



Likkutei Sichos

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Repeat Next Year

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1.

PRAISING THE JEWISH PEOPLE

In our *parshah*, following the passages on {the topics of} *bikurim*¹ and *viduy maasros*,² the Torah says,³ “This day Hashem, your L-rd, commands you to perform these decrees and the statutes, and you shall observe and perform them with all your heart and with all your soul.” Rashi (in his second gloss on the verse) quotes the words, “and you shall observe and perform them,” and explains: “A Heavenly voice blesses him: You have brought *bikurim* today — you shall repeat this next year.”

Rashi interprets the clause, “you shall observe and perform them,” **not** as a command, but rather as a **blessing**, even though, understood simply, this wording denotes a command (and in fact, many *pashtanim*⁴ interpret it as such). Simply understood, the reason Rashi interprets it as a blessing is (as the commentators⁵ explain):

The verse, “this day...” follows after the passages that **conclude** the discussion of the commands regarding *bikurim* and *viduy maasros*. This verse also follows the Torah’s description of the implementation of these commands (as Rashi explains:⁶ “Gaze down from Your holy abode — we have done what You decreed upon us”). Additionally, the verses that **follow**, “you shall observe and perform them” no longer discuss commandments; rather, they praise the Jewish people:⁷ “You have distinguished Hashem... And Hashem has distinguished you....” Therefore, there is no room to interpret “you shall observe

¹ {*bikurim*, lit., “first fruits.” The Torah commands us to bring the first fruits of the land of Israel to the *Beis Hamikdash*. See details in *Mishneh Torah*, “[Hilchos Bikurim](#),” ch. 3, par. 12.}

² {*Viduy maasros*, lit., “confession of the tithes.” A person made this declaration at the *Beis Hamikdash* affirming that he had taken the appropriate tithes from his produce, and had not held back anything that should have been given to a *kohen*, to a *levi*, or to the poor. This declaration was made in the fourth and seventh years of the *shemittah* cycle, on the eve of Pesach.}

³ *Devarim* 26:16.

⁴ {Commentators who interpret Scripture according to *pshat* — the plain, straightforward meaning of Scripture.}

⁵ See the commentaries on Rashi at length.

⁶ *Devarim* 26:15.

⁷ *Devarim* 26:17,18. {“You have distinguished Hashem today to be a L-rd for you, and to walk in His ways, and to observe His decrees, His commandments, and His statutes, and to listen to His voice. And Hashem has distinguished you today to be for Him a treasured people, as He spoke to you....”}

and perform them” as a **commandment**, since then this verse is out of place, unconnected to the preceding verses or to the verses that follow.

Therefore, Rashi interprets the words, “you shall observe and perform them” as a blessing for the Jewish people for having fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *bikurim*. Thus, this verse (describing the blessings and reward that the Jewish people receive for the *mitzvah* of *bikurim*) is connected to the verses that follow. For they also express praise for the Jewish people: the Jewish people merit that “Hashem has distinguished you” because “you have distinguished Hashem.”

2.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE REWARD

On this basis we can also appreciate Rashi’s nuanced wording, “You have brought *bikurim* today — you shall **repeat** next year.” Ostensibly, Rashi should have said, “you shall **bring** them next year” (corresponding to the earlier wording, “you have **brought** *bikurim* today”). Alternatively, “you shall **perform** this next year” (similar to the wording of the verse, “you shall... **perform** them”). Why does Rashi say, “you shall **repeat**...”?

However, based on the above, that the blessing, “you shall observe and perform them” is connected to and is similar {in theme} to the verses that follow, we can understand why Rashi uses the wording, “you shall repeat this.”

In the verses, “You have distinguished Hashem... And Hashem has distinguished you...,” the Torah teaches that Hashem’s reward is measure (“distinguished you”) for measure (“you have distinguished Hashem”).⁸ For “you have **distinguished** Hashem” brings commensurate reward: “Hashem has distinguished you.” Moreover, the terms “*he’emarta* {you have distinguished}” and “*he’emircha* {has distinguished you}” have “no parallel in Scripture.”⁹ Thus,

⁸ Similar to *Shemos* 18:11, see Rashi on that verse; see also *Sotah* 9b ff.

