

This week's *Parashah* begins with the *Mitzvah* of *Bikkurim* / bringing the year's first fruits to the *Bet Hamikdash*. This *Mitzvah* is introduced with the words (26:1), "It will be when you enter the Land . . ."

R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) asks: Last week's *Parashah* ended with the attack by Amalek and the *Mitzvah* to destroy that nation. What message is imparted by the juxtaposition of Amalek and *Bikkurim*?

He answers: We are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us "on the way." On the way to where? On the way to receiving the Torah. What did Amalek do? "*Asher karcha*" / It tried to cool off our fervor by asserting that all of the miracles of the Exodus were coincidence (see *Rashi* z"l to 25:18). Therefore, we are commanded to take revenge.

R' Elyashiv continues: How do we take revenge on Amalek? "It will be when you enter the Land . . .," you will sanctify your first fruits and bring them to the *Bet Hamikdash*. Bringing *Bikkurim* is accompanied by a reading (26:5-10) that recalls Jewish history and *Hashem's* intervention in it. The ultimate revenge on one who tries to cool our religious fervor by asserting that all of the miracles of Jewish history were coincidences is to dedicate the first fruits of our hard work to *Hashem*, take those fruits to the *Bet Hamikdash*, and speak about *Hashem's* hand in history.

This strategy, adds R' Elyashiv, applies no less when combating the "Amaleks" of our times. (*Divrei Agadah*)

## Shabbat

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first *Ashkenazic* Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael*) writes: The 39 prohibited categories of labor reflect the disunity of the world--the failure of *Hashem's* lofty work to be revealed in all its glory. The light of *Shabbat* comes to reveal the holiness of the unity above, which will appear in the world that is eternal.

(*Olat Re'iyah* II p.47)

R' Yehoshua Weitzman *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Ma'alot Ya'akov in Ma'alot, Israel) explains: Our material world appears to be made up of multiple separate and unrelated pieces. However, since everything originates from *Hashem*, Who is unique in His Oneness, everything must be one at the source. Man's task in this world is to re-unify the separate aspects of the world by "uncovering" *Hashem* in this world and revealing to all that everything emanates from Him.

R' Weitzman continues: If we are focused properly, all of our weekday activities are directed toward revealing *Hashem* within our material world--making choices in our daily lives to reveal or conceal *Hashem*. (For example: A person reveals *Hashem* when he chooses to place his trust in *Hashem*, to act honestly in business, to say "Please G-d" and "Thank G-d," and to give charity appropriately from his profits. A person causes *Hashem* to be hidden, G-d forbid, when he behaves in the opposite way.) Our weekday activities take place in many different arenas; hence our Sages' identification of 39 categories of labor.

This is how we serve *Hashem* on the six workdays, R' Kook is telling us. In reality, everything is one, for it comes from One, but we do not perceive this during the workweek. But "the light of *Shabbat* comes to reveal the holiness of the unity above." The "light of *Shabbat*" does help us see the Oneness of *Hashem*. Therefore, on *Shabbat* we refrain from the separate, individual labors which are our means of revealing *Hashem* during the week. (Mesos *Ha'aretz* p.6)

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on the *yahrzeit* of his mother, Leah bat Moshe Mayer a"h (17 Elul)

**“Hashem will confirm you for Himself as a holy people, as He swore to you--if you observe the commandments of Hashem, your Elokim, and you go in His ways.” (28:9)**

R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes: This verse contains a *Mitzvah* to emulate *Hashem* as much as possible, as is written, “You [shall] go in His ways.” Our Sages explain: Just as *Hashem* is called “Compassionate,” so you shall be compassionate; just as He is called “Giving,” so you shall be giving; just as He is called “Righteous,” so you shall be righteous; just as He is called “Pious,” so you shall be pious. The general idea is that we should imitate those good actions and worthwhile qualities that we ascribe to *Hashem*.

(*Sefer Ha'mitzvot: Aseh #8*)

R' Avraham ben Ha'Rambam z"l (son of Maimonides; Egypt; 1186-1237) was asked: Why does *Rambam* interpret “you go in His ways” as a commandment when, according to the *P'shat* / straightforward reading, it appears to be a condition, not a *Mitzvah*?

