



Parshas Ki Savo



Candle lighting: 7:04 Shabbos Ends: 8:05
Sof Zman Krias Shema: 9:38

פרשת כי תבוא

Leaders and Their Generations

Rabbi Mayer Schiller

It will be when you enter the land that Hashem, your God, gives you as an inheritance, and you take possession of it, and dwell in it, that you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your land that Hashem your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket, and go to the place that Hashem your God will choose, to make his name rest there. You shall come to the kohen who will be in those days, and you shall say to him, "I declare today to Hashem your God, that I have come to the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers to give to us." (Devarim 26:1-5).

Rashi comments on the phrase "the kohen who will be in those days", stating "you have none but the kohen who will be in your days, as he is." Rashi here seems to be quoting from the *Sifrei* (298), which in our versions of the text is a bit longer than what Rashi quotes. Before turning to that text, though, let us examine the Ramban, who asks a powerful question on Rashi, which occupies many of the latter's commentators

The Ramban bases his question on another similar Rashi, on the *possuk* (17:9) "and to the judge who will be in those days." Rashi there also quotes the *Sifrei* as saying that, "even if he is not like the other judges who were before him, you must listen to him. You have none but the judge who is in your days." (*Sifrei* 153). The Ramban points out that regarding a judge, this statement makes sense, since the *possuk* needs to inform us that one must obey a judge even if he is lacking the wisdom and greatness of those who came before him. However, in regard to offering the *bikkurim*, to whom should one bring it if not to the kohen who will be in his days? In other words, the comment fits when we are dealing with a matter of wisdom and experience, but the giving and receiving of first fruits is, seemingly, completely ritualistic. A legitimate kohen is all that is required to ef-

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First is the Worst?

Dovid Wartelsky ('20)

In honor of Shema Koleinu's 25th anniversary, we are proud to present articles throughout the year from past editors of the publication. This week's Dvar Torah comes from Dovid Wartelsky, who served as Editor-In-Chief of Shema Koleinu in the 2019-20 school year. Since graduating, Dovid has gone on to Yeshivas Kerem Biyavneh, where he learns in Rabbi Shlomo Friedman's Shiur Based on Shiurim by Rabbi David Fohrman and Rabbi Tanchum Cohen

In this week's parsha, Parshas Ki Savo, the Torah re-introduces the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*, the commandment to bring the first-ripening fruits of one's produce to Yerushalayim. Once there, the farmer must bring the fruits to the Kohein, who waves it and puts it down in front of the *mizbeiach*. Afterward, the farmer recites the "Maamar Bikkurim", the passage beginning with the words "arami oved avi", which is famously recited at the Pesach seder. Afterwards, the farmer may eat the fruits

fect the *mitzvah*. What relevance is there if he is not as great as the *kohanim* of latter generations?

Although both *Sifrei's* are stated in the name of Rabi Yosi Haglili, there are some interesting textual variations between them. The Ramban's resolution here will be based on textual factors and their meaning. In the meantime, though, let us first look at how some of Rashii's other defenders answered the Ramban's *kashya*.

Rabbeinu Eliyahu Mizrahi (1455-1525), one of the first and most prolific supra commentaries on Rashi, offers that just as the goal of going to a *shofet* is to elicit an answer, requiring that the *shofet* be knowledgeable and capable, so too, the purpose of bring *bikkurim* is to receive the blessing of the *kohen* and to bask in his holy presence. Therefore, one might think that he should not bring *bikkurim* to a *kohen* who is not as saintly and pious as in days of old. So, in both cases, there is a fear that people might view the contemporary judge or priest as unfit for this specific job. Thus, the *possuk* reminds us that we only have the people of our own age.

Rav Aharon Fisher, author of the *Mekoros Ubiurim* in the *Ramban Hamevoar* (Volume 10, p.118), finds the Mizrahi's answer puzzling. As he puts it, "*bikkurim* is simply a *mitzvah*, so what difference does it make if the current *kohen* is not like the one in earlier days? It is not similar to the concept of a judge, where the issue is one of knowledge and competency."

There are a few other answers from Rashi's defenders. Again, we recall that the goal of their comments is to illustrate why Rashi quoted the *Sifrei* to correct a potential mistaken belief that the *kohanim* of a given age could be unfit to receive *bikkurim*. The *Maskil Ledavid* (Rav Dovid Pardo, 1719-1792) avers that since the *bikkurim*, unlike other *matnas kehunah*, must be brought to the *kohen* in the Temple, we might mistakenly conclude that this should only be done with a *kohen* who deserves respect. In other words, the bringing of *bikkurim* might be viewed as more than just a

ritual, but a sign of respect for those who serve in God's house.

The *Divrei Dovid* (a commentary on Rashi written by the *Turei Zahav*, Rav Dovid Halevi Segal, 1586-1667, more famously known for his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*) states that the declaration said before the *kohen* over the *bikkurim* contains the words, "I recite today to the Lord Your God . . ."