⁹ Rashi on the verse.

clearly, “Hashem has distinguished you” corresponds precisely to “you have distinguished Hashem.”

Therefore, Rashi understands that the blessing, “you shall observe and perform them” — which is thematically similar to the clause, “You have distinguished Hashem... and Hashem has distinguished you...” — is not a regular blessing, but rather a blessing that “you shall **repeat** this next year”: During the second year you will {be rewarded so that you will be able to} **repeat** the same action that you are doing now — the reward is measure for measure.

3.

THE PENULTIMATE TOPIC

But we must still clarify why Rashi writes, “You have brought **bikurim**.” Previously, the passage closest to the verse, “this day...,” discusses the laws of **maaser** (even though the words “and I have **also** given,”¹⁰ which a person recites as part of the *viduy maasros*, also includes [*terumah*¹¹ and] *bikurim*,¹² nevertheless, the *viduy* primarily applies to *maaser*.) The Torah discusses the laws of *bikurim* two passages previously — in the passage **before** the one about *maasros*.

Why, then, does Rashi write, “you have brought **bikurim**,” i.e., that this verse refers to the passage about *bikurim* which appears two passages earlier, and not to the passage about *maasros*, which immediately precedes this verse?

[Although we find, in several places,¹³ that a verse may refer back not only to the previous passage but **also** to the passage before that, nonetheless, it seems unreasonable to presume (especially, within *pshat*)¹⁴ that a verse would refer

¹⁰ *Devarim* 26:13.

¹¹ {*Terumah* — (lit. “the elevated portion”); a portion (around 2%) of the agricultural produce given to the *kohanim*; this portion must be guarded from ritual impurity and eaten in a state of purity.}

¹² See Rashi there.

¹³ As in Rashi *Devarim* 11:19.

¹⁴ {The plain, straightforward meaning of Scripture.}

only to a matter discussed two passages prior, and **not** to the matter discussed in the passage immediately before it.]¹⁵

It is implausible that Rashi gives *bikurim* as an illustration (being the first topic mentioned in our *parshah*), even though the blessing also applies to *maasros*. For the wording of the blessing, “you shall repeat this next year,” cannot apply to (*viduy*) *maasros*, since *viduy maasros* will not occur **next** year ({as it is observed} only once every three years). This proves that Rashi understands that the blessing, “you shall observe and perform them,” was said **only** concerning *bikurim*.

4.

AN IRREGULAR TYPE OF BLESSING

Moreover, and more importantly, as people say, a *klatz kashya*:¹⁶ Throughout the Torah, whenever discussing the reward and blessings for fulfilling *mitzvos*, the Torah tells how Hashem promises (for all generations) an explicit reward for fulfilling a particular *mitzvah* (or for fulfilling all of the *mitzvos*), as in our *parshah*, “You have distinguished Hashem {by performing the *mitzvah*}... and Hashem has distinguished you...” {with the promised reward}. This sequence is then found in a lengthy passage that follows:¹⁷ “It shall be that if you listen... {— the *mitzvah*}. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you...” {— the reward}.

Here, Rashi introduces a unique and tremendous novelty — that (to borrow Rashi’s words) “**has no parallel in Scripture.**” A Jew would offer *bikurim* and {in addition to any reward} a Heavenly voice would bless **him** {individually}, “you shall repeat this next year.”

¹⁵ Note Rashi’s commentary on *Devarim* 11:7,13; *Devarim* 12:8.

¹⁶ {*Klatz kashya*, lit., “a fool’s question.”}

¹⁷ *Devarim* 28:1 ff.

Seemingly, also according to the methods of analysis of *halachah*, *remez*,¹⁸ *drush*,¹⁹ and *sod*,²⁰ this is difficult: A blessing from a Heavenly voice? Did the verse make any allusion to this?

Even more puzzling: Rashi presents this {seemingly unsubstantiated} interpretation according to his approach to Scriptural commentary,²¹ “I have come only to explain the **plain** meaning of the Scripture.”

5.

