



RABBI ARYEH PRIDONOFF



Giving and Grateful

PERHAPS THE MOST DIFFICULT—AND MOST rewarding—character trait humankind can work on is that of gratitude.

This week's Torah portion describes procedures, bent on helping us Jews achieve that very trait: the mitzvos of *Bikkurim* (bringing the First Fruit to the Temple) and *Vidui Ma'aser* (the verbal statement that all tithes have been properly separated). These mitzvos are meant to inculcate in us a valuable lesson: Hashem gives us so much, and we must acknowledge that.

But what is the connection? How do giving tithes and bringing the First Fruits to Jerusalem build our relationships with Hashem?

In order to answer this question, we must first reexamine our understanding of what a relationship is. We know that, in order to truly love something, we must give to it. This is seen in the Hebrew word for love, *ahava*, which shares its root with the word *hav*, to give. Authentic love of something or someone only comes from a relationship in which we are the *giver*.

How do we love Hashem, then? As

Rabbi Motty Berger, at Aish HaTorah, famously asks, "What can you do for an Infinite Being?"

Of course, the answer is "nothing."

So how can we, mortal beings, ever give anything back to Him?

The second half of the Torah portion mentions the Jewish People's reaffirmation of their commitment to follow the mitzvos and give pleasure to Hashem. But practically, how do we do that?

That is where *ma'aser* and *Bikkurim* come into play. They are practical channels, in which we "give" something back to Hashem. Following His will, and making deposits into His metaphysical "bank account," as it were, makes us into givers, people who can love Him in the way He wants us to. Now we can love Hashem back.

Nowadays, to some extent, the mitzvah of *tzedaka* (charity) poses for the separation of tithes. By giving to other people and to worthy organizations, we thank Hashem for the opportunity to help His children.

The Hebrew word for "thanksgiving," *todah*, comes from the same root as *l'hodos*, which means "to admit." Feeling—acknowledging!—and expressing gratitude can be a painful process. The Torah makes it much easier by giving us a mitzvah, meant to connect us to the Source of our sustenance. The

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A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

The month of Ellul is a time when there is a special closeness between the Jewish People and Hashem. It is a period when we should be working on improving our ways in preparation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Below are some of the laws and customs of this special month.

Some communities are careful to recite *Seder Yom Kippur Kattan* (prayers for the last afternoons of most months) specifically on Erev Rosh Chodesh Ellul, even though they don't recite them throughout the year. (*Matteh Efrayim* O.C. 581:3)

It is customary, when writing a letter from the beginning of Ellul through Yom Kippur, to end off by wishing the recipient "*k'siva v'chasima tova*—may you be written and sealed into the Book of Life." (*Eliyahu Rabbah* 581:1)

Some read ten chapters of T'hillim (Psalms) daily, with the goal of completing the whole book twice before Rosh Hashanah. (M.B. 581:1)

Almost everybody recites "*L'David: Hashem Ori v'Yish'i*" (T'hillim 27) once in the morning, at the end of Shacharis, and again in the evening. Those who daven Nusach Ashkenaz insert this special prayer at the conclusion of Ma'ariv

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

What mitzvah—not one of the four traditional cups of wine drunk at the Seder—can a person fulfill by drinking a cup of wine *after* eating the Afikoman?

The answer will appear next week.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:

Q What mitzvah is preferably done with thirty people at once?

A The slaughtering of the Paschal lamb. (Rambam, *Korban Pesach* 1:11) 🍷

NEW AND UPCOMING

Mishnah Kavuah, a daily podcast with Rabbi Stettin—two mishnayos and some mussar.

Shabbos in the Shade (men only), two-part series by Rabbi Heinemann—prepare yourself for the Yamim Nora'im; 6:30-7:15PM this Shabbos and next, under the tree in front of the Heinemann residence (6645 W Farm Acres).

Hil'chos Tola'im (women only) hands-on demonstration of bug-checking by Rabbi Heinemann—7:45pm this Wednesday, September 13, at the Kollel.

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

(the Evening Service), while Nusach Sefard does so after Mincha (the Afternoon Service).

