

“Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong hand”

The Bikkurim Declaration Incorporates an Expression of Gratitude on Behalf of the Fruit that Left Their Galus in the Depths of the Earth and Emerged to Their Geulah Above

In this week’s parsha, parshas Ki Savo, it is fitting that we explore two mitzvos encompassed by the mitzvah of bikkurim: (1) the mitzvah to bring a minchah offering in the Beis HaMikdash from the bikkurim and (2) the mitzvah to recite the passage of bikkurim. Regarding the first of these mitzvos, it is written (Devarim 26, 1):

“וְהָיָה כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נוֹתֵן לְךָ נַחֲלָה וּיְרַשְׁתָּהּ וַיִּשְׁבֶּת בָּהּ, וּלְקַחַת מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּבְיָא מֵאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נוֹתֵן לְךָ וּשְׂמַת בְּטֵנָא, וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשֹׁכֵן שָׁמוֹ שָׁם. וּבָאתָ אֶל הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו, הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בָאתִי אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְאַבוֹתַי לָתֵת לָנוּ. וּלְקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטָּנָא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.”

“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 mizbeiach of Hashem, your G-d.”

Regarding the second mitzvah, here are the pesukim that the owner of a field must recite when he brings the bikkurim (ibid. 5):

“וְעֲנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, אֲרָמִי אוֹבֵד אָבִי וַיִּרְדּוּ מִצְרַיִמָּה... וַיִּרְעוּ אוֹתוֹנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנִנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה, וְנִצַּעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אַבּוֹתֵינוּ, וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ, וַיִּרְא אֶת עַנְיֵנוּ וְאֶת עֲמַלְנוּ וְאֶת לַחֲצֵנוּ. וַיּוֹצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְמִוְרָא גָדוֹל וּבְאוֹתוֹת וּבְמוֹפְתִים, וַיְבִיאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדִבְשׁ, וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הֵבֵאתִי אֶת רֵאשִׁית פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לִי, ה' וְהִנַּחְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.”

Then you shall answer and say before Hashem, your G-d, “An Arami would have destroyed my father, and he descended to Mitzrayim . . . The Egyptians mistreated us and tortured us, and placed hard work upon us. Then we cried out to Hashem, the G-d of our forefathers, and Hashem heard our voice and saw our affliction, our travail, and our oppression. Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, with great awesomeness, and with signs and with wonders. He brought us to this place, and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now, behold! I have brought the first fruit of the ground that You have given me, O Hashem!” And you shall place it before Hashem, your G-d, and you shall prostrate yourself before Hashem, your G-d.

At first glance, the formula of this declaration is quite baffling. Certainly, a person who has the good fortune to bring bikkurim from the fruits of Eretz Yisrael is required to express his gratitude to Hashem—for giving us this land flowing with milk and honey and allowing us to eat its fruit and enjoy its abundant good. However, why was it necessary to recount and detail the three historical stages leading up to the inhabiting of the land? First, the descent into Galus in Mitzrayim is mentioned and the oppression we suffered there. Secondly, the exodus from Mitzrayim is described. Thirdly, the entrance into Eretz Yisrael is mentioned.

It is worth noting the specific language employed by the passuk: “וְעֲנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ”. According to Rashi, this indicates that the declaration demanded raising one’s voice. We will endeavor to explain why the bikkurim declaration had to be pronounced with a raised voice. Additionally, what is the significance of the words: “וְעֲנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ”—**you will answer and you will say?** These words suggest that someone is calling out to him and he is responding by

raising his voice and pronouncing the bikkurim declaration. So, who exactly is calling out to him that he must answer?