“REPEAT” IS ONLY A BLESSING FOR *BIKURIM*

The explanation:

The preceding passage discusses, “When you have finished **tithing**... in the **third** year.”²² If we assume that the phrase, “you shall observe and perform them” — which according to Rashi means, “you shall **repeat**...,” as discussed — pertains to *maasros*, it would emerge that the person was also blessed that next time he should bring up all the *maasros* — including those of the first and second year — only in the **third** year. But this cannot be true, because:

[The verse says, “you shall observe and perform them **with all your heart and with all your soul**,” and when a person performs a *mitzvah*, “with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul,” it is impossible that he would delay a year or two.]

¹⁸ {*Remez* is a method of commentary based on hints and allusions in the text, sometimes based on the numerical value of letters.}

¹⁹ {*Drush* is an exegetical method of commentary in which the words of a verse are used as a platform to express an ostensibly extrinsic idea.}

²⁰ {*Sod* is a method of commentary focusing on the secrets and esoteric teachings of Torah, based on *Kabbalah*.}

²¹ {Rashi’s commentary to} *Bereishis* 3:8.

²² {*Devarim* 26:12.}

This “repetition” — i.e., that the second time, he will also delay bringing the *maasros* until the *time of biur*²³ — is ostensibly the complete **opposite** of a blessing.

Thus, Rashi is forced to explain that the blessing only pertains to *bikurim*. In this case, the “repetition” is in fact a blessing. Meaning, in the following year, he will also offer his *bikurim*, as the verse says, “with all your heart and with all your soul.”

6.

BIKURIM = A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY

However, the following remains unclear:

How is it possible that the verse, “you shall observe” is completely unrelated to the passage closest to it, but only to a previous passage?

Accordingly, we must conclude that although the general topic of the previous passage {beginning with} “this day...” is (*viduy*) *maasros*, at its conclusion — near the words, “this day” — there must be some matter that relates specifically to *bikurim*. Consequently, in continuation, our verse follows with the blessing about *bikurim*.

The explanation:

The section, “When you have finished tithing” concludes with the words, “a land flowing with milk and honey.”²⁴ (As Rashi explains in *parshas Bo*),²⁵ this means, “Milk flows from the goats and honey flows from the dates.” These two

²³ {“*Zman habiur*,” in the Hebrew original —the deadline for a person to either distribute or destroy the *maaser* of the previous three years.}

²⁴ {*Devarim* 26:15.}

²⁵ *Shemos* 13:5.

items are **not** obligated in *maaser*. According to *pshat*,²⁶ the obligation to take *maaser* only applies to grain, wine, and oil,²⁷ but not to milk or honey.

Moreover, and more importantly: *Maaser* must be brought from “the **entire** crop of your planting,”²⁸ not just from {the choicest fruits, as the verse says,} “a land of wheat... a land of oil-olives...”²⁹ — {as Rashi explains, a type of olive} whose oil is stored inside it,³⁰ or only from dates whose honey oozes out — that is, “flowing with milk and honey.”

However, they {this verse and these items} are connected to *bikurim* [*bikurim* also applies to (the honey of) dates, as Rashi mentions at the beginning of our *parshah*.³¹ Additionally,] (“He gave us...) a land flowing with milk and honey,”³² is the basis for the *mitzvah* of bringing *bikurim* (to show his appreciation).³³ As the verse then **immediately** continues,³⁴ “And now, behold! I have brought the first...,” i.e., he **only** brings *bikurim* from this {quality of} fruits.

Therefore, the entire section (prior to “this day”) discusses (*viduy*) *maasros*, and the words, “flowing with milk and honey” also follow as a consequence of request, “and bless,”³⁵ which we request in the *viduy maasros*. Nevertheless, since the concluding phrase, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” contains a correlation specifically to *bikurim*, as mentioned, there is room to interpret the verse, “this day” as referring back to *bikurim*.

²⁶ Even according to actual *halachah*, **Rashi** (whose opinion we are dealing with) maintains in tractate *Brachos* (36a, s.v., “*gabei maaser*”; see also Rashi, *Rosh Hashanah*, 15b; *Kesef Mishnah*, *Mishneh Torah* “*Hilchos Terumos*,” ch. 2, par. 1; *Raadavaz*, *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Maaser*,” ch. 1, par. 9) that the biblical obligation for *maasros* only applies to grain, wine, and oil.

