



S. FLORIDA ZMANIM
CANDLE LIGHTING
 7:06PM
S"Z KRIAT SHEMA
 10:10 AM
SUNSET
 7:22 PM
MOTZEI SHABBAT
 7:57 PM

"Written by a Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich and Enhance Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion"

PARSHAT KI TAVO

פרשת כי תבוא

~ י"ח אלול תשע"א ~

RABBI BEN SUGERMAN 1,4

EVAN DOLGOW ('13) 2

ARI MAZOR ('14) 2-3

KELLEY TRIPP ('13) 3-4

SAGIV ZEHAVI ('12) 4

HOW TO TELL A STORY

RABBI BEN SUGERMAN

The first *aliyah* of this week's parsha sounds familiar. As it should. It's the psukim that we say at the Seder on Pesach. Together with the bringing of our first fruits, ביכורים, to the Beit Hamikdash and handing it to the kohen, the farmer is obligated to recite four psukim that provide a short historical synopsis of the exodus of Egypt. The Mishna in the 10th perek of *Pesachim* tells us that a main part of the mitzvah of telling over the story of Egypt is to

recite these four psukim together with a midrashic interpretation for these verses. And so we do, every Seder night. We start with the classic ארמי אובד אבי

Additionally, the Mishna provides for us a thematic instruction in terms of how to tell the story of the Exodus. מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח: Start the story on a downer and end on a positive, like any good story is told. The Gemara in *Pesachim* relays a debate as to how to properly fulfill this requirement. One opinion is that we start with lows of slavery and finish off with our emancipation. Another opinion is that we start with our spiritual depravity and finish off with our commitment and connection to Hashem. In practice, we do both. One of the opening paragraphs for the *maggid* section is מתחילה היו אבותינו עובדי עבודה זרה while another is עבדים היינו

At first glance, the first opinion is the more logical one. The topic of slavery seems to be more germane to the theme of the evening, as we are celebrating our exodus from Egypt. How do we understand the second opinion? Is there any indication in the psukim themselves that we need to be telling the story going all the way back to Abraham and his father Terach, and remind ourselves that once upon a time we worshipped idols?

Perhaps the answer can be found in this week's parsha. As mentioned, the prototype story for יציאת מצרים is the four psukim beginning with ארמי אובד אבי. The Torah provides a very succinct storyline of slavery to freedom. For the most part, these psukim are very clear, except perhaps for those first three words: ארמי אובד אבי

What do they mean? Rashi, the more popular explanation, reflects the view of the *midrash* that we say every year at the Seder. The *Arami* is a reference to Lavan, who sought to destroy Yaakov.

A different explanation is offered by Rashi's grandson, the Rashbam. The *Arami*, explains the Rashbam, is a reference to Avraham. The pasuk should be understood as saying the following: our father Avraham, who was from Aram, was wandering and lost, "like a lost sheep looking for its master."

Continued page 4

A MITZVAH IS NEVER OUTDATED

EVAN DOLGOW ('13)

In *Parshat Ki Tavo*, we learn that a farmer is obligated to bring his first fruits as an offering to Hashem. Although there are many explanations and lessons behind the reason for this commandment, perhaps the most important lesson one can learn from this mitzvah is the value of prioritization.

In the times of the Beit Hamikdash the farmers had many other daily rituals from sowing seeds to aerating soil. However, once *the bikurim*, the new fruit offerings, arrived, this mitzvah was given top priority. The *bikurim* represented a gift for Hashem, and are brought before the rest of our daily tasks.

Good deeds and a relationship with Hashem are our modern day "*bikurim*." Every morning before our daily activities one should set time aside to think about Hashem, contemplate His presence, and recognize how much one has to be thankful for.

In essence, having good deeds and a profound relationship with Hashem as our highest priorities can change lives. This is how we can all participate in the mitzvah of *bikurim* today, even without a Beit Hamikdash.

WE'VE GOT THE POWER

ARI MAZOR ('14)

Throughout the Torah, Hashem always seems to refer to the Jews through the seemingly elitist phrase: "The Chosen People." What does this mean? Surely Hashem does not mean that we are better than all the other nations? Why does this special status, a source of much anti-Semitism, bring Jews embarrassment, as if we are afraid of who we are? The answer is found in this week's parsha.

There is a well-known *midrash*, in which Hashem asks every nation to accept His Torah before asking the Jews. Each nation rejects, but the Jews cry out "*Na'aseh v'nishma*," "We will do, and we will listen"

However, when the Jews leave Har Sinai, they seem to do everything except listen to Hashem. They rebel time and time again, until Hashem punishes the entire generation by waiting until they die out in the desert before ever seeing Eretz Yisrael. After the generation dies out and Bnei Yisrael are finally going to enter the land, in this week's parsha, Hashem poses a challenge before Bnei Yisrael to "choose between life and death." If they follow commandments, then they will live happily, and if they do not follow the Torah, then they will suffer.

