

### Jerusalem Sanctifies the First Fruit

Our *parsha* opens with the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*, the commandment of separating the first fruit and bringing it to the *Beit HaMikdash* in *Yerushalayim*. The details of this unique commandment are a strange blend of several areas of *halacha*. On one hand, *bikkurim* has all the telltale signs of a *zeraim* (plant oriented) *mitzvah*. Like other farming-related commandments such as *hafrashat terumah*, *bikkurim* relates to separating produce apart from the rest of the crop and designating it for the consumption of *kohanim* alone. In fact, the *Gemara Makkot* assumes that the Torah utilizes the term *terumah* when referring to *bikkurim* (see *Makkot* 17a and *Rambam, Hilchot Terumah* 15:20).

However, there are also many *bikkurim* laws that also point in the direction of the world of *Kodshim*, the area of Torah pertaining to the *avodah* in the *Beit HaMikdash*. While a *kohen* can consume *Terumah* anywhere, *bikkurim* can only be consumed within the confines of Jerusalem. This is similar to sacrifices such as *pesach* and *shelamim* that must be eaten within the walls of Jerusalem.

Additionally, the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* is not simply to separate the produce. Rather, part and parcel of the *mitzvat hafrasha* is to bring the first fruits to the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, if the first fruits are lost, stolen, or ruined before the farmer is able to reach the *Har HaBayit*, the *mitzvah* is entirely unfulfilled and he must separate more produce as *bikkurim* from his field (*Rambam, Hilchot Bikkurim* 2:20). The process of *bikkurim* must culminate in proffering the sanctified produce in front of *Hashem* in the temple courtyard. The farmer and *kohen* wave the *bikkurim* in the *mikdash* much like the *kohanim* would wave sacrificial parts of the *korban shelamim*. Based on these *halachot* (and many more), the great Torah scholar Rav Yosef Engel convincingly concludes in his masterful *Atvan Deorayta (Klal 12)* that the fruits of *bikkurim* possess sanctity much like *korbanot* do.

This *kedusha* explains why the laws of *bikkurim* interplay so much with Jerusalem and the *Beit HaMikdash*. But the connection runs even deeper. As we just noted, it is strictly forbidden for a non-*kohen* to consume the *bikkurim* fruits. It is additionally forbidden for a *kohen* to eat the fruits outside Jerusalem. However, the *Gemara Makkot* (18b) explains that these prohibitions only kick in after the fruit enters the walls of Jerusalem. Before entering the holy city, the fruits are considered entirely unconsecrated. But upon entry, they are sanctified, כהקדש לכל דבריהם.

(Parenthetically, the simple language of the *Gemara* implies that the produce becomes sanctified by entering into *the temple*, משיראו פני הבית. However, the *Rambam (Bikkurim* 3:1) makes clear that *ראיית פני הבית*, seeing the face of the temple, occurs when entering the walls of Jerusalem. As we have noted in the past, the *Rambam* views Jerusalem as an extension of the *Beit HaMikdash's* sanctity. Hence, entrance into Jerusalem qualifies as if one has already encountered the *Beit HaMikdash* itself.)

While the farmer's act of separation creates an obligation to bring the produce to the holy temple, it does not sanctify the *bikkurim*. Only Jerusalem can confer *kedusha* upon the first fruits. Why should this be the case?

*Bikkurim* represents the ultimate act of sanctifying the mundane. The first fruits are the product of months and months of physical toil and earthly involvement. Success that stems from so

much physical involvement can easily turn into self-infatuated pride that ignores the Almighty's hand in the process. The *mitzvah* of *mikra bikkurim* forces the farmer to openly acknowledge his total reliance on *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. The sanctification of the first fruits, to be consumed exclusively by *kohanim* in *Yerushalayim*, reveals that all the fruits of the farmer's crop in truth belong to *Hashem*. But only Jerusalem can accomplish this sanctification. It is only in *Yerushalayim* that a simple farmer has the spiritual clarity to recognize that the toil of his hands belongs exclusively to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Hence, the sanctification of the *bikkurim* only begins upon entering into the walls of Jerusalem.

We should merit to see the toil of our hands sanctified in the fully rebuilt city of Jerusalem, speedily in our days.