

PARSHAS KI SAVO

תשפ"ג

There is a mitzvoh of bringing bikkurim, and the person makes a declaration in the Beis Hamikdash about how he has arrived in Eretz Yisroel, the land Hashem gave us. But wait a minute – who says this person bringing bikkurim actually journeyed to Eretz Yisroel? Maybe he was born here and his family was already living here for generations?

The posuk says וּבְנֵי וְאִמֵּיהֶם, and Chazal in Meseches Sotah explain this unique phrase requires the declaration to be made in loшон hakodesh – exactly as written in the parsha. Unlike many things which can be recited in any language – like krias sh'ma and tefillah – this declaration must be recited in the exact way it is written.

The story that is recited is very familiar to us. We say it every year at the seder as part of mitzvas sippur yetzias mitzrayim. We start all the way back with how Lovon tried to destroy Yaakov. It is very interesting that the person bringing bikkurim to the kohen in the Beis Hamikdash connects this act with all of Jewish history.

The next subject is about bringing maaser – you make a declaration at the end of the 3-year cycle that you gave all the maaser oni, maaser rishon, terumoh etc. that you were obligated to give. And you can say it in any language. You conclude by saying that in the zechus of Klal Yisroel's keeping terumos and maaseros, Hashem should give a special brocho to Eretz Yisroel. But, there is no requirement of loшон hakodesh and description of history.

The contrast between these two declarations is very striking. There are two paths of avodoh being presented. One is about the individual fulfilling his individual obligations, and he can express himself in any language he feels comfortable. It is a very personalized avodoh.

The other path views the Jew as a continuation of a long mesorah going all the way back to Yaakov Ovinu. Whenever we have a mitzvah that represents membership to Klal Yisroel, it has to be recited in loшон hakodesh – because it unifies Klal Yisroel.

There is an interesting Rashi in Parshas Re'eh on the posuk of Lo Sis'godedu. You are Hashem's children. Rashi says our kedushoh comes from our fathers, and in addition, Hashem chose us individually. There are two levels of kedushoh every Jew has – one is his kedushoh as a descendant of Yaakov Ovinu. Our special status comes to us because we are links in the chain of the mesorah. This is the basis of my claim to be in Eretz Yisroel and to live off its fruit. Hashem promised this land specifically to the descendants of Yaakov.

The other side is that Hashem also wants me to add a personal dimension to my relationship with Him that is unique to me as an individual.

On the night of Pesach we don't just recall the events that happened to our ancestors as if it has nothing to do with me. It is my personal experience – it was me who was taken out of Egypt because I am part of Klal Yisroel who left.

There is a fascinating gemara in Horiyos. If a person did an aveiroh b'shogeg and put aside an animal for his korban chatas and then he died, there is nothing to do with this animal. His heirs may not bring it for him and it must be left to die. But when very old or sick people donate their machtzis hashekel to the terumas halishkoh and they die afterward, there is no such concern. The gizbor doesn't have to check that the money they are using to buy korbonos are only from the people who are still living. It doesn't matter whose money they are spending. Why?

The gemara says this teaches us the concept that every korbon tzibbur is being brought on behalf of all Klal Yisroel throughout history – as one organic unit. It isn't just for the Jews who are currently living at the time the korbon is brought. All of Klal Yisroel get kaporoh from these korbonos – even those who left Egypt!

We read in Parshas Shoftim that the egloh arufoh is brought as a kaporoh for the nation whom Hashem redeemed. The gemara says, even those who left Egypt are getting a kaporoh from this egloh arufoh!

Why do generations of Jews who lived long, long ago need kaporoh today? The answer is that you are not only responsible for the specific action you did at the time you did it, but for everything that is affected as a result of your actions – all the way down the line. So if your learning Torah and doing mitzvos inspire your children and others around you, and they in turn inspire their children and others around them, that mitzvah is giving you more and more reward for as long as it has a positive impact in the world.

And the flip-side is also true. If you grew up frum and decided to stop being frum and that impacts your children and those around you, you will be punished for all the people who are not frum or do less mitzvos because of your influence on them.

Klal Yisroel is a corporate unit that exists throughout time. We are responsible for the mitzvos of all those upon whom we made a positive impact, and we are responsible for the aveiros of all those upon whom we made a negative impact – for generations to come.

