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פרשת כי תבוא
Parshat Ki Tavo

Ashreinu | אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

Rabbi Binyamin Frager

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Aliyah Summary

Hannah Markovich ('24)

1- Farmers in Israel are commanded to bring their first fruits to the Beit Hamikdash for *bikkurim*, where they say a special bracha on them.
2- Farmers are also commanded to take out sections of their crops to give to the Kohanim, Leviim, and poor people, and one section is to be eaten by the farmer in Yerushalayim.
3-Moshe reminds *Am Yisrael* to follow the mitzvot because Hashem is their chosen God and we are His chosen nation
4-The Jews are commanded to take two sets of three stones to inscribe the entire Torah on before crossing the Yarden River. One set is to be taken with them and the other is to be taken to Har Eival.
5-The Jews are supposed to proclaim blessings standing atop Har Gerizim and curses atop Har Eival
6-Detailed descriptions of the blessings they will receive for following Hashem and the curses that will befall them if they disobey
7-Moshe reminds *Am Yisrael* how grateful they should be for all the amazing things they have received from Hashem, therefore they must follow Hashem

Taking the Good

Rabbi Binyamin Frager

We have arrived at a *zman* of great joy, closeness, and trepidation (yes, all three can be felt all at once). In other words, we find ourselves in a unique time of the year where we are able to obtain a heightened spiritual awareness as well as divine consciousness. So I ask all who would "give an ear": how does the *tochacha* in Parshat Ki Tavo fit into this idea of closeness and an "awe-filled" *zman*?

Of course the *tochacha* reminds us that we need to be held accountable for our actions, but I think there is something deeper going on here that I would like to share. At first glance, it seems as though the Torah is expressing a reward and punishment system that is entirely dependent on how well we keep the Torah. I implore all of you to delve deeper into these seemingly terrible pesukim and attempt to weigh whether you think the punishments listed in our parsha fit the crime. Consider the following pasuk:

וְאָכַלְתָּ פְּרִי בִטְנְךָ בְּשַׂר בָּנֶיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ

"You will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your

sons and daughters that God has given you…" (Devarim 28:53).

Reading that, many of us are probably thrown back a few months to Tisha B'av and the reading of Eicha. Many of us have probably thought of this punishment, mothers eating their own children, as completely overdoing this whole reward and punishment thing. To top it all off, we are told later on in the pesukim that we deserve these horrific punishments due to the fact that we didn't serve Hashem with goodness of heart and happiness. What's *p'shat*?!

To answer these questions we need to get some context. Right before Moshe lists these punishments, we are given the mitzvah of *bikkurim*. The Torah tells us that when we bring *bikkurim*:

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה'

– "you should be happy, rejoice in all of the good that Hashem is giving you…" (26:11).

Another Pasuk reads:

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל

"Because you did not serve Hashem, your God, with happiness and goodness of the heart from all the good" (28:47).

The focus in these pesukim on goodness and happiness points us to another part of the Torah that will help clarify all of our questions: the story of Adam and Chava and the *Eitz Hada'at Tov V'ra*. Adam and Chava had all the good they could ever want in Gan Eden, yet they fell for the one thing they couldn't have, thus bringing curses into their life.

We can all have all the good we can ever want – the money, the home, and family – and yet still feel as though we are cursed with the burden of the day-to-day or the feeling that we are lacking compared to what we perceive others have. Take a look at some of these curses:

The person who builds a home, but someone else dwells in it. The person who chooses a woman to marry, but someone else will end up with her. The person who plants a vineyard, but the fruits will be enjoyed by others. These curses are bitterly painful, but, in a sense, they describe a person who has "*kol*," they have "*tov*": they built the home, the vineyard, they found the love of their lives, but they can't truly enjoy it. Why not?

I believe it comes down to not only receiving what is good, but being absolutely present and appreciative of the good that is given to us. Curses can befall those who only focus on what they lack or those who lack the awareness of what they truly have. We always have a choice between "good" and "evil" or "blessings" and "curses". Let's take these lofty days as a time to be fully present with what already "is" and continue to perpetuate that good into the rest of the year, *b'ezrat Hashem*.

Have a good Shabbos!

Holy Honey

Maddie Landau ('24)

Good Shabbos, KYHS! In this week's parsha, Parshat Ki Tavo, Moshe reminds Bnei Yisrael about their miraculous exodus from Egypt and Hashem bringing them into their promised land.

וַיּוֹצִאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרֹעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְמֹרָא גָּדֹל וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבְמֹפְתִים:וַיְבִאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֶּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבָשׁ

"And Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm and awesome power, and with signs and wonders, bringing us to this place and giving us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Devarim 26:8-9).

These pesukim famously describe Eretz Yisrael as a land flowing with milk and honey. Honey is also an important symbol of the upcoming holiday of Rosh Hashana. What exactly does honey symbolize, and why does this metaphor pop up both in this week's parsha and on our Rosh Hashana table?

Let's consider the process of withdrawing honey from the beehive, not a simple task. First, the beekeepers need to wear special equipment so they don't get stung. Then, after extracting the honey, a series of processes need to be done in order to eat it, including sterilizing it. It is clearly a difficult task and takes lots of hard work.

The hard work of producing honey is a great metaphor for this time of year. With Rosh Hashanah coming up, one way we can successfully start the new year is by putting in hard work to get to the place we want to be. We always tell ourselves, "This year I'm not going to speak any *lashon hara*," or, "I'm going to work on giving more *tzedakah*," but in order for this to be successful we need to really put in the hard work to get to the place where we want to see our-

selves in the future. It is not an easy process. We can either put in all the hard work and become our best selves, or we can have it easy and just do the bare minimum. It's up to each one of us to decide. So, will you put in the hard work and be the best you can be? Good Shabbos!