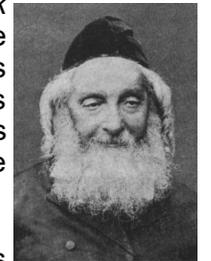
Thus, the *bikkurim* declaration attaches the name of God to the *kohen*. We might therefore mistakenly think the *bikkurim* should only be given to a *kohen* with spiritual importance. Therefore, this *droshah* informs us that this is not the case.

In the *Kli Yakar* (Rav Shlomo Ephraim Luntshutz, 1550-1610), we find the suggestion that since the *Gemara* (*Kesubos* 105b) learns from *bikkurim* that it is praiseworthy to bring gifts to a *talmid chocham*, one might assume that *bikkurim* should only be brought to a *kohen* who is a *Torah* scholar. The *droshah* therefore refutes this error.

The Netziv (Rav Naftali Tzvi Berlin, 1816-1893), in his *Chumash* commentary *Ha'emek Davar*, explains that the *bikkurim*, like *korbanos*, unleash Divine Blessings into the world. One might think that this power is generated only if the *kohen* is a *tzaddik*. This is the error which the *droshah* rejects.

Each of the five foregoing explanations see the error precluded by the *Sifrei* as a belief that something would be missing from the efficacy or dignity of the ritual if the *kohen* was unlike those of earlier generations.

The Ramban gives two alternatives to Rashi's understanding of "You shall have none but the Kohen in



A SHORT VORT

Akiva Ora (21)

"את-ה' האמרת היום... וה' האמירך היום" - "You have distinguished Hashem today...and Hashem has distinguished you today" (26:17-18)

The words *he'emarta* (you have distinguished) and *he'emricha* (has distinguished you) are unusual; Rashi points out that they are not used anywhere else in the *Torah*. While they are found in *Tehillim* (94:4), Rashi explains that in that context, it means something different from how it is used here.

The *Darash Moshe* (Rav Moshe Feinstein) explains that what one person finds beautiful isn't necessarily beautiful to others, neither in terms of physical beauty or in terms of beautiful actions. Here, the *possuk* is telling us that *Bnei Yisroel* defines the concepts of beauty and glory only by what *Hashem* considers fit and beautiful. We have uniquely "distinguished" *Hashem* for ourselves as the primary motivation for our actions and feelings. In this merit, He finds whatever we do to honor Him to be beautiful and glorious. We should all try to align our definitions of beautiful and important to be in line with *Hashem's* viewpoint. May we all be able to act and serve *Hashem* in the most beautiful manner possible!

your days as he is.” Unlike the common Rashi-based understanding, which believes that one might think that the *kohen* has to be better or special in some way, the Ramban interprets this phrase very simply: one might have thought that any *kohen* is a valid recipient of the *bikkurim* brought to Yerushalayim. Therefore, we are told that only the *kohen* who is currently serving in the Temple, based on the *Mishmar* rotation, may receive the *bikkurim*. He is the one who is serving “in those days”, meaning at that time, to the exclusion of the *kohen* who is not currently meant to be in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

We see here a studied avoidance on the Ramban's part of there being spiritual requirements that go beyond the bare ritual as required. In his other explanation, the Ramban takes an even more radical step.

This is the text of the *Sifrei* as the Ramban quotes it, and as it appears in some of the texts we now possess (please note that the version which appears in *Sifria* is a much shortened version, and may resemble one that Rashi had):

"And you shall come to the kohen that shall be in those days": This is what Rabi Yossi said: "Would it enter our minds that you should go to a kohen that is not "in your days"?! — [The intent is] to apprise us that the only criterion is a kohen who is qualified and presumed to be fit as in "your days." If he was related and became unrelated, he is qualified. And thus is it written "Do not say: 'How was it that former times were better than these'" (Koheles 7:10)

The Ramban postulates that this difficult text is speaking about one who offered *bikkurim* or an *olah* through a *kohen* who was presumed to be qualified, and who was afterwards discovered to be invalid for Temple service in some way. The Ramban explains that one only needs to look at the *kohen* as he was “in your days”, without considering any subsequent developments. The Ramban is hard-pressed to explain the phrase “related and became unrelated”, which has apparently nothing to do with Temple worship. He therefore concludes that this phrase actually relates to the question of a Sage in court. This is not as outlandish, as it seems that since both the text here and in *Parshas Shoftim* are statements of Rabi Yosi Haglili, that these may be variants on the same statement.

In any event, the Ramban once again avoids suggesting that the *bikkurim* ritual might (albeit errantly) be assumed to have more stringent spiritual demands. In fact, he says the reverse is true. Even if the ritual is done with an unfit *kohen*, it is still valid! There is an echo of this in the *mishnah* (*Bikkurim* 1:9), where we are told that the obligation is fulfilled even if the fruits are destroyed before the *kohen* takes them; in other words, the fruits only need to be brought to the *kohen*,

to fulfil the bare minimum of the ritual.