The Song of the Wheat:

“ממעמקים קראתיך ה’”

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing an excerpt from Perek Shirah (Chapter 3): “שיבולת חיטים אומרת: **the sheaf of wheat says, “A song of ascents: From the depths, I called You, Hashem.”** The song sung by the wheat can be understood simply in light of the fact that the earth was cursed in the aftermath of the Cheit Eitz HaDa’as. After Adam HaRishon sinned, it states (Bereishis 3, 17): “ארורה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חייד, וקוץ” —**cursed is the ground because of you; through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.**

Hence, when a farmer plants grains of wheat in the ground, perforce they must pray to Hashem from the depths of the earth that the thorns and thistles will not prevent them from growing and sprouting. So, after emerging from the depths of the earth, the sheaves of wheat sing their praise to Hashem: “שיר המעלות ממעמקים קראתיך ה’”. For, Hashem accepted their tefilos from the depths of the earth enabling them to grow and fulfill the task that HKB”H had assigned them—to feed and nourish mankind.

We can elaborate on this point based on a story told about the righteous Rabbanis Malka, a”h, the wife of the holy Admor, Sar Shalom of Belz, zy”a. It was her custom to distribute food to the chassidim that came to bask in the holy presence of her husband. On one occasion, she noticed that one of their guests uttered the berachah quickly, without “kavanah”; he began eating ravenously to satiate himself.

She rebuked him as follows: Please consider what these grains of wheat have had to endure since they were sown in the ground and until they were privileged to end up on a Jew’s table. After being planted in the ground, they pray to Hashem to let rains of berachah fall upon them, so that they may sprout and grow. When they successfully break through the surface of the earth and emerge into the air of this world, they pray to Hashem that worms will not consume them.

Then they pray to the Almighty, Who orchestrates everything that happens in the world, that they will be privileged to end up in the home of a G-d-fearing Jew, who will grind them up and make

them into a fine flour to be baked into bread. Then he will make a proper berachah over the bread with “kavanah,” and will thereby rectify all of the holy sparks contained in the bread. The Rabbanit concluded her words of rebuke to that chassid as follows: So, you see, now. After all the troubles these grains of wheat have endured, and all the tefilos they have uttered, until they were finally privileged to be baked into a loaf of bread that would end up on a table of those who fear Hashem, you come and utter a berachah quickly without “kavanah” and ruin everything!

This explains very nicely the words uttered by the sheaves of wheat. After successfully emerging from the depths of the earth, in the merit of their tefilah: “שיר המעלות ממעמקים קראתיך ה’, אדני שמעה” —**they beseech Hashem to watch over them on their long, perilous journey; they pray that they be privileged to be baked into a loaf of bread worthy of being eaten by a Jew, who will recite a berachah over it with intense “kavanah.”**

Furthermore, this explains very nicely the berachah that our blessed sages instituted to be recited prior to eating bread: “ברוך אתה ה’ אלקינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מן הארץ”. On the one hand, we are thanking Hashem for giving us bread to eat and to satisfy our hunger. In addition, with this berachah, we are also acting as the agents of the grains of wheat contained in the bread; we are voicing for them their intense desire to bless Hashem. After all, he took them out of the belly of the earth and protected them throughout their journey, until they ultimately were privileged to be part of a loaf of bread on a Jewish table. Since they lack the capacity to bless Hashem via speech, we become the mouths that articulate the berachah in their stead: “המוציא לחם מן הארץ” —**Who brings forth bread from the earth.**

The Sparks of Kedushah from All of the Grain Concentrates within the Terumah Portion

Following this line of reasoning, let us proceed to address the two mitzvos mentioned above: (1) bringing a korban minchah from the bikkurim and (2) reciting the bikkurim declaration. To begin with, we will introduce a valuable explanation from the incredible teachings of the Yismach Moshe (Terumah) regarding the portions set aside for terumah and ma’aser. Here is what he writes:

“והענין הוא כי בכל יש ניצוצי קדושה, וצריכים תיקון להעלותם ממדרגת דומם צומח חי למדרגת מדבר. והנה לא כל אדם יוכל לעמוד בסוד ה’ לתקן בכזונת אכילה, ואלו הכהנים נתייחדו לשרתו, והלויים למטה מהם כמו שנאמר (דברים יז-ט) ובאת אל הכהנים ואל הלויים וגו’. על כן צוה השי”ת להפריש התרומה לכהן, ומשגיח בחסדו יתברך שמו שמבחר הניצוצי יתעטף בזה, על כן נקרא ראשית כמו (עמוס ו-ז) וראשית

שמנים ימשחו, ועל כן נחרץ עונש גדול לזר האוכלו שלא יתחלל קדושתו, ועל כן שם קדושה עליה, והניצוצות הקלים במעשר, ומהבהמה המנות לכהנים.

