Points to Ponder

Ki Savo 5780

**וְלָֽקַחְתָּ֞ מֵֽרֵאשִׁ֣ית כָּל־פְּרִ֣י הָֽאֲדָמָ֗ה You shall take from the first fruits of the land (26:2) - Rav Nachman of Breslov** points out that there is a wonderful lesson of optimism to be learned from the Mitzva of Bikkurim. The Torah is teaching us that there is always a chance of renewal. In other words, no matter what troubles have befallen us in the past (symbolized by the parsha of Mikra Bikkurim) there is no room for despair in the world. We pick up and we begin anew and we get the next chance to restart and grow.

**וַיֵּ֣רֶד מִצְרַ֔יְמָה He went to Egypt (26:5)** - The Talmud (Shabbos 89b) notes that technically Yaakov and his family should have gone down to Egypt in chains. It was Yaakov’s merits that saved him. **Rav Kook ztl.** explained that it was not a particular sin that made the nation deserving of going into Egypt in this brutal way. Rather, it was a means to demonstrate to the future generations that the nation would be able to withstand even the challenges of Galus. However it was the power of the individual who was Yaakov that did not allow him to be taken to Mitzrayim in such a manner. Rav Kook adds that this demonstrates that even the Shibbud was done to demonstrate Hashem’s love for his people. Even the Galus is a means to get to the final purpose -- that of Gilui Kavod Hashem.

**וַיָּרֵ֧עוּ אֹתָ֛נוּ הַמִּצְרִ֖ים וַיְעַנּ֑וּנוּ The Egyptians were bad to us (26:6) - Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** noted that the word “VaYareiu” comes from the word to make us evil. He explained that in order to turn public opinion against the Jews, Pharaoh had to make us rebels and people who repay gratitude with a bad attitude. This was the only way he could get the Egyptians to enslave people. He needed to make them subhuman. It is an ongoing pattern that replays itself throughout our history.

**וַיַּ֧רְא אֶת־עָנְיֵ֛נוּ He saw our affliction (26:7)** - Chazal tell us that this refers to the disruption of family life (Preeshus Derech Eretz). **Rav Schachter Shlita** reminded us that this is specifically relevan to this Possuk as the idea of Inyui is one of ambiguity. Rav Schachter added that we live in a world of Preetzus in which things are all explained quite explicitly. The Torah wants us not to be so explicit in matters of intimacy. The Torah wants married life issues to be discreet. Thus in the possuk of obscurity, they interpreted the challenge to be in terms of Pritzus.

**וְהָיָה֘ בְּעָבְרְכֶ֣ם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן֒ תָּקִ֜ימוּ אֶת־הָֽאֲבָנִ֣ים הָאֵ֗לֶּה When you will enter the land, you will establish these stones (27:4) - Rav Dessler ztl.** noted that normally when someone comes to a new place, s/he first works on setting up his/her home and getting to know the stores. Only afterward, does one settle in and begin to learn. However, when it comes to settling the land, we begin with Torah. (This is similar to the idea we noted when we examined **Rav Yisrael of Shklov in the Profiles of the Pandemic series** -- with the study of the students of the Vilna Gaon.)

**אָר֗וּר אֲשֶׁ֧ר לֹֽא־יָקִ֛ים אֶת־דִּבְרֵ֥י הַתּוֹרָֽה־הַזֹּ֖את Cursed be he who does not uphold the Torah (27:26)** - The Yirushalmi (Sotah 7:4) explains that this Possuk refers to someone who COULD support Torah institutions and does not do so. The **Chofetz Chaim** noted that there is a famous Possuk “Eitz Chaim He L’Machazikim Bah” - The Torah is a source of life to those who uphold her”. He asked why we note that it says “uphold” and not those who support? He answered that those who uphold the Torah are also upheld by the Torah. If we merely noted support for Torah it would imply a certain distance between the donor and the Torah.

**וּבָ֧אוּ עָלֶ֛יךָ כָּל־הַבְּרָכ֥וֹת הָאֵ֖לֶּה וְהִשִּׂיגֻ֑ךָ These Berachos will come to you and they will catch you (28:2)** - It is interesting that the term “V’Hisigucha” is used. That term seems more applicable to curses catching up to you -- not berachos? **Sforno** explains that the intent is to refer to the fact that you will not even need to try to get the Beracha -- no Hishtadlus. **Rav Zeidel Epstein ztl**. added that sometimes we do not realize that certain decisions in life are a means of Beracha and we might try to avoid these. To that the Torah tells us that the Berachos will still catch up to us. Alternatively, the **Kotzker Rebbe ztl.** offered the thought that “V’Hiseegucha” referred to comes from the word Hasaga -- question (as in Hasagos of the Raavad) and the Torah is giving us a challenge -- if He gives us these Berachos, why are we not fully Ovdei Hashem?

**Haftara:  נֵ֧צֶר מַטָּעַ֛י (כתיב מַטָּעַ֛ו) מַֽעֲשֵׂ֥ה יָדַ֖י לְהִתְפָּאֵֽר A branch of my planting the work of my hands to be proud of (Yeshayahu 60:21)** - We are familiar with this Possuk as it is the prooftext to the introduction to Pirkei Avos which tells us that every Jew has a share in the world to come. **Rav Eliyahu Lopian ztl.** was quick to note that the Mishna does not say “in” but rather “to” the world to come. The Novi explains that each Jewish soul has been crafted with the handiwork and hardware to be able to get to the world to come. Whether we are worthy or not will depend if we know how to run the program properly throughout our lives.