

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Ki Savo

September 8, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Agricultural Study

by Rabbi Yaakov Zions

For most of us, farming and agriculture are not things we associate with as a classic Jewish profession. The Torah, however, places a great deal of focus on laws associated with the land, in particular, the mitzvos of the Land of Israel.

A case in point is this week's parsha, Ki Savo, which begins with the mitzvah of *bikkurim*, first fruits. When one's land in Eretz Yisrael produces one or more of the special seven fruits, there is a mitzvah to designate the first fruit of each harvest to be brought to the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple). This is accomplished by tying a reed (no, it need not be red) on the first blossoming fruit; after the harvest, it would be brought and dedicated in a special manner and given to a *kohein* (priest). The laws of *bikkurim* are detailed and unique; they comprise one of the *masechtos* (tractates) of the Mishna, appropriately named *Bikkurim*. Although this tractate is not expounded upon by the more commonly studied Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), it does have a place in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud). I'd like to focus on one law of *bikkurim* from the Yerushalmi.

First, a preface of a halacha and a question. Most agriculture-related mitzvos apply in Eretz Yisrael only, but this includes the land both west and east of the Jordan River. The eastern side, which was the portion of the tribes of Reuven, Gad and part of Menashe, was incorporated into the primary land division only following a special request submitted by the leaders of Reuven and Gad (as detailed in Bamidbar 32). Of particular interest is that Menashe does not join their request; only after Reuven and Gad are given the green light, we are told (Bamidbar 32:33) that part of Menashe receives their portion along with them. Why did they join only at this point?

The *mishna* (Bikkurim 1:10) teaches that Rabbi Yosi HaG'lili rules that *bikkurim* need not be brought from east of the Jordan. Although the halacha does not follow the view of Rabbi Yosi HaG'lili, the Rambam (Bikkurim 2:1, as understood by commentaries) rules that on a *Dioraisa* (Biblical) level, all agree with Rabbi Yosi HaG'lili. The Yerushalmi (Bikkurim 2:8) gives two possible explanations of Rabbi Yosi HaG'lili's ruling, based on the verses in our parsha (26:5-10) which one recites when presenting *bikkurim* in the *Bais Hamikdash*. As part of the declaration, one recites, "He gave us a land of flowing milk and honey. Now, I have brought the first fruit of the land Hashem has given me."

One explanation is that while the status of the area east of the Jordan is equal with its western counterpart, it lacks flowing milk and honey; it is therefore exempt. Another explanation is that *bikkurim* are brought only from land "Hashem has given me," not land taken, as in the case of east of the Jordan, where the tribes themselves initiated the gift. The halachic difference, says the Yerushalmi, is fruit brought from crops grown east of the Jordan in the portion of Menashe. According to the second explanation, Rabbi Yosi HaG'lili would agree that mitzvah of *bikkurim* would apply to these crops, as Menashe did not ask to receive its portion east of the Jordan; they received it as a gift, similar to the tribes of west of the Jordan. The question begs to be asked, why did Moshe give it to them? Was there insufficient land west of the Jordan?

The Ha'amek Davar (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin of Volozhin, also known as the Netziv; 1816-1893) provides sources that the tribe of Menashe was renowned for their Torah leaders, and suggests that Moshe requested Menashe's participation in settling the area east of the Jordan

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Stories For The Soul

Loud Rebuke

Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebbe (1905-1994) lost his wife, eleven children and most of his followers to the Nazis. He made it to the United States, where he remarried and had seven children. He rebuilt the Sanz-Klausenberg chassidus from a small group of fellow survivors. In 1960, he moved to Israel, where he founded schools, houses of Torah study, the Kiryat Sanz neighborhood in Netanya, and the famed Laniado Hospital.

It was Parshas Ki Savo in the late 1940s and the Klausenberger Rebbe was in New York with his small minyan. of followers. When the *baal koreh* (Torah reader) began reading the *tochacha*, the terrible curses that would befall the Jewish People if they failed to live as G-d expects them to, he began in a low voice, as is customary.

The Klausenberger Rebbe banged on his lectern and said, "Louder!" The *baal koreh* thought that he was reading too low for others to hear, so he raised his voice a bit. Again, the Rebbe banged and said "Louder!" By the third time this scenario was repeated, the *baal koreh* got the message. The Rebbe did not want him to read the *tochacha* in low tones or even in regular tones, but at the top of his lungs.

