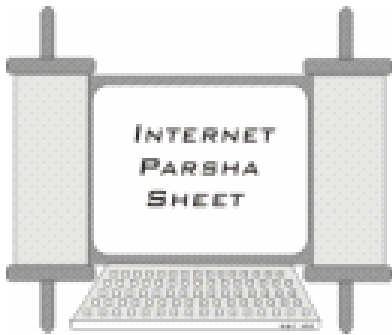


BS"D



To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com  
From: crshulman@aol.com

### INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON KI SAVO - 5763

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From: Chaim Shulman <[crshulman@aol.com](mailto:crshulman@aol.com)>  
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RABBI MAYER TWERSKY  
THE TOCHACHAH

Parshas Ki Savo includes the second tochachah, the dire, terrifying prophecy of the suffering to be endured by Klal Yisroel if we do not remain faithful to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The suffering which is therein prophesied is so great that the Talmud in Maseches Megillah entertains the possibility that the portion of kerias hatorah should not be translated lest people become disheartened. The custom is to read these pesukim in an undertone as though their mere utterance is overwhelming. How then does one live at a time of tochachah sustain himself? The tochachah implicitly provides the answer by beginning the parshah of Ki Savo with the twin mitzvos of Havaas Bikurim and Mikra Bikurim [i.e., bringing annually the first fruits of one's crop in Eretz Yisroel and presenting it to the cohein in the Beis Hamikdash; at that time making a declaration of thanksgiving known as Mikra Bikurim.] The text for Mikra Bikurim is most suggestive:

"Arami oved avi vayered mitzrayma...vayareu osanu hamitzrim...vayotzienu hashem mimitsrayim...vayevienu el hamakom hazeh (26:5-9)."

It provides a synopsis of Jewish history beginning with the near genocide we suffered at the hands of Lavan and Paroh, and culminating with the conquest of Eretz Yisroel. What this highly compressed history suggests is that ultimately our suffering is not simply punitive but redemptive. On the one hand, our sins precipitated galus Mitzrayim (1), on the other hand, galus

Mitzrayim did not simply punish. Rather, Klal Yisroel was forged in the crucible of Egypt (2). Suffering, albeit precipitated by our sins, facilitates the correction of those flaws thereby advancing the geulah.

It is this linear relationship between suffering and redemption sustains one at a time of tochachah.

Nedarim 32a; Rashi quoting Chazal to Shmos 2:14. Devarim 4:20.

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From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online [[feedback@kby.org](mailto:feedback@kby.org)] Sent: September 11, 2003 To: KBY parsha Subject: Parshat Ki-Tavo

Bikkurim - What you Raise with your Hands

Rosh Hayeshiva RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG shlita

"What you raise up with your hands" (Devarim 12:17) – this refers to bikkurim.

The hands are different from the other limbs of the body, whose place is fixed. The hands, though, can be lowered below the body, and they can be raised above the head. The hands represent man's activity. There are hands like those of Esav, which are involved in all kinds of evil and abominations: "Your hands are filled with blood" (Yeshaya 1:15), about which we ask in the Ne'ilah prayer: "So that we should refrain our hands from oppression." There are hands about which it says, "Lift your hands in the Sanctuary" (Tehillim 134:2), and some even bestow blessing upon others: "Aharon lifted his hands towards the people and blessed them." (Vayikra 9:22) The same is true for man's drives and desires. There is no need to run away from them or to uproot them entirely. Rather, we must learn how to use them in a positive manner.

The Gemara in Yoma mentions that when the members of the Knesset Hagedola defeated the inclination towards idolatry, they wanted to abolish the inclination of arayot, as well. The next morning they could not find a fresh egg for a sick person. When the drive is removed – every want and desire is removed, and the world cannot exist in such a manner. It needs a drive that pushes, but the direction – man must provide.

"If this vile one (the evil inclination) encounters you – draw him to the Beit Midrash." (Kiddushin 30b) R. Zadok Hakohen of Lublin pointed out that it does not say, "escape from him to the Beit Midrash," but rather draw him into it. If he remains outside – you will be lacking the driving force also in the Beit Midrash.

A person's property has value, provided that he knows how to use it for positive purposes, and it should not turn into a goal in and of itself.

"The Second Temple was destroyed because they loved money and hated one another." (Tosefta end of Menachot) One who loves money – loves himself; when he loves himself – he cannot love his fellow man. Chazal comment on this: "One who seeks lust separates himself" – this refers to Lot, about whom it says, "Separate from me" (Bereishit 13:9), and, "They separated one from another." (13:1) In the end, his lust caused him to sin with his daughters.

The test of whether man views money as an inherent goal or as a means – is joy. One who is happy with what he has shows that he does not desire money as an inherent goal, and therefore he is happy with his share. However, if money is the goal, he will always be lacking and demanding more and more. Therefore, he is called "evyon," since he desires (ta'ev). One who has a hundred – wants two hundred; when he achieves two hundred – he wants four hundred.

"You shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you." (Devarim 26:11) Conversely, in the end of the rebuke it says: "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart." (Devarim 28:47) You had everything, yet you were not happy, because you always felt lacking.

The Mishna (Bikkurim 3:3) describes how bikkurim would be brought up to Yerushalayim: "The ox would go before them; his horns were plated with gold, and a crown of olive leaves was on his head." Rav Kook zt"l explains the metaphoric meaning of this:

• The "ox" symbolizes wealth that is earned through labor: "Many crops come [through] the power of the ox." (Mishlei 14:4) It says about this, "An ox's face to the left [of the heavenly chariot]" (Yechezkel 1:10); "At its left, wealth and honor" (Mishlei 3:16). Bnei Yisrael lowered the ox from the left of the heavenly chariot and made a golden calf.

• "His horns were plated with gold" – This symbolizes wealth that comes from the work of the ox, and not from questionable sources and amassing wealth without work and toil.

• "A crown of olive-leaves was on his head," since the ultimate goal in borne on the head. The goal is symbolized by olive oil, which indicates wisdom. The Menorah indicates this, as well, and one who wants to become wise should turn to the south. This is the goal of wealth.

The purpose of bringing bikkurim is that through separating the first fruits – all the remainder, all of man's wealth, acquires sanctity. Therefore the bikkurim are "What you raise with your hand," raising what is done with the hands above even the head.

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From: owner-penim@shemayisrael.com Sent: September 11, 2003  
PARSHAS KI SAVO

It will be when you enter the land...and you possess it and dwell in it. That you shall take of the very first fruit of the ground. (26:1,2) Rashi derives from the words, "and you possess it and dwell in it," that the Jews were not obligated to bring Bikurim, the first fruits, until after Eretz Yisrael had been captured and divided according to each tribe. Why is Bikurim different from the mitzvah of Challah, which was imposed on them as soon as they entered the land? Why should they have been required to wait until the land was divided up? In his sefer Simchas HaTorah, Horav Simchah Shepps, zl, explains that the underlying motif of the mitzvah of Bikurim is to actualize the hidden potential of hakoras hatov, gratitude, that Klal Yisrael is to manifest to Hashem for giving them the land. Indeed, when they recite the accompanying liturgy, they begin with recounting their history, detailing how Lavan hoArami sought to destroy Yaakov Avinu. They recall the various kindnesses that Hashem did for them. Eretz Yisrael and hakoras hatov go hand in hand. Only after the Jew realizes that he is in the land only through Hashem's kindness, does he become worthy of inheriting the land. True gratitude can come only with Eretz Yisrael, and Eretz Yisrael can be attained only through gratitude. Thus, when the people became worthy of possessing the land, they concomitantly became deserving of its first fruits.

True hakoras hatov is the recognition that everything that has contributed to the favor that one receives comprises a factor in his favor and, thus, must be appreciated. Everything is the result of many little parts - each part a necessary cog in bringing about the gift that he receives.

With this in mind, Rav Shepps explains the Midrash that posits that Bereishis bara Elokim should be understood as, "In the beginning of Hashem's Creation." "In the beginning" is a reference to Bikurim, the first fruits, indicating that the world was created in the merit of this mitzvah. This is an incredible statement. The suggestion that the world's *raison de' etre'* is Bikurim is a powerful statement. What is the unique significance of this mitzvah such that no other mitzvah warrants this comment?