In conclusion, it seems that for Rashi, there is a temptation to view *bikkurim* as demanding greater conscious sanctity, which is then refuted by the *Sifrei's drosha*. The Ramban, however, sees *bikkurim* as a

5 Minute Lomdus

Shimi Kaufman (21)

"ארור משגה עור בדרך ואמר כל-העם אמן"
"Cursed is the one who leads a blind man astray on the path; and the whole nation answered 'Amen'" (Devarim 27:18)

Q. In general, there are two types of violations of the *issur* of *lifnei iver lo siten michshol* (lit. “do not place a stumbling block before the blind”). This *la'av* can be violated either by causing someone to do an *aveirah*, or by intentionally giving them bad advice on a certain topic in order to mislead them. The *Minchas Chinuch* (232) writes that the *Sefer Hachinuch* implies that there is no violation of *lifnei iver* by non-Jews as relates to giving bad advice. However, the *Gemara* (*Avodah Zara* 6b) explicitly states that causing a non-Jew to violate one of the *Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach* (the seven commandments given to non-Jews) would be a violation of *lifnei iver*. Thus, we are left with a question: why is there a violation of *lifnei iver* by non-Jews in causing them to sin, but not in giving them bad advice?

A. The distinction here emerges from a fundamental difference in the reasoning for *lifnei iver* regarding *issurim* and regarding bad advice. The *issur* of *lifnei iver* by *issurim* is meant to prevent losses in *bein adam liMakom* (between man and God); in other words, we are commanded not to cause others to sin, because sins are displeasing to *Hashem* and weaken mankind's connection to Him. Thus, it makes no difference if the sinner in question is Jewish or not, because the sins of a non-Jew are just as harmful as those of a Jew. However, the *din* of *lifnei iver* regarding bad advice is a matter of *nezikin*, of not damaging another person. In this regard, the *Torah* is almost always more stringent on damage caused to a Jew than damage caused to a non-Jew. Therefore, the *la'av* of *lifnei iver* would not apply. (Note that this does not mean that it is recommended or even permissible to give bad advice to a non-Jew; this only means that one who intentionally gives poor advice to a non-Jew is not in violation of the specific commandment of *lifnei iver*.)

—Source: *Mishmeres Chaim Chelek I, "Inyanim Shonim" 5*

ritual which requires only that the fruits be brought, even if the *kohen* is later proven to be invalid, or if the fruits are destroyed.

Given that the Ramban's general position is always that rituals effect and are rooted in metaphysical realities, we are left with the notion that even the bare bones ritual of *bikkurim* carries the total spiritual potency of the commandment. How wondrous are the power of *mitzvos*!

Building A House: Physical And Mental

Yeshurun Sorscher (21)

In this week's *parsha*, we are told that we are supposed to bring the first fruits of our harvest to "the place that *Hashem* will choose" (*Devarim* 26:2). Rashi understands this to mean the *Beis Hamikdash*. At the same time, throughout the month of *Elul*, we have recited the 27th *perek* of *Tehilim*, beginning with "*liDovid Hashem ori vi'ishi*", twice daily. In this short paragraph, we say "one thing I ask of *Hashem*, is to dwell in the house of *Hashem* all my days". This raises a question: how can Dovid say that the one thing that he desires is to stay in the house of *Hashem*, when he himself was a *Yisroel*, and would not have been fully allowed into the *Beis Hamikdash*? Additionally, while we know that the *Beis Hamikdash* is important, is it really true that all we should want is to be there? The *possuk* in *Parshas Eikev* says "what does *Hashem* ask of you, except to fear Him?" This *possuk* is taken to be such an essential rule that many members of *Chazal* understood it to be the most important *possuk* in the entire *Torah*. In light of this, why is staying in the house of *Hashem* Dovid's biggest wish? Seemingly, there are much more important considerations to ask for!

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, legendary educator and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva University and *Yeshivat Kfar Eztion*, writes that this "house of *Hashem*" to which Dovid is referring is not a literal house; rather it refers to a dream of Dovid's, where everything that he would do would reflect what it means to serve God. This 'house' is a metaphorical place, where we as an individual are able to store our aspirations and goals for what we want out of our lives. Thus, while it is true that Dovid was not a *kohen*, and would not have been able to enter the *Beis Hamikdash*, he still desired to enter his own, personal "house of *Hashem*", where he could experience the highest levels of spirituality. Dovid, in the midst of running a kingdom and waging wars, never lost sight of what was important to him in life, and constantly asked *Hashem* that he should merit to sanctify himself and grow.

