

# OHRNET

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## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Shock Treatment

Two weeks ago, I died.

Two weeks ago I was feeling more than usually tired and a little bleary. Two years ago I underwent an ablation procedure for atrial flutter, a common heart condition not in itself dangerous, but which can lead to serious complications. Baruch Hashem, the ablation was successful.

A couple of weeks ago, I started to feel the same symptoms. So, I went to get an ECG. I wasn't feeling terrible, so I said to the nurse after he'd taken the reading, "Ok, thanks very much. I'll check the results on your website later..." He said, "YOU are not going anywhere until we get the results from the lab and you get a release! So, there I was - The Prisoner of Meuhedet Health Insurance!

Fifteen minutes later, he came running out of the nurses' station and said with a very worried look on his face, "Look there's ABSOLUTELY nothing to worry at all! Just stay calm and RELAX!!" He looked about as relaxed as a snowflake on top of an electric range. "Now you just sit down there and the ambulance will be here in a jiffy!" He continued, "I wonder if I should make an incision in your arm for the IV? Or they'll do that in the hospital..."

I thought to myself: "Whoa! Just one second! I walked in here and I can walk out too!" But, I recalled John Webster's observation in *The Duchess of Malfi*: "Physicians are like kings. They brook no contradiction." So, I sat down and I thought, "Your day doesn't always go the way you scripted it." I walked in to the clinic and I'm leaving on a gurney with sympathetic faces watching me being wheeled into an ambulance.

They whisked me off to Hadassah Mount Scopus and the doctors decided to give me Shock Treatment to try and jolt the heartbeat back to normal. It was a decidedly bizarre experience being led to the treatment bed by a couple of burly Arab male nurses in the middle of a war.

During the cardioversion, or shock treatment, I knew that my heart would actually stop for a moment. That's a bit like dying, isn't it?

At Mount Sinai, when Hashem said: "I am Hashem, your G-d," the entire Jewish People died, as the Talmud relates. And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: From each and every utterance that emerged from the mouth of

the Holy One, Blessed be He, the souls of the Jewish people left their bodies, as it is stated: "My soul departed when He spoke" (Song of Songs 5:6).

And since their souls left their bodies from the first utterance, how did they receive the second utterance? Rather, Hashem rained the dew upon them that, in the future, will revive the dead, and He revived them, as it is stated: "You, Hashem, poured down a bountiful rain; when Your inheritance was weary You sustained it." (Psalms 68:10, Shabbat 88b)

In other words, when Hashem said, "I am Hashem, your G-d," the Jewish People experienced a revelation of Hashem that was such a shock and so compelling that the life-force inside them was inexorably drawn to its Source. In other words, they died.

And when Hashem revived them, that ultimate and intimate contact with the Divine, "I am Hashem, your G-d," was burned indelibly into their souls. It was a knowledge of Hashem's existence, transcending all necessity for intellectual proof; an *A Priori* knowledge as unshakeable as the knowledge of one's own existence.

This is why the Jewish People are alive and well and living in Israel. And this is why we have the extraordinary capacity to give our lives to sanctify Hashem's name.

The festival of Shavuot celebrates the moment when our deepest perception of our own existence and the existence of Hashem became one.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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### **Bamidbar**

The Book of Bamidbar – "In the desert" – begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty – old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The *levi'im* are counted separately later on because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the Mishkan and its furnishings, and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the Mishkan in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is split into two tribes, Efraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp.

A formal transfer is made between the first-born and the *levi'im*, whereby the *levi'im* take over the role the first-born would have had serving in the Mishkan if not for the sin of the golden calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed *levi'im* from one month old and up. Only *levi'im* between 30 and 50 will work in the Mishkan. The remaining first-born sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way we redeem our first-born today. The sons of Levi are divided into the three main families of Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the *kohanim* – the special division from Kehat's family). The family of Kehat carried the Menorah, the Table, the Altar and the Holy Ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the Ark and the Altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the *levi'im* prepare them for travel.

### **Naso**

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi. A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service. All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments.

If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement. If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a *kohen*.

In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A *kohen* prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing G-d's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her, but, rather, it brings her a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death.

