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KI TAVO

DIVREI TORAH

- The first portion of the sidra is the commandment to bring Bikurim. This is a Mitzva that is programmed for after Bnei Yisrael enter, conquer, and settle Eretz Yisrael, a timespan of another 14 years. Every Jew is required to own land before the Mitzva is operational. Such is the call necessary for Simcha for all of Israel. As long as one Jew did not receive his portion of Eretz Yisrael, then all of Israel could not experience the joy needed to envelop the Mitzva of Bikurim. At a wedding we purposefully mar the Simcha by breaking a glass at the end of the marriage ceremony. We say that this custom is in memory of the Beit HaMikdash. In reality, we will continue to mar the Simcha until time that all Jews worldwide will find themselves in a sound, healthy, and stable financial and spiritual good shape. As long as one Jew is deprived of spiritual and financial good health, all of Klal Yisrael will come short of this Mitzva.

- Moshe told the people, “Hashem has set you apart today to be His treasured nation” (26:18). “Setting us

apart” requires elaboration. Some say that it means apart from evil and wrongdoing. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot v.9, p. 173). Others would say that it means to separate ourselves from the outside, non-Jewish world. But how strong is the wall that we build to protect us from the influence from the outside world? I see this in the symbolism of the Sukka. The Sukka must have sturdy, strong walls, and a weak, fragile roof. The Halacha dictates that we have to build the walls first, and then we can put up the roof, the S’chach. In other words, we have to strengthen the barrier between us and the outside world. Then, and only then, can we concentrate on establishing a relationship with Hashem.

- “This day you have become a people [bound by covenant] to Hashem.” (27:9). Rashi comments “On each day it should appear to you as though it were ‘today’ that you have entered the covenant with Him.” (B’rachot 3b). Did you ever wonder why Hashem created us that we should go to sleep every night and awaken each morning to face the world? I believe that His divine plan was to create us in a way that we can start anew each day. When we wake up every day, we thank God that He has restored our soul to us. This enables us to be refreshed and be able to renew our covenantal relationship with Hashem,

as if it just started that day. Yesterday's problems are now looked upon with a fresh approach, maybe enabling us to solve the problem today, even though it frustrated us yesterday. As fore- boding an issue might be the night before, we get to look at it again today with a fresh outlook. It helps us to live up to Rashi's comment about renewing our relationship with Hashem today as if it just started.

- Moshe describes the scene that would unfold and happen during Yehoshua's leadership, when the people would experience a covenantal renewal with Hashem at Mts. Gerizim and Eival. In Sotah 32a, the Mishna would describe the scene. Six tribes went up Mt. Gerizim; six tribes ascended Mt. Eival. The Kohanim, Leviyim, and the Aron HaKodesh were in the valley between the two mountains. They turned to Mt. Gerizim and recited the blessings, and all answered AMEIN. Then they faced Mt. Eival and recited the curses, and all answered AMEIN. The space in between the two mountains represented the existence of a distance between good and evil. The Rambam commented on the scene in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve lived in a world of holy and evil, absolute truths. After eating of the forbidden fruit, the world became a world of good and bad, relative terms, sometimes difficult to identify

whether something is good or bad. The scene at the two mountains would restore the world to a division between the holy and profane, between the just and evil.

- The eleven curses in chapter 27 have a common denominator: BA'SETER, in secret. This gives rise to an understanding to those who are hypocritical in their "religious lifestyle. The following is based on the commentary of Rav S. R. Hirsch (19th century Germany), who portrays the sinners in a way that brings the text into the modern world. One who outwardly acts pious, but in secret disdains Hashem. One who shows respect to his parents in public, but privately puts them down. One who has a reputation for honesty, but, unobserved, infringes upon the rights of others to his own advantage. One who establishes funds for the needy, but, in fact, takes advantage of them. One who played up to the high and mighty in society, but ignores the poor and needy whom he could assist. One who portrays himself as moral, but in private is immoral and lewd. One who would never hit his neighbor, but takes pleasure in killing his happiness and peace of mind. One who holds a position of responsibility in society, but in private is a corrupt individual. One who is devout and religiously observant, but doesn't help his neighbor spiritually or physically.

