

PARSHAT KI-TAVO

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE' AM KADOSH / A 'COVENANT' OR AN 'OATH'?

1. Carefully review 28:9, and attempt to translate the phrase - "yekimcha Hashem le-**am kadosh** ka'asher **nishba** lach..." - noting its meaning and context.

In your opinion, what 'shvu'a' [oath] is Moshe Rabbeinu referring to in this pasuk? Also, does the word 'ki' in the second half of the pasuk imply 'when', 'for' or 'because'?

How does the first half of 28:9 relate to the second half of that pasuk? How does this 'promise' relate to the main speech of Sefer Devarim (i.e. chapters 5 thru 26).

To help you answer the above questions, review 5:1 and 26:16-19 (i.e. the 'bookends' of the main speech), as well as 7:6-9 & 14:1-2. [Note as well Shmot 19:5-6!]

Based on those psukim, what is the connection between becoming an 'am kadosh' and this 'oath'? How does this relate to 'brit avot' as well?

Can you explain why the Torah would refer to a 'brit' as an 'oath'? [Relate to Breishit 24:7 in contrast to Breishit 15:18!]

2. As you review 26:16-19 once again (i.e. the conclusion of the main speech that began in chapter 5), note how these psukim relate back to Ma'amad Har Sinai. Can you explain why? Note both textual and thematic parallels.

In what manner do these psukim echo the covenant described in Shmot 19:4-6?

3. In 26:19, note the phrase 'li-tehilla le-**shem** u-letif'eret'. In your opinion, whose **shem** [name / reputation] does this refer to: Am Yisrael or God Himself?

Relate this pasuk to the Torah's description of the garments of the kohen gadol as described in Shmot 28:2! Whose 'tif'eret' [glory] does 28:2 refer to? [See Ramban.] To 'help' you answer this question, read Yirmiyahu 13:1-11, noting especially the phrase 'le-**shem** ve-litehilla' ve-tif'eret' and its context in 13:11!

To strengthen this point, see also Yirmiyahu 33:7-9.

In your opinion, could Yirmiyahu's prophecy in chapter 13 be considered as a type of interpretation of Devarim 26:19?

Can you explain why this would help explain why God decided that it was necessary to destroy the Bet ha'Mikdash?

4. Review I Divrei Ha-ayim 22:5-7, which describes David ha-melech's charge to his son Shlomo - that he build the bet ha'Mikdash. Then, read also Divrei Ha-yamim 29:10-13 - David's speech to Bnei Yisrael regarding the bet ha'Mikdash and its purpose! [In case you didn't recognize them, you say these last four psukim every day in psukei de-zimra! Hopefully, now you'll understand them a little bit better.]

Relate these psukim in Divrei Ha-yamim to the theme of 'ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem' in the main speech of Sefer Devarim, and its connection to the concluding psukim in 26:16-19. [Note as well Yeshayahu 66:12-14.]

As usual, relate your answer to the theme of the main speech, the concept of 'shem Hashem', and the purpose of the 'bechira' of Am Yisrael.

Relate your answer to Yeshayahu 42:5-6, which just so happen to be the opening two psukim of the Haftara for Parshat Breishit!

"KEL ELYON" and/ or "AM ELYON"

1. Review once again 26:19, this time noting the opening phrase "u-letitcha **elyon** al kol ha-goyim" [lit. "to put you 'above' the other nations"]. In your opinion, what is the precise meaning of 'elyon'?

in this pasuk, and how does this promise relate to these concluding remarks in 26:16-19?

Based on this pasuk, does it seem as though the purpose of these mitzvot are to make Am Yisrael 'better' than everyone else? If so, why; and how would this relate to the underlying theme of the mitzvot of the main speech?

2. Next, review Devarim 4:5-8. How (and why) do (and should) these psukim relate to the above question? [If you are not sure, relate to 4:1-2 and 5:1-3.]

Then, study 28:1-14, noting the parallel between these psukim (and their context) and 26:16-19. [Try first on your own; afterward, be sure that you found the textual & thematic parallels to just about every word in 28:1 and 28:9-10.]

Note as well the parallel between 28:10-14 and 4:1-8!

Based on these parallels, what would be the deeper meaning and purpose of becoming 'elyon'?

3. Now, review Breishit 14:18-22 and its context, noting how Malki Tzedek (and later Avraham Avinu) refers to God as 'kel elyon'. Can you explain the deeper meaning of this name, especially within the context of Sefer Breishit?