The point is that all things possess nitzotzei kedushah; they require tikun to elevate them from the levels of inanimate objects, plants life and animal life to the level of speaking creatures (namely human beings). Now, not every person is capable of fulfilling this divine task, to rectify (the nitzotzos) by means of proper consumption. Hence, these kohanim were designated to serve him, and also the leviim to a lesser degree, as it states (Devarim 17, 9): “You shall come to the kohanim and to the leviim, etc.” Therefore, HKB”H commanded to separate terumah for the kohen; through His divine kindness, He makes sure that the essence of the spark will take this form (terumah or ma’aser). Therefore, it is referred to as “reishis,” as we find (Amos 6, 6): “And with the choicest (“reishis”) oils they anoint themselves.” Therefore, a severe punishment is reserved for the outsider (non-kohen) who eats it, so as to prevent the desecration of its kedushah. Therefore, it is referred to as being holy. The lower-level sparks become ma’aser; whereas the animal portions are for the kohanim.

The Yismach Moshe points out that this is the significance of the name “תרומה”—which comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to elevate.” By having the kohanim consume this portion with kedushah and taharah, they successfully elevate these sparks of kedushah to Hashem. His grandson, the Yitav Lev (Shelach), adds the following thought:

ואני אוסיף תבלין, כי על ידי שהכהנים ירימו המזבח והראשית שבו למעלה, כולא בתר רישא גריא, ונקל להבעלים להעלות גם הנשאר בדבר ההוא לשורשו באכילתו, ובשגם כי על ידי מצות הפרשה ונתינה לכהנים בעשותו מצות ה', שורה רוח קדושה על הדבר ההוא, והוא מסייע ותומך ביד הבעלים לאכלו לשם שמים ולהעלות הנשאר והגותר בו למעלה.

And I will add a spicy tidbit. By having the kohanim elevate the choicest and primary portions of the produce toward Heaven, the entire produce follows its lead (it is pulled along and elevated). This makes it easier for the owners to elevate the rest of that particular produce, as well, to its source, through their consumption. Also, seeing as the separation of the portion and the giving of it to the kohen is performed as one of Hashem’s mitzvos, a spirit of kedushah rests on that object. This assists and supports the owners’ efforts to consume it l’shem shamayim and to elevate the remaining and leftover portions to Heaven.

It Is the Task of Every Jew to Elevate the Sparks of Kedushah

To better understand the Yismach Moshe’s explanation, let us focus for a moment on the subject of clarifying nitzotzei (sparks of) kedushah. Unfortunately, many of us avoid this task, because we erroneously believe that such a holy task is beyond the scope of simple Jews like us. They think that this task is reserved for elite tzaddikim, who serve Hashem on a higher level, due to their greater understanding of the mysteries of the Torah and kabbalah. Yet, if we delve into our sacred sefarim, and especially the sefarim of the holy Ba’al Shem Tov and his disciples, zy”a, we find that this is precisely where we should apply the Mishnah’s principle of (Avos 2, 16): “לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא אתה בן חורין להיבטל ממנה”—you are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.

