

## Friday Night, Parshas Ki Savo, 5766

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words about the spiritual level of *mah* (“what”) and the nullification of one’s feelings of greatness, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 82.

Rebbe Nachman says: “When a person sees that things are not going as he had planned, he should know that he is suffering from feelings of greatness, that is [he thinks to himself], ‘I shall reign’. He should do *teshuva* and humble himself, at which point he enters the category of *mah*, as Moshe Rebbeinu declared (*Shemos*, Ch. 16): ‘*v’nachnu mah* – ‘for what are we [he and his brother Aharon]?’ – and then things will start going according to plan for him. (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that the main purpose of *Adam* (Man) in this world is to merit the level of *mah*, which means that his ego will become more and more nullified before the *Ohr Ein Sof* (The Endless Light), Blessed is He, and he will gradually have less and less feelings of self-importance and greatness, as Moshe Rebbeinu said to the Children of Israel (*Shemos*, Ch. 16): “*v’nachnu mah?*” – by which he meant that he and Aaron *HaKohein* were completely nullified to Hashem and had no feelings of greatness and of independent existence at all.

When a person merits an aspect of *mah*, he has achieved an aspect of the category of “*Adam*”, for “*Adam*” has the same *gematria* as “*mah*” (45), and then everything starts to go as planned and according to the person’s will. But when do things go against a person’s will and seem not to go as he had planned? This is when he feels that he has an independent existence separate from Hashem and when he is suffering from feelings of greatness. He wants such and such to be, but when it just doesn’t go his way, then everything is “not according to plan” in his eyes and he becomes very broken. However, when he merits an aspect of being nullified to the *Ohr Ein Sof*, Blessed is He, and when his entire will is that everything should be only according to Hashem’s will, then everything will start going “according to plan” for him, for he has given himself over entirely to Hashem with the knowledge that all Hashem does is the *best* possible plan.

So we find that when a person sees that things are not going his way – i.e. “not according to plan” – and he has many objections to the situation he finds himself in, he should know that he is suffering from feelings of greatness. He thinks to himself “I shall reign” – which means that he wants to be a king and rule over people. The attitude of “I shall reign” is the cause of things not going as planned for him. However, as soon as he does *teshuva* and lowers and humbles himself, he will merit the level of *mah*, and then everything will start to go according to plan for him.

How do we know that a person has truly merited the level of *mah*? The sign for this is when he is always acknowledging and praising Hashem for all the kindnesses He does with him at every moment. His mouth is filled with praise for Hashem for every detail of life. And he recognizes that the entire order of all the days of his life is dependent only on the hand of Hashem. And for all this, he expresses gratitude to Hashem with a full mouth and with his whole heart. Sadly, this is not the case when he is always complaining about the bitterness of his lot and is always crying about all the things he is lacking. This is a sign that he is suffering from feelings of greatness. And as a result of these feelings, nothing seems to go the way he had planned. He therefore feels no contentment and satisfaction in life. However, the main advice for such a person is to thoroughly remind himself how lowly and humble his former situation used to be, and how Hashem had compassion on him and raised him up from his poverty and anguish. Now, he will begin to contemplate the loving kindnesses of Hashem. And he will express gratitude to Him and begin to come out of his feelings of greatness until he merits true humility. And before his eyes, he will witness the “not according to plan” in his life transform into “according to plan”. Therefore, happy is the one who always contemplates the loving kindnesses of Hashem and shows gratitude to Him for all of the kindness and compassion that He does with him at every moment, for then, all of life will go “according to plan”, and he will get a taste of the World to Come in his lifetime. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman to our parsha in the following way. We find in our parsha the mitzvah of bringing the First Fruits (*Bikurim*), as it is written (*Devarim*, Ch. 26): “And you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your Land... and go to the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose to make His name rest there.” There is also a mitzvah of “Declaration (*Kriah*)” that accompanies the bringing of the *Bikurim*, as it is written (*ibid*): “And you shall come to

whomever will be the Kohen in those days and you shall say to him, ‘I declare today to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the Land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give to us...then you shall call out and say before Hashem, your G-d, ‘An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather...’ We need to understand why the mitzvah of the Declaration (*Kriah*) is added to the mitzvah of bringing the *Bikurim*, since *Kriah* is not found in connection with any of the other gifts that are given to the *Kohanim*. Also, why are the words “An Aramean tried to destroy my father”, which refers to how Lavan the Aramean sought to destroy Yaakov and his entire family, mentioned in the course of the Declaration? Furthermore, why do we mention the Children of Israel’s descent to *Mitzrayim* in the *Kriah*? Also, what is the meaning of that which our Sages learn from the verse (Bereishis, Ch. 1): “‘In the beginning (B’reishis), G-d created’, in the merit of the Torah which is called ‘first (*reishis*)’ and in the merit of Israel who are called ‘*reishis*’ and in the merit of the *Bikurim* which are called ‘*reishis*’ the world was created (*Midrash Aggados Bereishis*).” Why do the Sages so emphasize the importance of the mitzvah of *Bikurim* to the extent that the entire creation of the world was for its sake? Let’s try to answer all of these questions according to the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

The main purpose of *Adam* in this world is to come to a true nullification before Hashem to the extent that he recognizes that all that he has is a free gift from the Creator, Blessed is His name. And he will not think for a moment “my strength and the power of my hand made for me this wealth (*Devarim*, Ch. 8)”. These ideas are the foundation of the mitzvah of *Bikurim*. When one goes down to his field and sees the first ripe fig, he ties a string around it and declares, “Behold, this is *Bikurim*”. As soon as he merits to see the first fruits of his field, he sets them aside for Hashem in order to show how grateful he is to Hashem for all of the kindness He has bestowed upon him. And this gratitude is the foundation of the mitzvah of the Declaration of *Bikurim* (*Krias Bikurim*), as Rashi explains (verse 3): “‘You shall say to him [to the *Kohen*]’ – that you are not ungrateful (see more on this in the commentary of the holy *Alshich*).” It is not enough to merely separate his first fruits and give them to the *Kohen*; but he also needs to bring them to the *Beis HaMikdosh* with much pomp and circumstance, and to recite the entire *Kriah* before Hashem, as in this way he reveals the purity of his heart, that he is truly grateful to Hashem and does not attribute his blessings to his own hands at all.