The lessons that we can derive from this can truly shape the way that we interact with the world. Many of us are not able to learn all day, or are unable to spend all day in the best environment possible. Often, there are things around us which can tend to distract us from who we truly want to be. With this idea, we can approach things with a different lens: although we are not necessarily in the physical location which is tailor-made for our success, it is important to keep in mind what our goals are, and what is truly important to us. When we keep our goals in mind, we can work towards gradually reaching them.

One of my *rabbeim* in *yeshiva* would always remind us that it is important to make sure that we have a "value system", and to know what things in our lives take priority and precedence. With the aforementioned idea, we can expand on this. While we must have a value system for what we will physically do, we must also have a value system for what we think, and which thoughts are given precedence to be stored in our own personal "house of *Hashem*". This way, though we may not be where we want to be physically, we can maintain our goals and values in our minds and hearts. May we all merit to achieve our dreams, and to stay in the house of *Hashem* all our days.

Tree to Table with a Layover in Ancient Egypt.

Ari Wechsler (14)

Head R.A., MTA Dorms

In the journey from tree to table, the fruit that a person eats may take many paths before ever reaching its owner's stomach. In fact, there are many different categories in which edible vegetation can fall into that actually prevents it from simply being eaten by its owner. For example, the first fruits of one's crop must be given to a *kohen*, and cannot be eaten by the farmer that toiled over its production. Additionally, there are portions of the crop that must be given to the *levi'im*, and even some that can only be eaten in Yerushalayim. The reader with a pulse must then ask themselves the question: why, among all these intricate details, does the *Torah* digress and momentarily speak of Jewish history?

"The kohen should take the basket [of fruit] and place it before the mizbeiach; you shall then recite as follows: An Aramean sought to destroy my father, and he went down to Egypt; he lived there with a small number of people, and there they became a great and powerful nation. The Egyptians then dealt harshly with us and oppressed us, and they gave us

hard work. We cried out to Hashem, and He heard our voices, and saw our pain, our work, and our oppression, and He took us out of Egypt with a strong hand, an outstretched arm, with great wonders and miracles. And He brought us to this place, and He gave us this land, a land of flowing milk and honey.” (Devarim 26:4-10)

To answer this question, one must understand the importance of referencing the miraculous history of the Jewish people. Forced into many years of back-breaking labor, the Jewish people were quickly and marvelously extracted from their bondage, and made into a free people. Or, so it may seem. In reality, we were just being transferred from one sort of service to another. Instead of viscous task masters, we became the prized possessions of an all-loving Creator. Notwithstanding this bond of love, we technically never became free, and there is perhaps no greater way of realizing this than by having to give away the fruits of one's hard labor to another person. And yet, the question remains; why remind us of this in the middle of delineating the technicalities of these commandments? Why not include this paragraph as an introduction or postscript to this entire *parsha*?

I believe that this was done in order to simulate the experience of what it must be like to be a farmer who is commanded to give away the hard-earned fruits of their labor. After months of working and caring for the land, it would be reasonable to assume that one's first instinct would be to reap the rewards. The sudden need to pull back and first make the proper donations likely felt quite jarring for the farmer. So too, the experience of reading the *pesukim* simulates this jarring experience, as one suddenly is shifted from rules and regulations to stories and history. This sudden shift should instill an appreciation in us for those who happily fulfill the tithing commandments.

Serving With Joy

Noam Steinmetz (21)

In *Parshas Ki Savo*, *Bnei Yisroel* are told a series of *brachos* that they will receive if they follow all of the *mitzvos* which *Hashem* commands them. When *Bnei Yisroel* listen to *Hashem's* commandments, they will be blessed with fruitful land, peace and prosperity. However if they fail to follow these commandments, they will be cursed with destruction, death, and exile. The *possuk* (Devarim 28:47)

sheds light upon the cause of these terrible punishments. “תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב ל:” - “Since you did not serve Hashem, your God, with happiness and goodness of heart, from your abundance of all.”

At first glance, it seems surprising that not serving *Hashem* with joy is treated as such a severe transgression. However, a deeper look will reveal that a lack of joy in *mitzvos* is in fact incredibly severe. Rav Simcha Zissel of Kelm writes that the lack of joy in *mitzvos* is the first step in completely abandoning them, *chas vishaom*. The *Chazon Ish* emphasizes this idea, saying, “One either has 613 goals or 613 obstacles to happiness”. One can view *mitzvos* as goals, which are something which we work towards and feel happy when we are presented with a chance to fulfil, or as obstacles, which we view as an inconvenience. One can't actively decide to experience joy in doing *mitzvos*; however one can choose to treat *mitzvos* with importance, and grow closer to *Hashem* as a result. We can see that joy in *mitzvos* brings us closer to *Hashem* from a *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (30b), which states that the *Shechinah* can only rest on a person when he is involved in the joy of doing a *mitzvah*. The Arizal once said that all that he was able to accomplish in terms of wisdom and spirituality came from the joy that he felt when performing *mitzvos*.