Rav Shepps explains that hakoras hatov is the glue that keeps us connected to Hashem. When we recognize how much we owe Hashem for

the innumerable benefits of which we are the beneficiaries, our relationship becomes stronger. The mitzvah of Bikurim is unique in the sense that through it Hashem reveals to us the principle of hakoras hatov. Bikurim teaches us that our debt of gratitude to Hashem extends far beyond the immediate benefits we receive from Him. Indeed, we must recognize the genesis of Hashem's kindness, the original source of every benefit we receive. Hence, we thank Hashem for sparing Yaakov from Lavan, and we focus on Yaakov's going down to Egypt, the Egyptian bondage and ensuing redemption, until we finally arrived in Eretz Yisrael and built the Bais HaMikdash. Yes - hakoras hatov goes all the way back to the point that we come to realize that everything - every benefit - has one source, one origin: - Hashem. Hakoras hatov is the foundation of the world. Hakoras hatov defines our relationship with Hashem.

In an alternative understanding, the mitzvah of Bikurim has another aspect. Besides the actual appreciation of Hashem's beneficence that is the hallmark of the mitzvah, there is *hodaah*, expression of gratitude, with the public fanfare that accompanies it. The end result is the raised public awareness of Hashem's kindness towards us. In this light, Bikurim serves as the vehicle for public recognition of Hashem's beneficence. The entire creation was worth it for the mitzvah of Bikurim and the consequent sanctification of Hashem's Name.

Just as we are enjoined to thank Hashem for all the good that He bestows upon us, we are, likewise, instructed to show that same gratitude to anyone that benefits us. Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, understood the parameters of hakoras hatov and served as a paragon of ethical behavior for others to emulate. He would often say concerning the saying in Pirkei Avos 4:1, "'Who is honorable? He who honors people.' If one thinks that he can be honorable without honoring others, he is wrong!" He understood the enormity of the individual's responsibility towards others. Rav Chaim would make every effort to attend the wedding of any student who attended his shiur - even if he was from a different yeshiva! So great was his sense of hakoras hatov. It made no difference whether the favor he received was great or small, whether the benefactor went out of his way or had done very little on his part, if Rav Chaim had benefited from him, he felt he must show his gratitude.

Horav Meir Don Plotzki, zl, author of the Klei Chemdah, was in London to raise funds for the European yeshivos. After a day of visiting a number of London's wealthy philanthropists, trudging from door to door and neighborhood to neighborhood, Rav Meir Don finally returned to his host to rest up for the next days' trip to Belgium and then on to America. Waiting for him was Reb Michael Levi, a distinguished lay leader in the London Jewish community. He brought regards from his aged father who regretted that he was too frail to personally pay his respects to the Torah leader. After about an hour of conversation, it became known to Rav Meir Don that Reb Michael's father was the one who in his younger years had discovered the commentary of Rabbeinu Chananel on Meseches Pesachim and had it printed. Immediately upon hearing this, Rav Meir Don put on his coat and said, "There is not enough honor that I can bestow upon such a person, to whom the entire Torah world is in his debt for this great gift. Come, we must go to your father, so that I can thank him for what he has done." Rav Meir Don understood that he had benefited from this person; even though he was one of many and it was an indirect benefit, he felt it behooved him to show his appreciation. This is the mark of a great person.

Hashem will send in your midst attrition, confusion and worry, in your every undertaking that you will do. (28:20)

Inner peace eludes many of us. We search for it, never realizing that it is right in front of us. The Yismach Moshe once dreamed that he was in Gan Eden. He entered a room that was very plain, completely devoid of ornamentation, and noticed a group of Torah scholars studying Torah. He was quite surprised that this was all there was to Gan Eden. Suddenly, a voice called out to him, "If you are under the impression that the scholars are in paradise - you are wrong. It is paradise that is within the Torah scholars."

We are always searching for a touch of paradise. Look around at how many people spend their hard-earned money on exotic vacations. Although there is certainly nothing wrong with it, do they really find the tranquility and serenity they seek? True, for a few weeks they are relaxed and calm, but what happens as soon as they "land" and return to their daily lifestyle? To be truly free of all tension one must find inner-peace within himself. The problem is that we often think that we are in charge of our destiny. Consequently, we are always nervous about what we can do to insure a

positive result to our endeavor. The cure to this problem is, bitachon, trust in Hashem. When we are ready to begin trusting Hashem and believing that everything that He does is for our good, then we can achieve inner-peace and experience a little bit of Gan Eden in this world. One of the leading causes of depression is a lack of material success. Earning a livelihood is a challenge which becomes magnified when one's wife and children make unreasonable demands for the bread winner to keep up with the Jones'. There is nothing like having one's child wonder out loud why his father cannot be as financially successful as his neighbor. Families have to be supportive, not add to the challenge. A person must realize that his lot in life is decreed by Hashem for a purpose, a purpose that is inherently good for him. Horav Zushia, zl, m'Annipole lived in abject poverty. He never complained. In fact, he accepted his circumstances with a smile. He was once asked, "How can you be sincere in reciting the brachah, blessing, of She'asah li kol tzarki, thanking the Almighty for granting all your needs, when, in fact, you are so much in need?" Rav Zushia responded, "Hashem knows fully well what my needs are better than I do. He knows that one of my needs is poverty. Who am I to argue?" It all reverts to the same idea. Do we trust Hashem to make the correct decision? Do we truthfully believe that what He does is for the best? As long as we think that success or failure in financial endeavors is in our hands, we will be dejected when our efforts do not prove successful. If we realize that what Hashem gives us is in our best interest, we can be happy even if we receive less than we have anticipated.

The cause of all this mistrust is man's archenemy - the yetzer hora, evil-inclination. Horav Yaakov Yosef, zl, m'Polnaah says, "In the past, the yetzer hora directed its efforts at preventing people from acquiring their share in the World to Come. Now, the yetzer hora is busy at work preventing people from having enjoyment from their earthly existence." We have unprecedented opportunities to enjoy life; yet, we make ourselves miserable. Is that normal? We should be happy, but we are not. We do not realize that it is all the yetzer hora's ploy. Instead of enticing us to sin, it sows discontent and depression within us. We should learn to reject depression the way we repel a sin. By acknowledging the source of our problem, we can learn to overcome its effect.

Your sons and daughters will be given to another people - and your eyes will see and pine in vain for them... You will bear sons and daughters, but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity. (28:32,41) There seems to be a redundancy in these two tragic curses. We suggest that, unfortunately, they are two distinct curses, each one focusing on a different type of loss. In the former, the children are given over to another people. They might be living under the same roof as their parents, but their values are different. They are alienated from their people and are instead enchanted by the culture of another nation. In the latter curse, the children are no longer home; they have been taken captive by another nation. They are slaves to another people.

In the first curse, the Torah refers to the sons and daughters as "your sons and daughters." They are home. You see them every day but, regrettably you pine in vain for them. In the latter, they are gone, no longer your sons and daughters. They have been taken captive. Which curse is worse? No parent should ever be faced with this question, but from the sequence it would seem that curses become more serious as they progress. Thus, having the children at home, even though they no longer respect and adhere to their parents' wishes and level of observance, is still far better than having them out of the specter of parental influence and taken captive by another nation. As long as a child is home, there is hope. The parents still have an opportunity to reach out, to assuage the hurt feelings, to repair the breach. Once the child has moved out and moved on, it is so much more difficult. On the other hand, to observe a child's deterioration on a daily basis is a traumatic experience, one that for most people is gut-wrenching and devastating. Yet, the Torah seems to be telling us that as long as the child stays home, there is hope; as long as we consider them our children, they can still come back, because the return address has not been erased.

Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart. (28:47)

Joy in mitzvah performance, aside from being an essential prerequisite to the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah, also has a very practical application. Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains why so many children of European immigrants who came to America after World War I did not remain observant. Their parents were deeply committed to Yiddishkeit. They

slaved long hours, performing all kinds of backbreaking labor to eke out a meager living. They would never compromise their observance of Torah and mitzvos. Shabbos was paramount, and kashrus was a standard in their homes. So, what went wrong? How did so many Jews who were moser nefesh, sacrificed themselves for Torah, fail to see nachas from their children?

They were not happy. "Oy! Es is shver tzu zein a Yid." It is difficult to be a Jew. When they came home after a difficult day in the sweatshops - they complained. When they observed Shabbos, sometimes at the expense of their jobs - they complained. When the price of kosher meat was too much for their meager paychecks - they complained. Their children heard nothing but complaints. This was surely not a strong motivating factor for them. They grew up viewing Judaism as a pain, as a religion that imposed hardship, poverty and unhappiness. Their reaction was simple: they did not want to be miserable like their parents. Therefore, they dropped the source of their parents' misery: religious observance. Now they could be happy. Regrettably, now their children would follow them - until they would see for themselves the beauty and joy inherent in mitzvah observance. The home serves as the greatest and most important training ground for our children. They way we act at home can either inspire or impede. We have only ourselves to blame.