And this is the idea behind beginning the *Kriah* with the words “An Aramean tried to destroy my father” and with the entire matter of the Egyptian exile. Sometimes, feelings of self-importance and arrogance prevent a person from remembering the kindnesses of Hashem. And it may even seem to him that he was never lacking anything. So what can he thank Hashem for? Therefore, at the time of bringing the *Bikurim*, a person must remind himself of his entire past, from “An Aramean tried to destroy my father”... ‘descended to Egypt’... “The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us and placed hard labor upon us...” because this life cycle applies to each and every one of us in different forms, as our holy Sages have said (*Talmud Pesachim* 116b): “In every generation, one is obligated to see himself as though he had gone out of Egypt.” For every one of us has at one time in his life been in a very lowly state, whether he was lacking financially, emotionally, intellectually or spiritually, until Hashem helped him leave that situation. Therefore, when we bring the *Bikurim*, which is when we are involved in nullifying self-importance, we need to mention with a full mouth the enormity of the lowliness that had once been our lot until Hashem helped us out of it, and in this way, we fix solidly in our hearts that most precious and essential trait of gratitude.

And this is what we find in the *Mishnah* (*Bikurim*, Ch. 3, *Mishnah* 4): “They [those who brought their *Bikurim*] arrived at the Temple Mount; even King Agrippas placed the basket upon his shoulders and entered [the Temple]...” For when a Jew brought his *Bikurim* a nullification of his ego occurred in the light of Hashem’s presence. Even the king had to completely submit and nullify himself and read the entire *Kriah*, for it is precisely through this mitzvah that we fix the trait of self-nullification in our hearts and merit to attach the “first fruits” of our minds and thoughts to Hashem. And as we said before, this was the main purpose for the creation of the world.

Therefore, the explanation of our holy Sages is understood very well (*Aggados Bereishis*): “ ‘In the beginning (*B’reishis*), G-d created’ – for the sake of the Torah which is called ‘*reishis*’ and for the sake of Israel who are called ‘*reishis*’ and for the sake of the *Bikurim* which are called ‘*reishis*’, the world was created.” For it is precisely through the mitzvah of *Bikurim* that the true level of the souls of Israel is revealed - that they nullify themselves completely before Hashem. And this was the entire purpose of creation – to cancel our feelings of being independent entities separate from Hashem and to nullify our feelings of self-importance – i.e. to merit the level of *mah* - and to connect the concept of “not according to plan” to “according to plan”. Happy is the one who merits this in truth.

My father and master, author of *Sefer Minchas Ze'ev*, may his merit protect us, explained the above ideas in a very beautiful way. He writes that it is brought in the *Mishnah (Bikurim, Ch. 3, Mishnah 5)* that the wealthy people brought their *Bikurim* in baskets made of silver or gold and the poor people brought their *Bikurim* in baskets made of stripped willow. And it is explained in the *Talmud (Baba Kama 92a)* that the baskets of silver and gold were returned to the wealthy people after the *Kohanim* received the *Bikurim*, but the baskets made of stripped willow were left with the *Kohanim* along with the fruit. The noted commentator *Tosfos Yom Tov* wonders whether this difference in treatment between the wealthy and the poor wouldn't put the poor people to shame when the *Kohanim* confiscate their baskets while the baskets of the wealthy people are returned to them? My father and master answers that it is just the opposite, that there is no shame in this at all. It is rather a virtue and a great honor for the poor people that the *Kohanim* would keep their baskets of stripped willow, as our holy Sages explain (*Toras Kohanim Parshas Vayikra*) regarding the burnt offering of a bird brought by a poor person, that they would offer it on the Altar together with its feathers. We know that there is no odor as foul as that of burnt feathers. Despite the horrible smell, the bird was offered with its feathers in tact so that the Altar would be "satiated" with the poor person's offering, since if the feathers are removed a bird is embarrassingly puny and bony, but with their feathers covering them they look substantial. Likewise, the matter of giving the poor people's baskets of stripped willow together with the *Bikurim* to the *Kohanim* is an honor for Hashem. This is not so with regard to the wealthy people to whom the *Kohanim* returned their baskets of silver and gold, because Hashem has no desire for silver and gold. What is important to Hashem is a broken and humbled heart, as it is written (*Tehillim, Ch. 51*): "A broken and humbled heart, G-d, You will not despise". So too, our holy Sages have said (*Talmud Sotah 5a*): "I (Hashem) dwell with the humbled; he is with Me. Not so the arrogant man. Hashem says of him, 'I and he cannot dwell in the same world.'" Therefore, it is specifically the mitzvah of *Bikurim*, the essence of which is the Jew's self-nullification before Hashem, which demonstrates the great importance of the simple baskets of the poor people when their baskets are given to the *Kohanim* together with their first fruits. May Hashem help us reach the trait of self-nullification in truth, that all of our feelings of self-importance will be nullified before Hashem, until we merit to ascend and be included in Him completely, now and evermore. *Amen v'amen.*