Regarding the passuk (Bamidbar 15, 20): ראשית עריסותיכם חלה “the beginning of your kneading you shall set aside a loaf as a portion (terumah)”—the Avodas Yisrael writes (Shelach):

“שלא יאמר האדם, הנה אנכי עדיין רך בשנים ויש עת לכל חפץ, כשאזקין אשוב לעבוד אותו יתברך בהגבהת הניצוצין קדישין, אבל עתה כתיב (קהלת יא ט) שמוח בחור בילדותך, ולזה אמר הכתוב לא כן, רק ראשית עריסותיכם תרימו תרומה, כי עיקר העבודה בימי הילדות והבחורות, כשהאדם שולט בכוחו והוא הראשית לקדש מנעוריו.”

A person should not think to himself: “I am still quite young and there is plenty of time to do all of these things. When I grow old, I will return to serve the Almighty by elevating the sparks of kedushah. For the time being, it is written (Koheles 11, 9): ‘Rejoice young man in your childhood.’” The Torah teaches us here that this is not the proper attitude. Rather: “The beginning of your kneading you shall set aside a loaf as a portion”—the essence of one’s service to Hashem is in one’s youth and early years, when a person is still full of energy. This early energy should be dedicated to the realm of kedushah.

So, let us examine a revelation from the Ba’al Shem Tov on this subject. Occasionally, HKB”H arranges for a particular object to fall into a person’s possession for him to use l’shem shamayim—for the sake of Torah-study and the service of Hashem. This allows him to clarify nitzotzei kedushah that belong to his neshamah and were buried within that object. After clarifying his portion of said object, HKB”H arranges for him to sell the object or give the object to another person, who requires it to elevate nitzotzei kedushah belonging to his neshamah. Here are the words of the Baal Shem Tov:

“זה כלל גדול שכל דבר שאדם לובש או אוכל או משתמש בכלי, הוא נהנה מהחיות שיש באותו הדבר, כי לולא אותו הרוחניות לא היה שום קיום לאותו דבר, ויש שם ניצוצות קדושות השייכים לשורש נשמתו, וזה טעם שיש אדם שהוא אוהב דבר זה ויש אדם ששונא דבר זה ואוהב דבר אחר.

וכשהוא משתמש באותו כלי, או אוכל מאכלים אפילו לצורך גופו, הוא מתקן הניצוצות, כי אחר כך הוא עובד באותו כח הבא לגופו מאותו מאכל או מלבוש או שאר דברים, בזה הכח עובד להשיג, נמצא שעל ידי זה הם מתוקנים. לכך פעמים יארע שכשכלה כבר לתקן כל הניצוצות שהיו באותו דבר השייכים לשורש נשמתו, אז לוקח ממנו השיגות אותו הכלי, ונותן לאחר ששייכים הניצוצות שיש באותו הכלי לשורש אחר.”

This is a fundamental principle. Every object that a person wears or eats or uses, he benefits from the life-force in that object. For, without that spiritual aspect, that particular object could not exist. Furthermore, there are holy sparks in the object that belong to the root of this person’s neshamah. For this reason, one person loves a particular object; while another person hates that object, but loves another.

So, when this person uses this utensil or eats a particular food, even for the sake of his bodily needs, he rectifies the nitzotzos; because afterwards, he utilizes the energy that accrues to his body from that food or garment or any other object. With that energy, he serves the Almighty; in this manner, they are rectified. Therefore, often, after a person has finished rectifying all of the nitzotzos in a particular object belonging to his neshamah, the Almighty takes that utensil from him, and gives it to another person; for the utensil contains nitzotzos belonging to another.

This teaches us a valuable lesson regarding the service of Hashem. When a person establishes his home in a particular locale, he should know with certainty that it was arranged by Hashem, as it is written (Tehillim 37, 23): “מה' מצעדי גבר כווננו”—**by Hashem are the footsteps of a man established.** HKB”H orchestrates matters and directs a person so that his footsteps lead him to a particular destination. “ודרכו יחפץ”—**and his way, He shall favor.** A person believes that he chose to go to that destination; he does not realize that the matter was orchestrated by Hashem, so that he would rectify and clarify the nitzotzei kedushah relevant to his neshamah concealed in that location.