R' Avraham answers, in defense of his father: How could it be a condition if it were not also a *Mitzvah*? If *Hashem* says, “I will reward you if you do ‘X,’” clearly *Hashem* wants ‘X’ to be done!

Moreover, R' Avraham continues, what distinguishes us from the Karaites--a heretical sect that was active in *Rambam's* time--is that we do not look only at the *P'shat* when interpreting a verse. Rather, we interpret verses based on the *P'shat* coupled with the traditions received from our Sages. *Rambam's* interpretation of “you go in His ways” to mean “you shall go in His ways” is, indeed, the interpretation received from our Sages.

(*Teshuvot Rabbeinu Avraham ben Ha'Rambam #63*)

**“Hashem shall give you bountiful goodness, in the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your animals . . .” (28:11)**

The *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 8b) relates that there once was a famine and a plague simultaneously. The sage Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said, “One cannot pray regarding two troubles [*i.e.*, famine and plague] at once. [See below.] Pray that the famine end because *Hashem* will not send plenty only to have it go to waste. When He sends plenty, He necessarily will give life also.”

R' Yaakov Yisrael Halevi Stern z"l (18<sup>th</sup> century; *maggid* /preacher in Kremenets, Volhynia, now Ukraine) writes that, in this light, we may understand our verse as follows: “*Hashem* shall give you bountiful goodness.” And, in order that that bountiful goodness not go to waste, he also will bless “the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your animals,” etc.--more than you asked.

(*Sefat Emet: Mishlei* 10:20)

Why can one not pray regarding two troubles at once? R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) explains: The *Gemara* is referring to a type of prayer that involves single-minded focus on what is being requested. If one cries out about two things at the same time, it means that he is not focusing sufficiently on any one thing to be assured a response. (*She'arim B'tefilah*)

**“Then you shall raise your voice and say before Hashem, your Elokim . . .” (26:5)**

*Rashi* z"l comments: “He mentions the loving-kindness of the Omnipresent.”

R' Mordechai Hager z"l (1922-2018; *Vizhnitz-Monsey Rebbe*) quotes R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the “*Shelah Ha'kadosh*”; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630), who writes: Similarly, whenever *Hashem* blesses a person with something good or with success, that person should praise *Hashem* and thank Him for bringing about this good thing in His great mercy.

R' Hager adds: Doing what the *Shelah Ha'kadosh* suggests will awaken one's *Emunah* / faith, for he will effectively be acknowledging that there is no coincidence and no ascribing things to the laws of nature. Rather, everything is attributable to *Hashgachah Peratit* / *Hashem's* individualized providence.

(*Torat Mordechai*)

**“All these blessings will come upon you *Ve'hi'si'gucha* / and overtake you, if you listen to the voice of Hashem, your Elokim.” (28:2)**

R' Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter z"l (1799-1866; first *Gerrer Rebbe*, known as the “*Chiddushei Ha'Rim*”) explains in the name of R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischa z"l (1765-1827; Chassidic Rebbe in Poland): Sometimes *Hashem's* blessings are so great that a person is overwhelmed by them and cannot enjoy them. The word “*Ve'hi'si'gucha*” in this verse is a promise that one who observes the *Mitzvot* will be able to enjoy the blessings he receives.

R' Pinchas Menachem Elazar Justman z"l (1848-1920; *Chassidic Rebbe* in Pilica, Poland; grandson of the *Chiddushei Ha'Rim*) asks: In light of R' Bunim's explanation, how are we to understand the similar wording in the verse (28:15), “All these curses will come upon you *Ve'hi'si'gucha*”?

The *Pilica Rebbe* answers: When *Hashem* punishes, it is not in order to take revenge, as is the case when a human king punishes. Rather, *Hashem's* punishments are meant to awaken us to repent. Thus, “*Ve'hi'si'gucha*” may be understood as a blessing that one who experiences “curses” will appreciate their purpose and repent, so that the punishments can cease.

The *Pilica Rebbe* adds: When we speak of “*Teshuvah Me'ahavah*” / repentance because of love for *Hashem*, we refer to repenting out of a recognition that *Hashem* does not want to punish us. One who repents because of fear does so because he is afraid of being punished for his sins. In contrast, one who repents because of love for *Hashem* repents for the sake of *Hashem's* honor--because he knows *Hashem* doesn't want to punish us and he wants to make *Hashem* “happy.” (*Siftei Tzaddik*)