

**Bikkurim - First Fruits**

א והיה כִּי־תָבוֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה וַיִּרְשָׁתָהּ וַיֵּשְׁבֶתָ בָּהּ: ב וּלְקַחְתָּ מִרְאשֵׁיטָה כָּל־פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תֵּבִיא מֵאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ וּשְׂמַתָּ בַטֵּנָא וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: ג וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַיָּמִים הַהֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי־בָאתִי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר: ד וּלְקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטֵּנָא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנְיָחוּ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: ה וְעָלִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

<sup>1</sup>When you enter the land that Adonai your God is giving you as a heritage, and you possess it and settle in it, <sup>2</sup>you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land that Adonai your God is giving you, put it in a basket and go to the place where Adonai your God will choose to establish His name. <sup>3</sup>You shall go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, "I acknowledge this day before Adonai your God that I have entered the land that Adonai swore to our fathers to assign us." <sup>4</sup>The priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down in front of the altar of Adonai your God. **You shall then recite as follows before Adonai your God:**

אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיִם וַיְגַר שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מַעֲט וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עַצוֹם וְרַב: ו וַיִּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עֲלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה: ז וּנְצַעַק אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת־קִלְנוּ וַיִּרְא אֶת־עֲנִינוּ וְאֶת־עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת־לַחֲצָנוּ: ח וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֹרֵעַ נְטוּיָה וּבַמְרָא גָּדֹל וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבַמִּפְתָּיִם: ט וַיְבִאֵנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן־לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ: י וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה הֵבֵאתִי אֶת־רְאשֵׁיטָה פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתָּה לִּי יְהוָה

"My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. <sup>6</sup>The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. <sup>7</sup>We cried to Adonai, the God of our fathers, and Adonai heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. <sup>8</sup>Adonai freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. <sup>9</sup>He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>Wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, O Adonai, have given me."

וְהִנְחִיתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: יא וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ אִתָּהּ וּלְלוֹי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ: (ס)

You shall leave it before Adonai your God and bow low before Adonai your God. <sup>11</sup>And you shall enjoy, together with the Levite and the stranger in your midst, all the bounty that Adonai your God has bestowed upon you and your household.

**Ma'aser - Tithe**

יב כִּי תִכְלֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂי תְבוּאָתְךָ בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית שְׁנַת הַמַּעֲשֵׂר וְנָתַתָּה לְלוֹי לַגֵּר לַיְתוֹם וּלְאַלְמָנָה וְאָכְלוּ בְשַׁעְרֶיךָ וּשְׂבַעוּ: יג וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

<sup>12</sup>When you have set aside in full the tenth part of your yield—in the third year, the year of the tithe—and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your settlements, <sup>13</sup>**you shall declare before Adonai your God:**

בְּעָרְתִי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן־הַבַּיִת וְגַם נָתַתִּיו לְלוֹי וְלַגֵּר לַיְתוֹם וּלְאַלְמָנָה כְּכָל־מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי לֹא־עֲבַרְתִּי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וְלֹא שָׁכַחְתִּי: יד לֹא־אָכַלְתִּי בְּאֵנִי מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא־בְעָרְתִי מִמֶּנּוּ בְטָמֵא וְלֹא־נָתַתִּי מִמֶּנּוּ לְמַת שְׂמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי עֲשִׂיתִי כְּכָל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי: טו הַשְּׂקִיפָה מִמַּעַן קֹדֶשׁךָ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְרַךְ אֶת־עַמְּךָ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לָנוּ כִּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ: (ס)

"I have cleared out the consecrated portion from the house; and I have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, just as You commanded me; I have neither transgressed nor neglected any of Your commandments: <sup>14</sup>I have not eaten of it while in mourning, I have not cleared out any of it while I was unclean, and I have not deposited any of it with the dead. I have obeyed Adonai my God; I have done just as You commanded me. <sup>15</sup>Look down from Your holy abode, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the soil You have given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as You swore to our fathers."

Rashi on Deut. 26:13

ולא שכחתי. מִלְבָּרְכָךְ עַל הַפְּרָשֶׁת מְעֻשָׂרוֹת (ברכות מ):

"I have not forgotten" to bless you on setting the tithes aside.

Rabbeinu Bachya on Deut. 26:13

ולא שכחתי, מלהזכיר שמך ומלכותך עליו בשעת הפרשה. וכן המשפט להזכיר בהם השם והמלכות, וכבר אמרו כל ברכה שאין בה שם ומלכות אינה ברכה.

"I have not forgotten." To mention the name of God and God's sovereignty at the time of setting the tithes aside. For thus is the law: to mention *shem and malkhut* (God's name, and God's sovereignty), and it has already been said that any blessing doesn't include the Name and God's sovereignty is not a berakhah (B Berakhot 12).