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From: SHLOMO KATZ [skatz@torah.org] To: hamaayan@torah.org  
HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Ki Tavo

Edited by Shlomo Katz

Sponsored by Irving and Arline Katz on the yahrzeit of father Moshe Aharon ben Menashe Reiss a"h

The Sabrin family in memory of mother Bayla bas Zev a"h (Bella Sabrin)

Our parashah opens with the mitzvah to bring bikkurim / first fruits to the Temple. The Torah says (26:2), "You shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, and you shall put it in a basket." R' Eliezer Hager z"l (rabbi of Vizhnitz, Romania and rosh yeshiva of the Vizhnitzer Yeshiva in Tel Aviv; died 1946) comments on this verse:

Many sources teach that one must work to reach the level where he attributes everything to G-d and does not, G-d forbid, take credit for himself. This is alluded to in our pasuk: You shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your Land and realize that it is Hashem, your G-d, who gives it to you. Although you have worked hard, it is of course Hashem who causes the earth to give fruit.

"You shall put it in a basket." Our Sages learned from this phrase that bikkurim must be brought to the Temple in a container, not simply in the farmer's hands. So, too, the feeling that one's success comes entirely from G-d must be safeguarded as if in a container. (Aside from the plain implication of the verse that the bikkurim must be in a container, R' Hager notes that the gematria of the word "tenne" / "basket" (60) equals the gematria of the word "kli" / "container.")

The Mishnah states that when the farmer goes out to his field and sees the first fruits beginning to appear, he should wrap a "gemi" / "band" around the branch that is bearing fruit so that he can recognize it at the time of the harvest as the first fruit. The word "gemi," R' Hager notes, represents the initial letters of the verse (Tehilim 111:2), "Gedolim ma'asei Hashem" / "Great are G-d's works." This is the message that the mitzvah of bikkurim is intended to teach. (Damesek Eliezer)

"Then you shall say before Hashem, your G-d, 'I have removed the holy things from the house, and I have also given it to the Levite, to the proselyte, to the orphan, and to the widow, according to whatever commandment You commanded me; 'lo avarti' / I have not transgressed any of your commandments, 'lo shachachi' / and I have not forgotten.'" (26:13)

R' Moshe Shick z"l (1805-1879; rabbi of Huszt, Hungary) writes: Prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the priestly function was performed by the firstborn, not by the family of Aharon. If not for that sin, the bikkurim / first fruits and the terumot and ma'asrot / tithes would not be given to the Kohanim and Levi'im. Rather, they would have remained "at home" with each family's first born.

Therefore, a Jew declares when he finishes giving all of the gifts from his produce: "I, through my participation in the Golden Calf, have removed the holy things from the house, etc." How so? "Lo avarti" / "I transgressed the prohibition that begins with the word 'Lo', namely Shmot 20:3: 'Lo yihyeh' / 'You shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence.'" Moreover, "Lo shachachi" / "I forgot another prohibition that begins with the word 'Lo', i.e., Shmot 20:4: 'Lo ta'aseh' / 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image nor any likeness'." (Maharam Shick Al Ha'Torah)

"All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed . . ." (28:45)

Our Sages note several differences between the Tochachah / rebuke in this parashah and the Tochachah in Sefer Vayikra (26:27- 44). For example, all of the warnings and curses in our parashah are worded in the singular, while those in Vayikra are worded in the plural. There also are differences in how this Tochachah and the one in Vayikra may be read in public. The Gemara (Megillah 31b) states that the entire Tochachah in Vayikra must be read without interruption, while the Tochachah in our parashah may be divided into two or more aliyot.

Ramban (Spain and Eretz Yisrael; 1194-1270) teaches that the Tochachah in Vayikra relates to the short exile which followed the destruction of the first Bet Hamikdash, while the Tochachah in our parashah describes the longer exile that has followed the destruction of the Second Temple. In light of Ramban's observation, R' Moshe Avigdor Amiel z"l (Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and Tel Aviv; died 1935) offers an explanation for the differences between the two Tochachot and for the harsh language of this Tochachah (for example, the verse quoted above). He writes:

There are two circumstances in which a bet din / Jewish court may impose the penalty of makkot / lashes: (1) if a person transgresses certain negative commandments, for example, the prohibition on making an idol, and (2) if a person refuses to perform an affirmative commandment, for example, if a person refuses to wear tefilin or lift a lulav. What is the difference between these two cases of lashes? One who transgresses a negative commandment always gets 39 lashes (assuming he is physically fit to withstand them), while a person who refuses to perform a mitzvah is whipped until he gives up his obstinance. Depending on the person, he may receive one lash or hundreds. Chazal go so far as to say that a person who refuses to wear tefilin, take a lulav or perform another affirmative commandment should be whipped until his soul leaves him (or until he agrees to change his ways).

There is another difference between these two types of lashes. When the 39 lashes are administered to a transgressor, each lash brings him closer to atonement. Not so the one who is whipped for refusing to perform a mitzvah. The more lashes he gets, the more angry G-d becomes with him, for only a truly wicked person would remain obstinate in the face of such punishment.

The first Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because the Jewish people transgressed three negative commandments -- idolatry, adultery and murder. This is why the first Tochachah is in the plural; the punishment for transgressing a negative commandment -- 39 lashes -- is the same for every person. And, the punishment is finite. Moreover, just as each lash brings the transgressor closer to atonement, so each curse brought the generation of the first exile closer to forgiveness until, after 70 short years, they returned to the Land.

In contrast, the second Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because of unwarranted hatred. In essence, the Jewish people refused to perform the affirmative commandment of "You shall love your fellow as yourself." For such a refusal, the lashing is not finite; it continues until the obstinate person repents or until he expires. This is why the Tochachah says: "All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed." This also explains why the curses in our parashah are worded in the singular and why it is permitted to interrupt the reading. The curses are worded in the singular because every person's breaking point is different; thus, the Tochachah must be tailored to each individual. And, we are permitted to interrupt the reading of the Tochachah because we need time to reflect on our lashings. Have we absorbed enough punishment or do we need more?

This idea explains what we have witnessed over the last 2000 years, i.e., alternating periods of lashings and reprieve. We would err to assume that a period of relative quiet signals the end of the exile, explains R' Amiel. Rather, even the one who is whipped because he refuses to perform a

mitzvah must be given short reprieves to reflect on his alternatives. This is what we, too, must reflect on as the Tochachah is read. (Derashot El Ami)

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From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ [[jschwrtz@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:jschwrtz@ymail.yu.edu)]  
Sent: September 11, 2003 To:  
[internetchaburah@yahoo.com](mailto:internetchaburah@yahoo.com)  
Subject: [[internetchaburah](mailto:internetchaburah)] Internet Chaburah -- Parshat Ki Tavo Prologue:

The Talmud tells us (Megillah 31b) that we must read the Tochacha before Yom Hadin. Similarly, prior to the Yom HaDin on Atzeres, we read the Tochacha of Parshat Behar. Chazal seem to place a stress on breaking one's spirit as a prelude to the day of judgement. Sometimes, the softening of our hearts through the reading of the Tochacha will allow proper tears of Teshuva to flow forth because after all, Hashem only wants the heart (See Sanhedrin 7a).

But for the lack of heart, Hashem brings forth 98 Klalot? It seems like a punishment that is a bit excessive for the crime? Why note the purpose of the Tochacha is in place of lack of service toward Hashem with Simcha and Good spirit of the heart (28:47)? Rav Hai Gaon (cited in Kol Aryeh Al Hatorah) suggested that there are different types of sinners. Some perform the transgression and feel awful about it. They are addicted to a certain lifestyle but really want to change their ways. These people might be committing sin but they are not proud of themselves. Others commit sin and are happy to live in their present lives. They are oblivious to the Torah or even acting in its stead. To violate its principles makes this type of sinner happy. Rav Hai Gaon suggested that the former person is not the one subjected to the full effects of the Tochacha. This sinner sins but not in good spirit and a glad heart. Only the latter sinner, who is only glad to sin, will never change his ways and is subjected to the curses of Arrur.