Every morning when a person goes to the Beis Kenesses to pray, or to learn in the Kollel, or even when he goes to transact a business transaction to support himself, if his intent is l’shem shamayim—to support his family so that they may study Torah and fulfill Hashem’s mitzvos—he clarifies and elevates nitzotzei kedushah every step of the way. There are nitzotzei kedushah

concealed along the path that have been waiting, sometimes thousands of years, for a Jew to come along and elevate them back to their origins—from their nadir to their peak.

“Hungry and also thirsty, their soul became faint within them”

If this principle applies to all things and all matters, then it applies all the more so to the function of eating. Let us introduce an insight from the Ba’al Shem Tov regarding the passuk (Tehillim 107, 5): “רעבים גם צמאים נפשם בהם תתעטף”—**hungry and also thirsty, their soul became faint within them.** Surely, the Almighty could have created a human being that does not require food or drink. Yet, HKB”H chose to create a human being that gets hungry and thirsty and depends on food and drink for his survival. The reason being: “נפשם בהם תתעטף”—because the sparks of a person’s soul are contained in the food and drink he consumes. By eating and drinking them, he elevates them from the levels of inanimate objects, plant objects and animal objects to the level of speaking (human) beings. This concept is explained in the sefer Ba’al Shem Tov (Yisro 26):

“רעבים גם צמאים נפשם בהם תתעטף. פירש בכאן סוד גדול ונורא, והוא למה ברא הקב”ה עניני מאכל ומשתה, שאדם תאב להם לאכול ולשתות, והטעם שהם ממש ניצוצי אדם הראשון שהם מתלבשים בדומם ובצומח ובחי ובמדבר, ויש להם חשק לדבק בקדושה... וכל אכילה ושתיה שאדם אוכל ושותה. הוא ממש חלק ניצוצות שלו שהוא צריך לתקן.”

“Hungry and also thirsty, their soul became faint within them.” Here he explains an awesome and tremendous esoteric principle. Why did HKB”H create matters of food and drink that man would crave to eat and drink? The reason is because they are the actual sparks of Adam HaRishon that are disguised within the inanimate, plant, animal and human realms. They yearn to attach themselves to kedushah... Every food and drink that a person consumes actually contains his own sparks that he is obligated to bring to tikun.

This explains very nicely the remarks of the Yismach Moshe. In truth, everyone is not always on such a lofty spiritual level that he can eat exclusively with the kedushah and taharah necessary to elevate the sparks of kedushah contained in the food that he consumes. For this reason, HKB”H commanded that a terumah-portion be set aside from the grain to be given to the kohen—Hashem’s loyal servant. Additionally, HKB”H arranges for the essential sparks from the entire quantity of grain to concentrate in that terumah-portion. Seeing as the kohen, who serves Hashem, consumes the terumah in a state of kedushah

and taharah, he elevates the main, essential sparks of kedushah that were contained in all of that grain. As a result, the sparks remaining in the non-terumah portion of the grain follows suit and is also imbued with kedushah. This allows even a simple person, on a lower spiritual level, to elevate the remaining sparks of kedushah from the grain.

It is now with great pleasure that we can explain—based on the Yismach Moshe’s principle—why HKB”H commanded us to bring the minchah from the bikkurim to the kohen: **”ובאת אל הכהן אשר יהיה בימים ההם”**. For, HKB”H, the grand orchestrator, arranges for all the sparks of kedushah from all of the fruit in the field to concentrate in the bikkurim. The bikkurim are then brought to the kohen in the Beis HaMikdash and he consumes the fruit in a holy location in a state of kedushah and taharah. Thus, the sparks of kedushah from the entire field are elevated and achieve tikun.

