



כולל רבנים
רבינו צבי אשכנזי

An Initiative of Amsterdam Community Kollel

THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

10 Elul

- No'ach opened the window in the Teiva and sent the raven out.
- Jews of the ghetto in Buda survived a riotous attack and declared the day as a Purim, 1684.

11 Elul

- Expulsion of the Jewish community in Moravia, 1563.
- Liquidation of the ghettos of Minsk and Lida, 1943.

12 Elul

- Pope renews anti-Jewish restrictions of the Roman Jewish community, 1732.

13 Elul

- Jews of New York (1695, pre-USA) petition the governor for permission to exercise their religion in public. Permission was denied, because freedom of religion applied to Christians only.
- Yahrzeit of the Ben Ish Chai, 1909.

14 Elul

- Nazis decreed that Jews had no rights to moveable or immoveable property, 1940.
- Jews of Vilna confined to ghetto, 1941.

15 Elul

- Russia decreed the draft of Jewish boys from the age of 12, 1827.

16 Elul

- Nazi decree forbidding non-Jews to work for Jews, 1940.
- Whole Jewish community of Meretsch, Lithuania, massacred by the Nazis, 1941.
- Illegal Jewish immigrants exiled to Mauritius by the British, were admitted into Eretz Yisrael, 1945.

SEEING GREATNESS IN CHALLENGES

RABBI DAVID SZTEJNHAEUER

In our Parasha, we find the special mitzvah of Bikkurim. After years of hard work, planting, waiting, and hoping, a farmer finally sees the first fruits growing. Instead of immediately enjoying them, he takes those first fruits to the Beis Hamikdash and gives them to the Kohen. This mitzvah is so special that people would stand out of respect as someone carrying Bikkurim passed by, even if he was a simple person.

Why does someone carrying a few fruits deserve so much respect? There is another interesting point. When bringing the Bikkurim, the farmer does not simply say, "Thank You, Hashem, for these fruits." Instead, he goes back through our history. He speaks about Yaakov and Lavan, the slavery in Egypt, how Hashem took us out, and how He brought us to Eretz Yisrael.

Why do we need to go so far back just to say thank you? A few weeks ago, someone asked me an interesting question: Why do we consider Avraham Avinu or Moshe Rabbeinu such great people? If Hashem spoke to me the way He spoke to them, maybe I would also become great! But when we look at a great person, we often see only who he is today, not the journey that brought him there. Avraham Avinu went through test after test. Moshe Rabbeinu faced enormous challenges. Their greatness was built through everything they experienced and overcame. The same is true for each one of us. Our struggles, efforts, disappointments, and challenges are part of what makes us who we are today.

This is the message of Bikkurim. We stand up for the farmer because of the journey behind those fruits: the years of work, faith, and self-control. Even when the first fruit appears, he does not take it for himself. He dedicates it to Hashem.

Where does he find that strength? He looks back. He remembers where we came from and how Hashem brought us to where we are today. When we look at one difficult moment can be hard to understand. But when we look at the whole story, we see that our difficulties helped shape us, strengthen us, and move us forward. Perhaps this is the deeper lesson of Bikkurim: to truly thank Hashem for where we are today, we must also appreciate the journey that brought us here.