Judaism demands us to strive to uphold the entire Torah. At times, this command is literal. This week's Chaburah discusses one instance of upholding the Torah. It is entitled:

#### HAGBA HIGHLIGHTS: LESSONS FOR THE LIFTER

The Ramban (Devarim 27:26) quotes the Yirushalmi (Sotah 7:4) which, applies the Possuk of Arrur Asher Lo Yakim Es Divrei Torah to the Chazzan who is not careful to place the Torah back into the Aron properly. The Ramban himself adds that this applies specifically to the person who neglects to show the Torah to all the people assembled. But what are the rules for the Magbiah? When is Hagba to be done and in what manner?

In Meseches Sofrim (14:4) it seems clear that the proper time for Hagba is actually prior to Kriyas Hatorah. This is the opinion of the Michaber (Orach Chaim 134:2). The Ari HaKadosh (Shaar Hakavannos, 48d) specifically noted that the time prior to Laining is the time when the light of Torah becomes revealed to the Kahal. He adds that this is the opinion of the Zohar HaKadosh as well (VaYakhel, 206a). In fact, the Kaf Hachaim (134:16) notes that there were even Ashkenazic communities in Israel that used

to perform Hagba prior to Laining as that was the time of greatest exposure.

The Rema (O.C. 134:2) is quick to point out that this is not the practice among most of Ashkenazic Jewry. We tend to perform Hagba after the Laining. The reason, notes the Shaarei Knesses HaGedola (134:2 also cited in Kaf HaChaim), is that people used to assume that Hagba was more important than Laining and they'd leave after Hagba. In order to prevent this, the communities would first Lain, and have the Hagba come later. Many Sephardim (See Chida LDovid Emes 4:2) follow this practice as well. Some communities seem to follow both practices (See Shut MaHaritz Dushinsky I:10) and that too, seems acceptable to the Poskim.

But what is the Mitzva of Yakim Es Divrei Torah? The Michaber (ibid) notes the importance of helping others see the letters of the Sefer Torah. Indeed, it is cited in the name of the Mikubalim (See Mishna Berura 134:12) that it is better to see into the letters of the Torah as then one merits an Ohr Gadol. Ben Ish Chai (II: Toldos 16) adds that if one can find a letter with the same first letter of his name, it is even better as this is a good Segulah for success. But how does one make another able to do this?

Meseches Sofrim seems to suggest that for this reason we demonstrate the open Torah to the right, left, forward and behind. This opinion suggests the Sephardic style Torah (held out in front of people) or the Ashkenazic Crisscross Simchas Torah Hagba. For in this instance the turn to the right and then left also has the Torah travel always to the right. In addition, the Sephardic Hagba allows for the carrying of the Torah with the Ksav opened in order to allow everyone to see the letters. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shut Yabia Omer VII:16) suggests allowing the open Torah to transverse the crowd in order for people to see the letters but not to allow it to transverse the crowd closed, in order to let others kiss it. However, in conventional Ashkenazic Hagba, the Mishna Berurah (134:9) suggests we first turn left and have the Torah travel toward the right in order to guarantee that all turns are to the right. Others (See Beer Sheva Sotah II; Shut Shibbolei HaLeket IX: 26) suggested turning full circle to allow everyone to see the Torah. It follows that if the Tzibbur is all standing on one side then only turning to the crowd is necessary. However some (Shut BTzel HaChochma V:54) recommend a full circle even in this case.

As the Sefer Torah gets to the ends, the Hagba becomes more difficult. Must Hagba reflect the letters of the Torah that were just read? The Shaarei Ephraim (Shaar 10:14) seems to suggest that it does not. He suggests rolling the Torah to a more evenly distributed area for Hagba. The only concern he raises is for Tircha DTzibbura during the rolling. But if a potential difficulty might arise, it is better to roll the Torah. This is akin to the times where a Shul might possess but one Torah and have to Lain from it many times (like Shabbos Rosh Chodesh). In these cases only one Hagba is done from the location of the last Kriya. However, the Shulchan HaTahor argues that it is better to demonstrate letters that were just read if possible.

In the end, Chazal praise the one who receives Hagba with the Sachar of all those (ostensibly those who received Aliyos) because it is he who enables them to read from the Torah. May the merit of Kiyum Hatorah protect all of us always, individually and together forever more.

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From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST  
[parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: September 10, 2003 To:  
Shabbat\_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom:  
Parshat Ki Tavo by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 26:1 -29:8) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - "These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab in addition to the covenant He made with them at Horeb" (Deuteronomy 28:69).

What is the significance of this additional covenant, apparently to be made when the Israelites would enter the land of Israel, crossing over from the plains of Moab to the great mountains of Shekhem, Mount Gerizim and Mount Eyal? And indeed Joshua is later to carry out this covenantal ceremony of the blessings and the curses, the establishment of an altar of unhewn stone, the offering of sacrifices, the engravings on the stone of the altar, precisely as it is here described in our Torah portion, after the Israelites conquer the cities of Jericho and Ai (Deuteronomy 27; Joshua 8:30-35). And it is precisely following this covenantal ceremony that all of the surrounding nations attack Israel: "And it happened that when all of the kings from the other side of the Jordan heard this - from the mountains and the lowlands, from the entire shore-land of the Mediterranean ocean (lit. the Great Sea) to those (dwelling) opposite Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites the Hivites and the Jebusites - they gathered together in unanimous agreement to make war against Joshua and the Israelites" Joshua 9:1,2).

Why yet another covenant, and why is it apparently so threatening to the other nations of the region?

We have already seen two covenants which G-d made with the Jewish people: the first was with Abraham, "the covenant between the pieces," where G-d guaranteed Abraham progeny and boundaries, in effect the covenant of the Jewish nation-state (Genesis 15); the second was with the Israelite people at Mount Sinai, where G-d revealed the laws at Sinai, the covenant of the Jewish religion (Exodus 24:1-11). The Hebrew brit (covenant) connotes an eternal agreement, a Divine guarantee which can never be rescinded; Israel is both a nation and a religion which will never disappear from history. What else is needed, what other covenant can there be?

This third covenant seems to be dependent upon our entry into the land of Israel, - after all, our Torah portion begins with the words "It will happen when you enter the land which the Lord your G-d gives you as an inheritance, and you inherit it and dwell in it" (Deuteronomy 26:1) - and it seems somehow bound up with the ceremony of the "first fruits" and the tithing of the Israelites to the Levites, the strangers, the orphans and the widows (Deuteronomy 26:1-15). The Talmudic Sages see it as a covenant of mutual responsibility, co-signership, (areivut in Hebrew), a play on the Hebrew Arvot Moav, literally the Plains of Moab, from whence the Israelites entered the Shekhem area, but with the additional ring of areivut (co-signership) so close in sound to Arvot.

The Biblical text goes on to command that on the day that they cross over the Jordan River into Israel proper they must establish a stone altar - remember that the original decalogue was engraved on stone, and the Hebrew for stone, even, seems to be a contraction for av and ben, parent and child, connoting continuity - cover it with lime plaster and engrave upon the stones the content of this covenant. The engraved words are to be "explained well", be'er heiteiv, interpreted by our Sages to mean that they are to be translated into the seventy spoken languages of humanity! (Deuteronomy 27:1-8).

And the content of those blessings and curses are all universal laws of morality which pertain to every human being, like "Cursed is the individual (ish, not only Israelite) who scorns his/her parents, trespasses on the boundary of his neighbor, deceives a blind person on the road, perverts the judgement of a stranger,

orphan and widow, is involved in sexual immorality, strikes his/her neighbor secretly, takes a bribe to shed innocent blood." There are twelve curses and blessings in all, corresponding to the twelve tribes, and the first forbids making a graven image of worship (as explained by the Meiri, expressing the hedonistic and cruel practices of idolatry) and the last insisting upon the necessity of upholding these universal laws.

In addition to these details, the puzzle of this third covenant is solved completely when we take careful note of the verses which introduce its form and content: "You have chosen this day for the Lord to be your G-d, to walk in His ways and to observe His statutes, commands and laws, and to hearken to His voice; and the Lord has chosen you this day to be for him a treasured nation,...a holy nation to the Lord your G-d as He has spoken" (Deuteronomy 26:16-19).

