



## הכרת הטוב וכפיות טובה On Thankfulness and Ingratitude

### ■ The Two Wavings

Parashat Ki Tavo begins with a mitzvah that expresses better than anything else the sensation and trait of *hakarat hatov*, “gratefulness.” This is the commandment to bring *bikurim*, first-fruits, to the Temple, and to recite a special message of thanks and appreciation to Hashem for the occasion. The thanks begin as follows:

הִנֵּה הִבֵּאתִי אֶת רֵאשִׁית פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לִּי ה'...  
*I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground  
that You, Hashem, have given me...* (D'varim 26,10)

This mitzvah of bringing the fruits and recounting G-d's goodness raises us up to the highest heights of joy and inspiration:

וְשִׂמְחֶתְךָ בְּכֹל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ...  
*And you shall rejoice in all the goodness  
that Hashem your G-d has given you.* (verse 11)

If we look closely, we will see that the performance of this mitzvah involves two acts of “*setting down*” the first-fruits: once by the priest, and once by the land-owner bringing his fruits:

וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטָּנֵא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.  
*The priest will take the basket from your hand,  
and will set it down before the altar of Hashem your G-d.* (verse 4)



... והנחתו לפני ה' אֵל־להיה.  
*... You shall set it down before Hashem your G-d,  
 and bow before Hashem your G-d.* (verse 10)

Setting something down generally means that it was first raised up, and the Gemara (Makkot 18b) in fact derives that that is what happens here: First the fruits are lifted, or waved – the act of *t'nufah* – and then they are set down.

To fulfill this mitzvah, the farmer brings his first-fruits to Jerusalem and meets the priest in the Holy Temple. The land-owner then begins his declaration by announcing that he has arrived “*in the land that Hashem has sworn to give us.*” At that point, the priest takes the basket of *bikurim* and “*sets it down*” before the altar (verse 4). This signifies the end-action of the first “waving.”

In the next stage, the farmer resumes the speech he is commanded to give, and recounts how the Jewish People descended to Egypt, suffered tortures and afflictions there, and were Divinely saved and miraculously brought to the Holy Land. When he concludes, he sets down the fruits that he brought, after picking them up from where the priest had set them down. This is the second act of *t'nufah*.

What is the symbolism of these two acts of *t'nufah* of the first-fruits? And why is the word *t'nufah*/waving not written outright, but rather only the act of “setting down”?

To answer the first question, let us return to Parashat Behaalot'cha in Bamidbar, where we read that Moshe is to sanctify the Levites for Divine worship. He is to do *t'nufah* on them – physically lift and wave them, removing them from amidst the Children of Israel and transferring them to G-d's “authority.” It is interesting to note that here, too, this is done twice:

... והניף אהרן את הלויים תנופה לפני ה' מאת בני ישראל...  
*Aharon should wave the Levites before G-d,  
 from the Children of Israel...*

... והעמיד את הלויים לפני אהרן ולפני בניו והנפת אתם תנופה לה'.  
*Stand the Levites before Aharon and his sons,  
 and wave them unto G-d.* (Bamidbar 8,11-13)

Another hint to the double-waving is provided in this verse:

כי נתנים נתנים המה לי מתוך בני ישראל...  
*For the Levites are given, given to Me,  
 from among the Children of Israel.* (verse 16)



The word נתנוים, *given*, appears twice, symbolizing two acts of being given – waved – to Hashem. What is the significance of this double-action, both regarding the Levites and the first-fruits?

Let us note that the act of *t'nufah* means “giving to Hashem Who is found in every place.” We see this in the following Talmudic passage:

**R. Yochanan said: One waves [the Four Species on Sukkot] back and forth to the Master of the Four Winds, and lifts them up and lowers them to the Master of the Heavens and Earth.** (Sukkah 37b)

The Laws of the Sabbath, which forbid moving something from a private domain to a public domain, and vice-versa, provide us with an additional insight. One is considered to have violated this law only if he does two things: removes it from the first domain, and places it in the second domain. We can see these two actions regarding the *bikurim* and the Levites as well:

1. The first waving: taking the Levites or the *bikurim* out of the domain of Bnei Yisrael
2. The second waving: bringing the Levites or the *bikurim* into Hashem's domain.