A *Nazir* is one who vows to dedicate himself to G-d for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The *kohanim* are commanded to bless the people. The Mishkan is completed and dedicated on the first day of Nissan in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the Mishkan, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings.

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## TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

### Bava Metzia 96-102

#### Borrower's Insurance Policy

*Rava said, "A person who wants to borrow an object and be exempt from payment if something happens to it should say to the lender: 'Please bring me some water'; in this way it would be considered as 'borrowing the desired object WITH the owner.' And, if the owner is smart, he will first bring the water and only afterwards lend the object."*

Rava is giving advice to both a borrower and a lender about how they can each legally benefit in the case of a loan of an object. A borrower (*sho'el*) of an object is one of the four types of *shomrim*, guards. They are an unpaid guard, a paid guard, a renter and a borrower. A borrower is normally responsible to pay compensation in any event when he cannot return the object intact since "all the benefit is his" – i.e., he receives use of the lender's object without paying any rent. One case in which the borrower is exempt, however, is if the object "dies while doing its job."

Rava's statement on our *daf* is another example of a borrower's exemption from paying for the loss of the borrowed object. The Torah states (Ex. 22:14), "If the owner is with him (the borrower), he (the borrower) will not be responsible for payment (if the object 'dies')." A borrower's exemption from payment, as well any other type of guard, is often referred to as "*ba'alav imo*" – the owner is with him, which is the wording in the verse. The Torah does not explain the reason for the guard's exemption from payment when the owner is in the borrower's employ or service. Of course, this mitzvah, as well as every other Torah mitzvah, should be viewed as a Divine decree that does not require our understanding of its reason. Nevertheless, commentaries offer reasons for this seemingly mysterious exemption.

One reason suggested is that if the owner of the object feels so close to the one borrowing it from him that he has placed himself in his service, it can be assumed that he expects the borrower to return the object only if it

is intact when the term of borrowing has concluded, and he waives any claim for payment if the object is no longer returnable for any reason. (Seforno)

Rava also teaches what appears to be a clever application of this halacha. The *borrower* would be “smart” to ask for the owner to bring him some water, and while the owner is involved in bringing the water, the borrower takes the object that the owner has agreed to lend him. Since the owner was “with him” in serving him at the time when the borrowing began, the borrower would be exempt for any loss that might occur to the borrowed object. If the *owner* is “smart,” however, he will make sure to finish bringing the water before he gives the object to the borrower of his object, since in this manner the owner is no longer “with him” when the borrower actually becomes a borrower, and the borrower will therefore have all of the usual responsibilities of a borrower.

Although the halacha of the exemption from payment in the case of “*ba'alav imo*” was established and well known before Rava’s statement, Rava is teaching a novel idea. Even performing a relatively easy task, such as bringing a glass of water, is considered to be “*ba'alav imo*” and qualifies for the exemption of the borrower that is taught in the Torah. (Ritva)

