



### The Taste of the First Fruits

***"That you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you will bring from your land, which the Lord, your G-d, is giving you. And you shall put [them] into a basket"*** (Devarim 26:2)

This pasuk describes the mitzvah of bikkurim, wherein one takes the first fruit that ripened on his trees and brings it to Yerushalayim where he presents it to the Kohen.

The word used to open this topic is הוהו (and it shall be), a word that denotes joy. What is joyous about this mitzvah of bikkurim? Additionally, why is the one commanded to ascend to Yerushalayim with his new fruits? Why isn't a monetary equivalent sufficient?

Regarding ma'aser sheini, a mitzvah similar to bikkurim, we are told, "for the place which the Lord, your G-d, will choose to establish His Name therein, is too far from you... then you shall turn it into money" (ibid. 14:24-25). Although ideally, one should bring the fruits of ma'aser sheini to Yerushalayim and eat them there in sanctity, there is a dispensation for one who lives far away and finds it difficult to bring his fruits to Yerushalayim. He may take the monetary equivalent of the fruits to Yerushalayim.

Those who were blessed with numerous orchards had to rent wagons to carry all their first fruits to Yerushalayim. Why isn't the above-mentioned allowance made also for those who find the first fruits of bikkurim too difficult to bring all the way to Yerushalayim?

I would like to suggest the following novel idea: The mitzvah of bikkurim is exquisite in its simplicity. Most mitzvot often require great effort. Bikkurim, in contrast, is a seemingly small and easy mitzvah. One is commanded to take his first single fruit and bring it up to the Beit Hamikdash. It's such a simple mitzvah that the person doing it might wonder: For the sake of one fruit, I have to make the arduous journey to Yerushalayim? It is precisely this "insignificance" that raises one's awareness of the true significance of all mitzvot, simple as they may seem. From one single fruit, a Torah-true tzaddik can sprout forth.

As part of the mitzvah of bikkurim, one mentions the incident of Yaakov and Lavan. As Yaakov made his way to Aram Neharayim in escape of his brother, Eisav, he prayed fervently to Hashem. All he asked was, "If Elokim will be with me and protect me on this way that I am going... and I will

return in peace to my father's home..." (Bereishit 28:20-21). Rashi expounds on the word וּלְשָׁלְמִי (peace, akin to וְלִשְׁלֹם - whole): Whole from sin, that I not learn from the ways of Lavan.

Yaakov understood that while he had been righteous in his father's sacred house, he feared that in the environment of Lavan the rasha, he would be negatively affected and perhaps lose his status as a perfect tzaddik. Therefore, he prayed that he at least remain righteous. Remaining righteous in the home of such a rasha would be like breathing underwater or walking through a thick jungle and coming out safely.

Not only did Yaakov emerge unscathed from Lavan's den, but he succeeded in reaching greater heights than ever before. He established his holy home of twelve tribes, the shevatim of Hashem. It was Yaakov's small prayer that granted him such great dividends. The connection of this story with the mitzvah of bikkurim is clear: Through small mitzvot, one can reach untold greatness.

Hashem commanded that one bring the fruits themselves, and not their monetary value, to Yerushalayim. The word הוהו indicates that one who is happy with the small mitzvot and conveys his appreciation for all the good he has received, is capable of growing great in avodat Hashem. Doing "small" mitzvot shows that we love to do Hashem's will, no matter how "big" or "small" it seems.

Rabbi Mordechai Gifter zt"l, Rosh Yeshivat Telshe, used to collect "rabbanim cards" when he was young. He would organize these cards in an album. One evening, his mother decided to have a look at his album. She gazed at the photographs of the noble tzaddikim who graced the pages. Suddenly, she noticed an empty spot, as if waiting for a picture to fill it. She wondered how her orderly son overlooked this spot. But then she noticed that it was filled with her son's childish scrawl. This is what she read: Here, be'ezrat Hashem, will be my picture when I grow up and become a great rabbi. His mother was moved by her son's pure aspirations. Instead of dreaming about money, he aspired to Torah wealth.

