

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 20 Elul 5785, corresponding to September 13, 2025.

## TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 859 Hz) (p. 1117 S) (p. 768 Hi) (p. 1058 AS)

KI TAVO כִּי תָבוֹא

Deuteronomy 26:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus,

1. The opening of this Parshah is the discussion of the giving of Bikkurim, the special First Fruits, which a Jewish farmer brings to Yerushalayim and gives to a Kohen. This Halachah was first mentioned in Parshat Mishpatim (23:19): “The choicest first fruit of your land shall you bring to the House of Hashem, your God...” The Midrash mentions this Mitzvah as one of the reasons for which Hashem created Heaven and Earth. The Bikkurim show that the Jew is ready to celebrate his service to Hashem. The trip to Yerushalayim was celebrated in every town and city along the way with music and parades. [RED’s note: In 1948, when Israel was created anew, Bikkurim was celebrated joyously in every city, town, and Kibbutz, even in non-religious areas, as an expression of gratitude to Hashem for the Land of Israel.].

2. There is a new Mitzvah being presented here: the proclamation of Arami Oved Avi...An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather... a short declaration stating that we never would have received the Promised Land without Hashem’s loving intervention on our behalf. In the Mishnah (Sotah 7:2...), our Sages itemize which statements can be said in any language (prayer, Bensching, etc.) and which items that must be recited in Hebrew: this Bikkurim proclamation, the declaration during the Chalitzah ceremony, Birkat Kohanim, the Berachah of the High Priest on Yom Kippur, and several other items. This elevates these proclamations to a higher level of sanctity. Just as the Torah was given in Hebrew, so shall these statements be in Hebrew. Hashem created the world by uttering the statements in Hebrew. So too, do these statements echo an aspect of creation. When a Jew makes his Bikkurim declaration in Hebrew, he is recreating himself as a Jew. (RED)

3. Certain pertinent facts were omitted about this Mitzvah. Which fruits are eligible to be Bikkurim. Our Sages stipulate that the Mitzvah must be from only the Seven “Fruits” of Eretz Yisrael as indicated in Parshat Eikev (8:8). He could bring other fruits but they would not be considered Bikkurim. When are they brought? Our Sages say on Shavuot. If he could not do it then, he

could do it and say the proclamation until Sukkot. After that, he could bring Bikkurim and not say the proclamation until Chanukah. (This is the only place that Chanukah is mentioned in the Mishnah, so much did Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi dislike Chanukah because the Chashmonaim were Kohanim and were not permitted to rule the country politically or militarily.) Nor is the detail mentioned regarding the amount of fruit to be given. The Halachah is that he can bring as much as he desires.

4. Establishing that the proclamation had to be stated in Hebrew required some forethought. What would be the situation if a Jewish farmer came to present his Bikkurim and did not know how to read Hebrew. Therefore an official was appointed who would dictate the declaration in Hebrew and the farmer would repeat each word after this official. And this was done even for someone who was proficient in Hebrew so as not to embarrass the ones who did not know Hebrew. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:7). Noting this fact leads us to believe that in Temple times, many farmers were illiterate. This is surprising to me, but not shocking.

5. In chapter 27, the Torah lists 12 Curses for the public ceremony in the area of Mts. Gerizim and Eival. The Talmud (Sotah 32a) notes that each Curse was accompanied by a similar Blessing on the same topic. For example, the Leviyim faced Mt. Eival and recited Cursed be the one who moves his neighbor’s boundary. The nation answered Amen. Then the Leviyim would face Mt. Gerizim and recited Blessed is the one who did not move his neighbor’s boundary. The Torah does not mention this parallel statement maybe out of brevity. I can’t think of any significance to why only the Curses are mentioned in the Torah. The Toch’chah lists 98 Curses, far more than the number of Blessings, probably because Curses are more effective when addressing a large body of people.

