

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Ki Savo

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A Taste of Torah Non-All-Natural Ingredients

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshia Freeman

Growing fruit seems to be fairly straightforward. Plant a tree in a sunny spot, water it, and you'll get fruit. No big deal, right? It's a bigger deal than you think.

At the beginning of this week's parsha, the Jewish People are commanded that after they enter and settle in Eretz Yisrael, they must perform the mitzvah of *bikkurim*. The mitzvah is to place one's first fruits of the Seven Species into a basket, bring it to the *kohen* (priest) in the Temple and recite praise before Hashem. Our Sages attach great importance to this mitzvah. The Sifri states that it was for the purpose of the future performance of this mitzvah that the Jewish People entered Eretz Yisrael. The Medrash Rabba (Parshas Bereishis) goes even further, stating that the whole creation was for the purpose of the mitzvah of *bikkurim*. The Medrash bases this upon the first word of the Torah, *bereshis*, and expounds that the world was created for the mitzvah of *reishis*, the beginning, an allusion to the first fruits. What is so special about this mitzvah?

Perhaps we can explain based on a fascinating insight from the Ba'al Haturim. He writes that the numerical value of the Hebrew word for basket mentioned in the verse, *tenneh*, is sixty, hinting that the obligation of *bikkurim* is to bring one-sixtieth of one's first fruits. He concludes that this is the reason the letter *samech*, which has the numerical value of sixty, is omitted from the parsha of *bikkurim*. The Ba'al Haturim is quite terse and does not provide further explanation for the omission of the

letter *samech*.

Rabbi Moshe Shapiro explains that the letter *samech* represents the natural order of the world. The structure of the letter *samech* connotes this idea, as well, as it is a circle, alluding to the concept of consistent, reliable cycles which are manifested by nature. Based on this, he explains that omitting this letter shows how the mitzvah of *bikkurim* contradicts this ideal. The tendency of a farmer upon seeing the first ripening fruits is to contemplate how his own efforts and toil, utilizing the natural processes of the world, produced these fruits. Therefore, the Torah omits the letter *samech* to show that everything came through Hashem and should not simply be chalked up to nature.

However, this does not mean one should completely ignore the natural world. On the contrary, one must recognize that the laws of nature are created by Hashem, and the farmer's goal must be to connect nature back to its original source, Hashem Himself. It is for this reason that the Torah instructs the farmer to give the *teneh*, the basket, whose numerical value represents nature, to the *kohen*. The *kohen*, who performs the service in the Temple, is the conduit through which the natural, physical world is raised and connected to its spiritual source. And how much should be given for the mitzvah of *bikkurim*? One-sixtieth, signifying that this fruit, seemingly nothing more than the product of natural, *samech*-laden processes, in fact stems from a much higher place.

With this idea, we can explain the

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Stories for the Soul

Happy and Alive

After traveling through Chol Hamo'ed (Intermediate Days of) Sukkos, he'd finally arrived at the court of the Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin (Rabbi Yakov Yitzchak Horowitz; c. 1745-1815) on Hoshana Rabbah, in time for Shemini Atzeres, Simchas Torah and their attendant *hakafos*, dancing and rejoicing upon the completion of reading the entire Torah. Despite his exhaustion, the chassid hurried to the Chozeh's home to greet his rebbe and announce his presence.

Although he had been coming to the rebbe for many years now with no incident, this year a strange thing happened. The Chozeh looked carefully at his loyal chassid, and asked him to leave Lublin.

"B...but I just came here!" the man protested, a strange fear overtaking him.

The Chozeh merely repeated his instructions. Morose and broken, the chassid left Lublin and headed for the nearest Jewish city, where he would spend Simchas Torah. As he trudged down the main road, he met a group of chassidim heading to Lublin. They expressed surprise at his sudden departure, and were even more taken aback at their rebbe's instructions.

"Come, let us dance a little," said the leader of the group to the forlorn chassid. The chassid drank a *l'chaim* and began to dance. After they had danced for a while, and the banished chassid was smiling, they encouraged him to return to Lublin with them.

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Kollel Happenings

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

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|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Shavuot until Sukkos | 4) First are worst |
| 2) Burial shrouds | 5) Need a baker |
| 3) Seventy languages | 6) Forty years to learn |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Eliezer Silver Part XX

While most of the residents of the DP camp eagerly looked forward to the event, there was one young man who refused to attend. Rabbi Silver gently asked him, "Are you angry with G-d?"

The young man replied, "No, I'm not angry with G-d. I am angry with my fellow Jews, and I cannot forgive their behavior."

The young man related that during

the war, one of his bunkmates had managed to smuggle in a small siddur. The fellow often prayed to G-d, and earned the admiration of this young man. However, others approached and asked him to allow them to use the siddur, as well, and the man acceded only if they would share some of their very meager food rations with him. This behavior enraged the young man, and he could not move past it.

A Taste of Torah

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significance of this mitzvah of *bikkurim*, as it teaches us the vital lesson that everything is from Hashem, and we must express our gratitude to Him for everything He provides us.

As we approach Rosh Hashana and look for ways to improve our outlook on life, this is a key component. As we recognize Hashem's involvement

in everything and we express our gratitude to Him, we prevent ourselves from being misled that everything is controlled by nature. By internalizing this lesson, we will live happier lives by understanding that Hashem controls everything, and all the mitzvos we do are a small expression of our gratitude to Him.

Stories for the Soul

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This time, the Chozeh welcomed him with open arms. Later the rebbe explained his unusual behavior. "I sensed that you would leave this world during the holiday, and I didn't want it to occur in my court," said the Chozeh. "However, after you danced and allowed your inner joy to

transform you, the decree became null and void. After all, one can accomplish great things with *simcha* (joy)."

In this week's parsha, the Torah warns of the dire consequences of serving Hashem without joy. *Simcha* is a vital part of living as a Jew.

Parsha Quizzers - Answers

- 1) Shavuot until Sukkos 26:11 s.v. *vismachta*
 2) Burial shrouds 26:14 s.v. *lo nasati*
 3) Seventy languages 27:8 s.v. *ba'er*
 4) First are worst 28:23 s.v. *v'haynu*
 5) Need a baker 28:66 s.v. *chayecha*
 6) Forty years to learn 29:6 s.v. *v'atvone'u*