

# AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

PARASHAH

## THE CENTRALITY OF GRATITUDE

Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski

וְהָיָה כִּי תָבוֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ... וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה...  
וְשָׂמְתָּ בַטֶּנֶא וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשָׁבוֹן שָׁמוֹ שָׁם.

*It will be when you enter the Land that G-d gives you... that you shall take of the very first of every fruit of the ground... and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that G-d will choose to make His Name rest there (26:1-2).*

This is the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*, of bringing the first-ripened fruit to the *Beis HaMikdash* and giving thanks to Hashem for His bounty.

There is a cryptic statement in *Sifri*: "Do this *mitzvah*, for by its merit you will enter the Land." Inasmuch as the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* could not be done until after Eretz Yisrael was settled, how could the entrance to the Land be contingent on the performance of this *mitzvah*?

The essence of the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* is gratitude. What the *Sifri* means is that by virtue of acknowledging G-d's bounty and giving thanks for it, they would merit inheriting the Land. One of Moshe Rabbeinu's sharpest rebukes was the *Bnei Yisrael's* reluctance to be grateful.

The importance of gratitude is evident in that the Torah does not refer to the festival of *Shavuot* as the day the Torah was given, but rather as the "Day of *Bikkurim*" (*Bamidbar* 28:26). The *mitzvah* of gratitude outweighed even the momentous occasion of the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz cites the *Midrash* that when Hashem told Moshe to go to Egypt to deliver the *Bnei Yisrael* from their cruel enslavement, Moshe said, "I cannot go until I take leave from Yisro, who took me into his home when I was a wanderer" (*Shemos Rabbah* 4:2). Think of it! Moshe has a direct command from G-d, and it is to deliver the *Bnei Yisrael* from the inhuman slavery in Egypt, but Moshe says

that he cannot go without taking leave of Yisro! Rav Shmulevitz says that Moshe knew that it was indeed G-d's will that he do so, because gratitude is fundamental to G-dliness (*Sichos Mussar* 5732:32).

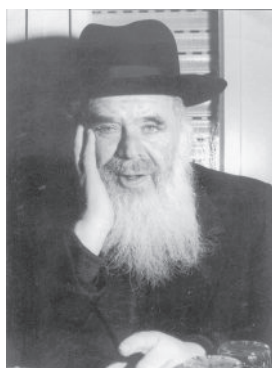
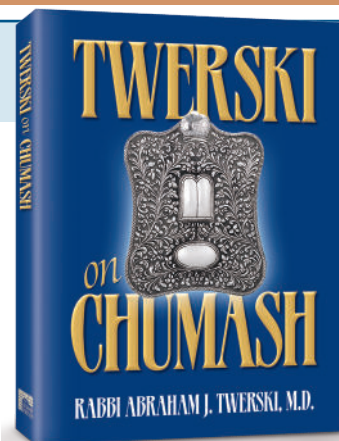
Rav Shmulevitz goes on to say that gratitude is so vital a trait that one is required to be grateful to even an inanimate object. When the Egyptians were to be smitten with the first plague of the Nile turning into blood, Hashem told Moshe to have Aharon initiate this plague. Moshe was not to smite the river, which had sheltered him when he was an infant. Similarly, the plague of frogs was done through Aharon, because this, too, required involvement of the river.

The river is not a sentient being that can be offended or appreciate an expression of gratitude. However, gratitude is so important a trait in character refinement that we must practice it toward even an inanimate object.

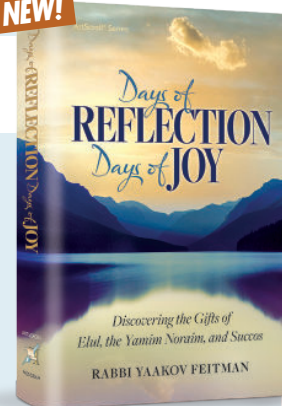
Expressing our gratitude toward Hashem is the central theme of prayer. Our very first words upon awakening in the morning are *Modeh Ani*, an expression of thanks to G-d for giving us another day of life.

We must model gratitude for our children. Children are often reluctant to express gratitude. A mother's instruction to her five-year-old child, "Say 'thank you' to the nice man for the candy,"

*continued on page 2*



Rav Chaim Shmulevitz



Yes, *Elul* is well underway. But has it actually changed our lives?

Are we thinking and acting differently than last week because of it? I often heard from my *rebbeztin's* *bubby* — who grew up in Kelm, the city of *mussar*, with her cousin, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv — the famous line, “Even the fish in the water trembled when *Elul* arrived.” She also related that two merchants were once arguing over money in the street, and an elderly woman leaned over the porch and shouted the magic word, “*Elul!*” Mundane discussions rapidly ceased.

