



Beautiful Bowing

Our *parashah* this week opens with the mitzvah of *bikurim*. The farmer put the first fruits from his harvest into a beautiful basket and brought it to the Kohen in the *Beit Hamikdash*. “*Vehinachto lifnei Hashem Elokecha vehishtachavisa lifnei Hashem Elokecha* – you shall set the basket down before Hashem and then bow down before Hashem” (*Devarim*26: 10).

What is the significance of one prostrating himself in this ceremony?

The objective of bringing *bikurim* is to internalize the reality that everything we have, everything we possess, are gifts from Hashem. The Tolne Rebbe explains that there is a certain potency in bringing the actual fruits as *bikurim* as opposed to bringing derivatives such as oil and wine. The fruit is closer to nature in its pristine

form. This reminds us that Hashem is the provider for all that we have, down to the very source of every item and article. We are thus obligated to show Hashem our gratitude. Bowing is an expression of complete surrender, a recognition that Hashem is the ultimate Sustainer.

Rav Eisenberger in *Mesilot Bilvavam* notes that it is the self, the ego, that blocks us from recognizing that our gifts come from Above. People are mistaken when they think that they have what to be boastful about. One’s money, wisdom, talents or other qualities are all endowed to us by Hashem, and it is imperative to acknowledge that. Accordingly, when bringing *bikurim*, one “lays it down before Hashem” instead of merely handing the basket to Kohen. It is a powerful statement that it all belongs to Hashem, rather than the farmer feeling like he is “giving Hashem a gift.” The next step is to bow completely before Hashem. After acknowledging Hashem’s total

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sovereignty, the farmer can thoroughly submit himself to the reality that he is entirely in Hashem's control and has nothing to feel prideful about.

Likewise, he notes, this is a good lesson to keep in mind for those who search the world for *segulot* to "fix" the challenges they face. The best advice is to acknowledge that every experience comes from Hashem. When one can look inward and humble himself, he can then become a receptacle for blessing from Above. Essentially, we must "place ourselves before Hashem," emotionally prostrating ourselves in recognition of His transcendent power.

Rabbi Kirzner in *The Art of Jewish Prayer* explains that each time we say the *Modim* prayer and bow, we should have this in mind. Standing erect is a posture of arrogance, whence one relies on his singular ability. Bowing acknowledges our limitations and our complete dependency on Hashem. Every time we lower our heads we yield to Hashem as our Master and break our resistance to feeling dependent on Him. Indeed, Chazal teach that *tefillah* is in place of *bikurim*. As we daven each day, we can work on acceding to Hashem's control and loving care. ■

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