי שֶׁהָאָדָם מַעֲוֹרֵר מַחֲשׁוֹתָיו וּמַצִּייר בְּלִבּוֹ הָאִמָּת בִּכְחַד דְּבָרֵי פִּי, עַל כֵּן בְּהִיטִיב אֵלָיו הַשֵּׁם בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּבִבְרָכּוֹ אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת אֲדָמָתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת פִּירוֹת, וְזָכָה לְהַבִּיאַם לְבֵית אֱלֹקֵינוּ, רָאוּי לוֹ לַעֲוֹרֵר לִבּוֹ בְּדִבְרֵי פִּיָּהּ וּלְחַשׁוֹב, כִּי הַכֹּל הִגִּיעַ אֵלָיו מֵאֵת אֲדוֹן הָעוֹלָם, וְיִסְפֹּר חֲסָדָיו יִתְבָּרֵךְ עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל דֶּרֶךְ כָּלֵל, וְעַל כֵּן מִתְחִיל בְּעִנֵּין יַעֲקֹב אֲבִינוּ שְׁחֻלְצוֹ הָאֵל מִיַּד לָבָן, וְעִנֵּין עֲבוּדַת**

המצריים בנו והצילונו הוא ברוך הוא מידם, ואחר השבח מבקש מלפניו להתמיד הברכה עליו, ומתוך התעוררות נפשו בשבח השם ובטובו זוכה ומתברכת ארצו, ועל כן ציונו ברוך הוא על זה כי חפץ חסד הוא...»

At the root of the mitzvah lies the reason that a man arouses his thoughts and conceives the truth in his heart through the power of the words of his mouth. Therefore, when Hashem, blessed is He, has been good to him and has blessed him and his land that it should yield produce, and he has merited to bring some to the House of our G-d, it is fitting for him to bestir his heart with the words of his mouth, and to reflect that all came to him from the Master of the Universe.

Then he should recount his kindnesses toward us and toward the entire people of Yisrael in general. Therefore, he begins with the matter of Yaakov Avinu, whom G-d rescued from the hand of Lavan; then about the servitude to which the Egyptians subjected us, and that He, blessed is He, rescued us from their hand. After the praise, he is to entreat Him to bestow the blessing upon him constantly. Then, as a result of the arousal of his soul in the praise of Hashem and his beneficence, he will be found meritorious and his land will be blessed. Therefore, the Blessed One commanded us in this regard, because He desires chesed.

At this juncture, let us add an embellishment of our own. Why is there a special need to express our appreciation to HKB"Y by bringing an offering of bikkurim specifically from the produce of the earth? Now, let us recall the Torah's stern admonition in parshas Eikev (Devarim 8, 11):

“השמור לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך... פן תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת, ובקרך וצאנך ירביזון וכסף וזהב ירבה לך וכל אשר לך ירבה, ורם ללבך ושכחת את ה' אלקיך המוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים... ואמרת בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה, וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל.”

“Take care lest you forget Hashem, your G-d, by not observing His commandments . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase — and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery, . . . And you may say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.”

Here the Torah informs us in no uncertain terms that the abundance of wealth is liable to lead a person, *chas v'shalom*, to forget Hashem. Ultimately, he believes erroneously: **“My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!”** We can suggest that this is the message conveyed by Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men, in the following passuk Kohelet 5, 12): **“יש רעה חולה ראיתי תחת השמש עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו”** -- **there is a sickening evil that I have seen under the sun, riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune.** In other words, the “sickening evil” is when wealth is hoarded by its owner — when the money’s owner is convinced that he earned this fortune with his own power, diligence and ingenuity.

Note that in this admonition, the Torah emphasizes the role of the hands more so than any of the other limbs: **“My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!”** This is because most human actions are performed with one’s two hands. We can also suggest the following allusion: Two times **“יד”** (14), the Hebrew word for hand, equals **“כח”** (28), meaning strength and power. This is the source of the misguided doctrine of **“כוחי ועוצם ידי”**. A person believes that his **“כח”** comes from his two hands — **“ידי”**. He attributes all of his prosperity to his own efforts and ingenuity. Therefore, the passage concludes with the stern warning: **“Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.”** Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.”