Rashi on Deut. 26:14

עשיתי ככל אשר צויתני. שְׂמַחְתִּי וְשִׂמְחַתִּי בּוֹ:

"I have done all that you have commanded me." I have rejoiced and made others rejoice by it (Sifrei Devarim 303:18; Mishnah Maaser Sheni 5:12).

Rav Kook, Ein Ayay on Mishnah Ma'aser Sheni (quoted by Rav Elchanan Samet):

Just as it must be imprinted upon a person the magnitude of his obligation in his service of God, doing good, and the sanctity of deeds and ways and the perfection of beliefs and qualities... and therefore this is the trait of the righteous, that they look upon themselves as being short in righteousness and good deeds... nevertheless, it is not good for a person that this trait will influence him too much, to the point that it allows him no rest, and steals his joy and gladness and peace of mind...

Therefore, the Torah gave us a way to awaken, that a person must also rejoice at times and give verbal expression to a good deed that he performed. This in proper measure to strengthen his heart in service.... It is fitting that he find peace in his soul and fill himself with happiness and peace, and not always see himself as wicked and as having fallen short even in a place where he truly fulfilled his obligation.

Therefore, just as there is great benefit for the repair of his soul in the confession of his iniquities, so too there is benefit at fixed times, which are distant and not as frequent as the confession of sins... also in the confession of his mitzvot, so that he may rejoice in them in his heart and strengthen his way of life in the path of God.

### Mishnah Bikkurim 3:7

בראשונה כל מי שיודע לקרות קורא וכל מי שאינו יודע לקרות מקרין אותו נמנעו מלהביא התקינו שיהו מקרין את מי שיודע ואת מי שאינו יודע

Originally whoever knew how to read, would read and whoever did not know how to read, they (the priests) would read with them. They (the illiterate) stopped bringing (the first-fruits). They (the Sages) instituted that they (the priests) would read along with both the literate and the illiterate.

### Eyn Ayah - Commentary of Rav Kook on Mishnah Bikkurim (tr. Bezalel Naor)

The main concept of collectivization that was fully manifested through the (ceremony of) the first-fruits, encompassed all aspects of unification, to the point that it did not neglect the relinquishing of honor and superiority that accrued to certain individuals according to their private standing. Even that freedom they would lovingly relinquish seeing that it would bring undesirable results for the collective. There are certain matters that in Torah law assume a uniformity, and once that uniformity has been established, it divests individuals of the revelation of their hearts based on their individual outlook and value. **However as long as the thing did not injure the collective as a whole, it was good that each exceptional individual should fill his behavior concerning spiritual matters according to his own measure. But since on the collective level, without uniformity the spirit would go down and come to a state of abandon, uniformity had to be instituted, and once instituted, all must work for the collective, even those individuals who on their own had no need of this.**

Take, for example, prayer. According to the elite, masters of feeling and intellect, their heart would more likely fill with holy emotions if they would pray as before the institution of the formula, each individual according to the spirit of his understanding and the feelings of his heart. But for the sake of the collective, who if not for formalized prayer would totally neglect the foundation of prayer, there was necessitated the institution of a general formula, and now that it has been established, heaven forbid that the individual deviate from the community. **If the thought should occur to the individual that the constraint of the formula robs him of the breadth of emotion according to his spirit, he must realize that our service on behalf of the community includes also volunteering our inspiration, though it be the supreme donation for a man of spirit.**

This lesson is well demonstrated here in the context of first-fruits. As long as the thing did not reach the point where *the illiterate stopped bringing* because he would want to resemble the literate, the different of degree was just; it certainly is a pleasure for a sensitive person to read himself, (whereby) he verbalizes his feelings swept up by the love of God and His might. But since they *stopped bringing* there is already a need for centralization. **Though it constrains somewhat the thought and emotion of the literate, his intellectual joy will increase, knowing that by depriving the revelation of his heart in emotion, he serves the community and thereby even those on the lower level will come and bring their first-fruits.** *They instituted that they would read along with both the literate and the illiterate.* This equalizing (of literate and illiterate) is the prototype for many formalities. The wise of heart on his own could broaden his horizon according to his individual degree, but this is the highest charity, the highest degree of holiness: Sometimes the heads of the people must acquiesce to spiritual constraint for the good of the general public. **Realizing the good that comes out of the strength of a unified collective, in their constricted state they already stand on the foundation that gladdens the good heart of “the wise man who sees the future development” (Tamid 32a) and desires the peace of the people of God, the entire nation. “Inquire into the peace of Jerusalem, your lovers will prosper” (Ps. 122:6). “For the sake of my brothers and friends I will speak peace in your midst. For the sake of the house of Adonai our God I will seek your good” (Ps. 122:8-9).**