*Bava Metzia 97a*

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# Q & A - Bamidbar

## Questions

1. Why were the Jewish People counted so frequently?
2. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
3. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
4. What is the difference between an "ot" and a "degel"?
5. How do we see that the Jews in the time of Moshe observed techum Shabbat - the prohibition against traveling more than 2,000 amot on Shabbat?
6. What was the signal for the camp to travel?
7. What was the sum total of the counting of the 12 tribes?
8. Why are Aharon's sons called "sons of Aharon and Moshe"?
9. Who was Nadav's oldest son?
10. Which two people from the Book of Esther does Rashi mention in this week's Parsha?
11. Why did the levi'im receive ma'aser rishon?
12. Which groups of people were counted from the age of one month?
13. Name the first descendant of Levi in history to be counted as an infant.
14. Who assisted Moshe in counting the levi'im?
15. Why did so many people from the tribe of Reuven support Korach in his campaign against Moshe?
16. Why did so many people from the tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun become great Torah scholars?
17. In verse 3:39 the Torah states that the total number of levi'im was 22,000. The actual number was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 levi'im?
18. The firstborn males of the Jewish People were redeemed for five shekalim. Why five shekalim?
19. During what age-span is a man considered at his full strength?
20. As the camp was readying itself for travel, who was in charge of covering the vessels of the Mishkan in preparation for transport?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 1:1 - They are very dear to G-d.
2. 1:18 - They brought birth records.
3. 2:2 - Each tribe's flag was the color of that tribe's stone in the breastplate of the kohen gadol.
4. 2:2 - An "ot" is a flag, i.e. a colored cloth that hangs from a flagpole. A degel is a flagpole.
5. 2:2 - G-d commanded them to camp no more than 2,000 amot from the Ohel Moed. Had they camped farther, it would have been forbidden for them to go to the Ohel Moed on Shabbat.
6. 2:9 - The cloud over the Ohel Moed departed and the kohanim sounded the trumpets.
7. 2:32 - 603,550.
8. 3:1 - Since Moshe taught them Torah, it's as if he gave birth to them.
9. 3:4 - Nadav had no children.
10. 3:7 - Bigtan and Teresh.
11. 3:8 - Since the leviim served in the Mishkan in place of everyone else, they received tithes as "payment."
12. 3:15, 40 - The leviim, and the firstborn of Bnei Yisrael.
13. 3:15 - Levi's daughter Yocheved was born while the Jewish People were entering Egypt. She is counted as one of the 70 people who entered Egypt.
14. 3:16 G-d.
15. 3:29 - The tribe of Reuven was encamped near Korach, and were therefore influenced for the worse. This teaches that one should avoid living near the wicked.
16. 3:38 - The tribes of Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun were encamped near Moshe, and were therefore influenced for the good. This teaches that one should seek to live near the righteous.
17. 3:39 - Each levi served to redeem a first-born of the Jewish People. Since 300 leviim were themselves firstborn, they themselves needed to be redeemed, and could therefore not redeem others.
18. 3:46 - To atone for the sale of Yosef, Rachel's firstborn, who was sold by his brothers for five shekalim (20 pieces of silver.)
19. 4:2 - Between the ages of 30 and 50.
20. 4:5 - The Kohanim.

## Questions

1. What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's Parsha?
2. Besides transporting the Mishkan, what other service performed by the Leviim is referred to in this Parsha?
3. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are *temeim* (ritually impure) out of the camp?
4. Name the three camps in the desert.
5. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
6. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
7. Who determines which *kohen* receives the gifts that must be given to the *kohanim*?
8. What does the Torah promise a person who gives *matnot kehuna*?
9. Why are the verses about *matnot kehuna* followed by the verses about the *sotah*?
10. Why is the *sotah* given water from the holy basin?
11. What does the *kohen* do to the hair of a *sotah*?
12. When a *sotah* who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
13. Before the name of G-d is erased, the *sotah* has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
14. What are *chartzanim*? What are *zagim*?
15. What sin does a *Nazir* commit against himself?
16. Where was the cut hair of a *Nazir* placed?
17. A *kohen* should bless the people "with a full heart". What word in the Parsha conveys this idea of "a full heart"?
18. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d bless you and guard you"?
19. What is the meaning of the blessing "May G-d lift up His countenance upon you"?
20. The Tribe of Yissachar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 4:47-48 - It is the number of *leviim* between ages thirty and fifty.
2. 4:47 - Singing and playing cymbals and harps to accompany the sacrifices.
3. 5:2 - The day the Mishkan was erected.
4. 5:2 - The camp of the Shechina was in the center, surrounded by the camp of Levi which was surrounded by the camp of Yisrael.
5. 5:2 - A *metzora* was sent out of all three camps. A *zav* was permitted in the camp of Yisrael but excluded from the two inner camps. A person who was *tamei* from contact with the dead had to leave only the camp of the Shechina.
6. 5:6-8 - He pays the principle plus a fifth to the victim, and brings a *korban asham*.
7. 5:10 - The giver.
8. 5:10 - Great wealth.
9. 5:12 - To teach that someone who withholds the gifts due the *kohanim* may eventually bring his wife to the *kohanim* to be tried as a *sotah*.
10. 5:17 - The holy basin was made from the mirrors of the righteous women who left Egypt; the *sotah* strayed from the example set by these women.
11. 5:18 - He uncovers it.
12. 5:22 - He dies a similar death.
13. 5:27 - Yes, she can refuse both: She can refuse to admit guilt and also refuse to drink the water. (After the Name of G-d is erased, she loses this option.)
14. 6:4 - *Chartzanim* are seeds. *Zagim* are peels.
15. 6:11 - He abstains from enjoying wine.
16. 6:18 - It was placed on the fire under the pot in which the *nazir's shelamim* offering was cooked.
17. 6:23 - "Amor."
18. 6:24 - "May G-d bless you" that your property may increase, "and guard you" from robbery.
19. 6:26 - "May He suppress His anger."
20. 7:18 - The Tribe of Yissachar was well versed in Torah. Also, they proposed the idea **that** the *nesiim* should offer gifts.

