

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn

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BIKURIM AND AHAVAS YISROEL

Parshas Ki Savo begins with the *mitzvah* of *bikurim*. The *possuk* states, "When you will come to the land that Hashem is giving you as an inheritance, and you will inherit it and settle in it..." Citing the words "and you will inherit it and settle in it," Rashi comments: "This teaches us that the Jews were not obligated to bring *bikurim* until they conquered the land and divided it."

ANALYZING RASHI

At first glance it appears that Rashi is explaining what the *possuk* means by inheriting and settling in Eretz Yisroel: this refers to conquering the land and dividing it among the Jewish nation. However, if that would be the case, Rashi could merely have cited those words from the *possuk* and clarified them: "And you will inherit it and settle in it—namely, you will conquer it and divide it." It appears from Rashi's wording ("This teaches us...") that he understands the *possuk* as teaching us a *chiddush*. What exactly is this *chiddush*?

Commentators explain that earlier, in Parshas Shelach (regarding the *mitzvah* of *challah*), Rashi stated that whenever the *possuk* says "When you will come to the land," the reference is to inheriting and settling in Eretz Yisroel. That being the case, Rashi was bothered by the words "and you will inherit it and settle in it." From the beginning of the *possuk*—"When you will come to the land"—we already know that the obligation of *bikurim* only began after inheriting and settling in Eretz Yisroel. Why does the *possuk* add the words "and you will inherit it and settle in it"? Rashi therefore explains that the *possuk* is teaching us a *chiddush*, that they were not obligated until they conquered the land and divided it.

This implies that conquering and dividing the land is not identical with inheriting and settling in it. What does this mean?

FOURTEEN-YEAR WAIT

The purpose of bringing *bikurim* is to thank Hashem for the produce of the land, and to rejoice in the good He has given us

(as the *possuk* states). For this reason, *bikurim* was only brought from the seven species with which Eretz Yisroel was praised, as they display Hashem's goodness to us more than other fruits.

Additionally, *mikra bikurim*—the special recitation when bringing *bikurim*—was only said when bringing *bikurim* from Shavuos until Sukkos, which is a "time of joy," as that is when the produce is harvested. Furthermore, *mikra bikurim* could only be said once a year, because true joy is not felt when bringing *bikurim* for a second time.

Now, it took seven years to conquer Eretz Yisroel, and another seven years to divide it. However, it is obvious that as soon as certain portions of the land were conquered, they were

apportioned to a select amount of Jews. Although the land as a whole had not yet been "conquered and divided," these Jews already "inherited it and settled in it."

This being the case, one would have assumed that as soon as these Jews settled in their land and began to harvest its fruits, they should be obligated to bring *bikurim*. After all, they were already in the position to "rejoice in the good" Hashem had given to them and to thank Hashem for it!

This, says Rashi, is the *chiddush* of our *possuk*. From the beginning of the *possuk*—"When you will come to the land"—we already know that the obligation of *bikurim* only

began after inheriting and settling in Eretz Yisroel. However, we might have understood this as referring to the inheritance and settling of each individual Jew. The added words "and you will inherit it and settle in it" teach us "that the Jews were not obligated to bring *bikurim* until they conquered the land and divided it," namely, until the conquering and division was *fully complete* at the end of the fourteen years.

This is also why Rashi adds the words, "until they conquered the land and divided it." The *possuk* clearly states "When you will come to the land." Why does Rashi need to repeat these words?

By adding these words, Rashi is emphasizing that the obligation to bring *bikurim* only took hold once they conquered and

One would have assumed that as soon as certain Jews settled in their allotted portions of land, they should be obligated to bring *bikurim*.

divided the *entire land* of Eretz Yisroel. Having settled in one's personal estate alone was not sufficient.

THE PREREQUISITE FOR TRUE JOY

Why indeed is this the case? Seemingly, if one has already reaped the produce of his field, shouldn't he thank Hashem for the abundant goodness He has bestowed upon him? Why should he refrain from thanking Hashem until others have received their allotted portion of land?

With this, the Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson. When can a person truly rejoice over the good Hashem has given him? Only once the *entire land* was conquered and divided. As long as there is even a single Jew who has not yet received his portion, the one who has already settled can also not feel true joy, and he is therefore exempt from *bikurim*.

When the other person receives his land, it's not *another* feeling of joy that is generated, in addition to his existing joy. Rather, until that point he is unable to rejoice at all.

A GOOD YEAR—GUARANTEED

Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo always occurs in proximity to Chai Elul, the birthday of both the Baal Shem Tov, founder of *Chassidus Haklalis*, and the Alter Rebbe, founder of *Chassidus Chabad*.

The above idea—that a Jew cannot truly rejoice if another Jew is lacking—is connected to Chai Elul. One of the fundamentals of Chassidus—both *Chassidus Haklalis* and *Chassidus Chabad*—is the extent to which one must have *ahavas Yisroel*.

The other's joy does not merely enhance his own joy; rather, he cannot be happy if the other is lacking.

If one unites with *Klal Yisroel*, he will certainly be inscribed for a good year, as the *klal* is surely worthy.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that the love of Hashem to each Jew can be compared to the love of elderly parents to a child who was born to them in their old age. From this we can infer how much we, too, should love each Jew, bearing in mind that this Jew is Hashem's only child.

If a family consists of a number of children and then another child is born, that child is an addition to those born beforehand. An only child, however, is not an addition; without him, there would be no one.

Similarly, when one views another Jew as Hashem's only child, the other's joy does not merely enhance his own joy; rather, he cannot be happy if the other is lacking.

The Alter Rebbe also emphasized the importance of *ahavas Yisroel* by discussing this *mitzvah* in Perek Lamed-Beis of Tanya, indicating that this concept is the heart (*lev*) of Tanya.

This approach of uniting with all Jews will ensure that we will all be written for a good and sweet new year. The Frierdiker Rebbe once said that if someone is an independent entity, his behavior needs to be analyzed Above to see whether he is deserving. But if one unites with *Klal Yisroel*, he will certainly be inscribed for a good year, as the *klal* is surely worthy.

May we indeed merit to be written and inscribed for a *shana tovah u'mesukah!*

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, pp. 152–156.



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