Rav Aryeh Finkel asks a question on this principle of loving *mitzvos* and loving *Hashem*. How is it possible to be happy and serve *Hashem* with Joy, while also simultaneously fearing *Hashem*, as we know we are supposed to. Fear and joy are complete opposites! Rav Finkel answers that when we fear *Hashem*, we have a better understanding of why we should take such joy in performing *mitzvos*. When we understand that *Hashem* is watching over us, and that every one of our actions has a great impact, we can see the significance of every opportunity to do a *mitzvah*. Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein says that we can see a great example of this in the *Yamim Neoraim*. Although we know that during these days, we are under intense judgement and Divine scrutiny, we can still experience the full *simchah* of *Yom Tov*; in fact, our *simchah* is enhanced by our more keen awareness of *Hashem's* presence!

May we all be *zocheh* to perform every *mitzvah* with joy, and as a result grow in our relationship with *Hashem*.

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in Yerushalayim, happy with the bounty *Hashem* had blessed him with. The question is, why do we bring *bikkurim* from the very first fruits to ripen? Why don't we wait for the best, most luscious fruits to be ready before bringing an offering of thanks for our bounty? Additionally, the Alshich, in his commentary to this week's *parsha*, brings down the *midrash* in *Devarim Rabbah* which states that one of the reasons why the world was created was because of *bikkurim*. What is so special about *bikkurim* that it is one of the reasons the world was created? And finally, why is it that we specifically must take our *bikkurim* with us to Yerushalayim? Why can't we eat them in our own homes?

These questions can be answered with a *mashal* (parable: a little girl, around the age of three or four, likes to draw; and by "drawing", I mean "scribbling over a blank piece of paper with a crayon." One day, this little girl makes a particularly chaotic mess of swirls, and presents her "masterpiece" to her mommy. Upon presenting it to her mother, the mother begins to tear up, and says affectionately to her daughter, "This is wonderful! I really love it!"

But why does the mother do that? Anyone else would just throw this seemingly worthless piece of paper into the garbage. The answer is that to the mother, this drawing is a lot more than just a bunch of scribbles; this is the first thing that her daughter has given her as a gift. The little girl had her mommy in mind while imagining it, drawing it, and presenting it to her. Therefore, the drawing is incredibly precious to the mother.

The *nimshal*, of course, is the *bikkurim*. *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* doesn't need our *bikkurim*; to Him, our fruits are just a bunch of worthless cells sealed together in a worthless peel. So why does He care so much? The answer is that the whole time the farmer was breaking his back over growing those fruits, he was thinking about the *bikkurim* he would deliver to his *tatty*. In this state of mind (so to speak), *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* can fulfill the request which we make in bringing the *bikkurim*: "Look down from *Shamayim* and bless us, the *Bnei Yisroel*, and the land that You gave us, *Eretz Yisroel*."

The *Chizkuni* adds to this point. He writes that despite the fact that the first fruits are not the best of the season, they are the most beloved. While it may seem automatic or natural that diligent planting will breed results, the farmer is still excited to see that his months of preparing, sowing, watering, fertilizing, and all the rest of the backbreaking labor have really paid off. Therefore, he will thank *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* for those fruits much more, because of his own satisfaction.

This idea of the first of something being the most beloved is also found in Moshe's opening statement to Pharaoh before *makas dam*. *Hashem* tells Moshe to tell

Pharaoh "*bni bichori Yisroel*", "My eldest son is Yisroel". Implied in this is that we are *Hashem's* firstborn, and therefore his most beloved. The *Bechor Shor* (aptly named for this point) also notes that despite the fact that all of the people of the world are *Hakadosh Boruch Hu's* children, since the *Bnei Yisroel* are the *bechorim*, they are "*chaviv li yoser mikulam*", more beloved to Him than anyone else.

This is also in line with the school of thought of Slabodka *mussar*. Their mantra was "*bishvilli nivra olam*", the world was created for me/us. Based on this *ma'amar* of the *Chizkuni* and the aforementioned *mashal*, this lesson can be derived from this *parsha* as well.

But why would the world have been created exclusively for the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*? The answer to this question lies in the approach we have developed: the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* is about demonstrating how the *Ribono Shel Olam* should constantly be in our thoughts and minds, even as we go about our daily, mundane routines. Related to this is the reason why we must bring the *bikkurim* to Yerushalayim. This can also be demonstrated with a *mashal*: a grocery store promotes itself with major discounts and sales, even if it means selling certain items at a loss. This is because, by doing this, multitudes of customers will ultimately end up buying items that are in the store that had not occurred to them, just because they happen to be in the store. Similarly, a farmer only has to trek up to Yerushalayim in order to fulfill his *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*. However, once there, he will end up picking up more from the "store" than he had originally anticipated, namely *chochmah* (wisdom; see *Midrash Eichah* 4:13) and *yiras Shamayim* (fear of Heaven). Additionally, grocery stores put the milk, which is a staple, at the back of the store, forcing you to walk all the way through the store, which leads you to pick up more items along the way. This is also true regarding Yerushalayim; the main entrance to *Har Habayis* and the *Beis Hamikdash*, the *Chuldah* gates, were smack in the middle of the city, which forced you to go through it. Thus, a person who came to Yerushalayim to bring *bikkurim* would lead to them acquiring a multitude of important character traits, which would help enhance their *avodas Hashem* upon returning back home.