The Declaration over the Bikkurim: Expressing Gratitude on Behalf of the Fruit

I was struck by a wonderful idea regarding the declaration made over the bikkurim! We find the following elucidation in the Gemara (Berachos 9b) concerning the passuk (Shemos 12, 36): **”וינצלו את מצרים, אמר רבי אמי מלמד שעשאוה כמצודה שאין בה דגן, וריש לקיש ”so they emptied out Mitzrayim”**: **Rabbi Ami said: This teaches that they transformed Mitzrayim into the equivalent of a trap containing no grain. And Reish Lakish said: They transformed Mitzrayim into the equivalent of the depths of the sea where there are no fish.** Our holy sources explain that these are allusions to the fact that Yisrael took all of the “nitzotzei kedushah” out of Mitzrayim, leaving it devoid of kedushah. We find the source for this notion in the writings of the Arizal. He explains that this is why it is prohibited for a Jew to return to Mitzrayim, as indicated by the passuk (ibid. 14, 13): **”כי אשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תוסיפו לראותם עוד עד עולם”**—**for that which you have seen in Mitzrayim today, you shall not see them ever again!** Here is an excerpt from the Arizal:

”גאולת מצרים היתה גאולה שלימה, כי אז וינצלו את מצרים, שעשאוה כמצולה שאין בה דגים, ולא נשאר בהם שום ניצוץ קדושה והיתה גאולת השכינה לגמרי, מה שאין כן בשום גאולה אחרת. וזהו הטעם לזכור יציאת מצרים יותר מכל שאר הגאולות, כי היא גאולה שלימה, אך האחרות צריכין עדיין תשלום, אמנם לעתיד לבוא תהיה גאולה שלימה יותר מגאולת מצרים, כי גאולת מצרים היתה פרטית, אבל לעתיד תהיה גאולה שלימה וכללית בכל העולם, כי אז לא ישאר שום ניצוץ קדושה בכל הגוים אשר הדיחנו שמה.”

The geulah from Mitzrayim was a complete geulah, because they emptied Mitzrayim out; they made it like the

depths of the sea, which has no fish; they were not left with a single “nitzotz” of kedushah; it was a complete geulah for the Shechinah; this was not true of any other geulah. This is the reason for remembering the exodus from Mitzrayim more so than any of the other geulot; it was a complete geulah; the others still need to be completed. However, le’atid la’vo, the geulah will be more complete than the geulah from Mitzrayim, because the geulah from Mitzrayim was individualized. In the future, however, the geulah will be comprehensive and encompass the entire world. At that time, not a single “nitzotz” of kedushah will remain among the goyim that He displaced us to.

We can now begin to appreciate the wonders and profundity of Hashem’s ways. He commanded us to express our gratitude to Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash by making a well-formulated declaration over the bikkurim minchah-offering. As explained above, three distinct stages are depicted in this declaration: (1) the descent into Galus Mitzrayim, (2) the exodus and geulah from Mitzrayim and (3) the entrance into Eretz Yisrael. Upon further scrutiny, it is apparent that these three stages also apply to the fruit that we bring to Hashem as bikkurim. They, too, endured three similar stages.

Let us explain. Stage one--Galus Mitzrayim: The seeds of the fruit were planted deep within the earth. As such, they found themselves in the oppressive earth that was cursed due to the Cheit Eitz HaDa’as. There they waited anxiously, as if with bated breath, for rains of berachah to descend from the heavens that would enable them to sprout and emerge from their Galus in the depths of the earth. Stage two—their geulah from Galus Mitzrayim: HKB”H takes them out from the depths of the earth and introduces them into the atmosphere of the world. Stage three—entering Eretz Yisrael: A Jew brings the first fruit yielded by his land as bikkurim to Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash.

As we know, HKB”H took Yisrael out of Galus Mitzrayim due to their outcry to Hashem. The Torah describes this as follows (Shemos 2, 23): **”ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלקים: מן העבודה, וישמע אלקים את נאקתם ויזכור אלקים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב—and Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the work and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to G-d. G-d heard their moaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak and with Yaakov.** In similar fashion, the grains of wheat, in the merit of their crying out to Hashem from the depths of the earth--**”ממעמקים קראתך ה’”**—are released by HKB”H from their earthy confinement, a form of geulas Mitzrayim.