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## KIDDUSH LEVANAH (PART 1)

### UNDER THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON

*“My walk on the moon lasted three days. My walk with G-d will last forever.”*

Charles Duke – Lunar Module Pilot, Apollo 16

At the very beginning of each lunar month, the moon is positioned between the earth and the sun in such a way that its light is not easily discernable. As the month progresses the moon waxes, growing to its fullest in the middle of the month. After that the moon then begins to wane, becoming smaller and smaller until it finally disappears altogether. And then the whole process begins anew with the advent of the new month. Kiddush Levanah (Sanctification of the Moon), or Birkat HaLevanah (Blessing the Moon) as it is referred to in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 426), is a mystical and beautiful series of prayers that were instituted by our Sages to commemorate the monthly reappearance of the moon. They are so lofty that Rabbi Yochanan declares (Sanhedrin 42a), “Anyone who blesses the new moon it is as if they have greeted the Shechinah.”

What is it about the moon that it is the catalyst for such a beautiful series of prayers? The verse in Bereshit (1:16) appears to be self-contradictory. The verse begins, “And G-d created the two great luminaries.” However, immediately afterwards it states, “The greater luminary to dominate the day and the lesser luminary to dominate the night.”

Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi cites an Aggadic teaching (Chullin 60b) that when first created the sun and the moon were of equal size. However, the moon approached Hashem and asked, “Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown?” It sounds as if the moon is trying to position itself to become the sole source of light in the world. However, the Maharal explains that the premise of the moon’s question was how can the earth have two equal luminaries when the most effective leadership for a kingdom is under one ruler. Hashem’s response was, “Go then and diminish yourself.” At face value it seems as if the moon is being punished for having questioned Hashem. However, the Maharal writes that the moon was not being punished. Rather, Hashem accepted the moon’s claim and, by making the moon the “lesser luminary”, Hashem was benefiting the earth.

However, the Ba’alei HaMussar ask, if the moon’s claim was correct, why did Hashem choose to diminish the moon and not the sun? They answer that when confronted with the moon’s statement the sun did not react in any way. It did not immediately begin to explain why it deserved to be the larger luminary. Because the sun did not regard itself as being a king at all. The sun looked at itself as simply being a servant of Hashem. Thus, explain the Ba’alei HaMussar, it was the moon that was diminished and not the sun. However, continues the Aggadata, in order to appease, as it were, the moon Hashem declared that a special offering would be brought in its honor on Rosh Chodesh to the Holy Temple. The Maharal expounds that the moon becomes the vehicle for the Jewish Nation to elevate themselves and to draw themselves closer to Hashem.

Fascinatingly, the Vilna Gaon writes that the physical body is a parallel to the moon and the soul parallels the sun. In the same way that the moon only reflects its light from the sun so, too, the body only reflects the “light” from the soul.

From the narrative of the Aggadata he understands that the Torah is defining the sun as being “big” because it is a source of light. The moon, on the other hand is defined as “small” because it does not have its own source of light. Rather, it reflects the light of the sun. Accordingly, the Vilna Gaon explains the meaning behind one of the blessings that an eight-day old baby boy is blessed with immediately after his Brit Milah is, “*Zeh hakatan gadol yihiyeh* – this *small* child will be *big*.” That this small baby will receive from his parents and mentors the

Torah knowledge that he needs to allow him to grow to become a moral and upstanding Torah scholar. That, like the moon, he will reflect everything that they have given to him. But, we do not stop there. We bless him that one day he will grow to the point where he is able to channel everything that he has received into giving to others. In effect, that he become a source of spiritual light to all those around him. That, like the sun, he become “*gadol*.”