Rav Asher Arielli reported hearing from Rav Shlomo Wolbe that a robber was fleeing a home in the city of Mir with his booty when the owner screamed, “*Elul!*” causing the thief to drop everything and flee. Rav Arielli pithily pointed out that in our time, we would undoubtedly scream out, “Police!” but in Mir they knew that saying, “*Elul!*” was more powerful. We don’t live in Kelm or Mir, but we are in the middle of *Elul*. What do we do now?

I once saw Rav Chatzkel Levenstein during *Elul* and that was frightening enough. But we unfortunately

can’t see him anymore. Actually, even he was once dissatisfied with his own reaction to the advent of this crucial month. Rav Shlomo Brevda used to share a pivotal *Elul* moment that happened during Rav Chatzkel’s tenure as *mashgiach* of the Mirrer Yeshivah in the United States. His description was this: “The *mashgiach* was like a king leading his troops in battle, surrounded by four hundred *talmidei chachamim* who hung onto his every word. His face was as radiant as that of a ministering angel, even though he barely looked outside of his personal four *amos*. “Yet, one day, something extraordinary occurred. Rav Chatzkel walked into the *beis midrash* on one of the days of *Elul* wearing his white *kittel*. When asked why, he answered softly but with the power of millennia, ‘I feel that since I arrived in the United States, my sensitivities have weakened. I am not as affected by the advent of the *Yemei Hadin* as I used to be, so I decided to wear my *kittel*, which is similar to the shrouds of the dead. I must use this garment to remind myself of the day of death so that I can strengthen my trepidation.” That was Rav Chatzkel, who lived and looked like a *malach*.

What should we do?

One answer may be gleaned from a line in the *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 81a). *Chazal* tell us to “be careful with children from poor homes, for Torah will come from them.” The *Ran* (first interpretation) explains, “The poor will succeed in their Torah studies because they have nothing else to divert their attention.” He apparently means that poor people don’t have to worry about businesses and assets, so they can concentrate on their Torah studies. In our contemporary world, the distractions are so multitudinous that even the poor barely have time to think about things like *Elul*. Yet the *Ran* is teaching that we must prioritize our lives, especially during this time of year, so that we make the time to consider our spiritual needs, and not only the perennial materialistic things that generally preoccupy us. This surely means, as a basic beginning, setting time to study *sifrei mussar* and other uplifting material that will reset our clock for *Elul* and *Tishrei* beyond. 📖

## THE CENTRALITY OF GRATITUDE continued from page 1

is often met with a grunt, indicating his refusal to do so. We can only conclude that reluctance to express gratitude is innate in children, and it is important that this resistance be overcome. This can best be accomplished by the parents modeling gratitude. Husbands and wives may take for granted the things that they do for each other. Saying “thank you” when the wife serves a meal

or when the husband does the dishes is an important lesson for the children.

The *Midrash* describes the adornments of the *bikurim* and the special honor that was shown to those who performed this *mitzvah*. No other *mitzvah* receives such celebration. It is the Torah’s way of impressing upon us that gratitude is the foundation of *middos* (desirable character traits). 📖

### THIS WEEK'S DAF YOMI SCHEDULE:

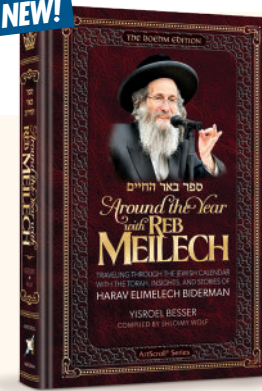
#### SEPTEMBER / אלול

SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
2 טו	3 יז	4 יח	5 יט	6 כ	7 כא	8 כב
Kiddushin 20	Kiddushin 21	Kiddushin 22	Kiddushin 23	Kiddushin 24	Kiddushin 25	Kiddushin 26

### THIS WEEK'S MISHNAH YOMI SCHEDULE:

#### SEPTEMBER / אלול

SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
2 טו	3 יז	4 יח	5 יט	6 כ	7 כא	8 כב
Ta'anis 2:4-5	Ta'anis 2:6-7	Ta'anis 2:8-9	Ta'anis 2:10-3:1	Ta'anis 3:2-3	Ta'anis 3:4-5	Ta'anis 3:6-7



A Yid went into the previous Rebbe of Toldos Aharon with a *kvittel*, in which he wrote that he had a *bittere machalah*, a dread disease, and needed a *refuah sheleimah*. The Rebbe wished him well and asked if he says *Tehillim*. He doesn't say much *Tehillim*, he admitted.

Then the Rebbe shared an insight. If a person has a bank account, he is able to write out checks against the balance in that account — the more funds in his account, the greater his ability to spend.

The way a person creates that sort of spiritual account is through saying *Tehillim*. The *perakim* add up and create a surplus against which one can make withdrawals when the need arises.

That's what the Rebbe said.

Reb Meilech waves his hands. "Nu, be *b'simchah*. You just found out how to become a *gvir*, the secret to an overflowing bank account, so smile!"

The Ari Hakadosh reveals that the word *Elul* is *roshei teivos* for *Ani l'Dodi v'Dodi Li*, I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine (*Shir Hashirim* 6:3), a reference to the fact that this month is a time for closeness, to mend our relationship with the *Bashefer*.