Thus, there are many lessons that can be learned from *bikkurim*: *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* loves our seemingly worthless gifts (which in the modern day would be our *tefillos* and *Torah* learning; see *Hosheiah* 14:3), that we must think of *Hashem* in their daily lives, that the world was created for us, *Hashem's* "firstborn", and that the places we are in have a profound effect on us, whether that be positive or negative. With these messages in mind, may we enter into the *Yamim Neoraim* and the upcoming year with increased cognizance of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu's* presence in our daily lives and all that He does for us. Can't we just give a little bit in return?

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: A YEAR WRITTEN IN STONE

As the Jewish people prepare to enter *Eretz Yisroel* proper for the first time, they are given a uniquely enigmatic commandment. Moshe instructs the nation that, upon crossing the *Yarden* river, they should erect giant stones, with the entire *To-rah* written upon them (Ramban). The reason for the erection of these stones is not mentioned in the *pesukim* here, but in the fourth *perek* of *Sefer Yehoshua*, when this monument is actually established, Yehoshua tells *Bnei Yisroel* that if they are asked the reason for these tablets, they should answer that they are intended to recall how the *Yarden* river split before the *Aron Kodesh* to allow the people to pass through. In light of the *pesukim* here, this statement of Yehoshua is incredibly strange; the Jews only crossed the *Yarden* after Moshe's death! How could Yehoshua claim that the reason for Moshe's commandment was based on an event which he himself never witnessed? Why would Moshe even instruct the people to do something as a commemoration of an event that had not yet happened?

The *Ba'al Haturim* draws a cryptic parallel between the erection of these stones and the erection of the *Mishkan*, based on the common word of "*vihakamta*" - and you shall erect. There appears to be some sort of common denominator between the purpose of these tablets, and the purpose of the *Mishkan*. However, the exact nature of this comparison is left vague. To unravel this, let us first take a look at the reason for establishing the *Mishkan* in the first place. *Hashem* tells Moshe (*Shemos* 25:8) "make for me a *Mikdash*, and I will dwell in it." Thus, on a simple level, the *Mishkan* is intended to serve as a beacon for God's presence in this world. However, the *Kedushas Levi*, as well as many others, point out that the language of the *possuk* is not "*bisocho*", meaning "in it", but rather "*biso cham*", literally meaning "in them". Based on this, it emerges that the true purpose of the *Mishkan* is that *Hashem* should dwell within the hearts of the Jewish people, as an ever-present force in their lives. The goal in erecting the *Mishkan* was that the holiness and sanctity of the physical location would arouse feelings of spiritual longing within the people, thereby motivating them to build their own, personal "*Mishkan*" within themselves. Without this spiritual component, the *Mishkan* consists of nothing more than empty sacrifices and rituals; as the *possuk* says (*Yeshayahu* 1:11-15) "what need do I have of your sacrifices... your hands are stained with sin!"

It therefore emerges that the essence of the *Mishkan* is not the building itself, but the inspiration which it provided for all of *Klal Yisroel*. In entering the land, it is reasonable that the people may have been concerned about losing this connection which they had grown so used to, even for a short period of time while waiting for the new *Mishkan* to be built. How would they be able to remain connected to *Hashem* in *Eretz Yisroel* without the spiritual strength provided by the *Mishkan*? And

so, Moshe instructed the people to establish stones with the words of *Torah* on them. The message to the people was that we don't need a *Mishkan* to connect to *Hashem*; in fact, thinking that we do misses the point of it. While the *Mishkan* is an incredibly powerful tool to connect to *Hashem*, the truth is that every member of *Bnei Yisroel* can connect in this manner, through the words of the *Torah*. *Kedushah* does not merely exist in the Temples and holy places; it exists in the street, in the house, and wherever the people choose to bring the words of *Torah* with them. And in the eyes of God, a plain house, filled with words of *Torah*, is far preferable to a *Mishkan* devoid of any spiritual content. This ritual was intended to remind the people that no matter where they were physically, whether in the heights of *kedushah* or the depths of depravity, it would be the *Torah* which connects them to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*.

This could be why Yehoshua stated that the purpose of the monument was to recall how the *Yarden* split before the *Aron Kodesh*. Despite the loss of the *Mishkan* and the somewhat familiar setup of the *midbar*, the people needed to remember that as long as they took the essence of the *Mishkan* with them, they would last through the bumpy road to *Eretz Yisroel*. The people were able to experience *Hashem* in a way comparable to their leaving *Mitzrayim*, but only as long as they took the *Aron* with them. Yehoshua's statement was therefore perfectly in line with Moshe's intention for the monument.

