

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

It Means The World To Him

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The *Midrash in Bereishis Rabba* (1, 4) extrapolates from the first *passuk* in the Torah that the world was created in the merit of three future *mitzvos* that *Klal Yisrael* were going to fulfill: taking off *challah* from one's dough, *ma'asros* (tithing one's produce), and, from this week's *parasha*, *bikkurim* (bringing the first fruits to the *Beis Hamikdash* to be given to the *Kohein*). If we think about it, why is the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* considered such a tremendous *mitzvah* that in its merit the WHOLE WORLD was created?! Every *mitzvah* is precious and certainly has its own value, but why does *bikkurim*, a seemingly simple *mitzvah* of bringing a few fruits to the *Kohanim*, have this distinction that the whole world was worth creating just for it?

Let us look at the process of bringing *bikkurim* and we will get a glimpse into exactly what the *mitzvah* is: a farmer decides to plant a fruit orchard from one of the *shivus haminim* (seven species). He plants the seeds and works hard to provide them a nourishing environment to grow. As the tree grows and he sees the first fruits maturing, literally the fruits of his labor, the Torah says he is not allowed to benefit at all from them; he has to wait a bit longer. All that work and he doesn't get to enjoy them. So he continues working hard, ensuring the tree will produce the next year. And it does, producing more fruit than the first year, but here again the Torah says he is not allowed to benefit from them at all, not even to burn them and use them as firewood; he has to wait a bit longer. So again, the farmer works hard the following year and the tree produces even more fruit. Yet again, the Torah says this third year as well he cannot benefit from them. Don't worry though, the following year he may. The next year again, the farmer works hard and by now he has a beautiful crop of fruit that he is able to enjoy. But wait, the Torah says, you can't just eat them now, you first have to bring all of them up to *Yerushalayim*; you can't just enjoy them wherever you are. So the farmer does the *mitzvah* incumbent upon him and brings them up to *Yerushalayim* to enjoy them. The

next year again, the farmer works hard to help his trees grow. When the fifth (!) year's crop finally arrives, we can hope that at least now he can kick back and enjoy his crop from the comfort of his own home. However, as that very first fruit is ripening, after working hard for five years, he takes a red string, ties it around the fruit and proclaims "*Kodesh Lashem* (sanctified to Hashem)." He then brings that fruit up to *Yerushalayim*, arranging it in beautiful baskets and gives it to the *Kohein*. Five years of hard labor and this is the first thing this person does?! Even more than that, the farmer's words he says as he is holding his basket of fruit recall and describe the specific difficulties of our ancestors going all the way back to Ya'akov *Avinu* and *Bnei Yisrael's* difficult time in *Mitzrayim*. Yet, instead of being resentful, the farmer is full of praises and thanks to Hashem for saving our ancestors, taking us out of *Mitzrayim*, giving us *Eretz Yisrael*, and, finally, for the bounty his land has produced. The farmer is recognizing where he has come from and what he and his ancestors have had to go through to get to this current stage, yet he is not bitter nor wanting to forget; he praises and gives thanks to Hashem for being able to come to this point in time. This is an unbelievable and near superhuman ability in expressing *hakaras hatov* (gratitude)! It is truly no wonder that the world was created in the merit of this *mitzvah*! In what is almost a recognition of this, the Torah guarantees that this *mitzvah* will secure a bountiful harvest for next year.

It is particularly striking that this *mitzvah* is read every year just as our year is about to be closed out and we start anew. As we look back at this year in particular, it is all too easy to recall all the bad times we've gone through as individuals and communities. However, it is critical to recall the good times and moments as well and give our thanks to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. And when we do recall those times and give a real, sincere thank you to our Father in Heaven, there is no doubt that we will all merit a *kesiva v'chasima tova*. 🕊️

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

It is customary to get up earlier than usual to say *Selichos* starting the Sunday before Rosh Hashana. If Yom Tov falls out on Monday or Tuesday, we begin the Sunday before. *Sefardim* recite *Selichos* the entire month of Elul (O.C. 581:1).

Selichos should never be said before *chatzos* (*halachic* midnight) (*Magen Avraham* 565:5). In a situation where such a *minyan* is the only option, one is better off joining than saying *Selichos* by himself at the proper time (R' Shmuel *Halochos* in *Kovetz Halochos Yomim Nora'im* p 17).

If one comes late and *Selichos* has already begun, *Ashrei* can be skipped and one should join whichever *Selicha* (paragraph) the congregation is holding in (ibid pp 21-22).