We can now begin to comprehend the unique significance of the mitzvah of bringing an offering of bikkurim upon entering Eretz Yisrael. So long as Yisrael were in the midbar and the **“mahn”** descended for them from the heavens on a daily basis, there was no danger that they would fall prey to the false belief that they were responsible for their own success. After all, they did not expend any effort or use their own hands to realize this bounty. After entering the land, however, the **“mahn”** ceased to descend from the heavens. Instead, they had to perform manual labor in the fields and vineyards — such as plowing, planting, irrigating and harvesting. Thus, the danger arose that they would attribute their prosperity to their own efforts and ingenuity: **“כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה.”**

Hence, the Torah commands: **“It will be when you enter the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance and you take possession of it, and dwell in it.”** For then you will need to perform various labors in your fields and vineyards in order to grow and harvest the fruit that you planted. As a

consequence, the danger will exist that you will attribute your success to your own power and wherewithal. Therefore, the Torah advises: **"You shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose, to make His name rest there. You shall come to the Kohen who will be in those days, and you shall say to him."** As Rashi explains, the person declares that he is not a "כפוי טובה" — he is not unappreciative. By bringing bikkurim, he is expressing his appreciation and gratitude to HKB"H for providing rainfall at the appropriate time and for causing these fruit to grow.

### Waving the Bikkurim with Our Hands Indicates that Everything Is the Work of Hashem

I was struck by a wonderful idea. I would like to explain: (a) the significance of the glorious mitzvah of waving the bikkurim offering and (b) why in parshas Re'eh bikkurim are referred to as "תרומת ידכם", emphasizing the raising of the hands rather than the raising of the bikkurim. When a person raises his hands heavenwards, he indicates that he attributes all of his actions and successes to HKB"H, Who dwells in the heavens. He supplies a person with the "כח" necessary to function with his two hands — two times "יד" equals "כח" — as it is written (Tehillim 33, 13): **"מַשְׁמִימִים הַבַּיִת ה' רָאָה אֶת כָּל בְּנֵי הָאָדָם, מִמִּכּוֹן שִׁבְתּוֹ הַשְׁגִּיחַ אֶל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ — from heaven Hashem looks down, He sees all mankind; from His place of dwelling, He oversees all the inhabitants of earth."**

This explains very nicely the incident involving Avraham Avinu. After he saved his nephew Lot by defeating the four kings in battle, it states (Bereishis 14, 21): **"וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ סְדוֹם אֶל אַבְרָם תֵּן לִי הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהַרְכּוּשׁ"** קח לך, ויאמר אברם אל מלך סדום הרימותי ידי אל ה' אל עליון קונה שמים וארץ, אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל ואם אקח מכל אשר לך ולא תאמר אני העשיתי את אברם — the king of Sodom said to Avram: **"Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself."** Avram said to the king of Sodom: **"I have raised my hand to Hashem, G-d, the Most High, Maker of heaven and earth, if so much as a thread or a shoe-strap; or if I shall take from anything that is yours! So you shall not say, 'It is I who made Avram rich.'"** Rashi comments: **"I have raised my hand"** — this is an expression of an oath stating that I raise my hand to the Supreme G-d. It is essential that we explain why Avram says **"הרימותי ידי"** -- **"I have raised my hand"** -- rather than saying explicitly that he is making an oath.

Now, the king of Sodom was the source and epitome of the evil emblematic of the people of Sodom, especially where money was

concerned, as it is written (Ibid. 13, 13): **"וְאִנְשֵׁי סְדוֹם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לָהּ"** **"מָאֵד — and the people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful to Hashem."** The passuk employs the word **"מָאֵד"**, which alludes to monetary matters. This is apparent from the following elucidation in the Gemara (Berachos 54a) regarding the passuk (Devarim 6, 5): **"וּבְכָל מָאֵדךָ - בכל ממונך"** — the Gemara interprets the word **"מָאֵד"** as a reference to money. So, according to what we have learned, we can suggest that the king of Sodom intended to infect Avram with an appetite for money, by encouraging him to take possession of the property he had confiscated with his own hands during the battle with the four kings. Therefore, he says to Avram: **"Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself"** — you earned them with your own hands.