His dream materialized and he became one of the Torah Sages of the generation.

Bikkurim – a small fruit with vast meaning. A mitzvah that is easy to do, but offers a taste of greatness: the desire to do Hashem's will, no matter how difficult. This ultimately leads to fulfilling harder mitzvot like Shemittah and Yovel.

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#### Hillulah of Tzaddikim

- 18 – Rabbi Yehuda Loewy, the Maharal
- 19 – Rabbi Chaim Benbenishti, author of the sefer Keneset Hagedolah
- 20 – Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian
- 21 – Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeshitz
- 22 – Rabbi Eliyahu Iluz
- 23 – Rabbi Yosef Babad, author of the sefer Minchat Chinuch
- 24 – Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen, the Chafetz Chaim





## Walking in their Ways

*Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon  
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita*

### A Blessed Delay

Avigail Fortuna, daughter of Rosa, was a small girl of six in the year 1994. One day, she began hemorrhaging dangerously.

Her doctors could not find the source of the bleeding. They tried to cure her in conventional and unconventional methods, but nothing helped.

The girl suffered for a long period with no cure in sight. Finally, the doctors discovered that her liver had grown to frightening proportions and was barely functioning. They suspected that the girl was suffering from a growth in the liver and therefore decided to take a biopsy. This procedure was to be done in a large hospital in Boston, under anesthesia.

The girl underwent all of the necessary tests before this procedure could be done. Her parents heard that I had arrived in their city, and they took it as a sign that they should wait for my arrival, so that I might bless their daughter before her flight to Boston.

The doctors were strongly opposed to this delay. They informed the parents that it was completely their responsibility. Their daughter was very sick, and every day was critical. But her parents' hearts swelled with faith in the Sages

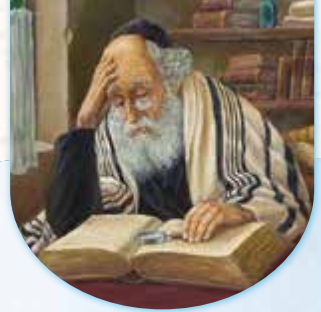
and their blessings. They stubbornly awaited my arrival, so that I might bless their daughter in the merit of my fathers' zechuyot.

As soon as I arrived in town, the parents brought their young daughter to me. They spent quite a while with me. I blessed the girl with a complete recovery and told the parents to do additional testing. I was of the opinion that the trip to Boston was superfluous. There was no need to do the biopsy, I felt. B'ezrat Hashem, her condition would improve.

The next day, the girl came in for testing. The results were astounding. There was no growth whatsoever, and her liver began functioning once more in a normal manner. This was in direct contrast to the tests taken only two weeks earlier, when the results had showed no liver function at all.

When I heard the good news from the emotional parents, I blessed them that the girl should have a complete recovery from the bleeding, as well, and they should merit announcing good news.

The merit of my forefathers, in which this girl's parents placed their hope, stood in their defense, saving their daughter from certain death. She was eventually completely cured.



## Words of Our Sages

### Gems on the Parashah From the Torah Sages

#### Considering All Sides of the Story

**"Cursed by he who misguides a blind person on the way"** (Devarim 27:18)

Rashi explains: "A blind person" refers to someone who is blind, or ignorant, in a specific matter. One is forbidden to give such a person bad advice. In Torat Kohanim, the pasuk, "Do not place an obstacle before a blind person" is explained in a similar fashion: Who is a blind person? One who is blind in a specific area. If he asks for advice in that area, don't encourage him to do something which will ultimately be to his detriment.

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l takes this a step further. Quoting various sources, he rules that even if one did not intend any harm, if he caused damage to his friend by his advice, he is held accountable with all the severity of the law!

An embittered woman arrived at the doorstep on Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik one Erev Tisha B'Av.