The Torah tells us (ibid. 14) that the moon will be an “*ot* – a sign.” An *ot* is something of tremendous spiritual significance. Rabbeinu Bachya explains that it is referring to the mitzvah of Kiddush Levanah. That we, Hashem’s Chosen Nation, who King Shlomo describes as being as beautiful as the moon (*Shir Hashirim* 6:10), step outside to greet the new moon and to reinforce within us the knowledge that our task in this world is to reflect the holy and pure light of Hashem.

*To be continued...*

## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

### Getting Dirty

The Talmud (Shabbat 146a, Yevamot 103b, Avodah Zarah 26b) relates that when the Jews stood upon Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, something miraculous and extraordinary happened: All the Jews were cured of the *zuhamah* that had infected mankind ever since the primordial snake injected Eve with its *zuhamah*. In general, the word *zuhamah* refers to “dirtiness,” although in this specific context, it may refer to physical or spiritual deformities and/or the susceptibility to death, both of which temporarily disappeared from the Jewish People at Mount Sinai. This essay discusses the word *zuhamah* alongside other words for “dirtiness” in Hebrew, like *lichluch*, *elach*, *go’al*, *tinuf*, and more. In doing so, we explore the various etymologies of these words and their cognates to hone in on their precise connotations and show how they are not quite synonyms.

We begin the discussion with the relatively obscure Biblical Hebrew term *elach* (Job 15:16, Ps. 14:6, 53:4), which appears thrice in the Bible. The way Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim defines it, that verb refers to becoming “soiled” by something that is not inherently disgusting; rather with that term, the point is more that something of another species/type has been mixed into to an otherwise homogenous concoction. For example, if you mixed grape juice into your milk, the results would be some sort of disgusting liquid that people would not be interested in drinking, simply because it is a strange combination of incompatible types.

The classical lexicographers (like Menachem Ibn Saruk, Yonah Ibn Janach, and Radak) trace this term to the trilateral root ALEPH-LAMMED-CHET. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ps. 14:3) sees that as related to ALEPH-LAMMED-HEY (which begets the word *allah*, “curse”), via the interchangeability of HEY and CHET. He explains that the latter root refers to a conflicting dynamic whereby one person wishes ill upon another, which is similar to the sort of dynamic described by *elach*, whereby the introduction of one element into another creates a similar sort of conflict or incompatibility.

However, Rabbi Pappenheim sees the initial ALEPH as extraneous to the core root, explaining the etymological root of *elach* as simply the two-letter root LAMMED-CHET, which he defines as “liquid” (like in the phrase



davar lach). In the specific case of elach, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that it refers to the presence of an unwanted “liquid” sully something else.

In light of this, we can better understand the post-Biblical Hebrew term lichluch, which also refers to “dirtiness.” That word does not appear anywhere in the Bible, and only occurs once in the Mishnah, but in the Talmud and later rabbinic writings, it becomes the standard word for “dirtiness.” Dr. Alexander Kohut in HeAruch HaShaleim sees the word lichluch (spelled with a KAF) as synonymous with its near-homonym lichluach (spelled with a CHET). The latter, of course, means “wet/liquid,” and derives from the two-letter Biblical Hebrew root LAMMED-CHET that we have just encountered, so that Biblical Hebrew root might just be the root of lichluch as well.

In fact, the one time that the word lichluch appears in the Mishnah, it specifically refers to “wet” dirtiness, as the Mishnah (Mikvaot 9:4) rules that lichluch of wet feces on one’s skin is not considered a “disruption” between the body of one immersing in a mikvah and the waters of the mikvah. This is because the liquid lichluch becomes one with the liquid of the water, and the immersion is therefore impeccable. Of course, this rule only applies to “wet” lichluch, but if the dirtiness (in this case, feces) were dry, then that dirty spot would indeed disqualify the immersion in the mikvah, as it interrupts between the mikvah waters and the immerser’s skin.