What wells up from all this is that the third covenant goes one crucial step beyond the covenant of nation-state and the covenant of religion; it is the covenant of our chosenness, our function (symbolized by the tribe of Levi, the tribe of teachers, for we are to be a holy nation and a Kingdom of priest-teachers) to perfect the world, to communicate the message of ethical monotheism, of a G-d of justice and peace, to all the other nations. Unlike the other two covenants, this covenant does not mention the rituals at all - not circumcision, and not the Sabbath. This is the covenant of morality, of doing what is right and good, the essence of our laws and the content of our mission to the nations. If the other two covenants are inner directed, this is outer directed; if the other two covenants are concerned with national borders and give equal weight to the ritual and ethical, this is universal and wholly moralistic. This third covenant can only be expressed from the backdrop of our nation-state of Israel, where we too are forced to deal with the complexities of peace and war, social inequities, economic challenges; after all, a teacher must first successfully master the subject matter him/herself, must know what it means to be among the downtrodden (see the ceremony of the first fruits) and must know how to share resources! Understandably this idea of cultural pluralism based on universal peace, freedom and justice upsets every totalitarian regime which enslaves its people and/or seeks world domination, as it did in the ancient Middle East and as it does today to all Islamic Fundamentalist regimes. And especially in a global village in which the threat of nuclear proliferation looms large, this is truly the covenant of responsibility and co-signership; the future of all humanity; including our own, hangs in the balance of our successful execution of our mission of morality to the nations of the world! Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>  
Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean To subscribe, E-mail to: <Shabbat\_Shalom-on@ohrtorahstone.org.il>

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From: National Council of Young Israel  
[YI\_Torah@lb.central.com]  
Parshat Ki Tavo 16 Elul 5763 September 13, 2003  
Guest Author: RABBI MOSHE TEITELBAUM  
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst, NY

As soon as the Jewish people arrived in Eretz Yisrael, indeed, on the very day we crossed the Jordan river, we marched through the Tirtzah Valley to Har Grizim and Har Ayvol. The Shevatim (tribes) of Shimon and Yosef, Yisochor, Yehuda, Levi and Benjamin stood on the green, verdant slopes of Har Grizim, while those of Naftali, Dan, Zevulun, Asher, Gad and Reuven were on

the barren, rocky terrain of Har Ayvol. There we heard the Levi'im invoke the Klalot (curses) of the covenant we entered into in Arvos Moav, supporting the moral and ethical behavior of Am Yisrael in areas of both Mitzvos Bain Adam LaMakom (between Man and G-d) and Bain Adam LaChaveiro (between Man and Man).

In Masechet Sotah (37a) Rebbe Eliezer ben Yakov shows that the Ziknei Kohanim and Levi'im were lower-most on the mountain, while the other Shevatim were positioned above them. Why this unnatural configuration? If the voices of Bnei Levi had to be heard by everyone in Klal Yisrael, then the Levi'im should have been on higher ground in order for their voices to carry? It's illogical for them to call out from below.

We recognize that the Brit (covenant) on Har Grizim was to be expressed and sealed in a manner totally different from the Brit at Sinai. At Sinai the voice of HaShem came from above: "Vayered HaShem al Har Sinai el rosh Ha'har." But not at Har Grizim. The voices of the Levi'im had to speak to us from below.

It's justifiably so - for two reasons. Only HaShem Al-Mighty can address us from a plane of existence that is beyond and above us, too far away and exalted for us to hear and comprehend as we would hearing words spoken to us face to face. Only HaShem. When people speak to us, even the message of Torah, it must be served or presented upward. It has to be presented in a way which tells us, "we are speaking up to you, not down to you", with a message that lifts the Jewish people and manifests our worth and esteem. HaShem wants us to speak up to the people in order to lift the people. "Ha'al es ha'am hazeh."

The minhag of holding a cup for Kiddush or Kos Shel Bracha is to lift it from underneath rather than to hold it by our fingers from above. The reason is because we are lifted by the Shabbos, lifted by the Mitzva to an exalted place rather than dragged there from above. So too we speak to each other from a more modest and respectful position - "below" - and lift Klal Yisrael, with our message, even higher.

That's the first reason why, unlike at Sinai, the Levi'im spoke from below.

The second reason is, that standing at the foot of the mountain at Sinai, "b'tachtit ha'har," meant that HaShem really gave us no choice. "If you accept Torah, good and well with you. If not, you will not live another day. I will crush you all beneath the mountain", HaShem said. So we had no choice but to receive the Torah and choose to accept it and observe its commandments.

But when we speak to each other - even if it is a Rebbe or great scholar, or when Shevet Levi pronounced words of the Brit on Har Grizim, we still have a choice. We are not "b'tachtit ha'har". Even when HaShem says we have no choice, we find it hard to hear the message. So, between and amongst us, we certainly need to be afforded the dignity of making freely chosen, if well informed decisions concerning how we should live our lives. And, therefore, respect and understanding toward the listener is the most vital prerequisite to the successful reception of a message of Torah and Halacha that we may wish to share.

The tragedy of the schism between the Torah-observant community and the secular community has been not only the lack of communication but also the ineffectiveness of a message often spoken down by the Torah-community instead of up. Spoken in words of "you have to" and of coercion, and political power, instead of by persuasive love in the context of respect and accord, free of judgment, labeling and finger-pointing.

Laws of Torah and Hashkafa of all kinds must be conveyed in a manner that lifts us, without talking down to anyone. Direction in all areas of Jewish life has to be offered in a warm, positive, supportive, fashion that expresses dignity and a distinct respect

for the listener. It must be free of coercive pressures. Only then will the eternal message of Torat HaShem be heard and appreciated in all its truth so it can be realized in our lives in all of its beauty. That is how the message of Torah was shared at Har Grizim and Har Ayyol on our first day in Eretz Yisrael. NCYI's Weekly Divrei Torah Bulletin is sponsored by the Henry, Bertha and Edward Rothman Foundation - Rochester, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Circleville, Ohio

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From: RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com Subject: RABBI WEIN'S WEEKLY COLUMNS

Parsha Archive September 12, 2003 Ki Tavo

One of the mitzvot that is described in this week's Torah reading is that of bikurim - the offering of the first-harvested fruit on the premises of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish farmer, after surviving the arduous task of planting and harvesting his precious and hard-won crops, brings the fruit of his labors to the kohen in the great and holy Temple in Jerusalem. There, upon handing over his basket of bikurim to the kohen and the altar, the Jewish farmer recites a prayer of thanksgiving and hope. But the language of that prayer, at first glance, appears to be out of place with the ceremony of bikurim that it is meant to commemorate. Instead of the expected and logical thanks for the rain, the sunlight and the bounty of the fertile earth, the prayer is a short review of ancient Jewish history. Instead, it tells of the travails of our founding forefathers, the descent of the tribes of Israel into Egyptian bondage, their eventual redemption from that bondage and their entry into the Holy Land, and the struggle of Israel to establish itself in its promised land.

And then the prayer almost abruptly switches to the acknowledgment of G-d's bounty in helping the farmer bring this first-harvested fruit offering to the Temple. What is the import of this construction of the prayer? Why the history lesson? What are we to make of this recitation of the prayer of bikurim? People are justifiably proud of their accomplishments. After all, one's efforts and talents, time and struggle, are of no minor consequence in one's life. Many times, we feel that this is perhaps all we have to show for our years on earth. Therefore, there is a human tendency to view one's achievements in a somewhat exaggerated fashion, without being able to place the true accomplishment in realistic perspective. In life, individual or communal, nothing takes place in a vacuum.

There is always a past to our efforts and struggles, as we hope there will be a future to them as well. If we do not somehow see ourselves in the light of that past, we really cannot be aware of the true nature of our accomplishment in the present. The disregard of the past is a common illness in twentieth century life. Much of secular society and secular Jewry blithely ignores the lessons of our past and of general history at large. Same-sex marriages, blind pagan worship of environment and nature, widespread use of addictive drugs, a disproportionate emphasis in life on sports and unwarranted adulation of athletes and the strong, feel-good and undemanding moral standards, all were staple components of the downfall of society in the Classical Era of Greece and Rome. But our world blithely ignores all of the lessons of the past. We see our society as being new and progressive, existing in a vacuum, cleverer by far than all generations that preceded us.

That is the false reality that the Torah warns about in this prayer of the bikurim service. Before the Jewish farmer, proud of his achievements and confident of his future and success, proclaimed his personal victory in the holy Temple of G-d, he first had to recite and remember a basic lesson of Jewish history. He had to admit that life and society did not begin with him, that his "first harvest" - bikurim - was preceded by many other such "first harvests." This sobering assessment of life is realism - uncomfortable, disturbing, thought provoking, challenging and valuable. The Torah prescribes this realism as the gateway to wisdom. We should all treasure our accomplishments in life. We should love and value our children and family. We can be proud of our companies, awards, enterprises and commercial successes. But we should be wise and cautious and remember our past in assessing our present. The necessity to avoid hubris and be realistic about our achievements is the key to true human success. That may be accomplished by studied knowledge and appreciation of our historic past.

Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

From: Aish.com [newsletterServer@aish.com]

<http://www.aish.com/torahportion/livelyParsha/showArticle.asp>

Parsha: Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8)

LIVELY PARSHA Ki Tavo

By: RABBI AVI GELLER

"Rabbi Elijah Kramer of Vilna", called out the bailiff, "You stand accused of assisting John the Christian in abandoning the faith of his fathers to join your inferior Jewish superstitions!"

The bailiff awaited the rabbi's reply, but only received silence. The Rabbi, wrapped in his Tefillin (phylacteries) and covered with his Tallit, was totally immersed in the book open before him and did not make any effort to reply. At every point in the case, the tribunal requested a reply, but the rabbi totally ignored the proceedings. "Another year in Siberia for contempt of court!" they proclaimed, yet the rabbi kept on perusing his book.

The tension rose, as the sentence was about to be read. The disciples informed their rabbi, "Our master, you must do something right away or we may never see you again!" The rabbi then proceeded to uncover the Tefillin that were covered by his Tallit, and suddenly a great trembling reverberated throughout the courtroom. The tribunal members shook from fear, immediately adjourned the court, and told the rabbi he was free to go. This story about the Vilna Gaon is based on a verse in our Parsha which states, "All the nations will see that G-d's name is called upon you and will fear you" (Deut. 28:10). The Talmud states that this refers to the Tefillin of the head. (Of course it probably would not work for us, as one has to be in touch with the spiritual qualities of the Tefillin and not act and feel like many of us, as if it was a potato on one's head!)

In Ki Tavo, Moses concludes the transmission of the 613 Mitzvot and begins the final section of Deuteronomy, Moses' farewell to his people. He places before them possible blessings and curses, and in broad strokes depicts what will occur if they fulfill the Torah (and if they do not). For the second time (the first being in Leviticus, Parshat Bechukotai), the Torah depicts the pain and suffering that will be the Jewish people's lot for forsaking the Torah.

Nachmanides points out that the first rebuke refers specifically to the destruction of the First Temple, while our Parsha is referring to the Second Temple. However, between the lines are hints of all Jewish suffering up to and including the Holocaust (and beyond).

The Parsha begins with two laws, the first fruits and the second tithe.

**THE FIRST FRUITS**

Before the harvest, a person would enter his field and find fruit on his tree. The natural first reaction is to pick and eat it, however the Torah requires us to control our desires and tie a red string around it as a reminder. When the fruits are ripe, the farmer gathers all the first fruits into a basket and travels to Jerusalem to present them to the Kohen.

This is the principle of gratitude, as contrasted with Amalek at the end of Parshat Ki Tetzei, who were the epitome of ingratitude and attacked the Jews.

The Mishnah describes the procession of Jews bearing their first fruits on the backs of the oxen, all ornamented for the occasion. As the people of every town would arrive in Jerusalem, the locals would come out to greet them: "Welcome pilgrims from this and that town!" They would then gather at the head of the Temple Mount and each landowner would transport his fruit basket up the mountain on his shoulders (including the king of Israel) - and present it to the Kohanim.

**THE PROCLAMATION**

At the time the First Fruit was presented to the Kohen, a proclamation was required from the landowner. It basically was a short catharsis of Jewish history summarizing the slavery and Exodus from Egypt. (The Passover Haggadah adapts these verses as the outline of the story of redemption, as narrated at the Seder.) We recall every detail of Jewish suffering, and therefore appreciate all the more so, that we are in our own land and can bring the first fruits.

The proclamation starts in the singular, changes to the plural, and then back to the singular, in order to indicate the individual's personal identification with the history of the nation. This is Jewish "national collective memory" throughout the millennia.

**THE SECOND TITHE**

After giving the first tithe of the crops to the tribe of Levi (who received no portion in the land), a second tithe was separated from the crops. This was eaten by the owner and his family in Jerusalem, in purity and holiness. In case logistics prevented transporting so much produce such a large



distance, one could redeem the holiness onto coins, and transfer the holiness back to food purchased in Jerusalem.

The goal was to raise the spiritual level of the nation even when doing physical acts - which is the main idea behind all the Mitzvot. Therefore this was the last Mitzvah formally taught the people; there are more Mitzvot hinted at later. (Rabbi S.R. Hirsch)

#### EXPLAINED WELL

The people are commanded upon entering the land to set up giant plastered stones, and to inscribe on them the text of the Written Torah. This should be "explained well" - which Rashi says means written in 70 languages, in order that the whole world should also be aware of the profound teachings of Torah. According to tradition, the nations sent representatives and copied the Torah into their language and thus were all aware of the Written Law.

#### THE TWIN MOUNTAINS

The Jewish people are commanded to assemble at the twin mountains (already mentioned in Parshat Re'eh) when they cross the Jordan River. Mount Grizim is verdant and green with trees and foliage. Mount Aival is bleak and desolate.

The lesson being taught is the concept of free will. Both mountains are situated in the same area. They both enjoy the exact same rainfall and sunshine. The fertility of the soil is equal, and yet one grows foliage and the other is bleak.

The analogy is like two people with the exact same givens, and yet one grows in one direction and the other in the opposite way. We have the free choice to decide our spiritual direction. (Rabbi S.R. Hirsch)

#### BLESSINGS AND CURSES

One half of the nation is instructed to ascend one mountain, and the other half the other mountain. The tribe of Levi stood in the middle and proclaimed the blessings facing Mount Grizim and the curses facing Mount Aival. (Although the text only mentions the curses, the tradition is that the blessings were given for those who did not commit these acts.)

The commentators explain that the common denominator of the curses is acts that are not common knowledge. At this point, the Jewish people became responsible for each other.

Here is the list of curses:

One who maintains a hidden idol. Even though he may act and dress very piously, hidden under his bed is a "voodoo god"!

One who belittles his parents (unknown to the public).

One who moves the divider marker of his neighbor, stealthily increasing his acreage.

One who misleads the blind (including knowingly giving bad advice) unknown to the public.

One who misjudges the alien, widow or orphan (who have no one to defend their rights).

One who has forbidden relations with members of the household who are always available (stepmother, sister, and mother-in-law), or with animals that don't tattle.

One who smites his fellow in secret (this refers to "Loshon Hara" - gossip and character assassination) unknown to anyone.

A judge who takes a bribe to spill innocent blood (unknown to the public). Anyone who does not perform any of the Mitzvot of the Torah to fulfill them. Question: What is the meaning of the extra words "to fulfill them"?

Answer: There were always those who believed that if we would just be a bit more lenient in Jewish law, we would succeed in attracting the masses instead of repelling them by our strict codes of living. (Not performing a Mitzvah, in order to "fulfill" the rest of the Torah.) This was proven to be a false premise over and over again. (If you allow the people to drive their cars on Shabbat only to the synagogue, in the end they will drive on Shabbat anywhere but the synagogue!)

#### THE REBUKE

The good news is that if you keep the Torah:

(1) "Blessed are you in the city, blessed are you in the fields." (Deut. 28:3)

Question: The order seems to be reversed. If there is blessing in the fields with a good crop, then there is surely blessing in the city with enough food? Answer: Whether or not there is blessing in the field depends on the Mitzvot kept in the city. When you keep the Mitzvot in the city, you will receive blessing in the fields.

(2) "Blessed are you when you enter, blessed are you when you exit."

(Deut. 28:6) The Rabbis interpret this as when you enter the world and exit the world. Just as a baby enters the world without sin, so shall you leave the world without sin. (Rashi)

The bad news is that if you don't keep the Torah:

(1) "Cursed are you in the city, cursed are you in the fields" (Deut. 28:16). If you are cursed in the city (do not fulfill the Mitzvot), you will be cursed in the fields with a failed crop.

(2) "Cursed are you when you enter, cursed are you when you exit" (Deut. 28:19). Just as a baby enters the world bawling his head off, so will you leave the world with tears in your eyes. (Sifsei Chachamim)

(3) "The heavens will be copper and the earth iron" (Deut. 28:23). Although in Leviticus the Torah states the opposite, the Sages explain that Moses was more lenient than the curse of G-d. Copper (as in copper pipes) sweats; iron doesn't sweat. If the heavens are copper there will be some moisture, and if the earth is iron, at least the crops already there will not spoil. By contrast, in Leviticus the curse is that the heavens will not give a drop of rain, and the earth will be moist and the crops already there will rot.