Could one suggest any thematic connection between this Biblical name of God as the 'Kel elyon' and the Torah's use of 'elyon' in Devarim 26:19? Relate your answer to the sources quoted in the above questions!

Note as well the use of the word "elyon" in Tehillim 91, in reference to both His Name (91:1) and His place (91:9)!

SELECTIVE CURSES

1. In 27:15-25, we find a list of 11 curses for those who do not obey any one of a list of specific mitzvot. Review those specific cases, and attempt to find any 'common denominator' that makes these mitzvot unique (i.e. in contrast to other mitzvot of the Torah). [If you have ample time, note how the different commentators dealt with this question.]

How do these warning relate to transgressions that are usually done in private, and why would that relate to the need for these curses. [Relate as well to 29:28.]

2. Review 27:15-25 once again, and attempt to identify the first time that each of these mitzvot had been mentioned earlier in Chumash. [For example, compare 27:19 with Shmot 23:6-9 and Devarim 19:14. and 27:20-23 with Vayikra 18:6-22.]

When your list is complete, see if you can identify any pattern, or if there certain Parshiot in Chumash from where we find most of these mitzvot? If so, can you explain why?

3. Finally, review Devarim 27:26, noting how this is the twelfth curse, yet it doesn't deal with a specific transgression, but rather with a very general one. In your opinion, what does the phrase 'kol ha-Torah ha-zot' refer to? [In other words, what does the word Torah in this pasuk refer to?]

Would (and should) the word Torah relate in any manner to the mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim? [In your answer, relate to 4:8, 4:44-45, 27:1-3 and 27:8! How do these blessings (or curses) relate to those mitzvot?]

How would this observation relate to your answer to the above question regarding the original source of the mitzvot mentioned in the first eleven 'curses'?

What common type of mitzvot do we find in both Parshat Mishpatim and Parshat Kedoshim that are similar to the mitzvot that we find in the 'chukim u-mishpatim' section of Sefer Devarim?

A COMMANDMENT - OR A PROMISE?

1. Review 27:9-10. Why are the people told that specifically on this day they have 'become a nation for their God'? Were they not already a nation when they came out of Egypt?

In your answer - relate to the mitzvot of the main speech!

2. In your opinion, is 27:10 a commandment or a promise; and how does it relate to 27:9? [See Seforno!]

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION

[for shiur on Mikra Bikkurim and the Haggada]

1. Carefully review the first ten psukim of the Parsha (i.e. 26:1-10). In your opinion (and based on these psukim), is the purpose of the mitzva of **bikkurim** to thank God for our first fruits, **or** are we 'using' our first fruits to thank God for giving us the Land? [Be sure that you understand this question before you attempt to answer it.]

In your answer, try to explain the underlying reason for each line of the declaration in 'mikra bikkurim', from 26:5-9.

Can you explain the necessity to mention God's covenant with the Avot in 26:3 and how it relates to 26:5-7?

2. Which specific covenant (and oath) does 26:3 refer to?

In your answer, relate to Breishit chapter 15; noting the parallel between Breishit 15:13-18 and Devarim 26:5-9. Note as well the Torah's use of the word 'yerusha' in Breishit chapter 15. Relate this to the same word in Devarim 26:1!

3. Note the word 'higgadeti' and the entire opening phrase of '**higgadeti** ha-yom I-Hashem Elokecha ki...' (see 26:3) - i.e. the opening pronouncement when one presents his **bikkurim**. How does the declaration relate to what is stated later in 26:5-7.

Compare these psukim to Shmot 13:8 and its context, noting once again the word 'higgadeti'!

Based on this comparison (and you answer to the above questions), can you explain why we quote specifically these psukim in the **maggid** section of the **haggada**?

Is there a thematic reason as well?

4. Quickly review chapter 26 (especially the end of the perek), and the first few psukim of chapter 27. While doing so, note the change from first person (in chapter 26) to third person in 27:1! [Recall our explanation that this change indicates that the main speech, which began in chapter 5, now finishes here at the end of chapter 26.]

Then, carefully review 26:16-19. Explain how and why these psukim 'conclude' the main speech. How (and why) do these psukim relate to Shmot 19:3-6, noting how Shmot chapter 19 introduces Ma'amad Har Sinai.

Based on the setting of the main speech of Sefer Devarim (see introductory shiur), what is the significance of this parallel? Relate this to the purpose of the mitzvot of Sefer Devarim.

5. Recall the theme of **ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem**, that was developed in chapters 12-17. Review 26:1-2, noting how this topic returns once again!

In your opinion, would it not have been more logical for the Torah to have included this mitzva within that section?