A well-known custom is to sound the Shofar every morning for the whole month of Ellul, except for on Shabbos and on the day before Rosh Hashanah. *Yismach Moshe* explains that in the last Psalm (T'hilim 150), "Hall'lu'kah, Hall'lu E-l b'kodsho—Praise G-d in His Sanctuary," the word *hall'lu* occurs twelve times, corresponding to the twelve months of the year. Ellul, the sixth month of the year (the months are numbered starting with Nissan), lines up with the sixth *hall'lu*, "Hall'lu b'seika shofar—praise Him with the blast of the shofar." This alludes to the custom of blowing the shofar during the month of Ellul.

Since the idea behind sounding the Shofar throughout the month of Ellul, as explained by Maimonides, is only to remind the listener that Rosh Hashanah is coming, and that one should amend and improve his ways, one doesn't need to be meticulous in regard to sounding and/or hearing these shofar blasts. (This is in contrast with the shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanah proper.) If one missed part of the sounds, or did not hear the shofar at all, he is not required to make it up. One can sit while the shofar is being blown. If necessary, a minor can blow for the entire congregation. Someone who finds himself in the middle of the silent Amidah prayer should pause when the shofar is sounded, and listen. (Rabbi S. Kamenetzky, *Kovetz Halachos* p. 10)

We will continue next week with the laws of *S'luchos*, special prayers which are recited from the days before Rosh Hashanah till Yom Kippur. 

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

MARK WAS NEW TO CLEVELAND. HE WAS ALSO new to observant Judaism. Understandably, he didn't yet feel at home.

The first day of Sukkos came, and Mark's discomfort grew as he saw all the men on their way to shul, carrying their lulavim and esrogim. He felt quite ashamed that he had not bought a set, owing to the fact that he was struggling to make ends meet.

Another man in shul, Dovid, noticed

At the Kollel

EVERY DAY

EVERY WEEK

Sunday *Free brunch!*

 **Beginner's Gemara**
(Maseches Sukkah)

Rabbi Ezra Stettin 9:10–10 AM

 **Beginner's Halacha & More**
(skills-building)

Rabbi Moshe D. Zeffren.. 9:30–10:30 AM

 **Shivti** (Self-contained learning,
geared toward practical halacha)

Rabbi Avrohom Weinrib..... 10 AM–noon

Monday

  **Torah Treasures for Seniors at the Mayerson JCC**

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis 10:30–11:15 AM

Tuesday

   **Partners in Torah at the Mayerson JCC**

Rabbi Michael Soroka..... 8 PM

Wednesday

  **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn at Strauss & Troy**

Rabbi Yitzchok Preis 12–1 PM

Thursday

   **Yehoshua/Shabbos in the former Back Office**

Rabbis Michael Soroka and Moshe Dovid Zeffren..... 9:10–10 PM

 *Homemade refreshments served*

KEY:  Beginners  Intermediate  Advanced  for men and women

Chavrusos are available for private and group learning—
speak to Rabbi Chaim Heinemann! weekdays noon–1 PM • Sun.–Thurs. 8–9:45 PM

DAVENING TIMES CAN BE FOUND AT CINCYKOLLEL.ORG/MINYAN-SCHEDULE/

THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On **12 Ellul, 5701 (1941)**, groups of Jewish partisans near the Ukrainian city of Dubossary killed a Nazi Commander by the name of Kraft and destroyed a large ammunition dump. One group was led by Yakov Guzanyatskii, while the other was headed by a man named Efim Boim. The assassination was in retaliation for the murder, the day before, of 600 Jewish residents of Dubossary.

Historians believe that approximately 20,000 to 30,000 Jews participated in partisan groups during World War II, primarily in the forests of Ukraine and Belarus, which were more conducive to the forming of partisan groups—as opposed to areas such as Poland, which were not as thickly forested. It is estimated that there were around 230 separate partisan groups in that area, consisting of well over 300,000 people (Jewish and gentile). The largest Jewish-only partisan group in that area was led by the Bielski brothers, with approximately 1,200 members. The Bielski group was also unique in that it allowed whole families, with children, to join. 

that Mark had entered shul without a lulav and esrog, so he hurried to bring over the set that the shul provided for anyone who needed to borrow one.

It was something else that Dovid did, though, which Mark would remember for years to come. Dovid did not present Mark with the lulav and esrog in the plain plastic box and standard cardboard. He put the shul's lulav and esrog to his own beautiful

cases, so that Mark wouldn't feel bad that others had nice holders for their lulavim and esrogim, while he did not. 

Giving... CONTINUED

notion that my own muscles and willpower brought me my success can be pushed aside, leaving room for a genuine connection with our Creator. 