Avraham Avinu, however, grasped his evil intent and responded adamantly: **"I have raised my hand to Hashem, G-d, the Most High, Maker of heaven and earth."** In all that I accomplish in this world with my hands, I raise my hands to Hashem, in order to obliterate the blasphemous doctrine of: **"כוחי"** **"וְעוֹצֵם יָדִי"**. In this manner, I demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt my intense emunah, in keeping with the directive: **"וְזָכַרְתָּ"** **"אֵת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הַנּוֹתֵן לָךְ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל"**. Therefore, I refuse to take anything from you, so that you will not be able to claim that you made Avram wealthy and that you indoctrinated him with this false, misguided belief. Instead, I wish to instill in all creatures the exalted emunah that HKB"H feeds and sustains all creatures.

Based on this discussion, we can begin to comprehend what we have learned in the Gemara regarding Rabeinu Hakadosh, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi (Kesubos 104a): **"בְּשַׁעַת פְּטִירָתוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי זָקָה עָשָׂר אֲצַבְעוֹתָיו כְּלָפֵי מַעְלָה, אָמַר רַבּוּנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, גְּלוּי וִידוּעַ לַפְּנִיךָ שִׁיגְעִיתִי בַּעֲשֵׂר — as Rebbe was departing from this world, he straightened his ten fingers upwards toward the heavens and declared, "Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known to You that I toiled with my ten fingers in Torah, and I did not derive pleasure even from my little finger!"**

To fully appreciate the significance of Rabeinu Hakadosh's heartfelt declaration, let us refer to the Gemara in (57b) describing the vast wealth of Antoninus and Rebbe: **"שֶׁלֹּא פָסַק מִשְׁלַחֲנָם, לֹא צִנּוֹן — for neither radish nor horseradish nor cucumbers ceased to be found on their tables neither in summer nor in winter."** Additionally, it states (Gittin 59a): **"מִיָּמֵינוּ מֹשֶׁה וְעַד רַבִּי לֹא מָצִינוּ תּוֹרָה וְגִדּוּלָה בְּמִקּוֹם אֶחָד"** — **from the times of Moshe until Rebbe, we do not find Torah and greatness (material wealth or authority) in one place."**



This is the implication of Rebbi's gesture: **"He straightened his ten fingers upwards toward the heavens."** He wished to indicate that despite his greatness both in the realm of Torah and in the material realm, he never dropped his hands downwards; in other words, he never took credit for his personal accomplishments in the sense of: **"כוחי ועוצם ידי"**. Instead, throughout his entire life, he raised his ten fingers upwards, attributing all that his hands had accomplished to Hashem — Who gave him the power to succeed. This also explains the matter of his appellation, **Rabeinu HaKadosh**. The Gemara (Shabbas 118b) explains that he was called **Rabeinu HaKadosh**, due to his extreme level of kedushah: **"שלא הכניס ידו תחת אבנטו"** — **he never placed his hand under his belt**. This depiction can be interpreted as an allusion to the fact that his hands never pointed downwards, which would have indicated that he took personal credit for his accomplishments. On the contrary, he always raised his hands upwards attributing all of his accomplishments to Hashem.

Now, we have a very nice explanation for the depiction of the mitzvah of bikkurim as: **"תרומת ידכם"** — **that which his hands raised**. It is certainly true that the bikkurim offering had to be waved upwards in order to demonstrate that HKB"Y was responsible for the growth of the fruits; He caused the rains to fall at the propitious time and caused the earth to yield its fruit. Notwithstanding, elevating one's hands was the essential part of the ritual. For, it expressed the fact that everything this person had produced was solely due to the power Hashem had given him; from His heavenly dwelling, He watches over all the inhabitants of earth and provides them with sustenance.