Review as well Devarim 14:28-29 (regarding the topic of 'ma'aser ani' in the third year), and then note how this relates to the laws of 'viddui ma'aser' that are detailed now in 26:12-15.

Would it not have made more sense to include these laws in 26:12-15 back in chapter 14?

Do these two mitzvot (mikra bikkurim & viddui ma'asrot share anything in common?

[Relate to 'declarations' of any type found in Chumash.]

Can you suggest any reason why the Torah may have preferred to 'save them' for the conclusion of the main speech?

THE CEREMONY AT HAR EIVAL

6. Review chapter 27, noting how it describes a ceremony that is to take place at Har Eival (after Bnei Yisrael cross into Eretz Canaan). Review especially 27:1-8, and based on those psukim, explain how (and why) this ceremony relates to the main speech in Sefer Devarim (i.e. chapters 5-26)?

7. Compare the national gathering and ceremony described in 27:1-8 to the events at Ma'amad Har Sinai, as detailed in Shmot 24:3-10. Note the rather obvious textual and thematic parallels.

What is similar, and what is different?

Can you explain the reason for (and significance) of this parallel? [As usual, relate to topic of the main speech.]

8. Later on in Sefer Devarim (see 31:9-13), we find the ceremony of **hakhel** that is to take place once every seven years. Compare the details of that ceremony to the ceremony at Har Eival. What is similar and what is different?

Can this help you understand the reason for **hakhel**?

9. Note the '**tochacha**' which follows in chapter 28. Can you explain how it relates to chapter 27, and to the main speech of Sefer Devarim? [Relate to 28:1 and 28:15.]

Return to the parallel (noted above) between the ceremony at Har Eival and the ceremony at Har Sinai in Shmot 24:3-10. Did you find any parallel in Devarim to the 'sefer ha-brit' that was read in public (see Shmot 24:7)?

If not, can you explain why?

Review the tochacha once again, noting its final pasuk (at the end of chapter 28). Does this explain the 'missing link'? How does this parallel help you understand the reason for the tochacha after the main speech in Sefer Devarim?

10. In relation to a tochacha that follows a lengthy set of mitzvot, in what manner is this tochacha in Parshat Ki Tavo similar to the tochacha in Sefer Vayikra (chapter 26 / Parshat Bechukotai)?

Note how each tochacha is similar and how they are different. Can you relate the differences to the corresponding theme of each book?

For example, why does the tochacha in Bechukotai warn about the destruction of the mikdash, while the tochacha in Ki Tavo warns about exile from the Land?

PART III - PARSHANUT

WHAT'S THE 'MITZVA' & WHAT'S THE 'TORAH'

1. In 27:1, Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to 'keep this entire **mitzva** that I am commanding your today'.

In your opinion, according to pshat, what **mitzva** is Moshe Rabbeinu referring to: 1) the mitzvot of the main speech; or 2) the mitzva which follows (i.e. 27:2-4)?

[In other words, is it going backwards or forwards?]

Now, see Ibn Ezra and Ramban!

In your opinion, what is the reason for this dispute?

2. Next, see 27:3. Note that Bnei Yisrael are instructed to write down 'et kol divrei ha-**Torah** ha-zot...'. In your opinion, what specifically does the word **Torah** in this pasuk refer to?

* to the entire **Torah** (all five books)?

* just Sefer Devarim? [Relate to 1:5 and 4:44.]

* or, just the 'brachot u-klalot' in 27:11-26 / and / or chp.28?

Again, see Ibn Ezra & Ramban (his entire peirush to this pasuk!) Finally, see 27:8. What is the meaning of the word 'torah' in this pasuk? See Rashbam's explanation of what was written.

3. In your opinion, what does 'be'er heitev' mean (see 27:8)?

See Rashi & Ibn Ezra.

In your opinion, which peirush is pshat, and which is drash?

Can you suggest a reason for this drash?

Relate to 26:16-19 & Shmot 19:5-6 (& Breishit chap.10).

[try also Breishit 12:1-3!]

TWELVE 'CURSES' FOR TWELVE 'TRIBES'

4. Note that we find **twelve** curses in 27:15-26. Can you explain why there are specifically twelve? Relate to the number of tribes who witness these curses in 27:11-14.

Then see Rashbam's peirush on 27:15.

5. Note as well how the tribes are divided into two groups of six each in 27:11-3. Can you find any logic in this division? If so, how does it relate to the blessing and curse?

See Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni on 27:12.

be-hatzlacha,
menachem