With the Levites, the first *t'nufah* occurred after Bnei Yisrael gave “authorization,” so to speak, by resting their hands upon them – thus rendering the Levites “*of Bnei Yisrael*” (Bamidbar 8,10-11). The second waving took place after the offering of the sacrifices to atone for the Levites, at which point, “*the Levites will be unto Me*” (verses 13-14).

Another example can be brought from our wedding ceremonies, when a woman leaves her unmarried state and becomes married. The first stage, the *kiddushin*, when the groom consecrates his bride to him with a ring, means that she is now forbidden to marry anyone else; she has left her unmarried state. The second stage, that of the *chupah* and the Seven Blessings, is the *nisu'in*, in which she actually enters into a married state with her husband.

When did the two wavings or liftings of the *bikurim* take place, and what do they each symbolize?

### ■ With a Happy Heart

As stated above, the bringing of the *bikurim* begins with a general declaration by the land-owner, who says to the priest:



... הַגְּדַתִּי הַיּוֹם לְה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ כִּי בָאתִי אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה'  
לְאַבְתֵּינוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ.

*I have said today before Hashem your G-d that  
I have come to the Land that Hashem vowed to  
our forefathers that He would give us.* (D'varim 26,3)

This is an expression of acknowledgement and thanks for the fact that G-d fulfilled the oath He made to our Patriarchs and brought us to the Land of Israel. At this point, as the next verse tells us, it is appropriate to wave the *bikurim*, symbolizing their removal from the giver's domain.

But a general declaration is not sufficient. A second stage is therefore required, with more details and accompanied by a second waving, as written in the next verses:

וְעִנִּיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לְפָנָי ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ: אֲרָמִי אֲבִד אָבִי וַיֵּרֵד מִצְרַיִם...  
וַיִּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ... וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה...  
וּבְאֵתוֹת וּבְמִוֹתָיִם.

*You shall respond and say before Hashem your G-d:  
Laban the Aramite wished to wipe out my father,  
who descended to Egypt...*

וַיִּרְעוּ אֶתְנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ... וַיּוֹצֵאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה...  
וּבְאֵתוֹת וּבְמִוֹתָיִם.

*The Egyptians did us evil and tortured us...  
And G-d took us out of Egypt with a strong arm...  
and with signs and wonders.* (verses 5-8)

We see here that it is important to be specific when giving thanks. We must detail all the great acts of kindness that Hashem did for us, from the day we went down to Egypt as a small family, and up to the time we became a great and strong nation departing Egypt amid great wonders and miracles.

Why is this important? Because by going into detail and truly understanding in depth the greatness of the Divine kindnesses, it is easier for us to give the first-fruits whole-heartedly and with true joy, and only then do they truly pass into Hashem's domain. That is, Hashem accepts our gifts only when they are given joyfully and with total desire. This is why we need the second waving, symbolizing this higher level of gratefulness.

#### ■ In King David's Time

A perfect example of a whole-hearted contribution accompanied by true joy is when Israel contributed to the construction of the Holy Temple during the times of King David. We read at the end of the Bible:



וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ הָעָם עַל הַתְּנַדְּבָם, כִּי בְלֵב שְׁלֵם הִתְנַדְּבוּ לָהּ,  
וְגַם דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׂמַח שְׂמֹחַ גְּדוֹלָה.  
וַיְבָרֶךְ דָּוִד אֶת ה' לְעֵינֵי כָל הַקְּהָל...  
*The nation rejoiced in having contributed,  
for they gave to Hashem whole-heartedly, and King David,  
too, was greatly happy. He blessed G-d before  
the entire congregation [and said]... (Chronicles I 29,9-10)*

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וַיֵּדַעְתִּי אֱ-לֹהֵי כִי אַתָּה בַּחֲוֹן לִבְבִי,  
וַיִּמְשְׁרוּם תְּרַצָּה, אֲנִי בַיָּשׁוּר לִבְבִי הַתְּנַדְּבָתִי כָל אֱלֹהֵי,  
וַעֲתָה עִמָּךְ הִנְמַצָּאוּ פֹה, רְאִיתִי בְשִׂמְחָה לְהַתְּנַדֵּב לָךְ.  
*I know, my G-d, that You discern the heart,  
and desire uprightness.  
I have donated all this with the uprightness  
of my heart, and now I see Your nation gathered  
here giving to You with joy. (verse 17)*

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Let us now return to our second question above: Why does the Torah not use the word *t'nufah*, waving, when talking about the *bikurim*? Why does it say only והנחתו, *you shall lay it down*, instead?