It's a time of special *rachamim*, a time to immerse ourselves in our well-worn *Tehillim* — to fill up that account!

And this special opportunity makes us happy and gives us a new rush of energy... *Elul* is *roshei teivos* "*leibidik uhn veiter leibidik*" (לעבדיק און ווייטער לעבדיק, enthusiasm and added enthusiasm), always with joy and only with joy.

## Keep It Close

We usher in the new month by reciting a *kappitel Tehillim* (Chapter 27), *L'Dovid Hashem ori*, and with it comes a new light. *Tehillim* does that for us, the words healing and uplifting, and we therefore recite this *kappitel* in all our *tefillos* through *Shemini Atzeres*.

Reb Meilech looks around, as if he is surrounded by a handful of people and not hundreds.



Rav Elimelech Biderman

**"THE TEHILLIM NEEDS TO BE YOUR BEST FRIEND AT THIS TIME OF YEAR."**

In our *chaburos*, we undertake together to come to the *heilege teg*, the holiest days, bearing the whole *Sefer Tehillim*. There are five *sefarim*, five sections in *Tehillim*, so we start by saying one of the five *sefarim* on *Shabbos mevarchim Elul* and we say one more each *Shabbos* until *Rosh Hashanah*, finishing the entire *sefer* this way. Of course, those who have the *minhag* of saying the complete *sefer* each *Shabbos* — in my father-

in-law's *beis medrash*, like in all of those led by *Nadivna* descendants, they recite the *Sefer Tehillim* every *Shabbos* in the weeks leading to *Rosh Hashanah* — shouldn't say less to take part in this... This is a minimum, but the more *Tehillim* said, the better!

This is the *lashon* of the *Shaar HaMelech*:

I have seen this in various places, and my father has told me about this very fitting custom — and that is to recite *Tehillim* following *tefillah* each day between *Rosh Chodesh Elul* and *Yom Kippur*, because the prime *avodah* in this month is to weaken the prosecuting angels who seek to harm us. The more strength one adds, the more effective this *avodah* will be, and nothing is more devastating to the forces of evil than *perakim* of *Tehillim*, which are called "*mizmorim*," a term that denotes pruning. They are the means by which we weaken and uproot the destructive angels.

If there is a community that does not yet know of this *minhag*, please make them aware, so that they keep the *Sefer Tehillim* close by during this month...and the merit of *Dovid HaMelech* will stand by them...

The *Tehillim* needs to be your best friend at this time of year.

The *mashpia* reaches out and lovingly taps a *Tehillim* on the table. "*Deine besteh freint, your best friend*," he says again. 📖

## This week's Yerushalmi Yomi schedule:

SEPTEMBER / אלול

SHABBOS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
2 טו Kilayim 49	3 יז Kilayim 50	4 יח Kilayim 51	5 יט Kilayim 52	6 כ Kilayim 53	7 כא Kilayim 54	8 כב Kilayim 55



# Parashah for Children

## פרשת כי תבוא

### A Special Prayer

Once they arrived at the Beis HaMikdash, the farmers thanked Hashem. How? By giving their bikkurim away to Hashem's servants — the Kohanim. And by saying a special prayer to thank Hashem for what He gave them.

The Torah tells us exactly what the farmers should say when they bring bikkurim.

The farmer tells the Kohen: "I declare today to Hashem, your God, that I have come to the land that Hashem promised our Avos to give to us."

The Kohen and the farmer hold the basket and wave it up and down and in the four directions, something like what we do with a lulav and esrog. The farmer then takes the basket. Holding onto the basket, the farmer says the prayer in a loud voice.

After saying this prayer of thanks, the farmer puts down the basket next to the Mizbei'ach. He bows and leaves the basket for the Kohen. He is happy and grateful for all the good that Hashem has done for him and his family.

The Kohen is happy too. He has fruit that he and his family can enjoy! The bikkurim have to be eaten in Yerushalayim.

There is a lot more to the mitzvah of bikkurim than what you have read about here. An entire maseches (section) of the Mishnah explains the details of the mitzvah. It is called Maseches Bikkurim.



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## THE WEEKLY QUESTION

Question for Parashas Ki Savo:

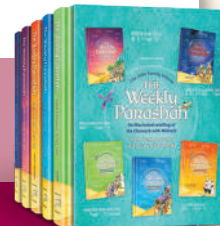
*Before a person bringing bikkurim left the Beis HaMikdash, a Heavenly voice was heard. What did it say?*

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to [shabbosquestion@artscroll.com](mailto:shabbosquestion@artscroll.com) by this Wednesday to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.

**The winner of the Parashas Re'eh question is: TZVI KURANT, Passaic, NJ**

The question was: What is the highest level of tzedakah?

The answer is: The highest level is to help a poor person get a job or start a business, so that he will not need to take tzedakah anymore.



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