#### THE CAUSE OF THE PAIN

"Because you did not serve G-d with joy and good heart when you had it all good!" (Deut. 28:47)

We don't appreciate our blessings until we, G-d forbid, lose them! Serving G-d with joy is source of all blessings in this world!

#### ROME

"G-d will bring upon you a nation from afar as the Eagle flies. A nation that you will not understand its language, a brazen nation that will show no pity on old or young." (Deut 28:49)

Nachmanides sees an open reference to Rome, whose symbol was the eagle, came from afar, spoke Latin, and had no compassion on their subjects. (The distance from Rome to Israel equals the span of an eagle's flight.)

#### WALLS

"Until the walls and fortifications that you depended on all fall down." (Deut. 28:52)

From 1967-1974, Israel depended on the "Bar Lev Line" to hold back the Egyptians. The Yom Kippur War was to change that complacency. It took Anwar Sadat all of 24 hours to get over the Bar Lev line. The same myth of security was shattered at the September 11 attacks.

#### PROPHESIES FULFILLED

Among the predictions of calamities, we find a number of open prophecies that a human author could not be aware of. Here are some examples:

(1) "Your corpses will be food for the birds and beasts, and no one will chase them away." (Deut. 28:26)

In the history book of Josephus Flavius, "The Jewish Wars" (4:6), Josephus describes the cruelty of the Romans who - after murdering the Jews (during the second destruction) - left the bodies to rot in the heat of the sun and forbade them to be buried.

(2) "And you shall be a proverb and a byword among all the nations that G-d will drive you there." (Deut. 28:37). This refers to anti-Semitism.

"Anti-Semitism is like no other phenomenon in the history of the world. No other nation has hated any other nation with such intensity. We have not yet merited any logical explanation to explain this phenomenon and its very frequent reappearance without any reason or logic." (Dr. Ben Shalom, Hebrew University)

(3) "And the Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships. You will be sold to your enemies for slaves and no one will buy you." (Deut. 28: 68) There is a land route between Egypt and Israel, yet the Torah predicts they will be transported by boat.

"Innumerable was the multitude of those who were sold as slaves. At the annual market in Hebron, they were offered for sale in such numbers that a Jewish slave was of no more value than a horse. What could not be disposed of there was brought to Gaza and sold or sent to Egypt, on the way to which, many died of hunger or by shipwreck." (E. Schwrer: "A History of the Jewish People," Edinburgh, 1890, p. 314)

Rabbi Avi Geller has been a senior lecturer at Aish Hatorah since 1980. He is an alumni of Lakewood, Be'er Yaakov and Mir Yeshivas and gives a very popular weekly Parsha class in Jerusalem's Old City. He has over 80 tapes available from the Aish audio center, including 50 tapes on the entire Chumash, Mitzvah series, and Holiday series. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and 8 children. See the full Parsha Archives: [http://www.aish.com/torahportion/pArchive\\_hp.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/pArchive_hp.asp) Lively Parsha contains one yearly cycle of essays that repeat. Aish.com is a project of Aish HaTorah, an international network of Jewish educational centers, where Jews from all backgrounds can explore their heritage in an open, non-judgmental atmosphere. (C) 2003 Aish HaTorah International - All rights reserved. Email: [webmaster@aish.com](mailto:webmaster@aish.com) Home Page: <http://www.aish.com> Live camera from the Western Wall: <http://www.aish.com/wallcam>



From: Menachem Leibtag [tsc@bezeqint.net] Sent: September 11, 2003  
Subject: [Par-reg]Parshat Ki-tavo - shiur THE TANACH STUDY CENTER  
[http://www.tanach.org] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag Shiurim in  
Chumash & Navi by

RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG  
PARSHAT KI TAVO

The Finale of the Main Speech

Saying 'thank-you': Ask any mother - it's not enough to 'think' it - a child has to say it. For some reason, a verbal declaration, be it of gratitude or regret, is of paramount importance not only for the listener, but - even more so - for the person who utters it. In Parshat Ki Tavo, we find two such examples of obligatory declarations, precisely where the main speech of Sefer Devarim reaches its conclusion. In this week's shiur, as we study the concluding section of the 'main speech,' we attempt to explain why.

INTRODUCTION As usual, we must begin our shiur with a quick review of the three basic components of the main speech in Sefer Devarim: \* Introduction - the events at Ma'amad Har Sinai (chap.5) \* The mitzva section - (chapters 6-11) \* The chukim u-mishpatim section - (chapters 12-26)

Our last several shiurim have focused on the mitzvot in the chukim u-mishpatim section, which began in Parshat Re'eh with the commandment to establish the National Center at ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem, then continued in Parshat Shoftim with mitzvot relating to national leadership and waging war, and concluded with a wide variety of civil laws ('mitzvot bein adam le-chavero') in Parshat Ki Tetzeh. Now, in Parshat Ki Tavo, we find: A) two final mitzvot, which conclude the chukim & mishpatim B) Moshe Rabbeinu's concluding remarks (26:16-19); C) a special ceremony to take place on Har Eival (chapter 27); D) the 'Tochacha' - a lengthy rebuke (in chapter 28).

Off this backdrop, we will discuss these topics in three "mini-shiurim" into which our shiur will be divided.

PART I - THE TWO LAST MITZVOT OF THE MAIN SPEECH Review the opening section of Parshat Ki Tavo (26:1-15), noting how it contains two mitzvot: 1) MIKRA BIKKURIM (26:1-11) A special declaration made upon the presentation of one's first fruits. 2) VIDDUI MA'ASER (26:12-15) A special declaration recited once every three years, when 'ma'aser sheni' [the second tithe] is given to the poor (rather than to the 'makom asher yivchar Hashem').

Then, review the next short 'parshia' (26:26-19), noting once again how it forms the concluding remarks of the 'main speech'. [To verify this point, simply review the opening psukim of chapter 27, noting how they are written in third person narrative, and hence form the beginning of a new section.]

Based on this short analysis, it becomes quite clear that these two mitzvot were specially chosen to conclude the chukim & mishpatim section of the main speech of Sefer Devarim. In our shiur, we will attempt to explain why.

WHERE THEY 'REALLY' BELONG! Before we discuss what is special about these two mitzvot, we must first take into consideration that both of them should have been recorded earlier in the speech, back in Parshat Re'eh. Let's explain why.

Recall how Parshat Re'eh discussed numerous mitzvot relating to "ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem" (note how that phrase appears over fifteen times in that Parsha and in the beginning of Parshat Shoftim, see 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:23; 15:20; 16:2,6,7,11,15,16; and 17:8). Afterward, that phrase doesn't appear again until the mitzva of bikkurim at the end of the speech (see 26:1-2)! Furthermore, back in Parshat Re'eh, we already found laws relating to bringing other produce to ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem (see 14:22-23). Hence, it certainly would have made more sense to record the laws of bikkurim back in Parshat Re'eh. [In fact, if we compare this to the pattern established in Parshat Mishpatim (see Shmot 23:14-19, especially 23:19), then the mitzva of mikra bikkurim should have been recorded in Devarim chapter 16 (in Parshat Re'eh), together with (or immediately after) the laws of shalosh regalim (compare Devarim 16:9-12 with Shmot 23:14-19).]

Similarly, the laws of viddui ma'aser also should have been recorded in Parshat Re'eh, for the simple reason that all the other laws of the three year cycle of ma'aser sheni are found there (see 14:22-29). Yet for some reason, Sefer Devarim prefers to uproot these mitzvot from Parshat Re'eh and record them instead as part of the finale of the entire speech.

MATCHING BOOKENDS One could suggest that the relocation of these mitzvot yields a chiasmic structure for the entire chukim u-mishpatim section of the main speech. In other words, the mitzvot of ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem serve as 'bookends' for the entire chukim u-mishpatim section (chapters 12-26), as it both begins and ends with mitzvot relating to this theme. [In a previous shiur, we offered a similar explanation for the structure of the earlier mitzva section of Moshe's main speech. We suggested that the parshiyot of shma and ve-haya im shamo'a serve as 'bookends' for this section (i.e. chapters 6-11), thus emphasizing the section's overall theme, 'ahavat Hashem' (see shiur on Parshat Va-etchanan).]

Nonetheless, a more basic question remains: i.e. Why were specifically these two mitzvot - mikra bikkurim and viddui ma'aser - selected (over all the others) to form this closing 'bookend'? To answer this question, we must show how both of these mitzvot relate to thanking G-d for the Land of Israel, and how that concept is an underlying theme in the main speech. To start, note how both mikra bikkurim and viddui maser contain declarations of gratitude for the fertile land granted to us by G-d:

1. MIKRA BIKKURIM "You shall then recite: ...and G-d brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I now bring my first fruits of the soil which You have given me" (26:9-10).

