

Ki Tavo 5778

BS"D Parashat Ki Tavo 5778

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Bringing Bikurim to the New Bet HaMikdash

Our parsha begins with the mitzvah of "bikurim". A landowner who grew any one of the seven species of flora which are indigenous to Eretz Yisrael: wheat, barley, grape, fig, pomegranate, olive or date, must bring a sampling of the first growth to the Bet HaMikdash starting after the holiday of Shavuot.

The landowner declares his recognition and thanks to HaShem for the bountiful blessings he received as an owner of land in Eretz Yisrael and presents the fruit to a kohen who places it near the altar.

Then the landowner voices a short historical overview of Jewish history, ending with:

אֲנִי עַבְדֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל ()
:אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל ()
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אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל ()
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אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַיְהוּדִים אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל ()
:אֲנִי וְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

⁸ *The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great awe and with signs and wonders.*

⁹ *And brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey;*

¹⁰ *and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me. Then place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him.*

¹¹ *Then you and the Levites and the converts residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.*



It is interesting to note that the Bikurim declaration deals with very material agricultural matters while ignoring the bigger implications of the Jewish nation and our great spiritual mission as HaShem's chosen people. The reason is that at the time of HaShem's revelation at Sinai, world history was not yet sufficiently developed for the Jewish nation to impact on humanity. The great empires of Persia, Greece and Rome were not yet born, nor had the major religions, which grew out of Judaism, appear on the world stage.

With the blessings of HaShem and the sacrifices of dedicated, loyal Jews in Eretz Yisrael, the Bet HaMikdash will soon ascend above the mountains of Judea and our landholders will bring to it their first fruits. But their declarations will be a bit different than the text of our parasha.

One part of the declaration will be to point out and offer thanks to HaShem for the great material wealth that this land has given forth to those who dwell in it. Riches that will reach the quality and quantity of King Solomon's legendary monarchy, in which the Talmud states that gold abounded like stones in the street.

Then the declaration will deal with the miraculous survival of a handful of Jews in a world that tried in every way to eradicate our existence.

The declaration's crescendo will focus on the unbelievable, miraculous, unprecedented establishment of Medinat Yisrael and the return of the Jewish nation from the far-flung corners of the galut. It will deal with the Medina's destruction, demolition and devastation of the false gods of Islam and Christianity, each one claiming that it replaced the Jewish nation as God's chosen people, with the proof being the never-ending exile of the Jews from the holy land. Our very return to Eretz Yisrael, regardless of the spiritual level of many here is a devastating rejection, rebuttal, denial, contradiction, repudiation and disavowal of all of their false claims.

The thundering words of the prophet Yeshayahu will be realized, as brought down in the second chapter of Yeshayahu:

¹ This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

³ *Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths". The law will go out from Zion; the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

⁴ *He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.*

⁵ *Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

We Reap What We Sow

However, not every Jew in the world will merit to share in the exhilaration of grandeur that will be part of our nation's future.

If one does not toil to bring forth the spiritual and material richness of HaShem's blessed land, preferring to dedicate his energies to foreign lands and cultures, how can he expect to share in the rewards awaiting those Jews who sacrificed so much to sanctify HaShem's name?

As we approach the Days of Awe, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we should all remember that no action or thought is forgotten before the Almighty. Although He is our merciful Father "Avienu", He is also "Malkaynu" – our King who metes out

justice based on “a measure for measure” – what you invest is what you receive in return.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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