How special to have arrived on Aliya on the Wednesday (mitvoch) between Ki Teitzei (from the US) and Ki Tavo el HaAretz - 41 years ago.

Aliya-by-Aliya
Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p’tucha or s’tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p’sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam’s Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya
11 p’sukim - 26:1-11

[P>26:1] When we come to the Land and settle it, we are commanded to take of the First Fruits [the mitzva of Bikurim has already been counted back in Parshat Mishpatim] of the "Seven Species", put them in a basket and go to THE Place (i.e. the Beit HaMikdash). We are to go to the kohen on duty, announce our presence and present him with the basket. He shall take it and place it before the (external) Mizbei’ach. We are then to recite the Bikurim passage [606, A132 26:5].

MITZVOT

6 of the 613; 3 pos. and 3 prohibitions

To put things into mitzva-perspective: Pinchas has 6 mitzvot, too. 22 sedras have more mitzvot than Ki Tavo; 30 sedras have fewer.

Ki Tavo follows three sedras with mitzva ranks of 3, 6, and 1 - R'ei, Sho-f'tim, and Ki Teitzei - with a total of 170 mitzvot.

Ki Tavo is followed by 18 sedras with a total of 5 of the Taryag Mitzvot. Lots of content but a a huge desert of Mitzvot

It is clear to see that the 613 mitzvot are not at all evenly distributed among the Torah's 54 sedras. 613/54 = 11.35, the average number of mitzvot per sedra.

MITZVAAnotes

It is said of Bikurim: "Do this mitzva, for in its merit you will enter the Land." The
ARI HaKadosh singles out Bikurim as the mitzva which is the TIKUN (repair) for the Sin of the Spies. Bikurim has a Torah-commanded, built-in recitation that helps us to focus our thoughts in a particular direction. With this recitation, the Jew identifies himself with his Jewish Heritage and announces to one and all the centrality of Eretz Yisrael in G-d's plans for the People of Israel. Bikurim makes the statement that we are glad to be here. Being happy about being in Eretz Yisrael grants us the "z'chut" to be here. Joyfully thanking G-d for our being here helps "repair" the opposite attitude as expressed by the 10 spies and echoed by the panicked multitude. The Sin of the Spies was committed by what the Meraglim SAID, and it was while they were displaying fruits of Eretz Yisrael, no less. Bikurim is the mitzva that is performed by what the Bikurim bringer SAYS (in addition to bringing the fruits), and while he displays fruits that he brought from the Land. "A perfect match!" (in opposites).

Rav Menachem Zemba HY"D added a beautiful note to the above notion that Bikurim is the positive counterpart to CHEIT HAMERAGLIM. Look in Mishna, Bikurim 3:1 - How does one designate his Bikurim? A person goes into his fields and sees a ripe fig, a ripe cluster of grapes, a ripe pomegranate... The Mishna uses as an example of Bikurim, the very same three fruits that the Meraglim brought with them to show to the People. A perfect exclamation point to the statement of the ARI z"l.

Bikurim is a prime example of "Hakarat HaTov", recognition and acknowledgement of the good that G-d does for us. We must apply this lesson to other areas of mitzvot and life in general.

May we soon be privileged to bring Bikurim with all the joy and Jewish pride that says that we are truly pleased to be chosen by G-d as His People and that we are genuinely thankful for this wonderful Land.

The first four p’sukim of the Bikurim recitation form the main text for the

The first phrase is in Ki Tavo; the second one is in next week's Nitzavim.

Which is correct - HAZEH or HAZOT?

Depends if the word (meaning 'this') goes on SEFER HATORAH or on HATORAH. SEFER HATORAH is masculine; TORAH is feminine.

Okay, so which is it?

Look at the TROP (Torah notes).

In the first phrase, B’SEFER has a TIPCHA after it, which commands a pause. The HaTorah HaZot go together. So it’s HAZOT, feminine. The Book of this Torah.