Unlike other nations, the Jews hold their own lives in their hands. However, Jews are often embarrassed and shy away from the challenge as it demands responsibility. We are afraid to show our true potential as Jews. "What if I make a mistake? What will others think of me?"

Continued page 3

Ari Mazor continued

The Jewish people, especially in these dark times, must take the challenge with responsibility, and stand up with pride as Jews. Choose life, and the Jewish people will “live” up to their full potential and be a “chosen people,” shining their light onto the other nations.

Adapted from Aish.com

A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

KELLEY TRIPP (‘13)

The first mitzvah in this week’s parsha is the mitzvah of *bikurim*, the bringing of the first fruit. The Gemara describes the joyous festivities that occurred in Yerushalyim when welcoming the farmers bringing their *bikurim*.

The second mitzvah in *Ki Tavo* is *vidui ma’aser*, when a farmer makes a declaration (preferably in the Beit Hamikdash) about having tithed all his *ma’asar rishon*, *maser ani* and *maser sheni*- close to 20% of his crop of the past three harvests. There is no accompanying celebration.

Why is it that for the mitzvah of *bikurim*, only a small basket of fruit, do the people approaching Yerushalayim receive a celebration of music and fanfare to welcome them? However, when a farmer completes his tithing of *ma’asrot* there is no celebration, no fanfare! The *vidui ma’aser* declaration is made quietly by its owner in Yerushalayim. The financial value of this *ma’aser* is much greater than that of the *bikurim*! Why is there no excitement about *ma’asrot*? What makes the *bikurim* so special?

When Bnei Yisrael finally reached Eretz Yisrael, it was after 40 long years in the desert with no agriculture, no farming. In the desert, Bnei Yisrael constantly received gifts from Hashem. They survived not by their own toiling, but by what Hashem provided. After living a life where all is provided for them, they were suddenly forced to grow their own produce and practice their own agriculture. And what is their greatest thrill? The first fruit that grew from something that they themselves have planted! And what did they do with that crop? They gave it as a gift to Hashem; a gift so cherished because it was the first result of their hard work. The last time Bnei Yisrael experienced the satisfaction of seeing the products of their labor was many years ago, before they were enslaved. And so, it is the taking of the food that they loved so much and then bringing it to the Beit Hamikdash that was a tremendous sacrifice.

When the farmer says *vidui ma’aser*, however, the field has already been plowed and he has already eaten or sold 80% of his crop. Only then must he make the *ma’aser* declaration in Yerushalayim. The *vidui ma’aser* is not about what is anticipated; it is about what is left over. What Bnei Yisrael anticipated the most was what they had not seen, what they grew themselves and watched flourish. With the most amazing sense of deep appreciation, they tied that fruit and prepare it for the Beit Hamikdash. Therefore, because of this sacrifice of giving up something they love so much, their bringing is accompanied with such excitement and celebration.

Continued page 4

Kelley Tripp continued

In life, we very often give Hashem what is left over. Hashem blesses us with a full day of strength and we use it for our work and physical activity, giving our leftover time to davening and learning Torah. We must learn from the lesson of sacrifice from the *bikurim* and we must give our best time to performing mitzvot. We must sacrifice our best things, our *bikurim*, for Hashem.

Rabbi Sugerman continued

Based on this explanation, we see that the Torah itself, when recounting our story of going into exile, takes us back to Avraham who was wandering and searching for a truth. The exile and slavery were a means and a backdrop to how we eventually discovered that truth. This is further reflected by the fact that our destination after leaving Egypt is Har Sinai. Revelation becomes a realization of a search for the Divine that traces its way back to the wanderings of our Patriarch, Avraham.

אהבת נעורים

SAGIV ZEHAVI ('12)

הגדתי היום לה' אלוקיך כי באתי אל הארץ אשר נשבע ה' - הלשון "כי באתי אל הארץ", לכאורה אינה מתאימה למי שנולד בארץ.

מיישב הרב כהנמן (הרב מפוניבז') שגם על ותיקי א"י שנולדו בה, מוטל לאהוב את א"י אהבת נעורים תמידית כאילו רק כעת הגיע לשם.

והוסיף הרב מפוניבז' - "בכל פעם שאני חוזר ובא לארץ ישראל, כולה חידוש בעיני, וכל כולי מתמלא התחדשות כאילו עוד לא ראיתיה מעולם, אפילו אפליג ממנה רק ליום אחד, אפילו רק לקפריסין הסמוכה, תיכף ומיד אחזור, גם אז ארגיש בה חידוש גדול" (הרעיון כולו, וכן לשון הרב מפוניבז'), מובא בספר "כמוצא שלל רב"

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