First Things First

Miri Wolk('26)

This week's parsha contains some of the most important information that Bnei Yisrael will need to know for their journey into Eretz Yisrael. This information will be useful for all time. In this week's parsha, Parshat Ki Tavo, we see the concept of שְׂכַר וְעונֶשׁ , reward and punishment. The Torah lists the potential consequences of our actions, including the bracha for those who follow in the ways of Hashem:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בָּעִיר וּבָרוּךְ אַתָּה בַּשָּׂדֶה

"Blessed are you in the city, blessed are you in the field" (Devarim 28:3)

Why does the pasuk mention success in the city before success in the field? Why is it that if a person fulfills the mitzvot, he first sees the reward בָּעִיר , "in the city", at home amongst his neighbors, and only then sees good growth בַּשָּׂדֶה , "in the field", in business? What is the lesson that the Torah is trying to teach us by putting these rewards in a specific order?

Rav Hirsch suggests that perhaps the Torah is hinting to us the great essence of Bnei Yisrael. In most cases, a person who finds success in school and at work is given honor and respect. Since he is blessed בַּשָּׂדֶה , with success in school and at work, he then becomes blessed בָּעִיר , given honor and respect at home. However, in Judaism, a person gains respect and honor by his relationship with Hashem and other people. A person who is kind, caring, and fulfilling of the Torah's mitzvot is a person who really deserves respect and honor. After mastering all these traits at home, with his neighbors, and in his community, Hashem will help him find success in the larger public arena as well.. Therefore, when someone first succeeds in their relationship with Hashem and others בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בָּעִיר , they then succeed in school and work וּבָרוּךְ אַתָּה בַּשָּׂדֶה .

Have a great Shabbos.

Don't Hesitate

Elisha Marcus ('23)

Parsha Ki Tavo begins by saying:

וְהָיָה כִּי תָבוֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יהוה אֱלֹקֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ נַחֲלָה
וִירִשְׁתָּהּ וְיָשַׁבְתָּ בָּהּ
וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תָּבִיא מֵאַרְצְךָ אֲשֶׁר יהוה
אֱלֹקֶיךָ נ�ֹתֵן לָךְ וְשַׂמְתָּ בַטֶּנֶא וְהָלַכְתָּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
יִבְחַר יהוה אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם

"It will be, when you will come to the land that Hashem your God gives you as an inheritance, and possess it, and dwell in it, you should take from the first of every fruit of the ground that you will bring in from your land that Hashem your God gives you; you should put [it] in a basket and should go to the place that Hashem your God will choose to establish His name there" (Devarim 26:1-2).

Why does the parsha start with וְהָיָה כִּי תָבוֹא , "and it will be when you come to the land," if it could just start with כִּי תָבוֹא , "when you come into the land,"? Why is the added word וְהָיָה necessary? A similar question arises at the beginning of Parshat Lech Lecha when the Torah says לֶךְ לְךָ – "Go for yourself" (Bereishit 12:1). The Torah could have just said,"Go!"

Rashi in Parshat Lech Lecha explains that the Torah adds the extra word to teach us that it was good for Avraham to go to Eretz Yisrael. How can this concept be applied here in Ki Tavo?

Just like in Parshat Lech Lecha, the extra word in Parshat Ki Tavo could also mean that Hashem is indicating what is good for us, in this case, going to the land of Israel! Like with Avraham, if Hashem tells us that going to Israel is good for us, we should not hesitate to listen to Him! May we all be *zocheh* to be in Yerushalayim next year!

Have a great Shabbos!

Torah Strong

Elisha Horowitz ('25)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Ki Tavo, the Torah deals with a wide variety of ideas. One of these topics is the section of the blessings and the curses.

The Torah lists twelve curses that are included in the ceremony of the blessings and the curses. The first eleven are clearly each drawn from a commandment in the Torah and refer to specific sins one should not commit. However, the twelfth one varies from this pattern and portrays a broader curse:

אָרוּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָקִים אֶת דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם...

"Cursed be whoever will not uphold the words of this teaching and observe them…" (Devarim 27:26).

The obvious question is, why does the Torah conclude a list of very specific curses with such a vague one? Additionally, what "teaching" is the last curse talking about?

Rabbi Goldin offers two different answers to this question, which both reflect challenges that are still around today.

The first answer comes from the Talmud Yerushalmi, which interprets this curse as telling people with the ability to maintain the honor of Torah that they have to follow through and uphold the reverence of Torah. The rabbis include in this category people who have the money to support and engage in Torah study but instead withhold it. The Netziv interprets this curse as a commandment to support communal Torah learning.

Conversely, the other interpretation does not redefine the terms or even see the need to redefine the terms. Rashi suggests that this is simply a broader commandment to observe the entire Torah. But if so, why do we need the other eleven curses if they are covered by this last, broader one? The Ramban explains that the last curse does not refer to observing the Torah, but rather to accepting it. This pasuk curses people who go against Torah authority and challenge its legitimacy.

As explained by both the Malbim and the Ramban, the Torah is a warning against people who believe in the values of the Torah but claim its laws are out of date and try to delegitimize its relevancy.

In a time where religion is challenged and the Torah's laws are viewed by many as out of touch with society, the Torah itself contains a warning: We must fight to uphold the authority and legitimacy of the Torah and all of its laws.

Have a good Shabbos!

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