The answer is that the Torah wants to hint to us this truth: The axis around which the entire passage revolves is our arrival in the Land of Israel and the chosen site of the Holy Temple. It makes this point by using a word that stems from the same root as the word for placing down the *bikurim*. Earlier in the Book of D'varim, the Torah tells us:

כִּי לֹא בָאתֶם עַד עֲתָה אֶל הַמְּנוּחָה וְאֶל הַנַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱ-לֹהֵיךָ נָתַן לָךְ.  
*For you have not yet come to the rest and  
the inheritance that Hashem has given you.*

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וַעֲבַרְתֶּם אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן...וְהִנִּיחַ לָכֶם מִכָּל אִיְבֵיכֶם מִסָּבִיב וַיִּשְׁבְּתֶם בְּטוֹחַ.  
*You shall cross the Jordan...  
and Hashem will relieve you from all your enemies around  
and you will dwell in security. (D'varim 12,9-10)*

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The words for both “rest” and “relieve” in these verses are predicated on the letters *nun* and *het*.

## ■ Gratefulness and Its Opposite

Undoubtedly, the demand made upon man to pass the test of gratefulness and to thank G-d by bringing first-fruits is designed to improve our



character and make us better. In Parashat Ekev, earlier in the Book of D'varim, we find another important insight into this concept:

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ.

*You shall eat and be satiated and bless Hashem your G-d  
on the good land that He has given you.* (8,10)

This verse refers, of course, to the obligation to recite Grace After Meals, *Birkat Hamazon*, and thus express our thanks and appreciation. But the Torah also emphasizes here the negative consequences of *not* showing appreciation:

הַשְּׁמֹר לָךְ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבַלְתִּי שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו  
וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם.

*Guard yourself lest you forget Hashem your G-d,  
and not observe His commandments,  
laws and statutes that I command you today.* (verse 11)

That is, if we ignore that G-d gave us this Land and its produce, we are liable to next disavow G-d's Torah and its commandments. From what could this stem? The Torah tells us:

וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ כַּחַי וְעַצְמִי יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחַיִּל הַזֶּה.

*And lest you say in your heart,  
"My own strength and wealth has brought me  
this valor!"* (verse 17)

To sharpen our understanding of the trait of gratitude, emphasized in the beginning of Parashat Ki Tavo, let us turn to its opposite: Ungratefulness, as practiced by the nations of Amon and Moav:

לֹא יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בְּקִהְלֵךְ ה',  
גַּם דּוֹר עֲשִׂירִי לֹא יָבֹא לָהֶם בְּקִהְלֵךְ ה' עַד עוֹלָם.

*An Amonite and Moabite – even the tenth generation –  
shall not enter the congregation of G-d, forever.* (D'varim 23,4)

The Torah immediately explains why it is so tough on Amon and Moav and forbids them from intermarrying into the Jewish Nation:

עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קָדְמוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּלֶחֶם וּבַמַּיִם בְּדַרְךָ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם,  
וְאֲשֶׁר שָׂכַר עֲלֶיךָ אֶת בְּלַעַם בֶּן בְּעוֹר מִפְּתוֹר אֲרָם נְהַרִים לְקַלְלָךְ.

*Because they did not greet you with bread  
and water on your way out of Egypt  
and because they hired Bilam ben Beor to curse you.* (verse 5)



Was this really such a terrible sin? Was it worse than what the Egyptians did to the Jewish slaves, killing their children and oppressing them with great cruelty? It does not seem so. Still and all, the Torah does not treat the Egyptians as harshly:

...לא תתעב מצרי כי גר היית בארצו.  
בנים אשר יולדו להם, דור שלישי יבא להם בקהל ה'.