²⁷ As the verse states in *Devarim* 14:23.

²⁸ *Devarim* 14:22.

²⁹ {*Devarim* 8:8. The verse enumerates the seven Blessed fruits of Israel. *bikurim* need only be brought from these seven fruits; they are wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates.}

³⁰ Rashi, *Devarim* 26:2. {“The term oil-olives refers to the *aguri* olive which is called that name because its oil is collected (*agur*) inside it.” And Rashi, *Brachos* 39a, s.v., *Agur B’socho* explains that the oil of these olives is separate from its pulp, and is extracted easily, like the juice of a grape. It is not absorbed inside the pulp like the juice of an apple.}

³¹ Rashi, *Devarim* 26:2; Rashi, *Shemos* 34:26.

³² {*Devarim* 26:9.}

³³ Rashi, *Devarim* 26:3.

³⁴ {*Devarim* 26:10.}

³⁵ {*Devarim* 26:15.}

BAS KOL

But one issue remains unresolved. By way of introduction:

The *mitzvah* of bringing *bikurim* **strongly emphasizes** the principle of “measure of measure.” Since “Hashem took us out of Egypt” ({where we endured} “hard labor...”),³⁶ and on the opposite extreme, “He gave us... a land flowing with milk and honey,” we bring only the first of the fruits and not all fruits, and from these fruits, we bring specifically a fig (or the like) “**that has begun to ripen.**”³⁷ Similarly, Hashem also {acted in a way that was “measure for measure”}, since concerning the Jewish people, it says, “You have **distinguished Hashem today,**” therefore, “Hashem has **distinguished you today.**”

This begs the question:

In order for a person to show gratitude in a way that is “measure for measure,” the following would have been sufficient: “You shall take from the first... and go **to the place** that Hashem, your L-rd will choose...”³⁸ (corresponding in measure to, “He brought us **to this place...**”),³⁹ and, “behold! I have brought... and you shall place it before Hashem, your L-rd...” (corresponding to, “He gave us this land”).⁴⁰

However, the person {bringing *bikurim*} **adds**: “I declare today to Hashem, your L-rd,”⁴¹ and moreover, he “shall call out”⁴² {as Rashi writes, “this denotes} raising the voice.” Consequently, he also deserves a measure in response to this measure, for this is the essential characteristic of the *mitzvah*, as mentioned.

³⁶ {*Devarim* 26:6,8.}

³⁷ Rashi, *Devarim* 26:2.

³⁸ {*Devarim* 26:2.}

³⁹ {*Devarim* 26:9.}

⁴⁰ {*Devarim* 26:10.}

⁴¹ {*Devarim* 26:3.}

⁴² {*Devarim* 26:5.}

Therefore, a *straightforward* understanding of Scripture compels us to conclude that in response to a person *calling out*, there followed a corresponding Divine response {“measure for measure”}.

But how can this be? {Earlier,} when “you heard the voice,”⁴³ the Jewish people protested, “Is there any mortal who has heard the voice of the living G-d... You {Moses} should approach and hear...,”⁴⁴ since this {hearing the voice of Hashem directly} was only possible for Moshe and for {other prophets}: “I will establish a prophet... **like you**. I will place My words in his mouth and he shall speak to them.”⁴⁵

Therefore, we are forced to conclude that the {reciprocal} *calling out* from Heaven {prompted by the *calling out* of a person} was expressed as a **bas kol** {a Heavenly voice}.⁴⁶

8.

CORROBORATING RASHI WITH *CHASSIDUS*

Rashi’s commentary contains wondrous novellae, amongst them:

The reasoning behind Rashi’s interpretation — that the verse, “this day” discusses the *mitzvah* of *bikurim*, since it refers back to the phrase, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” which appears immediately prior to this verse — fits {well} with the Alter Rebbe’s explanation of this verse.

In *Likkutei Torah*,⁴⁷ the Alter Rebbe explains that the verse, “this day” connects to the words, “flowing with milk and honey” in the previous verse. As such, he says that the first letters {ו,ה,ה,ו} of the four words, “*u’dvash hayom*

⁴³ *Devarim* 5:20.