In the second phrase, B’SEFER has a MERCHA, which links it to HATORAH. The pause is after HATORAH and the HAZEH goes on SEFER TORAH - masc.
Pesach Seder’s MAGID section; they summarize Egyptian enslavement and the subsequent Exodus. The fifth pasuk (which is not in the Hagada) speaks of coming to Eretz Yisrael. This corresponds to the fifth term of redemption and is represented by Eliyahu’s cup, which we don’t yet drink.

We all bring Bikurim (including the Levi and the convert) with feelings of joy and thanks to G-d for all we have.

**SDT:** The Bikurim recitation is perfectly suited to form the heart of the story of the Exodus, more so than any of the original passages from Sh’mot. The editors of the Hagada found in ARAMI OVEID AVI the “whole” story in only four p’sukim - something we are all capable of handling at the Seder table. The original material is too copious. Furthermore, the Bikurim recitation is in first person - I my, we, us - rather than narrative form of the original account of the Egyptian experience in the Book of Sh’mot. This fits very well with the maxim: In every generation a person shall portray himself as if he himself came out of Egypt. There are other factors that also favor the Bikurim parsha for Seder purposes.

**Levi - Second Aliya**

4 p’sukim - 26:12-15

[S>26:12 (4)] After one has completed proper separation and distribution of T’ruma, Ma’aser, and Ma’aser Ani (during the third and sixth year of a Shmita cycle), one is required to formally declare that none of the “holy produce” remains in his possession and that it was actually given to its intended recipients [607, A131 26:13]. This declaration is made on the last day of Pesach in the 4th and 7th year of a Shmita cycle.

**Vidui Maaser** implies that there is something wrong in our performance of the mitzvot mentioned (based on the term VIDUI, confession). Yet the statement specifically says that we did everything that we were supposed to do. In fact, a person who might have transgressed does not make the statement, since it might not be the truth. Only someone who did not sin at all can make the declaration. Why then, do we get the impression that something was not 100%? Rav Soloveitchik zt”l pointed to the word K’CHOL (like all), which is mentioned twice. The implication is that our performance was almost perfect, but not quite. Also, the statement implies that the individual did only that which he was required to do, and did not (often) go beyond the call of duty. Or perhaps we did a mitzva sort of like it is supposed to be done, but maybe without full KAVANA and/or enthusiasm. These implications might be responsible for the title VIDUI. What an important message this is as we approach Rosh HaShana, when we have to answer for what - AND HOW - we do mitzvot.
It is forbidden to eat Maaser Sheni (the second tithes of years 1, 2, 4, 5 of a Shmita cycle, which remain the owner’s property but which must be eaten "with sanctity and ritual purity" in Jerusalem - or be redeemed) while one is a mourner (here it refers to the status of the mourner before burial of the dead - ANINUT) [608, L151 26:14] or in a state of ritual impurity [609, L150 26:14] (the person and/or the food). It is also forbidden to use the redemption money of Ma'aser Sheni for purposes other than food and drink in Jerusalem [610, L152 26:14].

The literal meaning of this prohibition is not to use the money for "the dead". This can narrowly apply to shrouds, casket, etc., but is also generalized to include all non-food uses.

HASHKIFA! We next call upon HaShem to "look down" upon His People from on high and bless us and the Land of Israel. [We have kept our promise, we say to G-d (so to speak), now You keep Yours. - Rashi]

It is a common practice (based on the Talmud Yerushalmi) for the Baal Korei (a.k.a. Baal K'ri'a) to raise his voice and emphasize the word HASHKIFA.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 4 p’sukim - 26:16-19

This short aliya is a summary of our relationship with G-d. We are to keep, preserve, observe, practice all the mitzvot, statutes, laws which Moshe has reiterated for us, with all our hearts and souls. We have pledged allegiance to G-d, promised to follow His ways [611, A8 26:17] and to listen to Him. He pledges to take us as His "Chosen Nation" and to elevate us above the nations of the world - IF we keep His mitzvot.

