

Taste of Talmud and Halacha

Rav says: **G-d's name** must be included in a blessing in order for the blessing to be efficacious, *Rabbi Yochanan* says that you also have to mention the fact that **G-d is the King of the universe** for the blessing to be valid. *Abayey* explains that this dispute is based on their varied understandings of the verse which tells us what the farmers say when they bring *Bikurim* (the gift of their first fruit). The farmers say, "I have properly completed the tithing in **all** of its details (Deut. 26:13)." All agree that one of the requirements for a proper tithing is that a blessing should be said. They are only arguing as to what must be included in the formula of the blessing (*Brachos* 40b). *Rashi* comments, the wording of the blessing is: Blessed are you our G-d, King of the universe, Who has commanded us to separate the tithes and priestly gifts. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky Zt"l points out that we can learn from this *Rashi* that he is of the opinion that this blessing is biblical in origin. From *Rashi's* commentary to Deuteronomy (26:13) it is also clear that he understands that there is a command to make a blessing **prior** to separating tithes. Great scholars of later generations were troubled by these words of *Rashi*. They asked: In regards to other *Mitzvos* such as blowing the *Shofar* or performing a *Bris Milah*, the blessing is Rabbinic in origin. Why is the *Mitzvah* of tithing different? Therefore, they amended *Rashi's* statement to say that there is a biblical command to **praise** G-d prior to separating tithes but not

necessarily to make a blessing prior to the *Mitzvah*. *Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky Zt"l* provides us with a novel insight which removes the necessity to amend the words of *Rashi*. The *Mitzvah* of separating the tithes is different than other *Mitzvos* such as blowing the *shofar* and *Bris Milah*. It is readily apparent when one performs *Mitzvos* which do not give us physical pleasure, such as these, that they are being done because G-d commanded us to do them. The blessing that is said prior to their performance is rabbinic in origin because it is merely intended to help us clearly express the otherwise obvious. The *Mitzvah* of separating tithes, however, has **two** aspects to it. The **first** is very physical. One must remove the forbidden food from this mixture in order to be able to enjoy his produce. The **second** part, giving the gift to the Levites and *Kohanim*, is clearly a spiritual act in service of G-d. Since, when a farmer first removes the fruit, it is not clear from his actions whether he is doing it in order to serve G-d, or just to enjoy the produce, there is a biblical command to make a blessing prior to the tithing. In so doing, he makes it clear that not only is the spiritual side of this *Mitzvah* being done to serve G-d but the physical aspect is being done to sanctify G-d's name in this world as well.

This week's issue is dedicated
in honor of
Dany Zaslavsky's
Bar Mitzvah.

Have a Great Shabbos !!

Taste of Parasha

The *Medrash*, in *Bereishis Rabba* 1:15, relates an interesting debate between the great sages *Shamai* and *Hillel*. *Shamai* is of the opinion that heaven was created before earth, whereas *Hillel* is of the opinion that earth was created before heaven. *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* commented on this debate: In my opinion, they were created at the same moment. The *Nesivos Shalom* explains: These sages are not arguing about the physical creation of the world, rather, they are conveying to us their different approaches as to the purpose of life itself. What is the loftiest goal in life? *Shammai* is telling us: The most important objective in life is to do *Mitzvos* that are purely spiritual, **heavenly**. *Hillel* says there is an even loftier objective. In his opinion, the main purpose of life is to uplift all **earthly** matters to be used in the service of G-d. To this, *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* says, "Both ways of serving G-d are commendable. G-d's name can be sanctified both through *Mitzvos* that do not have physical pleasure and through those that do." With this insight, we can now understand why our sages say that the world was created so that the Jews would bring the gift of *Bikurim* (first fruits) as gifts to the *Kohanim*. This is a *Mitzvah* in which both ways of serving G-d come together in an ideal manner. We too, can learn from here to look for ways through which to elevate all aspects of our lives towards a more meaningful existence in the upcoming year.

"A Taste of Yeshiva" is a project of Yeshiva L'Baalei Batim. To schedule a learning session, or to dedicate an upcoming issue, you may contact Rabbi Friedman at rabbiyaf@gmail.com.