6. The Toch’chah includes the mention of an illness called Shachefet, which in modern Hebrew means tuberculosis, but the Biblical term does not mean that. Commentators weigh in with their own interpretations. Hirsch defines it as an illness that indicates weakness and fatigue. Rashi and the Rambam define it as a disease that causes the skin to swell and become dry. The Sifra states that one with this disease wastes away. He becomes thin and has a fever, and depression. The end result is that we don’t know what the word really means, but we can conclude that it is not a good thing.

7. In the Toch’chah: 28:30. “You will be engaged to a woman and another man will ‘lie’ with her.” The Torah word is more than to lie with her, but a stronger more

vulgar term. Throughout TaNaCH, there are cases when the Sages alter a Torah word and various reasons are offered in each case. Here, the Torah word is too coarse for a public reading. The Torah chooses its words very well and wishes to convey a stronger message by using a vulgar term for a meaningful message, but wants us to publicly not use that term. Words help define who we are and we are instructed to be careful when choosing what to say. Often, Scripture finds itself in a difficult situation. How to express itself in strong language and not really say so.

8. In the Curses the Torah states “as a blind man gropes in the darkness.” [the implied question is “in the darkness.” For a blind person is always in the darkness!]. In daytime, when a blind man walks about, he knows that other people will see him and possibly offer him help. In the darkness of night, the blind person will also feel isolated, with no one offering to help. The isolation will be felt. (Based on Megillah 24b)

## QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT KI TAVO 5785

### I. From the Text

1. To whom was the Bikkurim given? (26:3)
2. What response did Bnei Yisrael give to the Curses given at Mt. Eival? (Chapter 27)
3. What city is at Mts. Gerizim and Eival?
4. What is the reason given in the Toch'chah for deserving the various punishments? (28:47)
5. How many Curses are there in the Toch'chah?

### II. From Rashi

6. From which fruits were the Bikkurim brought? (26:2)
7. How many Jews came down to Egypt from Canaan in Yosef's time? (26:5)
8. Bikkurim were brought on Shavuot. After Shavuot, for how long could a Jewish farmer bring Bikkurim and make the proclamation? (26:11)
9. Where did the Kohanim and Leviyim stand when the people were atop Mts. Gerizim and Eival? (27:12)
10. How will you be blessed when you enter and when you depart this world? (23:6)

### III. From the Rabbis

11. In what way will the Jews show their Simchah when bringing their Bikkurim? (HaKtav V'HaKabbalah)
12. After writing the entire Torah on stone, they would coat the words with a covering of plaster. What was that for? (Sotah 35b)
13. What in particular will grant the Jewish people with the Blessings? (Seforno)

### IV. Midrash.

14. According to the Midrash, at what time of the year will the Bikkurim proclamation become a central featured phrase?

### V. Haftorah

15. In the time of Mashiach, what will the nations of the world come to realize?

### VI. Relationships

- 16.
- a) Shem - Asshur
- b) Mitzrayim - Canaan
- c) Ephraim - Orde
- d) Elisheva - Nachshon
- e) Amram – Chevron

## ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT KI TAVO 5785

1. To a Kohen
2. Amen
3. Shechem
4. Since we did not serve Hashem with joy.
5. 98 Curses.
6. From the seven prized “fruit” of Eretz Yisrael. Barley, Wheat, Pomegranate, Figs, Grapes, Olives, and Dates.
7. 70 adults
8. Anytime from Shavuot to Sukkot.
9. In the middle, in the valley between the two Mountains.
10. Without sin.
11. With song.
12. To protect the writing.
13. The study of Torah.
14. At the Pesach Seder.
15. That Hashem is in Yerushalayim and that the Jews are His messengers.
- 16.
- a) Father Shem
- b) Brothers
- c) First Cousins
- d) Siblings
- e) Brothers

**Torah Dialogue Sponsor: Beth & Gary Hopen and family** in loving commemoration of the yahrzeits of her parents, Kalman Talansky - Kalman ben HaRav Dovid z”l, and Irene Talansky - Chaya bas Moshe z”l. May their neshamas have the highest of aliyahs