MITZVA notes

To follow in G-d's footsteps means to develop and practice various traits that are attributed to Him. As He is merciful, so too shall we be merciful. As He is holy, so too must we behave in ways that lead to our becoming holy. From general traits, we can also use specific examples - as G-d clothed the naked, visited the sick, buried the dead, comforted the grieving... so too must we. There are mitzva-counters who define this mitzva as Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, in addition to generalizing to include all types of acts of kindness.

R’VI’I - Fourth Aliya 10 p’sukim - 27:1-10

Moshe Rabeinu and the Elders command the People concerning the inscribing on 12 pillars of stone the words of the Torah (parts thereof; the Book of D’varim or parts of it); this to be done upon crossing the Jordan.

Subsequently, another set of pillars is
to be erected and inscribed on Har Eval where a Mizbei’ach is to be built (of whole, uncut stones) and sacrifices are to be offered.

Moshe and the Kohanim next declare to the People that they have grown into complete nationhood at this point - with all the mitzvot of the Torah having been reviewed. Privilege of nationhood goes hand-in-hand with the responsibilities of keeping the mitzvot.

Moshe, the Kohanim and Leviyim, say to all the people, "on this very day you have become G-d's nation." Rashi says that the Torah emphasized THIS VERY DAY, to teach us that our commitment to Torah and mitzvot should be as if we have entered into a covenant with HaShem on this very day - i.e. every day of our lives. We are challenged to refresh our Judaism continually. This is not the only place this lesson is learned. But that fact just reinforces the significance of the idea.

Moshe describes what will happen after the People enter the Land. Six tribes will stand on Mt. Grizim and six on Mt. Eval. There they will hear the blessings and curses that will be the fate of those who keep or don’t keep Torah and mitzvot.

Twelve curses are enumerated in this portion touching upon many diverse areas of Jewish life including "between Jew and G-d" as well as interpersonal mitzvot. Each K’LALA is a pasuk long and its own parsha stuma (almost). To each curse, the people are to respond AMEIN...

he who makes idols...
he who degrades his father or mother...
he who encroaches on his neighbor’s boundary...
he who misleads a (figuratively) “blind” person...
he who perverts the judgment of orphan or widow... he who sleeps with his father’s wife... (Note that these two curses share a parsha.)
he who engages in sexual behavior with animals...
he who sleeps with his sister (or half-sister)...
he who sleeps with his mother-in-law...
he who secretly strikes his fellow...
he who takes a bribe and an innocent person is killed...

he who does not uphold the words of the Torah to do them...

Once again, Moshe Rabeinu tells us that following G-d’s mitzvot will earn us superior status among the nations of the world. We will also be showered with blessings for hearkening to G-d’s voice. We will flourish economically and agriculturally, and be blessed with a healthy increase in population. Our every coming and going will be blessed.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya
63 p’sukim - 28:7-69

Longest of the 378 Aliyot in the whole Torah (not counting combined Aliyot of double-sedras)

The blessings continue with the promise of victory over our enemies. G-d will “command” His blessings upon us and the Land, and will establish us as a holy nation... provided we keep the mitzvot and follow His ways.

The Torah’s expression V’HALACHTA BID-RACHAV is repeated here - emulating G-d is defined as being kind, merciful, charitable, etc.

The nations of the world will see the special relationship we have with G-d, and be appropriately reverent towards us and fearful of us. G-d’s heavenly treasure-house will open for us and we will flourish. G-d’s blessings are conditional upon keeping mitzvot.

HOWEVER...

...if we don’t listen to G-d...” Thus begins the ”Tochacha”.

There is a custom to read this part in a low voice because of how devastating it is to realize that G-d needs to warn us in such graphic terms, what will happen if the Jewish People are unfaithful to Him. Unfortunately, we need these harsh words of reproach. Unfortunately, they have turned out to be prophetic more than once. The Tochacha is contained within one Aliya (resulting in the longest Aliya in the Torah) so as not to prolong the discomfort in hearing it. And it is sandwiched (so to speak) between "good" p’sukim, so the Aliya begins and ends on a good note.