Believe it or not, a form of the word lichluch actually appears as a personal name in a humorous anecdote related by the Talmud (Nedarim 66b): A man once vowed that his wife may not derive benefit from him until she showed Rabbi Yishmael ben Rabbi Yose her most beautiful feature. They went to the rabbi, and he examined her, asking the onlookers about her features. "Maybe her head is beautiful?" he asked. "No, it is round like a ball," they replied. "Maybe her hair is beautiful?" "No, it looks like flax fibers." "Maybe her eyes are beautiful?" "No, they are bleary." "Maybe her ears are beautiful?" "No, they are misshapen." "Maybe her nose beautiful?" "No, it is flat." "Maybe her lips are beautiful?" "No, they are thick." "Maybe her neck is beautiful?" "No, it is short." "Maybe her stomach beautiful?" "No, it is distended." "Maybe her feet are beautiful?" "No, they are wide like those of a goose." "Maybe her name is beautiful?" "No, her name is Lichluchit (literally, "Dirty")." Finally, Rabbi Yishmael concluded, "Her name befits her well, as she is indeed ‘dirtied’ by her blemishes.”

To read the full version of this article, with more discussion about the different words for “dirty,” visit us online at: [https://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](https://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)

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## TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

### Reasons behind the Mitzvos

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

*“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)*

#### *Bikkurim and the Giving of the Torah*

#### Mitzvah #606 (*Devarim 26:1-11*)

The mitzvah of Bikkurim requires a person to bring the first fruits of his produce in a basket to the *Beis HaMikdash*, proclaim words of gratitude, and present them to a Kohen on duty, who places it by the Altar. After the ceremony, the Kohen would take the Bikkurim for himself. This is one of the means of livelihood that the Torah accords Kohanim to enable them to dedicate their time to the service in *Beis HaMikdash*.

Bikkurim may be brought only from the Seven Species for which the Land is praised. Bikkurim may only be brought during the time of harvest, which begins on Shavuos. Some explain that for this reason, Shavuos is called “the Day of Bikkurim” (*Bamidbar* 28:26) [*Chizkuni*; see also *Rashi*].

The speech that the bringer of the Bikkurim must recite begins by describing our humble beginnings: fleeing from Lavan, descending to Egypt, suffering bitter slavery, and emerging with unprecedented wealth and spiritual greatness on the way to the Promised Land. The reason we relate the story of the Exodus at this time is that it is a person's nature to take Hashem's gifts for granted, especially when it comes to the first fruits of his labor. We therefore have to recall that we began in Egypt working hard as slaves to produce fruits for our masters, and Hashem granted us liberty, His precious Torah, and His prized Land. We ought to consider ourselves fortunate to be able to work hard and produce for ourselves! Seen from this perspective, our gratitude to Hashem is true and complete.

We are required to relate the story of the Exodus aloud in order to arouse our thoughts and emotions. By acknowledging Hashem's kindness toward us and the Jewish people as a whole, we merit that Hashem sees fit to bestow further blessing upon His Land and His people (*Sefer HaChinuch*).

One might ask: If Bikkurim is connected with the Exodus, why does the time for Bikkurim begin on Shavuos, the day of the Giving of the Torah?

We may suggest as follows: The mitzvah of Bikkurim ends with a directive to rejoice over all the good that Hashem has given us. Now that we have acknowledged that our bounty comes from Hashem by bringing the Bikkurim, it is appropriate for us to rejoice over all the good that He has given us. On a deeper level of understanding though, the Sages expound that “the good that Hashem has given us” is an allusion to the Torah (*Tanchuma, Re'eh*). Our joy and gratitude over the gift of the Land culminates with joy and gratitude over the Torah whose precepts govern and inspire our life in this Land. As the Torah makes clear several times, the fulfillment of the Torah is essential to our right to live in Eretz Yisrael, and that is why Hashem did not bring us to Eretz Yisrael until He gave us the Torah. It is therefore only appropriate for us to bring Bikkurim and express our joy and gratitude over the Land from Shavuos onward, when, in a spiritual sense, we receive the Torah anew every year.

The Sages teach that in a way, it is possible to fulfill the mitzvah of Bikkurim even today. When a person gives a gift to a Torah scholar or hosts a Torah scholar in his home, Hashem regards it as if it were a gift of Bikkurim brought for Him in the *Beis HaMikdash* (*Kesuvos* 105b; *Vayikra Rabbah* 34:13).

Contemplating this mitzvah also reminds us not to take Hashem's multitudes of kindness for granted. Not only will this add much joy to our lives, but also it will make us worthy of receiving more and more blessing.

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