



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM
KI TAVO • **כי תבוא** / **WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?**

DISTRIBUTION DATE:

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 5, 2006 / י"ב אלול תשס"ו

PARSHA:

KI TAVO / כי תבוא

SERMON TITLE:

WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

KI TAVO • כִּי תבוא / WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?

PARSHAS KI TAVO: WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?

What's the Magic Word? How many times have you asked this question of your children? Every child knows that if they want to get something from their parents, they had better master these two important words: 'Please' and 'Thank you'.

This custom is not a new one, in fact, the very first mitzvah of this week's Torah portion is *bikkurim*. This is the commandment for every Jew to bring the first ripe fruits of his gardens to the Holy Temple as an expression of his thanks for all of the goodness and blessings G-d had bestowed upon him. This mitzvah, the Torah tells us, only applies to the seven kinds of fruit for which the land of Israel is praised, namely wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates and olives. (Author's note: It is suggested that the congregation be asked what the seven kinds are.)

This commandment was given to the Jewish nation as they were entering the Land of Israel. The Torah tells us that one was only to start bringing *bikkurim* once the land of Israel had been conquered and divided among the Jewish people.

The puzzling part of all this is that the conquering and dividing of the land that was done by Joshua took fourteen years to complete, and since the *bikkurim* offerings were to show one's appreciation for G-d's kindness, it would seem more reasonable to command every individual Jew who had received his portion



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

KI TAVO • כִּי תבוא / WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?

of the land to bring *bikkurim*, even while others still have not yet received their portions? But the Torah decrees that until every Jew had his land, even the Jew whose cup was already overflowing with G-d's blessings, had to wait what turned out to be fourteen years.

Only when every Jew was settled, could he could bring the First Fruit offering and show his appreciation

The explanation lays in the nature of the Jewish people.

The *bikkurim* expresses a Jew's thanks to G-d for the complete goodness shown to him and the first fruits must be brought to Jerusalem amidst the greatest joy. However one Jew cannot completely enjoy his own good fortune as long as he knows that there is another Jew who does not yet have a place of his own. That is why no Jew could bring the *bikkurim* until every Jew was able to do so, otherwise the joy would be incomplete as there would still be a piece of G-d's kindness missing.

We find a similar instance when it comes to asking for rain. Everyone knows that Jews all over the world pray for rain throughout the winter months and for dew in the summer month. We begin to say "משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם" (a praise that means G-d is the one who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall) on the last of Sukkot, but the actual request that G-d grant us rain "ותן טל ומטר" we postpone until the seventh of *Mar Cheshvan*, fifteen days later.

The Alter Rebbe explains the reason for this in his Shulchon Aruch:



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

KI TAVO • **כי תבוא** / WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?

"The land of Israel is a mountainous terrain and needs rain immediately after the holiday of Sukkoth, but we postponed asking for rain for fifteen days until the Jews who lived near the Euphrates River, the farthest location from Jerusalem, could reach their homes without caught by the rain."

The Rebbe said that this is a prime example of the Jewish people's love for one another. Rain in Israel is absolutely crucial for the very survival of the people there, for without it no food would grow. In contrast the issue of the people from near the Euphrates getting home before the rains begin is only a matter of convenience. Still the great love of the Jewish people for one another would set the comfort of every last Jew before even what could become a matter of life and death. Every Jew knows that if his request for rain would bring discomfort to another Jew, he would not consent to gain any benefit from such rains. He therefore forgoes his own comfort and even wellbeing not to gain from another's inconvenience. Like parents who hear that their son living thousands of miles away is in distress, cannot enjoy any kind of pleasure; such are the Jewish people's feelings for each other.

We find another example of this in the Midrash, "R. Simeon says: Why did the taste of the manna change into everything except these (cucumbers, watermelons, leeks, onions, and garlic)? This is because these foods are harmful for nursing mothers. We tell nursing women, "Do not eat any garlic or onion, for the baby's sake."



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

KI TAVO • **כי תבוא** / WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?

Again the Rebbe points out the greatness of the Jewish people. Imagine; there were approximately six hundred thousand men between the ages of twenty and sixty. In addition, there were the older men and the younger boys, the unmarried girls and the women who had stopped having children, so nursing mothers were the smallest minority among the Jewish people in the desert. Still, no Jew could taste any of these foods in his own manna so that none of these women of the smallest minority should be able to think that everyone else is enjoying the taste of watermelon and begin to crave it. Once again we see, that a Jew, by nature feels that it's worthwhile for everyone to have less for the sake of a select few.

What then is the lesson for us from this week's Torah portion?

In a *Ma'amar* (Chassidic discourse) the Rebbe comments on the famous saying on the verse about Abraham that when he returned to Israel from Egypt, "He called there in the name of G-d." The deeper meaning is that not only did he call in the name of G-d, but "He caused others to call in the name of G-d." The Rebbe explains that if one wants to be able to "call in the name of G-d" he must first see to it that others can call in the name of G-d.

In other words no Jew can truly enjoy his own relationship with G-d while he knows that there are countless Jews who don't even know of G-d's existence. He cannot enjoy the prayers of Rosh Hashanah or the atmosphere of Yom Kippur if he still has not done everything in his power to bring another Jew closer to his heritage, closer to G-d.



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

KI TAVO • **כי תבוא** / **WHEN CAN ONE REALLY ENJOY LIFE?**

Once however a Jew *has* brought another spiritual delight, once he *has* connected another with G-d and with Judaism, the pleasure he will have in his own relationship with G-d will be twofold; a true and honest pleasure.

* * *