



Standing for Bikurim

In the third chapter of *masechet Bikurim* we learn in great detail about how *bikurim* was brought. The precession and excitement the surrounded the masses of people that brought *bikurim* together was simply awesome. One detail mentioned is that aside from the officials and important people of the *Beit Hamikdash* that went to greet the crowd, craftsmen would also stand and ask about their welfare. Why was it important to mention the craftsmen's involvement?

The *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 33a) explains that craftsmen are not allowed to stand during their work for *talmidei chachamim* as they pass by. Nevertheless, during the *bikurim* precession, they would stand. *R' Yossi* explain that this detail in our *Mishnah* illustrates the importance of a *mitzvah* while it is being performed; even craftsmen that are forbidden from any break stop their work for the *bikurim*.

We need to understand two points. Firstly why are craftsmen not allowed to stand for *talmidei chachamim*? Secondly why are *bikurim* so special?

Since giving respect to *talmidei chachamim* is so important, the *Tosfot* question this prohibition that is placed on the craftsmen. They first answer, that the *Gemara* is referring to a craftsman that is being paid to do work for another; consequently they are not allowed to waste time during their contract. Alternatively the *Tosfot* answers that they are performing their own work, yet the *Gemara* means that they are not obligated to break for the passing sage but may do so if they want (see *Shluchan Aruch* YD 244:5).

The *Ritva* however explains that even a craftsman performing his own work is not allowed to stand. The *Chachamim* understood that people would generally opt to stand. The *Chachamim* were therefore concerned for the negative impacts on productivity (*bitul melacha*) and therefore outright forbade it. The *Ran* agrees but provides a

different reason. Since standing is optional for a craftsman performing his own work, if one craftsman decides to stand, then it would put the other craftsmen in bad light making them appear as they a degrading the owner of the *chachamim*.

Returning to *bikurim*, we find that the craftsmen nonetheless stand. We have mentioned that *R' Yossi* explains that this law shows how important a *mitzvah* is during its performance. The *Bartenura* learns from this that one must stand when a coffin is being carried for burial or when a baby is being brought for a *brit millah*.

The *Rambam* however explains that the difference by *bikurim* is that it involves giving respect to the masses (*kavod tzibbur*) which is different to honouring an individual *chacham*.¹

The *Gemara* however continues suggesting that perhaps the reason why the craftsmen must stand is not because of the importance of showing respect to *mitzvah* when it is being performed, but due to the negative ramifications if they do not. *Rashi* explains that there was a concern that those that came would feel that what they were doing was considered lightly or even nonsense in the eyes of the locals and would not come the next year.

The *Ben Yehoyah* questions this reason. Were the people bringing *bikurim* doing so for honour? Were they so sensitive that if the craftsmen did stand, who do not even stand for *talmidei chachamim*, they would be offended? He answers that this certainly is not the case. Instead there was a real concern that those coming would be embarrassed. After all, they travelled the country to bring a couple of pomegranates! Consequently all efforts were made to create a fuss and show respect to this *mitzvah* so that those that were coming would indeed appreciate the greatness of this "small" *mitzvah*.²

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¹ See the *Birkei Yosef* (YD 244:5) who offers an explanation as to where the *Rambam* derived this explanation, seeing that it appears to contradict the *Gemara*.

² Note, much of the content of this article was gleaned from the *Metiva*, *Yalkut Bi'urim*, *Kidushin* 33a.

As a final note perhaps we can use this to answer the *Mishnah Rishona's* question (3:2). He asks why there was no ceremony

when people brought *maaser sheni* or were *ole leregel*. He answers that perhaps they would combine all three and bring *maaser sheni* and *bikurim* to *Yerushalaim* at the same time. Perhaps we could provide the answer of the *Ben Yehoyada* that because of the potentially perceived triviality of *bikurim* in particular, there was need to generate a great fuss so that people recognise that despite its appearance, *bikurim* was a great *mitzvah*.

Revision Questions

ביכורים ב' ד' – ג' ר'

- What laws are specific to *bikurim* and not shared with *trumah* or *ma'aser sheni*? (ב' ד')
- Explain how *trumah ma'aser* is similar to *bikurim* in two ways, and similar to *trumah gedolah* in two ways. (ה')
- *Rabban Gamliel* held that an *etrog* is similar to a fruit in three ways and similar to a vegetable in one way – explain. (ב' ר')
- In what way is human blood similar to animal blood, and in what way is it similar to *dam sheretz*? (ז')
- What is a *koi* and how is it similar to a *behema*; and how is it similar to a *chaya*? (ח' – ט')
- In what ways is a *koi* similar to a *behema*? (י')
- In what ways is a *koi* different to both a *behema* and a *chaya*? (י"א)
- How does one separate *bikurim*? (א')
- Describe the process of how the *bikurim* were brought to *Yerushalaim*?
 - Where was the first stop? (ב')
 - What did they do when they approached *Yerushalaim*? (ג')
 - Describe the procession to temple mount. (ד')
 - What were done with the birds that were carried in their hands? (ה')
 - Describe what happened when they reached the *azarah*. (ו')

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Bikurim 3:7-8	Bikurim 3:9-10	Bikurim 3:11-12	Bikurim 4:1-2	Bikurim 4:3-4	Bikurim 4:5 – Shabbat 1:1	Shabbat 1:2-3

