



A collection of Torah thoughts produced by the Maor Centre, Melbourne

המאור

Light reading  
HaMaor

ISSUE 14

Parshas Ki Savo, Elul 5784

## The Jewish People as Hashem's Bikkurim

### Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

*You shall rejoice in all the good that Hashem your G-d has given you*

The Mitzvah of Bikkurim teaches us the Middah of Hastapkut, to be satisfied and content with what we have. One should not be jealous of those who have more. This is in line with the teaching of Pirkei Avos that the one who is rich is one who is satisfied with their lot.

The Torah's directive to rejoice in their Bikurim applies to each person equally, whether they have many fields with many Bikurim, or only one field with fewer Bikurim.

A person must believe that everything they have in wealth and Parnasa comes from Hashem. As such, there is no need to be jealous of others, because what they have is not meant for us and concerning what we have, Hashem certainly provides us with everything that we need and so we don't need anymore.

This is the meaning of the Bracha וישם לך שלום. The word Shalom also means complete. The true blessing is that we see whatever we have as being complete and sufficient.

This is the meaning of Bikurim, where the Torah tells us that "you shall rejoice in all the goodness that Hashem has given you". We rejoice in everything we have, because we know that it is from Hashem.

When a person came into this world, they were "naked" and possessionless. Therefore, whatever we gain is a gift of which we are undeserving. With this perspective we will be Besimcha with whatever we have.

When saying the Haggadah, the sages teach that מתחילין בגנות ומסיימין בשבח - we begin with our disgrace and conclude with our praise. Tiferes Shlomo reads this as an allusion. If we begin seeing our גנות, that really we are undeserving, then we will forever praise Hashem for everything we have.

Before a farmer in the Land of Israel was able to partake of their harvest, there were various separations that had to be performed in fulfilment of the Mitzvos Hateluyos Baaretz - the agricultural Mitzvos applicable on account of the sanctity of Eretz Yisroel.

The first offerings that had to be taken were the Bikkurim which are discussed at the beginning of Parshas Ki Savo.

Bikurim were the first fruits from the Seven Species. They were taken even before the crop was harvested and were not separated from the harvest pile. They had to be taken to the Beis Hamikdash and placed next to the Mizbeach. After this they could be eaten by Kohanim in the city of Yerushalaim

After the harvest, the next separation was Terumah. A measure of the produce that was given to the Kohen. The Torah does not define a minimum measure for either Bikurim or Terumah. However, the Rabbis instituted a measure for Terumah of 1/40th, 1/50th or 1/60th of the crop.

From the remaining produce, the first Maaser (tithe) was given to the Leviim. The second tithe, depending on which year of the Shemittah cycle they were in, was either taken to Yerushalaim to be eaten by the owners or given to the poor. The remainder of the crop could be eaten free of restriction.

Bikurim and Terumah share a unique distinction that they were both Kodesh. They had sanctity that meant they could only be eaten by a Kohen and only in a state of purity. The rest of the crop, including the subsequent separations of Maaseros, were Chullin and could be consumed by anyone.

Both Terumah and Bikurim are referred to as Reishis - "the firsts", in relation to the rest of the crop.

On a deeper level, this relationship between the Bikurim, Terumah and the rest of the crop, is reflected in the creation of the world.

The world and all that was created within it, are like the mundane crop that are not essentially holy (Chullin). But prior to the creation of the world, came two "firsts" that are holy.

At the beginning of his commentary on the Torah, Rashi explains that the word Bereishis is made up of ב' ראשית, meaning two firsts. This refers to the Torah which is called the first of Hashem's ways and the Jewish people who are called the first of His pro-

duce. Both the Torah and Jewish people preceded the world.

But of these 2 firsts, which comes first and which is one is the greater? The Midrash teaches that the Jewish people are greater than and preceded the Torah. In the words of the Midrash, Hashem's "thought of Yisroel came before everything."

Terumah, which is the second of the 'first' offerings, represents the Torah. The Zohar writes that the word תרומה is made up of תורה and the letter נ, that represents the 40 days that Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai to receive the Torah.

Whilst Torah preceded the world, it is still related to the world in a definable or "measurable" way, as taught by our sages "the Torah receded the world by 2000 years." Whilst holy, lofty and called a 'first' in relation to the world, the Torah is not truly infinitely beyond Creation. This is like Terumah, that is called the 'first' as it is separated from the harvested crop.