"Rebbi," she cried, "I am a righteous Jewish woman, careful in all mitzvot. From the day I got married, I have been preparing a meal of noodles for the seudah hamafseket before Tisha B'Av, as is the Jewish custom. But today, a terrible thing happened. Through my great sins, I mistakenly made farfel instead of noodles!"

"Really?" asked the Rav, with a very serious expression. "This is a very grave case." He removed a thick sefer from his bookcase and creased his forehead in concentration. He spent a good while tugging at his beard as he studied the pages. Those who were with him looked on in utter surprise.

After some time, the Rav turned toward the woman. "You may eat the farfel. But resolve that in the future, you will always prepare noodles for the seudah hamafseket!"

When the woman finally left, those in the room could not withhold their curiosity any longer. "Why did the Rav make such an issue over a foolish question?"

"The woman showed that she is a simpleton. If I would have sent her away in derision, she would not come back when she had a truly serious question."

## The Haftarah

The haftarah of the week:

**"Arise, shine"**

(Yeshayahu 60)

The connection to this Shabbat: This is one of the seven Shabbatot of consolation; the haftarot of which we read beginning with the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av.

### Guard Your Tongue

*The Power of Speech*

#### Implanting Hatred

Rechilut is forbidden even if nothing new was revealed. For example, if Reuven shares with Shimon that he was found guilty in Beit Din, and Shimon says, "That's terrible of the judges!" Shimon has transgressed this commandment. He has implanted hatred in Reuven's heart toward the Beit Din, and for this, he is guilty.





## Chazak U'Baruch

### Strengthening Fellowship and Meriting Blessing

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein shlita relates:

My brother-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita received a letter from a talmid chacham. The sage described a series of miracles that happened to him. Here is his story:

After a period of time of feeling unwell, he underwent testing. His worst fears materialized: the doctors had discovered a malignant growth, *rachmana litzlan*. His world turned black when he heard the diagnosis. Then he remembered what a Jew in distress does. He turns to Hashem for help.

At that moment, he recalled hearing about the tremendous power in answering, "Amen yehei shmei rabba" with all one's might. He decided to work on this. He gathered ten talmidei chachamim and offered to pay them for answering, "Amen yehei shmei rabba" with all their might. He offered a sum that was too good to refuse.

After some time, the man went to the hospital for further testing. Before the eyes of the doctors, the unbelievable occurred. The growth had completely disappeared. How great is the power of answering, "Amen yehei shmei rabba" with all one's might!

This story made waves, reaching as far as Europe, where another talmid chacham lived. Approximately a year and a half earlier, he had been diagnosed with a form of sclerosis, which affected his legs so badly that he couldn't walk normally. With time, his condition became more severe. Then he remembered the above story, and decided to take action. He approached ten talmidei chachamim in his town and offered them \$100 each for answering, "Amen yehei shmei rabba" with all their strength. The men agreed to the deal.

His doctors, too, were dumbfounded. With each visit, his condition improved. Then, suddenly, his condition regressed. The man investigated the matter, asking the talmidei chachamim if they were keeping their word. Most of them admitted that they had slackened in this matter.

When the man informed them of the regression in his condition, they resolved that from now on, they would say, "Amen yehei shmei rabba" with renewed enthusiasm, to atone for their laxity.

The man records: Something amazing took place. A few days ago, I felt I could stand on my legs and walk around like anyone else. My family nearly fainted when they saw this. My friends and disciples were also thunderstruck at this turn of events. It's impossible to ignore the connection between answering, "Amen yehei shmei rabba" loudly and with intent, and my full recovery.

## Treasures

Based on the teachings of  
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik  
Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita



### For Love of the Land

"And it will be, when you come into the Land, which Hashem, your G-d, gives you an inheritance, and you possess it and you settle in it" (Devarim 26:1)

"And Moshe and the elders of Yisrael commanded the people saying, 'Observe all of this commandment that I command you today'" (ibid. 27:1)

The connection between settling the Land and observing the mitzvot is abundantly clear: Living in the Land is contingent upon keeping the mitzvot. Without mitzvah observance, the fabric of life in the Land inevitably unravels. Additionally, Eretz Yisrael is the only land that contains Land-related mitzvot. These are mitzvot that can be performed only there.