### The Mitzvah of Netilas Yadayim Involves Raising One's Hands to Hashem

Now, come and see! Based on what we have learned, we can achieve a deeper appreciation of the mitzvah of "netilas yadayim," which we perform prior to eating bread, in accordance with Chazal's institution. Furthermore, the Rishonim state that it is imperative to raise one's hands upwards while performing this mitzvah. We find two reasons given in the Gemara for the mitzvah of "netilas yadayim." Firstly, the Gemara explains (Chullin 106a): **"נטיילת ידיך לחולין מפני סרך"** — **washing hands for bread of chullin** (that is not sacred) **is in order to establish a routine for terumah**. Secondly, we learn elsewhere in the Gemara (Berachos 53b): **"והתקדשתם אלו מים ראשונים"** — **"and you shall sanctify yourselves"** (Vayikra 11, 44) **refers to the first waters**. The Mishnah Berurah (198, 1) provides us with an explanation in the name of the Semag (Mitzvah 27):

**"טעם תקנת נטילה הוא משני דברים, אחד מפני סרך תרומה, והיינו כיון דידיהם עסקניות הן ונוגעים בכל דבר, ובזמן שהיה נוהג טומאה וטהרה והכהנים אכלו תרומה, היו צריכין לטויל ידיהם מדברי סופרים קודם אכילת תרומה כדי שלא יטמאוהו בנגיעתן, וכדי שיהיו רגילין הכהנים בזה, גזרו גם כן על כל איש ישראל האוכל פת שאסור לאכול עד שיטויל ידיו, וגם עכשיו שאין הכהנים אוכלין תרומה מפני הטומאה, לא בטלה תקנה זו כדי שיהיו רגילים בני ישראל כשיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו לאכול בטהרה, ועוד טעם לתקנת נטילה משום נקיות וקדושה, וסמכו בגמרא אקרא דוהתקדשתם והייתם קדושים."**

The reason for the institution of "netilah" is twofold. Firstly, because of the conduct of terumah. That is, since hands are active and they touch everything, and during the time that ritual impurity (tumah) and purity (taharah) were observed, and the kohanim ate terumah, they were required to wash their hands, due to a pronouncement from the sages, prior to eating terumah; so that they would not contaminate it with their touch. In order for the kohanim to grow accustomed to this practice, they imposed a similar decree on every Jew eating bread; it was prohibited to eat until he would wash his hands. Even nowadays when kohanim no longer eat terumah due to concerns of tumah, this institution has not been abolished; so that the Children of Yisrael will be in the habit of eating under conditions of taharah when the Beis HaMikdash will be built, swiftly in our times. An additional reason for washing is for the sake of cleanliness and kedushah. The Gemara bases this practice on the passuk: **"And you shall sanctify yourselves and you shall become holy."**

At first glance, this appears somewhat peculiar. What prompted our blessed sages to impose the washing of hands for the sake of the routine of terumah, which is not at all relevant at this time? Yet, based on what we have discussed, we can provide an explanation. The mainstay of our livelihood is expressed in terms of bread, as we see in the following passuk (Bereishis 3, 19): **"בזעת אפיק תאכל לחם"** — **by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread**. Now, man's main test and challenge is related to the actions performed with his hands. It is in this arena that the yetzer attempts to trip him up with the false doctrine of **"כוחי ועוצם ידי"**. Consequently, Chazal instituted the mitzvah of "netilas yadayim" prior to eating bread, in order to cleanse the hands of any semblance of misguided thoughts.

Chazal alluded to this fact by stating that the practice of "netilas yadayim" was established for the sake of **"סרך תרומה"**. In other words, this practice was instituted so that a person would be able to properly fulfill the command of **"תרומת ידכם"**, that

**which is raised with your hands** — the imperative to elevate all activities performed with our hands to Hashem. [Translator's note: This allusion is a play on the word "תרומה" which comes from the Hebrew word meaning to elevate.] This is also the reason the sages decreed a state of tumah on hands in general based on the fact that: "ידיים עסקניות הן". Since hands are active and perform all sorts of functions, there is a constant concern related to the tumah of "כוחי ועוצם ידי". Therefore, it is necessary to cleanse them and purify them with water. Thus, it turns out that the two reasons for "netilas yadayim" coincide and achieve the same purpose: (1) "סרך תרומה" and (2) for the sake of cleanliness and kedushah. Our hands must be elevated and pure in every way.