Another idea that is discussed in this parsha is the final curse put upon someone "who does not hold up the Torah". אָרוּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְיָם אֶת דְּבַר יְהוָה הַזֶּה.

The Ramban cites the Yerushalmi that comments: It doesn't curse someone who isn't fulfilling the Torah. It is cursing someone who isn't holding up the Torah. But, the Yerushalmi asks, is the Torah falling down that it needs to be held up? Rather, according to how the Ramban interprets the Yerushalmi, the posuk is referring to someone who gets hagboh – lifting the sefer Torah for the tzibbur to look at after it is read in shul. The gemara in Megillah says the one who gets hagboh is getting s'char equal to everyone who got an aliya. Why? Because he is getting everyone in shul to testify to the integrity of the Torah we have today, when they say וְזֵאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁם מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. That is the biggest thing you can do.

The Yerushalmi continues to tell us that this curse teaches us even if you learned Torah, taught Torah, performed mitzvos and refrained from aveiros, you still have an obligation to others. If you had the ability but you neglected to inspire others to keep the Torah, you are included in this curse. You aren't just responsible for your own growth in ruchniyus. You are also held responsible to worry about the spiritual growth of all those within your area of impact.

King Yoshiyahu took this posuk deeply to heart. He cried when he realized that he has the power of the malchus to cause Klal Yisroel to do teshuvah and he wasn't using it. So he decided to use that power and he eradicated much of the avodo zoro of his time.

What does this mean in life, and what does it mean for yeshiva bochurim?

The truth is that all of us have tremendous kochos. This powerful

Ramban is challenging us to ask ourselves: What are your kochos? What are you doing with those kochos?

Now there are different stages in life that require different kochos to be employed.

We know the klal of לזה זה ערבים כל ישראל. The Rambam says there is a din on individuals and there is a separate din on every level of the tzibbur that exists – from cities to nations to the entire globe. When you are part of a group, you are responsible for the ruchniyus growth of that group, and you have an impact on the din of that group. If you are an inspiration to those around you, you get tremendous reward. If you discourage those around you, you are judged for the failure of the group to grow as much as they could have.

Bochurim in yeshiva are in a preparatory stage of life. They are training for the time that they will have a broader impact on the Jewish community. As you move into adulthood and have a family and become part of a community, your level of responsibility will be upgraded accordingly. But while you are in yeshiva, there is still the principle of לזה זה ערבים כל ישראל which bochurim often forget about.

The Torah says it isn't enough to only worry about your own growth. You have to ask yourself how you are impacting on the growth of others around you. For better or for worse. You impact your chavrusoh, your shiur, your roommates and the yeshiva at large. And you need to realize that what you do may not only have an impact now, but will reverberate for generations to come.

The idea of a yahrtzeit is that every neshomo that is niftar is coming in front of Hashem for a new din on the day of his death. Hashem is

always re-assessing the impact that a person's actions have on this world as time goes on. Descendants of the niftar say kaddish on the yahrtzeit in order to give extra zechusim to the niftar on this day of din. To show that this person's life is still serving today as an inspiration to their offspring and is spurring them to be frum and be mekadash shem shomayim b'rabbim.

Bochurim are too often very focused on their own situation and don't reflect on what is happening around them. We live in the western world, where everyone is in their own bubble and doesn't want to be intrusive. But we are Jews and we have different concepts of society. We are responsible for each other and we can't just be bystanders who don't care about what happens to other Jews. We made a bris in Arvos Moav in next week's parsha which made this arvus before we entered Eretz Yisroel. Even if we are spread out and not living next to each other like in the midbor, we are still one people and we are responsible for everyone else. People are very tribal today – sticking exclusively to their little group – and it isn't healthy.

This parsha is telling us that I do mitzvos as an individual and I do mitzvos as part of a group and part of a historical unit called Klal Yisroel. The actions of our ancestors are reverberating throughout time, for either reward or punishment.

The posuk says Hashem set us aside to be His treasured nation. We can become superior to all the other nations because we have a national identity of being Hashem's representatives. We are a holy nation – not just as individuals but as an entire nation. This is one of the essential messages of this week's parsha.