Man Serves as the Fruit's Agent Expressing Their Gratitude to Hashem

At this point, we have succeeded in presenting a novel explanation as to why HKB"H specifically chose these pesukim to be recited in association with the mitzvah of bikkurim. For, when a man brings his gift of bikkurim to Hashem—consisting of those fruit in whom the nitzotzei kedushah from the entire field gathered—the fruit themselves cannot express their gratitude to Hashem in actual speech. Therefore, HKB"H commanded the person bringing bikkurim to thank Hashem for everything he has experienced—from the Galus in Mitzrayim until entering Eretz Yisrael; so that in his declaration of gratitude he will have in mind to also include the sparks of kedushah contained in the fruit. For, they, too, have experienced all that we have experienced.

We can now explain very nicely the terminology: "וענית" "ואמרת"—which Rashi explained indicates that the declaration must be pronounced with a raised voice. Apparently Rashi was bothered by the term "וענית"—**and you shall answer**. Who is being answered? Yet, as we have explained, the person bringing the bikkurim is expressing gratitude on behalf of the nitzotzei kedushah in the fruit, as well. For, they also yearn to praise and thank HKB"H. Hence, the the passuk says: "וענית"—you shall respond to the sparks of kedushah; "ואמרת"—and you shall pronounce the declaration loudly, because you are also acting as the "shaliach tzibbur" of the bikkurim.

Now, let us explain in detail how all of the specifics mentioned in this passage also apply to the fruits of the field. "וענית ואמרת" "לפני ה' אלקיך, ארמי אוכד אבי וירד מצרימה"—the seeds of the fruit also descended into a form of Galus Mitzrayim in the depths of the

earth; this, too, was brought about by Lavan HaArami, who was an embodiment of the "nachash hakadmoni," who caused Adam and Chava to sin. This association is explained in Sha'arei Orah (10): "והנה נחש הקדמוני הנמשך מכוח לבן הארמי, הטיל פגם בלבנה על ידי אדם: הראשון—**and behold, the primeval servant, drawing from the power of Lavan HaArami, introduced a defect in the moon by means of Adam HaRishon**. The source for this notion is found in the Zohar hakadosh (Behar 111b). There it states that Yaakov Avinu released Rachel and Leah: "מן לבן הארמי הנחש"—from Lavan HaArami, the serpent. As a consequence, the earth was cursed. Ever since then, it requires a tremendous amount of labor and exertion to remove the thorns from the vineyard.

"וירעו אותנו המצרים ויענונו ויתנו עלינו עבודה קשה"—just as we suffered terrible hardships at the hands of the Egyptians, so, too, do the fruit seeds suffer hardships due to all sorts of harmful winds and external influences that affect the fruit's growth. "ונצעק אל ה' אלקי" "אבותינו, וישמע ה' את קולנו, וירא את ענינו ואת עמלנו ואת לחצנו"—just as Bnei Yisrael cried out and were heard by Hashem, so, too, do the fruit seeds cry out to Hashem from under the ground, in keeping with the passuk: "ממעמקים קראתיך ה'". They pray to Hashem that they will be privileged to develop and emerge from the darkness of the earth to experience the great light!

"ויוציאנו ה' ממצרים ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובמורא גדול ובאותות ובמופתים"—just as He took us out of Mitzrayim, HKB"H takes the fruit seeds out of their Galus in the depths of the earth, enabling them to grow and develop in the air above the ground. "את הארץ הזאת ארץ זבת חלב ודבש"—just as we were brought to the holy land of Eretz Yisrael, so, too, the fruit are brought to the holy site "ועתה הגה הבאתי את ראשית פרי האדמה אשר נתתה לי ה', והנחתו לפני ה' אלקיך והשתחוית לפני ה' אלקיך".



Donated by Family Madeb for the Refuah Shelimah of Lea bat Virgini

To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com