2. VIDDUI MA'ASER "When you set aside your ma'aser...you shall declare before Hashem: I have [fulfilled all my obligations]... Look down from heaven and bless Your people Israel and the soil You have given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as You swore to our fathers" (26:12-15).

Note as well how both declarations thank G-d not only for the Land but also recall His covenant with the Avot (which included G-d's original promise of the Land). This element emerges explicitly in viddui ma'aser (see quote above / 26:15), and is expressed more subtly in mikra bikkurim, as that proclamation reflects thanksgiving for G-d's fulfillment of his covenant at 'brit bein ha-btarim' - when the land was promised to Avraham's offspring (see Breishit 15:18 / also compare Breishit 15:13-16 w/ Devarim 26:5-8!). [See Further lyun section for a more complete explanation.]

Recall as well how the primary purpose of the main speech was to teach Bnei Yisrael the various laws which they must keep when they enter the land. For example,: "And these are the mitzva, chukim u-mishpatim that G-d has commanded me to impart to you, to be observed in the land that you are about to enter and conquer..." (6:1). [See also 5:28 and our introductory shiur to Sefer Devarim.]

These observations suggest that Sefer Devarim intentionally 'saved' these two 'declarations' for the conclusion of the main speech - because both of these mitzvot relate to the need for Am Yisrael to recognize why G-d gave them the land of Israel. Hence, it becomes most appropriate that the final mitzvot of this speech include expressions of gratitude to G-d for the land He has given us. In this sense, one could understand the mitzva of mikra bikkurim in a slightly different light. Instead of viewing this mitzva as a yearly thanksgiving to G-d for our fruits, it should be viewed instead as a yearly thanksgiving to G-d for the Land. In other words, we thank G-d for the Land and bring a sampling of our first fruits as a 'token of our appreciation!' [To verify this, carefully read 26:3-8 once again.] [This may also explain why we quote mikra bikkurim in the Haggada on Pesach as part of the mitzva of retelling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim and thanking G-d for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim. Whereas the primary purpose of this mitzva is to thank G-d for fulfilling His covenant, this declaration is appropriate as well for maggid, in which we thank G-d for His fulfillment of brit bein ha-btarim. (See Shmot 13:8 and compare with Devarim 26:3, noting the use of 've-higgadeti' in both contexts!)]

Recalling G-d's covenant with the Avot serves another purpose, as well. The farmer not only thanks G-d for fulfilling His promise to our forefathers, but also reminds himself of the reason why G-d gave us the land - to become a great nation to represent Him in the world. [See Breishit 12:1-3 and our shiur on Parshat Lech Lecha.] As such, these declarations are significant in that they emphasize the reason for keeping all the mitzvot of the main speech in Sefer Devarim - that Bnei Yisrael become an 'am kadosh' (a holy nation), a model for all nations to follow. [See Devarim 4:5-8.]

PART II / THE FINALE - MOSHE'S CONCLUDING REMARKS This same theme continues in Moshe Rabbeinu's concluding remarks of the main speech (which follow these two mitzvot): "On this day, G-d

commands you to observe these chukim u- mishpatim... G-d has affirmed this day that you are His 'am segula' (treasured nation) and He will set you high above all the nations, that you shall be, as He promised, a 'goy kadosh' (a holy nation)..." (see 26:16-19)

Moshe concludes the main speech by reiterating the primary purpose behind keeping these mitzvot: that Am Yisrael becomes an am kadosh, a holy nation, worthy of representing G-d.

**BACK TO HAR SINAI** Moshe's concluding remarks also feature a striking parallel to G-d's original charge to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai. Recall that when Bnei Yisrael first arrive at Har Sinai, G-d summons Moshe to the mountain and proposes a special covenant with Bnei Yisrael: "And now, if you will listen to my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall become for Me a 'segula' amongst all the nations...and you shall be for Me a kingdom of priests and a goy kadosh..." (Shmot 19:5-6).

This proposal, which actually forms the prelude to the Ten Commandments, explains the central function of Matan Torah - that Am Yisrael will become a goy kadosh to represent G-d. At the conclusion of the main speech, in which Moshe Rabbeinu repeats those mitzvot which were originally given at Har Sinai (immediately after the dibrot - see our introductory shiur to Sefer Devarim), this very same theme is repeated: "And G-d has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you [at Har Sinai!], His am segula who shall observe all of His commandments, and that He will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised [at Har Sinai!], a goy kadosh..." (26:18-19).

Moshe's concluding remarks thus appropriately close his presentation of the mitzvot that will facilitate Bnei Yisrael's development into a am segula and an am kadosh, just as He had originally promised at Har Sinai!

**THE PROPER BALANCE** Moshe's concluding remarks also beautifully tie together the two sections of the main speech. Recall that the mitzva section, whose primary topic is ahavat Hashem, opened with the commandment to love G-d - 'be-chol levavcha u-vechol nafshecha' - with all your heart and soul. Now, at the conclusion of the chukim u-mishpatim section, Moshe explains how these two sections relate to one other: "The Lord your G-d commands you this day to keep these chukim u-mishpatim; observe them faithfully - 'be-chol levavcha u-vechol nafshecha' - with all your heart and with all your soul..." (26:16).

In other words, the numerous specific mitzvot recorded in the chukim u-mishpatim section must be observed with the proper attitude, as explained in the mitzva section. Thus, Moshe's speech has come full circle. The general values of faith and love of G-d outlined in the mitzva section must combine with the practical, day-to-day details and guidelines of the chukim u-mishpatim section, to form a mode of behavior capable of producing G-d's special nation in His special land.

**PART III - THE COVENANT AT ARVOT MO'AV AND HAR EIVAL** The thematic and textual parallel to Ma'amad Har Sinai at the conclusion of the main speech continues in the next parshia as well: "Moshe and the elders charged the people, saying: Observe everything that I command you today... for when you cross the Jordan, you must erect large stones and coat them with plaster [in order that] you shall write on them all the words of this Torah [the mitzvot of Sefer Devarim]... erect these stones on Har Eival... And you shall build there a mizbeiach... (note parallel to Shmot 20:22), and you shall offer upon it olat and shlamim..." (Devarim 27:1-8).

You might recall that an almost identical ceremony was conducted some forty years earlier, at Ma'amad Har Sinai, immediately after Moshe taught Bnei Yisrael the laws he was taught after the Ten Commandments: "And Moshe came [down from Har Sinai] and told the people all of G-d's commandments and the mishpatim... Moshe then wrote down all of G-d's commandments. Then, he woke up early in the morning and built a mizbeiach at the foot of the mountain and erected twelve large stones... and they offered olat and shlamim..." (Shmot 24:3-8).

Furthermore, the requirement that a tochacha be read as part of the ceremony on Har Eival (see Devarim 27:11-28:69) parallels the tochacha delivered at Har Sinai (Vayikra 26:3-46, see also 25:1). Thus, this ceremony on Har Eival, which consists of the writing and teaching of the mitzvot of Sefer Devarim, the construction of a mizbeiach and offering of olat and shlamim, parallels the covenantal ceremony at Ma'amad Har Sinai, when Bnei Yisrael proclaimed 'na'aseh ve-nishma' (see Shmot 24:3-11). The reason behind this parallel is simple. Since this generation (which stands on the brink of entry into the Land to fulfill these mitzvot) was not present at the original ceremony, a new ceremony is required for the new generation to reaffirm their commitment to the covenant. This

ceremony will take place on Har Eival, where Bnei Yisrael will 'relive' the experience of Har Sinai by studying the mitzvot of Sefer Devarim, which will guide them towards the establishment of their new nation.

**TODAY** It is not often in our history that a generation is granted the opportunity to fulfill a destiny originally intended for an earlier generation. Aware of the immense potential latent in such an opportunity, Moshe encourages the new generation in the desert to rise to the challenge of establishing an am kadosh in the Promised Land, as G-d had originally planned for their parents. Although this challenge by Moshe Rabbeinu to Am Yisrael is some three thousand years old, it takes on additional significance today, as our own generation has been granted the opportunity to fulfill this very same destiny, a privilege that had remained but a dream for so many years. The tragedies of this past week in Yerushalayim and Tzrifin, that cut short the lives of wonderful people who had dedicated their entire lives to the realization of these ideals, certainly cloud those dreams. Yet their memory must serve as our source of inspiration to continue.

shabbat shalom, menachem

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