This explains very nicely why it is customary to raise one's hands after performing "netilas yadayim." The source for this practice comes from the Responsa of the Rashba (Part 7, 534): "וכתב רבינו האי גאון בתשובה לשאלה, כי לשון נטילת ידיים על שצריך להגביה — **our teacher Hai Gaon wrote in response to a question that the term "netilas yadayim" indicates that it is necessary to raise one's hands upwards after the washing; it comes from the terminology (Yeshayah 63, 9): "וינטלם וינשאם" — He lifted them and bore them.** The Kol Bo (Hilchos Netilas Yadayim 23) provides a similar explanation.

The Shla hakadosh writes: "קיבלתי לאחר שנטל ידי והגביהם כדלעיל, קודם שיעשה הברכה יאמר הפסוק שאו ידיכם קודש וברכו את ה', ואין זה נקרא הפסקה, ויכוון להסוד שרמזתי (מאמר שמיני מעשרה מאמרות) בהג' זקף רבי — **I have been taught that after a person washes his hands and elevates them, as described above, before he makes the berachah, he should recite the passuk (Tehillim 134, 2): "Raise your hands in the sanctuary and bless Hashem." And this is not considered an interruption; and the person should have in mind the secret that I alluded to in the gloss: "Rebbi straightened his fingers."** The source for this practice comes from the Zohar Chadash (Midrash Ruth 87, column 1): "צריך להגביה ידי בשעה שמברך לאחר נטילה, ויקדש ידי דכתיב — **a person is required to raise his hands when reciting the berachah after washing; and he will sanctify his hands, as it is written: "Raise your hands in the sanctuary and bless Hashem."**

Based on our current discussion, we can provide the following explanation for this practice. All actions in this world are facilitated by our hands. Therefore, they are subject to the persuasive influence of the yetzer, who attempts to inculcate in a person the heretical belief of: "כוחי ועוצם ידי". Therefore, it was

instituted that the hands be washed and purified in the waters of chesed and then raised upwards toward heaven. This gesture demonstrates that we believe wholeheartedly — "be'emunah sheleimah" — that all acts that we perform with our hands come only from HKB"H — the One Who gives us the strength and power to succeed.

## And the Kohen Shall Take the Basket from Your Hand

Continuing onwards and upwards along this exalted path, let us proceed to explore the wonders and depths of Hashem's mitzvos. He commanded us to bring bikkurim to Yerushalayim and present them to the Kohen: **"You shall come to the Kohen who will be in those days."** Then the Torah adds the following detail: **"The Kohen shall take the basket from your hands."** Recall that according to Rashi's commentary in the name of the Sifrei, this means that the Kohen places his hand underneath the owner's hand and waves the bikkurim basket.

It is written (Devarim 10, 8): **"בעת ההוא הבדיל ה' את שבט הלוי לשאת את ארון ברית ה', לעמוד לפני ה' לשרתו ולברך בשמו עד היום הזה, על כן לא היה ללוי חלק ונחלה עם אחיו, ה' הוא נחלתו כאשר דבר ה' אלקיך לו" — at that time Hashem set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Aron of the covenant of Hashem, to stand before Hashem to minister to Him and to bless with His name until this day. Therefore, Levi did not have a share and a heritage with his brothers; Hashem is his heritage, as Hashem, your G-d, had spoken of him.** The Torah teaches us that the kohanim and leviim from the tribe of Levi did not inherit any fields or vineyards. They only receive Hashem's heritage from the terumah and ma'aser portions set aside by Yisrael. HKB"H set up the system in this manner so that they would not have to perform various forms of manual labor in the fields and vineyards. Thus, HKB"H sanctified the tribe of Levi. This sanctification protected them from falling into the yetzer's enticing trap of: "כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה".

This explains why HKB"H commanded: **"The Kohen shall take the basket from your hands"** — implying that the Kohen should place his hand underneath the owner's hand and wave. Due to the Kohen's immense kedushah — stemming from the fact that he lacked any portion or heritage with the rest of Yisrael — he was able to impart kedushah to the people of Yisrael bringing bikkurim. These were the fruits of their labor, which their hands had produced in the fields and vineyards. It was now time to sanctify those hands to Hashem and remember that everything comes from Him.

