Points to Ponder

Ki Savo 5778

**הגדתי היום I have stated today to Hashem (26:3)** - When the one bringing the Bikkurim comes, he makes a declaration that he has already spoken his words. Yet, until he begins with Arami Oveid Avi we do not find him saying anything. What did he already say? Why the past tense in “Higaditee”? **Rav Yitzchak Koppelman ztl.** explained that sometimes actions speak louder than words. At the same time, not all words convey purposeful messages. The one bringing the Bikkurim declares that his actions indicate that he is complete in word and deed with his gratitude to Hashem as shown by all of the steps that he is taking to get to the current point in his Bikkurim adventure (See also Sforno and Netziv).

**וענית ואמרתAnd you will respond and declare (26:4) - Rashi** notes that the declaration needs to be made out loud. Why? **Rav Dovid Kronglass ztl.** pointed out that people naturally cry out when they have needs but when they want to express thanks, that is expressed too quietly. **Rav Akiva Males Shlita** would often add that we always reach out to people to daven on behalf of the sick but need to remember to also reach out to update them that there is a time to stop and offer thanks for the Tefillos instead. **Ramban** (Shemos 13:16) points out that the purpose of Shuls is the chance to publicly thank Hashem for all of his never ending Chessed.

**ושמחת בכל הטוב And you shall rejoice with all of the good Hashem has given you and your family (26:11) - Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl.** used these possukim to introduce the manner that is ideal for a person to protect himself from becoming addicted to materialism. When a person realizes where he came from, who charted his course of destiny, why and for what purpose -- than one does not forget the purpose of material gain and to the contrary, uses it to sanctify the name of Hashem in the world.

**ובאו עליך כל הקללות האלה והשיגוךThese curses shall all come onto you and catch you (28:15)** - When the Berachos are offered in the Parsha, the word for catching (“V’Heeseegucha”) is spelled incomplete. Only when the word is introduced in the context of the curses does it appear complete. Why? The **Shach** explains that had the Berachos all been actualized at once, man would be overwhelmed and not appreciate each one. Thus, man is blessed to not get each one at the same time as the other so that we can feel the full effect of each of the Berachos. When it comes to the curses, their coming all at the same time might help some of them to cancel one another and create a bubble from within which, we can survive their torture. **Rabbeinu Bachaya** adds that the Possuk is written full in order to show that Hashem is fully there with us when we suffer. (he adds that the possuk begins with a vav and ends with a Chaf hinting to the name of Hashem =26).

**תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחהBecause you didn’t serve Hashem through Simcha and goodness of heart and abundance (28:47)** - The Torah does not seem to want us to be opposed to life and the joy in it. In fact, it seems that a lack of Simcha is a reason for Galus. **Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlita** explains that the Torah is highlighting a critical message about Mitzva observance in connection to life. Rav Aviner notes that it is not Hashem’s will for us to “do” Mitzvos but rather to “live” them. When Mitzva observance is opportunity and not obligation, we come to get the best out of life. As an example he describes the spouse who tells his or her spouse that s/he will “give” anything the spouse wants but that s/he does so because “that’s my obligation”. Clearly, the fulfilling of marital opportunity does not foster close connection or bond. Rather, when we try to connect to Hashem’s way of wanting us to use His world, and attempt to relate to it, we are, in turn relating to Him as well and this is the source of beracha and the end of all curse. **Rav Elazar M. Teitz Shlita** regularly references the comments of **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** who noted that many of the religious, ideological problems our generation faces came from the declaration made from our forebearers that “Es iz Shver Tsu Zein A Yid” which often leaves the next generation to curse it and walk away. **Rav Schachter Shlita** often added to the general issue from the Rambam at the end of Hilchos Lulav that it is important to realize the chance we get to get closer to Hashem through doing Mitzvos and not to take doing them simply or by rote.

**והשיבך ה' מצרים באניותHashem will return you to Egypt in boats (28:68) - Rashi** explains that this refers to boats in captivity. What is Rashi adding? And why does he not explain the boat concept when we first encounter the word in regard to the tribe of Zevulun in VaYechi? And who cares how Hashem returns us to the slavery in Egypt -- boat or walking? **The Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl.** explained that the concept of the boat is confining. When one is tied to the boat his choices are limited which allows the torture to commence earlier when the captive realizes that his choices are limited between death and slavery and he is not in control to do anything about it.

**והתמכרתם לעבדים ולשפחות ואין קונהAnd you will be sold into slaves and maidservants and none will buy (28:68) - Rav Shlomo Kahanneman ztl.** noted that while there are words of consolation and return after the Tochacha in Vayikra there are none here. The reason, he explained, was that the first Tochacha was for the Tzibbur and this one is to the individual. There is no guarantee of salvation for the individual -- the comfort is in the person’s turn to the Tzibbur. He added that the fact that no one else wants us to be absorbed into them will make sure that we remain for eternity -- but only as a nation. Unfortunately, we do find some individuals who can be splintered off and purchased by other nations.

**Haftorah: ועמך כולם צדיקים And your nation are all Tzadikim, they shall inherit the land forever (Yeshayahu 60:21)** – We recall this possuk perhaps most famously from the introduction to Pirkei Avos as a proof text to the claim that all of the Bnei Yisrael have a share in the world to come. **Rav Yisrael Meir Lau Shlita** commented that the land referenced here is a reference to the world to come. The Mishna is pointing out to us that whomever put himself as part of our nation, in whatever way it is -- merits a share in the world to come. However, we need to remember that the portions are not always equal. Portion sizes and quality are dependent on how the person lives a life and merits the reward at the end.