The first portion of the Tochacha is the negative mirror image of the blessings previously pronounced in the Torah. The p’sukim then proliferate and describe in shocking and grisly detail that which will occur if we do not remain faithful to G-d. The final pasuk of the Aliya reiterates the ”simple” but eloquent covenant with G-d: Keep the Torah and all will be good, if not...

The contrast between the ”good times” that Bikurim brings to mind and the terrible times as described in
the Tochacha, is overpowering and frightening. It is the difference between contentment and respect on the one hand, and devastation, despair and degradation, on the other. Prosperity in our own Land vs poverty and exile. The key to the difference is Torah & Mitzvot.

**SDT:** One of the famous “sum it all up” p’sukim in the Tochacha is 28:47, which says that many of the terrible things will happen to us because we did not serve G-d with joy and a good heart (even while we still had all good things). The Kotzker Rebbe gives this pasuk an interesting spin. Because, not only did you not serve G-d, but the not serving Him was with simcha to you. When a Jew does mitzvot, there is the extra aspect of doing them “with a smile” (on your face and in your heart). And, conversely, when a Jew sins, there is the extra aspect of sinning with a smile. Does one who eats non-kosher cry about his betrayal of G-d (probably not), or does he lick his fingers with relish and joy (sadly, probably yes). And if and when the joy of sinning leaves a person, or is driven out by him, then and only then will the person be on the path to T’shuva.

In more general terms, this pasuk speaks to Jews who just "go through the motions" of religious observance. They were brought up that way, perhaps, but there is little joy in their religious behavior. How sad! The Baal Shem Tov would say: **S’CHAR MITZVA** - the reward for a mitzva is the joy one derives from doing a mitzva.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** We are commanded **V’SAMACHTA B’CHA-GECHA**, to be joyous on the festivals. Perhaps this refers to an added dimension of joy, because the fact of the matter is that the Bikurim bringer was 'commanded' to be joyous for all the good that G-d has bestowed on him. That is not really a one-shot burst of joy, merely on the day that the Bikurim are brought. Rebbe Nachman had it right when he said, **MITZVA G’DOLA LIHYOT B’SIMCHA TAMID.** TAMID can mean always, but it can also mean every day. We are rebuked in the Tochacha for not having served G-d with joy and a good feeling. That is an everyday kind of thing - we serve G-d every day, with every mitzva we perform. If we can re-arrange the words in the Rebbe Nachman statement, we might say that it is a great thing to be joyous in the fulfillment of mitzvot, always.

[S>28:69 (1)] After all those dreadful p’sukim of the Tochacha, this long aliya is concluded with the statement: These are the words of the covenant that G-d commanded Moshe to make with the people of Israel in the territory of Moav - besides the covenant of Sinai (Chorev).

**Sh’VII Seventh Aliya**

8 p’sukim - 29:1-8
Moshe Rabeinu calls to the People, and tells them that they now have seen (and know) all that has happened since the Exodus through the 40 years of wandering until this very moment. It is incumbent upon us to keep our "deal" with G-d. "And G-d did not give you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear, until this very day." This realization comes after living all the experiences and miracles of 40 years of wandering.

The last three p’sukim are reread for the Maftir.

**Haftara 22 p’sukim**

**Yeshayahu 60:1-22**

The uplifting message of the haftara is the coming of the Geula, when G-d will restore His People to the Land and the nations and peoples of the world will flock to Jerusalem to pay homage to G-d and His People.

The concluding words of the haftara are enigmatic: "...I Am G-d, in its (the redemption’s) time, I will hasten it."

Will the Mashiach come in his appointed time, or sooner?

That depends upon us. If we enhance the overall conditions of Jewish Life, increase Torah observance, improve relations between Jew and his fellow, come to live in Eretz Yisrael - then we might be privileged to an "early" arrival of the Mashiach and the Geula. If we do not lay the proper ground-