Let us see how nicely this interpretation agrees with the actual text. The passuk states: **"The Kohen shall take the basket from your hands."** In other words, he will relieve you of the false, misguided belief that those bikkurim are **"מידד"** — from the actions of your own two hands. You will not attribute your successful yield to your own strength and ingenuity, the false doctrine of: **"כוחי ועוצם ידי"**. Instead, the Kohen places his hand beneath the hand of the owner and waves the bikkurim. In this manner, he influences the owner and helps him realize that everything was Hashem's doing. This is the message of the passuk: **"Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth."**

### Birkas Kohanim Involves the Raising of Hands

Let us now revel in the wonders of the Torah! Based on what we have learned, we can appreciate why the kohanim were commanded to bless Yisrael by raising their hands. For this reason, in the Gemara (Ta'anis 26b), Chazal describe Birkas Kohanim as: **"נשיאת כפים" — raising the hands**. In the Gemara (Sotah 38a), they derive this fact from the following passuk (Vayikra 9, 22): **"וישא אהרן את ידיו אל העם ויברכם" — Aharon raised his hands toward the people and blessed them**.

Let us suggest an explanation. The divine purpose of the berachah is that a person should recognize and acknowledge that his bounty and success come from Hashem. This will remind him to elevate the products of his hands to Hashem. However, if he fails to remember this crucial fact and mistakenly believes: **"כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה"**, then the following will apply: **"עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו" -- riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune**. As a consequence, the letters **שפע** (bounty; abundance) which relate to him are liable to be rearranged and transformed into **פשע** (transgression; punishment).

Therefore, HKB"H commanded the kohanim, who were privileged to be sanctified in this regard, to bestow upon Yisrael the blessings of Olam HaZeh. It was their job to influence the people with the power of their Torah and kedushah, so that they, too, would be able to act with kedushah in matters pertaining to Olam HaZeh, and elevate all of their physical activities to Hashem.

Upon careful consideration, this issue is alluded to in the first passuk of Birkas Kohanim (Bamidbar 6, 24): **"יברכך ה' וישמרך" — may Hashem bless you and protect you**. Rashi comments: **"May Hashem bless you" — that your possessions should be blessed; "and protect you" — that bandits should not come upon you to take your property**. His source is the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 11, 5): **"יברכך ה' בעושר, וישמרך מן הליסטים" — Hashem should bless you with wealth and protect you from the bandits**. After Yisrael have been blessed with material possessions, they require special protection from bandits and robbers, such as the yetzer hara and its cohorts. For, they will use every means at their disposal to trap a person with the sacrilegious doctrine of: **"כוחי ועוצם ידי"**.

Let us add a pleasant embellishment based on a teaching from the Radbaz in Metzudas David (Mitzvah 78), which is also presented by the great Gaon Chida in Chomat Anach (Nasso). They explain that the three pesukim of Birkas Kohanim correspond to the three holy Avot. Thus, the first passuk: **"יברכך ה' וישמרך" — corresponds to Avraham Avinu**. We saw that Avraham said to the king of Sodom: **"I have raised my hand to Hashem, G-d, the Most High, Maker of heaven and earth**. With that remark, he wished to demonstrate his genuine, unquestionable emunah that all of man's success and actions are attributable to HKB"H. Therefore, specifically in the first passuk of Birkas Kohanim, which corresponds to Avraham, we utter the berachah: **"יברכך ה' וישמרך" — He should bless you with wealth and safeguard it for you**. When Yisrael follow in the footsteps of their forefather Avraham by raising their hands upwards toward Hashem, their possessions will be protected.

This then is the significance of HKB"H's statement immediately after Birkas Kohanim (Bamidbar 6, 27): **"ישמו את שמי על בני ישראל" — they shall place My name upon Bnei Yisrael, and I shall bless them**; they should impart kedushah to Yisrael, so that they will always remember that **"אני אברכם" — it is in fact I, HKB"H, Who blesses them**; it is not the strength or skill of their hands. It is precisely for this reason that HKB"H instructed the kohanim to bless Yisrael by raising their hands. By doing so, they impart kedushah on Yisrael, so that they, too, will elevate all that their hands do to Hashem. This is the concept of: **"תרומת ידכם" — to fulfill at all times, without hesitation, that which is said: "Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth."**

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To receive the mamarim by email: [mamarim@shvileipinches.com](mailto:mamarim@shvileipinches.com)