This week, we reunited in *yeshiva* for the first time in almost six months. Over the course of our stay at home, many of us found ourselves missing the *yeshiva* more than we ever thought we could. Looking back, it's remarkable that we took any part of our experience here for granted. But now that we're back, the road ahead looks bumpy, and the mountain of necessary regulations and guidelines makes it difficult to imagine the day that we'll be back to where we were before. And so, like the Jews preparing for their long conquest of *Eretz Yisroel*, we must bear in mind that what made *yeshiva* special in the past was our own desire to learn and grow as *bnei Torah*. *Yeshiva* this year can be even more uplifting and *gishmak* than in the past, as long as we recognize that it's on **us** to create the environment of *Torah* and *kedushah*. In spite of all the obstacles in our way, we have the ability to make the *yeshiva* into a veritable *Mishkan*. If we do that, there's no restrictions in the world that can hold us back.

Wishing everyone a great *Shabbos*,
-Shimi Kaufman

Goodbye Midbar, And Thanks For All The Fruit

The first three *aliyos* of this week's *parsha* deal with the laws of bringing the first fruits of the harvest, called the *bikkurim*, up to Yerushalayim. We know that in general, we must look to the *Torah Sheba'al Peh* to spell out the exact details of a given *mitzvah*. However, in the case of the *bikkurim*, we find that most of the details of the

mitzvah are given within the *pesukim*. The *Torah* does not have any extraneous words, so why does the *Torah* spend so much time discussing this seemingly unremarkable *mitzvah*? Additionally, after we bring the fruits up to the *Beis Hamikdash*, we are instructed to recite a paragraph detailing the history of the Jewish people, from the *galus* in Egypt to the arrival in *Eretz Yisroel*. This passage, called “*arami oved avi*”, is among the *pesukim* which we incorporate into the *Pesach Seder*. Would it not be more appropriate to recite *pesukim* from *Sefer Shemos* at the *Seder*, where the Exodus from Egypt is primarily mentioned?

A common idea found within *Chassidus* and Modern Orthodox philosophy is that whatever a person does, he must do it for *Hashem*. When we find that we, as human beings, worked hard at something, and that it paid off, we tend to forget that the main purpose of doing that given task was supposed to be entirely for *Hashem*. This can happen even if we originally had *Hashem* in mind for that task! For this reason, the *Torah* commands us to dedicate our first fruits, the beginning of the results of a labor-intensive farming season, to *Hashem*. This is intended to instill in us that everything we do, whether it be hard labor or even just relaxation, should be for *Hashem's* sake.

While this idea can be applied to answer the first question, the second question still remains: why do we use these *pesukim* on the night of the *Seder*, as opposed to *pesukim* directly from *Sefer Shemos*? If we delve deeper into what these *pesukim* are saying, the answer becomes apparent. These *pesukim* represent the history of the Jewish people as a whole by summarizing the story of *yetzias mitzrayim*. We recite these *pesukim* as we give our first fruits over to *Hashem*, to remind us that we need to be just as thankful to *Hashem* for the things that seem to be “natural”, like fruit growing when it is cared for, in the same way, that we thank *Hashem* when he performs wondrous miracles for us, as he did for us in *Mitzrayim*. With this in mind, we can learn a priceless lesson in gratitude. Instead of thinking “it happened so long ago” or “how is it relevant to me” we need to view these miracles through the lens of our own experiences and thank *Hashem* for them accordingly. As we approach the *Yamim Neoraim* and begin to take stock of our lives and *avodas Hashem*, we need to bolster our *midah* of *hakaras hatov* and *daven* that He continues to help us in the coming year. To take this lesson one step further, we can learn that we must be grateful even for the things we take for granted, because as we all found out in recent months these things are not a right, so we should therefore thank *Hashem* for each and every *bracha* that comes our way. As we finally begin our return to *Yeshiva* we should be careful to thank *Hashem* for every step that we take towards our “new normal”.

Shabbat Shalom,
Yisroel Hochman



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: ANIMALS IN THE PARSHA

A Revised Take on the Matter

Yisroel David Rosenberg (23)

There is a *possuk* in this week's *parsha*, found in the *Tochachah* (rebuke), which reads as follows: " שׁוֹרְךָ טְבוּחַם לְעֵינֶיךָ וְלֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ חֲמֹרְךָ גְזוּל מִלְפָּנֶיךָ וְלֹא יָשׁוּב לְךָ צֹאנְךָ נְתַנּוֹת לְאֵיבֶיךָ " - "Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, you will not eat from it; your donkey will be stolen from before you, but will not be returned; your sheep will be given to your enemies, but you will have no savior." (Devarim 28:31) The *possuk* here is describing one of the many punishments *Hashem* will send if we do not observe the *Torah*, specifically how all of one's animals will be lost and taken from right in front of them.