⁴⁴ *Devarim* 5:23,24.

⁴⁵ *Devarim* 18:18.

⁴⁶ {The nuance here is that the Hebrew term *bas kol*, lit., “the daughter of the voice,” or “echo,” refers to an “echo” of a Heavenly voice.}

⁴⁷ At the beginning of *parshas Ki Savo* (41c).

hazeh Hashem {and honey. This day, Hashem}” spell out {together} **one** combination of the letters of the Tetragrammaton {the ineffable name of Hashem}, since the *vav* of the word “*u'dvash* {and honey}” connects to the verse that follows it.

As mentioned above, although according to *pshat*, the verse {“this day”} alludes to all four words, “*eret zavav chalav u'dvash* {a land flowing with milk and honey},” still, it is **primarily** connected to the word “*u'dvash* {honey},” since the **obligation** to bring *bikurim* only applies to honey {i.e., dates} (and not to milk).

The same holds true according to the explanation, based on *Chassidus*, in *Likkutei Torah*. As the Alter Rebbe says there, “this verse is connected to the section above it, which concludes, ‘**a land flowing with milk and honey.**’” Meaning, this verse is connected to all four words. Nevertheless, it is primarily connected to the word “*u'dvash* {honey}” specifically, for its letter “*vav*” forms part of the acronym, together with “*hayom hazeh Hashem* {this day, Hashem}” to the extent that they {together} form **one** combination of the name *Havaya*.

9.

CHOICE

In *Likkutei Torah*, the Alter Rebbe explains another thought based on the term, “this day”: “‘This day’ refers to Rosh Hashanah.” This idea also fits well with Rashi’s interpretation that this verse refers to *bikurim*, for just like **Rosh** Hashanah {is the **head** of the year}, *bikurim* fruit are also **reishis** {**first** fruit}.

⁴⁸

Furthermore, regarding the difference between *bikurim* and *terumah* — although *terumah* is also called “the first,”⁴⁹ *bikurim* **precedes** *terumah* {in the

⁴⁸ *Shemos* 23:19; *Shemos* 34:26; *Devarim* 26:2 (“from the first”).

⁴⁹ *Devarim* 18:4 (and see Rashi there); *Bamidbar* 18:12 (and see Rashi there).

sequence of separating tithes}, (as Rashi writes earlier,⁵⁰ “I did not give *terumah* before *bikurim*”). The *Tzemach Tzedek* in *Ohr Hatorah* on our *parshah*⁵¹ explains at length that *terumah* being “first” corresponds to the Torah {being first}, regarding which the verse states,⁵² “Hashem made me {i.e., the Torah} at the **beginning**⁵³ of His way”; and *bikurim* being “first” corresponds to the souls of the Jewish people, regarding whom the verse states,⁵⁴ “Israel is holy to Hashem, the **first** of His crop.” Therefore, just as the Jewish people preceded Torah,⁵⁵ so, too, *bikurim* precedes *terumah*.

As the *Tzemach Tzedek* elucidates there: The *bikurim* of the Jewish people’s souls relates to the soul’s essence as sourced in Hashem’s core. **At this level**, “the {Divine} thought of the Jewish people preceded everything,”⁵⁶ including Torah.

On this basis, we can appreciate the relationship between *bikurim* and Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah, our *avodah* is to accept the yoke of Hashem’s kingship, prompted by the essence of our soul. (As explained in a number of places,⁵⁷ the acceptance of Hashem’s kingship throughout the year does not {openly} engage a person’s inward faculties. In contrast, the acceptance of Hashem’s kingship on Rosh Hashanah is an expression of the *bitul* arising from the essence of the soul.) This is the level of *bikurim* — the **first** — the core of the soul, as mentioned above.

[Additionally, we can explain: One of the primary factors of Rosh Hashanah is that, on this day, “You have chosen us,”⁵⁸ i.e., Hashem’s choice of the Jewish people is revealed. As we recite in our prayers on Rosh Hashanah,⁵⁹

⁵⁰ *Devarim* 26:13 {part of the *viduy maasros*}.