Moshe Rabbeinu pleaded with Hashem to allow him to enter this coveted land. His desire was to fulfill those mitzvot that cannot be done anywhere else. He so wished to observe all of the mitzvot of the Torah, and these could be done only in the Holy Land.

A Jew is so intrinsically connected to Eretz Yisrael, that Chazal state that whoever lives in *chutz la'aretz* is considered a person who has no G-d. We are interconnected with the mitzvot. When one is disconnected from the Land, he is liable to sever his connection with all the mitzvot. As we know, the mitzvot connect us to Hashem. Therefore, one who lives outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered beyond the borders of Hashem's inner circle.

One who has the ability to live in Eretz Yisrael and does not, is held accountable. He willingly foregoes a connection to the Land, the mitzvot, and Hashem Himself. There are, unfortunately, those who feel no sorrow living outside of the Chosen Land. They view Eretz Yisrael as a foreign country. These people have extinguished the Jewish spark from their souls. Otherwise, why wouldn't their souls pine to ascend to the heights of the Land?

We, who live in *galut* throughout the world, feel the pain of the Shechinah in exile. We yearn for the arrival of Mashiach. This itself connects us to the Land. B'ezerat Hashem, we will yet merit to rejoice in its redemption.



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



## The Less, the Better

Rabbi Aharon Walkin shlita relates:

I heard the following from my grandfather, the gaon and tzaddik, Rabbi Shmuel David Walkin zt"l:

When the Chafetz Chaim was at advanced age, his hearing deteriorated. He was offered a hearing aid.

He flatly refused, claiming, "My entire life was spent trying to filter out unwanted sounds. I was extremely careful not to

listen to lashon hara, rechilut, and all such type of speech. Now that I have been granted the opportunity to hear less, I should try to increase my hearing?!"



## Men of Faith

Excerpts from the book *Men of Faith on the lives and deeds of the House of Pinto*

### A Full Blessing

Mr. Sammy Gabey from Casablanca made sure to come each year to the hilula of Rabbi Chaim Hagadol. In 2003 (5763), he stood by the tombstone crying bitterly, since he had been married many years but did not have children.

The participants of the hilula, who sympathized with his agony, blessed him that he should merit having a healthy child, and in the following year, he should come to the hilula a father.

The following year, he joined the hilula as usual, and when he exited the cemetery, he turned to Rabbeinu, shlita, to ask for his blessings. Moreinu v'Rabbeinu responded cheerfully, "So, your wife is pregnant, and the blessing that the participants blessed you with at the gravesite of the tzaddik was fulfilled."

Mr. Gabey confirmed his statement, but wanted to know, "Why wasn't the entire blessing fulfilled, since the congregants had declared that I would come here as a father, and this has not yet materialized. After all, I am here in Mogador, and my wife is in Casablanca, approximately 500 kilometers away."

"You know what the Jewish date is today?"

"Yes, today is Shabbat, the twenty-fifth of Elul."

"If so," Moreinu v'Rabbeinu responded, "who knows? Maybe your wife is giving birth now, but since it is Shabbat, she cannot inform you. I am sure that the prayers of the congregants by the grave of Rabbi Chaim Pinto will be fully fulfilled."

Meanwhile, the congregants at the hilula proceeded to eat the seudah shlishit meal. Mr. Gabey's friends asked him what he had discussed with Moreinu v'Rabbeinu, and upon hearing that his wife was due to give birth, they blessed him heartily with "Mazal Tov!"

At the conclusion of the Shabbat, the joyous news spread like wildfire. Mr. Gabey's wife had given birth to a boy exactly at 3:00 p.m., the very moment when all the congregants had blessed him with a hearty "Mazal Tov."

This caused a great kiddush Hashem, since many Jews witnessed how the blessings at the grave of the tzaddik resulted in a wonderful miracle.