However, the Chida comments that the entirety of the *Tochachah* can be interpreted as *brachos* (blessings) as well as *kelalos* (curses). He mentions that when this *possuk* is read backwards, word for word, it has the exact opposite meaning: " מוֹשִׁיעַ לְךָ וְאֵין לְאֵיבֶיךָ " - "You will have a savior and your enemies will not; your sheep will be given back to you and your donkey will not be stolen from before you; you will eat from it, and your ox will not be slaughtered before you."

At a time when we really need it, the Chida teaches us how to find the *brachos* hidden within the *kelalos*. Sometimes, all we have to do to find clarification and blessing in our lives is to take a look "back".



Parsha Puzzlers

Submit your answers to shemakoleinu@yuhsb.org along with your name and cell phone number to be entered into a raffle at the end of the *sefer*! 1 answer = 1 entry!

(Hint: Use the commentaries in the *Mekraos Gedolos Chumashim*, along with the *Toldos Aharon* on the side to find relevant *Gemaras* and *Midrashim*)

1. What item is mentioned four times in this week's *parsha*, and nowhere else in the entire *Torah*?
2. The *pesukim* describe how the nation would answer *amen* to the blessings and curses stated on *Har Gerizim* and *Har Eivel*. What is the only other time in the *Torah* that we find the word "amen" used as a response?
3. The second *possuk* in this week's *parsha* commands us to bring *bikkurim* "meireishis kol pri ha'adamah" - from the first of the fruits of the earth. List two reasons why the *possuk* adds a letter "mem" before the word "reishis".



GEDOLIM GLIMPSE: REB SHMELKE OF NIKOLSBURG

Meir Morell ('22)



Rabbi Shmuel Shmelke Halevi Horowitz of Nikolsburg (1726-1778) was born in Chrotikov. He was the oldest son of Tzvi Hirsh Horowitz. His father traced his lineage back to Shmuel *Hanavi*, and his mother traced her lineage back to Dovid *Hamelech* (with the help of her great-grandfather, the Maharal of Prague). In his earlier years, he learned with his brother, Pinchas, who later became known as the *Ba'al Hafla'ah*. After traveling to Mezritch and meeting Reb Dov Ber, the famed *Maggid* of Mezeritch, he became a close *talmid* of the esteemed *Rebbe*.

After serving first as Rav in Ryczywohl and Shinove, Reb Shmelke was invited, in 1773, to become the rabbi of Nikolsburg and Chief Rabbi of Moravia, where he made a powerful impact. The fact that he was a *chossid* angered many members of the community, eventually leading to the personal intervention of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, which quieted down the uproar.

Reb Shmelke established a major *yeshiva*, which attracted numerous outstanding *talmidim*. Among these were such luminaries and Chasiddic leaders as Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak, the Chozeh of Lublin, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, Rabbi Yisroel of Koznitz, Rabbi Yitzchok Eisik of Kalev, Rabbi Mordecai Benet, who later became Chief Rabbi in Moravia, and Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov.

Reb Shmelke passed away on the 1st of Iyar, 5538. His *seforim*, published posthumously, included *Divrei Shmuel*, a collection of thoughts and sayings; *Imrei Shmu'eli*, on the weekly *parsha*; and *Nezir Hashem*, a commentary on *Shulchan Aruch Even Ha'ezer*.

Through his *talmid*, Reb Baruch of Kalev zt"l, who became his son-in-law, we have a link of *Reb-ber*s that links to the current Nikolsburger Rebbe of Monsey, Rabbi Yosef Yechiel Mechel Lebovits. (There are 3 different chasidic groups called "Nikolsburg " one is Nikolsburg of Monsey, one is Nikolsburg of Borough Park and Woodbourne, and one is Lelov-Nikolsburg, However, they are all of different origins.)

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Parsha Summary

The *parsha* begins with a discussion of the laws of *bikkurim*, the first fruits of the harvest which must be brought to Yerushalayim. The *Torah* also mentions the *halachos* of the different *ma'asros* (tithes) which must be taken at different points in the *Shemittah* cycle. The idea of both of these commandments is to acknowledge *Hashem's* complete ownership and mastery of *Eretz Yisroel*. Moshe then presents the nature of our relationship with *Hashem*: if we keep the *mitzvos*, *Hashem* will cause us to be praised and exalted among the nations, but if we stray from the proper path, then terrible curses will befall us. Moshe describes how the nation will acknowledge this relationship after crossing the *Yarden* river, by inscribing the *Torah* onto twelve stones and erecting them as a monument. The *parsha* then continues with the *Tochachah*, the description of what horrors will befall the Jewish people if they fail to observe the *Torah*. The *parsha* concludes with Moshe describing how the events over the forty years of traveling in the desert clearly demonstrate *Hashem's* mastery over everything.

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