⁵¹ Pg. 1033 ff.; pg. 1039 ff.

⁵² *Mishlei* 8:22.

⁵³ {In context we have translated this word as “beginning,” however, in the original, the word “*reishis*” is used in both the verse about Torah and the Jewish people.}

⁵⁴ *Yirmiyahu* 2:3.

⁵⁵ *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 14.

⁵⁶ *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 1, par. 4.

⁵⁷ See *Sefer HaMaamorim* 5704, *Hemshech Rosh Hashonah*, ch. 3, ff.

⁵⁸ {Prayer liturgy, *amidah* for festivals.}

⁵⁹ *Tehillim* 47:5.

“He will **choose** our heritage for us....” This choice is prompted by the *bikurim* of the soul, the core of the soul.

The explanation:

True choice only occurs when the choice is not at all predicated on reasons or causes. Therefore, choice is possible on a level where the (virtues and) behaviour of humanity is insignificant. “Esav is the brother of Yaakov”⁶⁰ — both are equal (and the *makifim*,⁶¹ which are beyond *seder hishtalshelus*,⁶² identify with the nations of the world to a greater extent, as known regarding Esav’s right of the first-born.)⁶³ Nonetheless, {Hashem declares,} “I love Yaakov.”⁶⁴ This choice is prompted by the root of souls that are rooted in Hashem’s Essence, the “*bikurim*” of the soul. At this level, Yaakov is the firstborn,⁶⁵ and Hashem chooses the Jewish people specifically.]

10.

BIKURIM EVERYDAY

Based on all the above we can also appreciate why, in Rashi’s commentary (in his previous gloss) on the words, “This day Hashem, your L-rd, commands you,” Rashi emphasizes, “Every day they {the *mitzvos*} shall be new {חדשים} in your eyes, as though they were commanded to you that very day.” “**Every day** they shall be new in your eyes” means that even on a day when a person busies himself with other *mitzvos* or with studying other topics in Torah (unrelated to *bikurim*) he must feel, “as though you had received the *mitzvos* that very day.” {Regarding which *mitzvos* must a person feel as if he had received them that

⁶⁰ *Malachi* 1:2.

⁶¹ {Transcendent G-dly energy.}

⁶² {*Seder Hishtalshelus* refers to the chain-like descent of spiritual worlds until this physical world. Each spiritual world denotes a complete realm of existence, resulting from its general proximity to or distance from Divine revelation.}

⁶³ See *Torah Ohr*, *Toras Chaim*, *Ohr HaTorah*, beginning of *parshas Vayishlach*. See *Ohr HaTorah*, *parshas Ki Savo*, pg. 1036, ff.; 1042,1043.

⁶⁴ *Malachi*, *ibid*.

⁶⁵ See *Ohr HaTorah*, *parshas Ki Savo*, p. 1036, ff.; 1042, 1043.

very day? The verse continues:} “these decrees and the statutes,” which, according to **Rashi’s interpretation**, means the *mitzvah* of *bikurim*.

Now, why is it so important that within the context of the **general** observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, a person should remember the commandment of *bikurim* “**everyday**”? And furthermore, they should be regarded as “new — חדשים,” and” not “as if they were new — כחדשים” (written with a *kaf ha’dimyon*)⁶⁶ as Rashi mentions in other places⁶⁷ regarding Torah and *mitzvos*.

But on the above basis, this becomes clear. In everything that a Jew does, including the *avodah* that he performs with specific faculties, he must sense the *bitul* and *kabbalas ol*⁶⁸ prompted by the core of the soul. Similar to the well-known concept that a person must “take” the *kabbalas ol* of Rosh Hashanah (which comes from the *bikurim* of the soul, as mentioned) and bring it with him so that it will also shine throughout the year. This holds true in a similar vein everyday: In everything that a Jew does on a daily basis he must sense with utter freshness the commandment of *bikurim*, i.e., with *bitul* of the essence of his soul.