In contrast, the Jewish people's essential connection to Hashem transcends the Torah and is completely beyond any level of limitation. The Jewish people are infinitely beyond the Chullin of the world. This refers to the essence of the soul which is a part of G-d Himself. Therefore, the Jewish people are like the Bikurim that, unlike Terumah, were not a separation from the harvested crop itself.

Whilst both Bikurim and Terumah are 'beyond measure', the Rabbis quantified the separation of Terumah. This also alludes to the fact that Terumah, as reflective of Torah, is beyond the world, yet still connected to the world.

Since the Bikurim represents the essence of the Neshama as a part of G-d, which can't be defined, limited or measured in any way, no measure could be set. It remains a point of pure infinity.

The Midrash teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu foresaw that the Beis Hamikdash would be destroyed and the bringing of Bikurim would cease. And so, he established that we should Daven 3 times a day to replace the loss of the Bikurim.

Learning Torah connects us to Hashem like a student to their teacher. The Avodah of Davening, like Bikurim, reveals our infinite and essential connection to Hashem as a son to their Father.

# Differing Customs of Hagbah - part 1

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

To dedicate a n edition of Hamaor or to commission a Halachic Analysis topic please email rabbijohnson@gmail.com

When it comes to performing Hagbah, different Kehillos have different customs, that often leave guests confused.

For example, Sefardim perform Hagbah before leining whilst Ashkenzaim do so after leining. Chabad custom is for the one lifting the Torah to place it back on the Bimah and roll it closed, whereas Minhag Ashkenaz is to sit while the Torah is open and have someone else roll it closed. There are also differences in what is said when the Torah is lifted.

In the next few articles, we will explore the Mitzvah of Hagbah and the origins of these divergent customs.

## Source of Hagbah

The source of performing Hagbah is found in Mesechta Sofrim<sup>1</sup>, which states “when the Torah is taken out... immediately it is opened to display 3 columns. He lifts it up and shows the face of the writing to the people standing to his right and to his left and he turns it to his front and back, for it is a Mitzvah for everyone – men and women, to see the writing, to bow and to say “Vezos Hatorah<sup>2</sup>... Toras Hashem Temimah<sup>3</sup>”.

The Ramban in his commentary of Parshas Ki Savo<sup>4</sup> references a Yerushalmi<sup>5</sup> that has an allusion to Hagbah based on a Posuk in the Parsha. Parshas Ki Savo details the ceremony of the Blessings and Curses that would take place on Har Gerizim and Har Eival after Bnei Yisroel would enter Eretz Yisroel.

The final curse is; Cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah to observe them. The inverse would be Hashem’s blessings for one who does uphold the words of the Torah. Literally the verse reads “cursed is the person who does not stand up this Torah”. The Yerushalmi asks, can the Torah fall that it needs to be picked up?

The Yerushalmi offers two explanations. According to the first explanation, the command is being addressed to the Chazan in Shule. Korban Haeidah explains that it is a directive to the Chazan doing Hagbah.

Ramban suggests that it is a warning to the Chazan doing Hagbah to make sure to show the Sefer Torah to everyone in Shule; men, women and children, so that they can see its words and pledge their commitment to keep them by declaring “This is the Torah that Moshe place before the Jewish people”. To not do so would be to cause the Torah to fall as people may become lax in their observance.

## When is Hagbah Performed

The Beis Yosef, following the literal reading of Mesechta Sofrim and the prevailing Sefardi custom to perform Hagbah before Krias Hatorah, discusses Hagbah immediately prior to the laws of Krias Hatorah<sup>6</sup>. The Darkei Moshe, following the prevailing Ashkenazi custom, discusses Hagbah at the end of the Tur’s laws of Krias Hatorah where he discusses Gelilah<sup>7</sup>.

In Shulchan Aruch, the Mechaber likewise places the requirement to lift the Torah and show its writing to the people, before the laws of Krias Hatorah<sup>8</sup>. In the style of the Ram”o as glosses on the Shulchan Aruch, the Ram”o adds that the custom is to do this after Krias Hatorah<sup>9</sup>.