- “Accursed is one who will not uphold the words of the Torah” (27:26). The Ramban quotes the Yerushalmi, where our Sages refer to one who learns Torah, observes the Mitzvot, but does not support those who study Torah. Our history highlights those rabbinical leaders who did make it a point to keep and support others who learned Torah. One who looms large in this area was Shmuel HaNagid (993-1055, Spain), who was a Talmudic scholar, grammarian, philologist, soldier (general), merchant, politician, and famous poet. He became vizier to the king, a very high and influential position, and he became top general of the army (for 17 years). Yet he took time to promote Jewish learning. He purchased many copies of the Talmud. He also promoted the study of Talmud by giving forms of scholarships to those who wanted to study the Torah for a living. (Kfar HaNagid, a moshav in Israel, was named for him.). It all boils down to this: one who truly cares about the Torah will do absolutely everything to support the Torah, including financial support.

- One of the most meaningful (and sometimes overlooked) line in the Toch’chah/Admonition is 28:47, [All these curses will come upon you]...”because you did not serve Hashem, your God, with gladness and goodness of heart, when everything

was abundant.” The Torah is saying that these curses can come about because you served Hashem with a lack of Simcha. Rav Soloveitchik once commented that it pained him to see young men spend a year learning in Eretz Yisrael, and then return to America, and he would notice that when they davened the Amida, they would grimace, and show a tortuous look on their faces, and would gesture as if praying in pain. He should pray to Hashem with joy and happiness. The Rav would remember his years in Europe when he noticed that the only times he saw tearful eyes in praying was on Tish’a b’Av and Ne’ila during Yom Kippur. Otherwise we should worship with joy. Rav Moshe Feinstein commented that the worse comment that a parent can make to his children is: SHVER ZU ZAYN A YID: it is difficult to be a Jew. You have to display a sense of happiness in order to successfully transmit our Judaism to the next generation!

- MIDRASH. Commenting on the verse regarding Hashem opening His good storehouse, the Midrash (D’varim Rabba) teaches that Hashem keeps four keys in His own hand and never delegates them to an angel: the keys of rain, sustenance (Parnassa), life, and resurrection. Ki Tavo links the rain and sustenance directly back to the moral accountability of the covenant.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. To where and to whom were the Bikurim (First Fruits) brought? (26:2,3)
2. Who gets the two portions of Ma'aser in the third year of the Sh'mita cycle? (26:12)
3. Which River needed to be crossed to enter the Promised Land? (27:2)
4. Who is to stand on the 2 mountains (Gerizim and Eival) when the blessings and curses are read? (27:12)
5. What would the people respond after each B'racha and K'lala? (27:15...)

From Rashi

6. From which fruits are Bikurim brought? (26:2)
7. How are the Bikurim marked in the field? (26:2)
8. During which time of the year does one say the Bikurim speech? (26:11)
9. In chapter 27, 11 curses are recorded, corresponding to 11 tribes. Which tribe is omitted and why? (29:24)
10. What did Bnei Yisrael say to Moshe when they saw Moshe give his Torah scroll to the Leviyim? (29:3)

From the Rabbis

11. Why may iron not touch the Altar?

12. Levi was one of the tribes on the mountains. And Leviyim are in the valley. How is that?

13. What do we call the lengthy portion in the Parsha dealing with the curses?

Midrash

14. Why do we read the Tochacha right before Rosh Hashana?

Haftara - Yishayahu

15. What is special about Isaiah's vision of our Redemption?

Relationships

- a) Livni - Shim'i
- b) Levi - Amram (2 answers)
- c) Chushim - Guni
- d) Kush - Mitzrayim
- e) Sheim - Eiver

ANSWERS

1. To the Beit HaMikdash in Yerushalayim; to a Kohen.
2. The first Ma'aser is given to a Levi. The second Ma'aser is given to a poor person, a convert, orphan, or widow.
3. The Jordan River.
4. Six tribes on each mountain.
5. AMEIN.
6. The seven "fruits" of Eretz Yisrael: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates.
7. By tying a ribbon around the fruit.
8. From Shavuot through Sukkot (and even to Chanuka).
9. Shimon, because Moshe did not want to bless Shimon.
10. Why are you giving the Torah just to the Leviyim. All of us were at Sinai also.
11. Iron represents death since weapons are made from it. And the Altar is to bring long life.
12. The Leviyim in the valley were the elder Leviyim.
13. The Tochacha.
14. So that the year and its curses may conclude and the New Year may begin without curses.
15. It will be the Final Redemption.

Relationships

- a) Brothers (sons of Gershon)
- b) Grandfather & Grandson
Father-in-Law & Son-in-law
- c) First Cousins (sons of Dan and Naftali)
- d) Brothers (sons of Cham)
- e) Great-grandfather & Great-grandson