[As the *Tzemach Tzedek* there explains⁶⁹ the *Tanchuma*,⁷⁰ which says that prayers were established in place of *bikurim*: Prayer binds the soul in this world with its source and soul-root {above}. Therefore, a person must pray before he studies Torah, since in order to study Torah properly, he must first be excited by his soul’s essence. This is accomplished by prayer.]⁷¹

⁶⁶ {Lit., “the *kaf* of similarity,” the letter *kaf* is used as a prefix in the word כחדשים to indicate similarity: “like new,” but not actually new.}

⁶⁷ *Devarim* 6:6 (see *Sifrei* there).

⁶⁸ {*Kabbalas ol*, lit., “accepting the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven,” connoting an unequivocal commitment to Hashem.}

⁶⁹ *Ohr Hatorah, parshas Ki Savo*, pg. 1033 ff.; pg. 1039 ff.

⁷⁰ At the beginning of *parshas Ki Savo*.

⁷¹ For this reason *bikurim* (prayer) precede *terumah* (Torah).

11.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEED BLESSING

The above deeper explanation of *bikurim* clarifies another element of Rashi's interpretation:

A blessing that constitutes a **promise** can only relate to entities that do not depend on a person's choice. However, seemingly, such promises cannot be made regarding Torah and *mitzvos*, which require us to “**choose life**,”⁷² inasmuch as “everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven.”⁷³ As such, how can we say that “a Heavenly voice blesses him... you shall **repeat** this next year”?

Based on the above explanation that *bikurim* symbolizes the essence of the soul, however, this becomes clear: Since the blessing is conducive to awakening the soul's essence, the blessing does not interfere with a person's free choice. On the contrary! It is from the essence of the soul that a person can “choose **life!**”⁷⁴

[Also within the framework of *pshat*, this dynamic can be understood. According to *pshat*, the purpose of offering *bikurim* is to express gratitude to Hashem. This is prompted by the fact that a person is not an ingrate (as Rashi writes⁷⁵ {and was mentioned} above). Since a person by **nature** is not an ingrate, he will assuredly offer *bikurim*, reflexively.]

⁷² *Devarim* 30:19.

⁷³ *Berachos* 33b.

⁷⁴ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, pg 35, ff.

⁷⁵ *Devarim* 26:3.

12.

MAKING IT REAL

As mentioned above, the *bitul* prompted by the essence of the soul needs to also pervade his particular faculties; this concept is also expressed in offering *bikurim*. A person brings *bikurim* from physical fruits, and furthermore, he brings specifically the finest and choicest of the fruits (and for this reason, we do not bring *bikurim* from dates that grow in the mountains, etc.).⁷⁶

Additionally, the *bikurim* brought from **these** {choice} fruits were not burned on the altar; rather, the *kohanim* **consumed** them;⁷⁷ moreover, the fruit was eaten in a state of joy — “you shall rejoice.”⁷⁸ Meaning, we take the idea of *bikurim*, representing the source and root of the soul, and we connect it with physical consumption — {whereby food becomes} a person’s flesh and blood — and consumption with **joy**.

Since Hashem rewards a person measure for measure, as discussed, therefore, the blessing that a person receives for the *mitzvah* of offering *bikurim* is that “you shall **repeat** this next year.” That is, his land will produce “from the first,”⁷⁹ fine delicious fruit, and he will experience {the promise described in the verse}, “You will rejoice with all the good that Hashem, your L-rd, has granted you and your household.”⁸⁰

The same applies to the *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah (which incorporates the idea of *bikurim*, as discussed). Through a Jew awakening within himself *bitul* and *kabbalas ol* prompted by the essence of his soul, Hashem will grant that he be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year, in his spiritual affairs, and also in his material affairs — he and his household, in all that they need, concerning children, health, and abundant livelihood.

-Based on a talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Ki Savo*, 5728 (1968)

⁷⁶ *Mishnah, bikurim*, ch. 1, sec. 3; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos bikurim*,” ch. 2, sec. 3.

⁷⁷ *Bamidbar* 18:13.

⁷⁸ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos bikurim*,” ch. 3, sec. 6 {*Devarim* 26:11}.

⁷⁹ {*Devarim* 26:2, the command to take “from the first of the fruits...” for *bikurim*.}

⁸⁰ *Devarim* 26:11.