Some<sup>10</sup> suggest that the reason that the Ashkenazim changed the custom, was because people would stay for Hagbah and then leave for the leining, thinking that the primary Mitzvah is to see the writing of the Torah. Others offer specific reasons why this custom is preferred<sup>11</sup>. According to the writings of the Ariza”l<sup>12</sup>, Hagbah should be performed before Krias Hatorah.

Some Ashkenzai communities, particularly in Eretz Yisroel, have adopted the Sefardi custom to perform Hagbah before leining<sup>13</sup>.

## How many Columns

The Magen Avraham<sup>14</sup> suggests that Mesechta Sofrim means specifically 3 columns. The Mishna Berura writes that it depends on the strength of the one lifting the Torah i.e. they may show more columns. The Rebbe’s father was known to display many columns when performing Hagbah.

Some have the custom of lifting the Torah while it is closed and then while up in the air, opening the 3 columns<sup>15</sup>.

## Looking at the Writing

The Ariza”l<sup>16</sup> would gaze intently at the letters at the time of Hagbah to the closeness that he would be able to read them. He would say that a great light comes to a person by looking at the letters closely to the point that they can read them clearly. Ben Ish Chai<sup>17</sup> records that one should look a letter that is the first letter of one’s name.

One should try to observe this practice if they are positioned near the Sefer Torah<sup>18</sup>. Some suggest that If one’s place in Shule is far away from the Sefer Torah, they should not come closer to be able to read the letters, as this would be an outward and boastful display of piety. However, based on the ruling of the Alter Rebbe in the Siddur<sup>19</sup>, Sefer Haminhagim Chabad

states that each person should try to come close.

## Which Part to Show:

Technically, when performing Hagbah, one does not need to show the section of the Torah that was or is being read<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, when one side of the Torah is too heavy, the Torah could be rolled to the middle to allow Hagbah to be performed if there is no other option<sup>21</sup>.

However, others<sup>22</sup> write that it is preferable and that the Segulah is to see the words that were actually read.

## Writing on the Inside or Outside

The Bach<sup>23</sup> understands that according to Mesechta Sofrim and the practice of the Rishonim recorded in the Beis Yosef<sup>24</sup>, when performing Hagbah, the writing should be on the outside facing the people. The blank side of the Klaf faces the one lifting the Torah. – which way face writing. This is the custom of the Sefardim.

Ashkenazi custom<sup>25</sup> is to have the writing facing the one lifting the Torah<sup>26</sup>. One should not deviate from the custom<sup>27</sup>. On Simchas Torah, some Ashkenazi Kehillos have the practice of reversing the writing to the outside as an act of Simcha. However, there are Poskim<sup>28</sup> who write that this should preferably not be done. If done, it must be by someone who is capable.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. 13 and 14 as referenced by Beis Yosef Orach Chaim 134                                     | 13. Ketzos Hashulchan 84:5  |
| 2. Devarim 4:44  | 14. 134:3. See also Shaarei Efraim 10:13                              |
| 3. Tehillim 19:8   | 15. See Shaarei Efraim 10:14  |
| 4. Devarim 27:26. Referenced by the Beis Yosef, Bach and Biur Hagra”a.                       | 16. Shaar Hakavanos. Quoted in Magen Avraham 134:3                    |
| 5. Sotah 7:4   | 17. Shana 2, Toldos 16  |
| 6. Orach Chaim 134 as noted by Mishna Berura 134:8 referencing Levushei Serad                | 18. Shaarei Efraim 10:13  |
| 7. Orach Chaim 147   | 19. Siyum Tefilas Shacharis   |
| 8. Orach Chaim 134:2   | 20. Shaarei Efraim  |
| 9. He does not discuss the obligation of Hagbah in Siman 147 as he does in the Darkei Moshe. | 21. Otherwise this would be Tircha Detzibura                          |
| 10. Shayarei Kneses Hagedolah, Kaf Hachaim 134:16  | 22. Shulchan Hatahor 134:2  |
| 11. Chid”a Ledovid Emes 4:2  | 23. Orach Chaim 147:3   |
| 12. Shaar Hakavanos  | 24. Mordechai describing how his Rebbe, the Mahara”m performed Hagbah |
|  | 25. As also noted by the Bach   |
|  | 26. Shaarei Efraim 10:13  |
|  | 27. Shaarei Efraim 10:16  |
|  | 28. Shaarei Efraim 10:16, 8:62  |