The *baal koreh* came to the Rebbe after the services were over and asked for an explanation. The Rebbe responded: "This can be read quietly when you are afraid that it might befall you and you don't know what will actually occur once it happens. We, however, have already lived through this and we are still here. This is now something that we are proud of. This happened to us and we are still in shul on Shabbos. We are still reading the Torah each week! The *tochacha* is now our badge of honor. It will no longer be read silently. It will be read completely out loud! We can say, "We were there. It happened to us and we have remained *ehrllicher yidden* (Jews of integrity)."

Kollel Happenings

SYMBOLIC FOODS PLATTER FOR ROSH HASHANA

There is a widespread Rosh Hashana custom to eat simanim, foods that symbolize a good year. The Denver Community Kollel is proud to offer a simanim platter containing 10 items presaging a sweet, new year. For more info, or to order yours for just \$25, email info@denverkollel.org, visit the Kollel website at www.denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855. Be sure to leave method of payment and contact information. **Order deadline: September 10th.**

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch & Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Who composed the *Nishmas* prayer, recited on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* Mornings?

A: This prayer is of ancient origin, quoted by the Mishna (Pesachim 117b, according to Rav Yochanan's interpretation on 118a) to be recited at the Pesach Seder. Its authorship is unclear, and some claim to have a tradition that it was written by Shimon Kippa (also known as Peter, an early leader of Christianity)! Many great scholars (including Rashi) have vehemently denied the veracity of such a tradition. Nevertheless, there are some who vindicate the abovementioned tradition based on the writings of other *Rishonim* (medieval Torah authorities). Accordingly, the Mishna must be referring to an earlier prayer with

a similar beginning. Some speculate that Shimon Kippa may have been sent by the sages of his period as an undercover agent to separate the Early Christians from the midst of the general Jewish population. For more on this fascinating topic, see *Machzor Vitri*, Goldschmidt edition, vol. 2 pg. 412 and vol. 3 pg. 728, *Otzar HaMidrashim*, pg. 557 and *Masas Kapai*, by Rabbi Dovid Cohen, pg. 123.

This week's question: According to most customs, *selichos* prayers are recited during the period before *Yom Kippur* (called *selichos* of *Yamim Nora'im*), and on *ta'aniyos* (public fast days). What are the primary differences between the two?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel – the Mordechai Part VI

As mentioned in past weeks, Rabbi Mordechai had studied by numerous teachers in Germany and France; this gave him a very broad base of knowledge to draw upon when writing his work. The Mordechai is also extremely important because the Jewish communities of

Germany and France were constantly persecuted and harassed; many of the individual works of earlier Ba'alei Tosafos were in danger of being lost during the course of the sufferings and wanderings of the Jews in these areas.

A Taste of Torah

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with Torah scholars. This was done to set a precedent for future generations that one should attempt to settle in close proximity to Torah scholars.

But why was this necessary specifically for the tribes of Reuven and Gad? Doesn't everyone need the presence of Torah scholars in their midst? Perhaps we can suggest that there was a special necessity for intervention in this scenario. In *Avos* (6:9), we are told of an incident where Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma met an individual who offered, "Rabbi, would you like to dwell with us in our place? I will give you a million dinars of gold, precious stones and pearls." Rabbi Yosi responded: "If you were to give me all the silver, gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not

dwell anywhere but in a place of Torah."

How did Rabbi Yosi know that this anonymous locale was lacking a basic Torah infrastructure? Some suggest that this was obvious from their conversation. Since the offer was all about physical pleasures, there was obviously a lack of spiritual perks. In a similar vein, Reuven and Gad, in their wish to settle east of the Jordan, specifically mention the financial (or, in their case, agricultural) incentives. This was a red flag, and Moshe responded accordingly. By settling Torah leaders in their midst, Moshe was assuring that their primary focus in this world not be undermined. May we all merit to utilize the Torah scholars amongst us, and continue to grow in Torah and mitzvos!

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Denver Community Kollel | 1395 Wolff Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855
info@denverkollel.org | www.denverkollel.org

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