It is proper to train boys under Bar *Mitzvah* to say *Selichos* in the morning. However, it is not necessary to wake them up extra early. The custom is that women do not recite *Selichos* (ibid p 28 note 27).

Since there are a number of *passukim* found in our *Selichos*, one must recite

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A RIDDLE FOR YOU

What *mitzvah* can only be performed using a non-kosher animal? 🐾

See reverse side for the answer

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

Bircas haTorah before beginning (O.C 46:9), even if, by doing so one will fall behind and miss part of the *Selichos* (ibid p 19).

It is better not to start *Ashrei* unless a *minyan* has gathered (*Matteh Efrayim OC 581:17*). If it is getting late, they can start *Ashrei* in a way that the final *passukim* will be said once ten men are present. When faced with no other choice, those who are there can begin with the *Selichos* and interrupt by reciting *Kaddish* when the *minyan* is completed (*Elya Rabbah 13*).

It is nice to stand during *Selichos* unless it is difficult. However during the 13 attributes, one is obligated to stand (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128:6*).

If one finds that the congregation is moving too rapidly for him to keep up, he should go slowly at his own pace and focus on what he is saying because “a little with *kavanah* is preferred over a lot without *kavanah*.” However, he should join in for the 13 *Middos* (13 attributes). Similarly, if one reads slower and sees that the majority of those present are already saying *Tachanun* at the conclusion of *Selichos*, he should join them and

A SHINING EXAMPLE

Rav Chaim Tirar was a *Chassidic* leader better known as the *Be'er Mayim Chaim*. Rav Chaim's son Leib began to drift away from his father's teachings and eventually from all of Judaism itself. From talking to Rav Chaim you would not be able to tell though, as all he ever was heard saying about his son was to tell over any and all qualities that his son possessed, with nary a negative word. Finally, a close student, known as Rav Meir of Premishlan, worked up the temerity to ask his teacher after again hearing complimentary words about his son Leib, “How are you able to act so upbeat about a child that we know is a source of anguish

do *Nefilas Apayin* together with everybody else; it is not necessary to go back and make up that which was skipped (ibid p 35).

If a *chosson* is present, *Tachanun* is not recited at the conclusion of *Selichos*. The same holds true with one of the *ba'alei bris* (*sandek*, father or *mohel*), providing that the *Selichos* finish after day break (R' T P Frank *Mikroei Kodesh 2*). 🕯

RIDDLE ANSWER

The redemption of a first-born donkey. 🕯

for you?” Said Rav Chaim, “You are right that it is something that tears your heart but I never give up hope for him, and it is as well my prayer to the Master of the World that just as I try to only see the good in my son who pulled himself so far from me, so too will G-d look down on his children and only see the good in us and forgive us for when we act in a way that does not benefit us as G-d's children.” 🕯

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BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

“Do not exchange your religion for money.” These were the last words that Harry Fischel's parents said to him as a twenty-year-old in 1885 as he prepared to journey to America to avoid being drafted into the Czar's army. Arriving in America with only sixty cents in his possession and nothing in the form of worldly possessions beyond the clothes he was wearing, he is truly a rags-to-riches story, as within three years he was earning a good salary as a contractor and within thirteen years he was a multimillionaire real estate mogul. All the while he adhered to the charge his parents gave him as he took his leave. This is not to say that he was never severely tested, especially on his Sabbath observance, in his first several years in America, as he would actually be fired or give up on opportunities that would ordinarily seem too good to pass up. Fischel would use his personal means to help the plight of fellow Jews and strengthen Torah observance in America and across the globe. Helping fellow immigrants and improving Talmud Torahs were his early favorite causes. One of his pioneering ideas was to create Talmud Torahs for girls as well. Fischel would become one of the key supporters of Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Theological School and would establish a *yeshiva* in Israel that still bears his name, the Harry Fischel Institute for Talmudic Research. Apparently, with the realities of living in the in the “*shtetl*,” he was only able to stay in *cheder* until he learned to read and write and have a rudimentary knowledge of the *Chumash*, but Fischel wrote that upon his arrival in America he was able to begin to learn *mishna*, and began to learn Talmud at the age of 69 in the midst of the Great Depression, writing later that those years, while adversely affecting him financially, were the best years of his life on a spiritual level. 🕯

SOURCES: Levine, Dr. Yitzchok. “Orthodox Jewish Philanthropist Par Excellence.” *The Jewish Press*. 2006.

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