*Do not despise the Egyptian,  
for you were a foreigner in his land.*

*Children born to them in the third generation  
[after conversion] may enter G-d's congregation.* (verses 8-9)

Third-generation Egyptians may convert and marry into Israel. And even regarding Edom, who did not allow Israel to pass through their land and purchase food and drink, the Torah states merely, *“Do not despise the Edomite, for he is your brother”* (verse 8). Why are Moav and Amon treated so much more harshly?

To understand the severity of the betrayal of Moav and Amon in not helping Israel, we must return to B'reshit and the story of how Avraham saved their father:

ויהי בשחת אלהים את ערי הכנר, ויזכר אלהים את אברהם,  
וישלח את לוט מתוך ההפכה בהפך את הערים אשר ישב בהן לוט.

*After G-d destroyed the cities of the plain (S'dom and Amarah),  
He remembered Avraham, and so when He overturned the  
cities in which Lot lived, He allowed Lot to escape.* (B'reishit 19,29)

We see clearly that Lot, and his wife and two daughters – the mothers of Moav and Amon – were saved in the merit of his uncle Avraham. How dare they return the favor by ignoring his descendants' request for bread and water during their escape from their cruel taskmasters?! And they did not even suffice with that: Balak, the King of Moav, hired the sorcerer Bilam to curse Israel and destroy them!

We stated above that two levels of gratefulness are required, as symbolized by the two wavings:

1. Gratefulness as a manifestation of justice; measure for measure;
2. Repaying a favor out of a pure desire to do good.

The opposite side of the coin, as performed by Amon and Moav, has two parallel levels of wrongdoing:



1. Turning their back on one who has done them a kindness; ungratefulness.
2. Repaying them with evil, for the purpose of harming them.

We see that Amon and Moav sunk to both levels of ungratefulness: denial of the good that was done to them, and its repayment with the opposite. They thus showed that they were not worthy of the good that Avraham showed them, and that they truly should have been destroyed together with S'dom and Amarah. Just as these two evil cities were smothered with Divine salt forever, totally detached from the world of kindness and goodness, so too must Amon and Moav now be treated in the same way – and not be allowed to ever attach themselves to the Jewish nation, predicated on goodness and compassion.

Nations that forfeited their connection with goodness can never marry into the Jewish People, whose very Identity Card is gratefulness, integrity, and goodness.

### ■ The Wonders of the Body

When we come to thank G-d for the wonders of our existence, do we know the extent of what He has done for us? When we say the *Modeh Ani* prayer (I Thank You, G-d) every morning when we wake up, do we know all the details of the kindness – as we are taught to list when we bring the *bikurim*?

Let us take this opportunity to present some data on just one aspect of the many miracles that make up our physical bodies: our circulatory system.

1. The bloodstream in each person passes through veins, arteries and capillaries that together run a total length of 100,000 kilometers – 2.5 times the circumference of the planet Earth.
2. Within our bloodstream are 25,000 billion – 25 trillion! – red blood cells. If we were to pile up all these cells atop each other, they would form a tower 50 kilometers high.
3. Every red blood cell contains 270 million hemoglobin molecules, each of which bears up to four molecules of oxygen.
4. Each molecule of hemoglobin has 10,000 atoms.
5. Every red blood cell lives for four months, during which time it travels from the lungs to the body and back again 75,000 times.





6. Three million red blood cells die every second, and three million new ones are formed every second in the bone marrow to replace them.
7. One trillion platelets, or trombocytes, circulate in the blood. Their job is to promote blood clotting, repair cuts in the veins and arteries, and assure a steady blood flow.
8. The bloodstream also has white blood cells – 36 billion of them, whose job it is to fight disease and foreign bodies.
9. A human heart beats 2.5 billion times during an average lifetime.
10. The billions of capillaries all together are about 40,000 kilometers in length. They are so narrow that the red blood cells can only pass through in single file..

Let us suffice with these few tidbits so that when we say *Modeh Ani*, “I thank You, G-d, everlasting King, Who has returned my soul to me with compassion; Your faithfulness is great,” we are more likely to say it with great joy and awe.

