

# THE FIRST OF OUR FRUITS

by Rabbi Label Lam

*And it will be that when you come into the land that HASHEM your G-d gives to you as an inheritance and you settle in it. And you should take from the first of all the fruit which came from the land that HASHEM your G-d gave to you...And you shall place it in a basket and take it to the place that HASHEM your G-d has chosen that His Name should dwell there...And declare before HASHEM your G-d, "An Aramian tried to destroy my father and he went down to Egypt to sojourn there a while and there he became a great and substantial nation. The Egyptians did us harm and afflicted us and they put upon us hard work. And we cried out to HASHEM the G-d of our fathers and HASHEM heard our voices and saw our pains and our burdens and our pressures. And HASHEM took us out from Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with great awe and with signs and wonders...And he brought us to this place and He gave to us this land flowing with milk and honey...and now I am bringing the first fruit of the land that HASHEM has given to me..." (Devarim 26:1-10)*

Why the requirement to travel so far and recite such a significant portion of the Haggada for some tiny first fruit?

There is a little blind spot that we mortals suffer from which requires occasional adjustments. It may seem like a minor foible or a game but if practiced in business accounting could spell criminal activity. Whenever anything goes even remotely correct in our universe we are quick to take credit for ourselves. When something within our immediate sphere goes wrong there's a tendency to dump losses on whoever is standing nearby, even G-d! Imagine a typical sports enthusiast sitting in his living room rooting for his team. "If only Casey could get a whack at that...I'd give even money now with Casey at the bat..." His man stands in and hits a homer- on the West Coast. The next day at the water cooler he's still gloating amongst his co-workers. He knew that if this guy would come up in this situation that that would be the result.

He foolishly feels he did it himself- "My power and the strength of my hand have accomplished this!" (Devarim 17:8)

Now that same fellow rushes out to work a little late the next morning. His wife reminds him to take out the garbage. Grumbling, bag in hand, he exits. She shouts a reminder that today is garbage collection. Now grunting Neanderthal style he drags the can to the head of the driveway, hustles to his car and quickly backs down the driveway. Entering the street he realizes that he has just struck his own overstuffed garbage can spilling out its contents into the middle of the street. Now he is revisiting a week of garbage, cleaning the entire mess, while cars in both directions join in a

cacophony of honking horns. Frustrated beyond reason he is suddenly stricken with a spirit of religiosity and turns to the heavens complaining, "Why me G-d?!" About this latter attitude King Solomon writes, "The foolishness of a man perverts his way and his heart frets against HASHEM. (Proverbs 19:3)

At the beginning of the planting season the farmer approaches his field with feelings of trepidation. He is vulnerable to his core dependant upon millions of factors beyond his control. However when those first little fruits begin to appear he is tempted to declare a personal victory falling victim to the illusion, "Born on third base and thinks he hit a triple!" He is like the guy who wins the lottery and starts to give financial advice.

So the Torah prescribes that he bring that first little fruit to a place where the Name of HASHEM is prominent and that he verbalize the context of his success. With this all shrinks back to proportion and credit is given where it is due. We too are not the authors of our existence, the makers of our own grey matter, or the directors of the more than 60 trillion genius cells that remain dutiful to their task daily. One cannot control and command enough of an entire world economy to celebrate alone any size score. In Heaven's eyes this humble awareness is not less than a presentation of the first of our fruits. Text Copyright &copy 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.