



REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

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His[s]tory

The declaration one recites upon bringing his first fruits to the Beit Hamikdash is curious. The passages comprise an overview of Jewish history and do not seem related to the *Bikkurim* ceremony. Would it not be sufficient for the farmer to simply acknowledge the gifts of his fruits and his dedication to Hashem? What can *we* learn from this chapter?

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro zt"l shares a fundamental lesson. To express true appreciation for the abundant Divine kindness we experience, it is imperative to reiterate the details again and again. When we look at the farmer's proclamation, we notice the constant emphasis on Hashem's unending goodness and mastery of all that exists.

This is a valuable lesson to us, stressing the importance of always expressing our gratitude to Hashem, not only through tefillah and brachot, but throughout our day in every experience. Living with this awareness humbles us and heightens our awareness of Hashem's greatness and the need to voice our indebtedness over and over.

We have here an insight into the human psyche, taught by Rav Zaitchik zt"l in *Ohr Chadash*. Human nature is such that when blessed with goodness, one tends to become haughty and will often forget the needs of others. By recounting the collective past of our nation, one is reminded of what it feels like to suffer and live with deprivation. Thus, the declaration will inspire others to give to those less fortunate and indeed can rejoice before Hashem.

An alternative approach is found in *Birkat Mordechai* by Rav Mordechai Ezra-chi zt"l. He notes that this entire section focuses on the beauty and magnitude of Divine Providence. From *Yetziat Mizrayim* and beyond, Hashem orchestrates every detail of history that creates every episode and circumstance. Even the exact fruits in the farmer's basket were directly gifted to him by Hashem.

Focusing on Jewish history gives us the opportunity to realize that nothing in this world is random, but an explicit manifestation of Hashem's intense love for every one of us. This then gives rise to the overwhelming joy of the mitzvah of *Bikkurim*.

The month of Elul is a most fitting time to integrate these lessons into our lives. It is a time to become more mindful of Hashem's abundant kindness and continuous love. When we personalize this awareness, we will be inspired to concentrate on how we do mitzvot and feel that we are each an integral part of Hashem's grand scheme. ■

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