

# Parsha Ponders

Ki Savo | Sep 19, 2024 | 17 Elul 5784

## First fruit proclamation<sup>1</sup>

ובאת אל-הכהן אשר יהיה בימים ההם ואמרת אליו הגדתי היום ליקוק אלקיך כי-באתי אל-הארץ אשר  
נשבע יקוק לאבותינו לתת לנו

You shall come to the Kohen that will be in those days, and say to him: “I state today to Hashem your G-d that I have come to the land which Hashem swore to our forefathers to give to us”<sup>2</sup>

One of the final *mitzvos* that is discussed in the Torah is known as *Bikkurim*. There is a *mitzvah* to bring our first fruits to the Temple, declare our thanks to Hashem, and give them to the Kohen for consumption. There are some questions that can be asked on this whole ceremony. First of all, the verse says to come to the Kohen who will be in those days. Which other Kohen could I possibly go to? Our Sages teach us<sup>3</sup> that this is stressing that we have to suffice with the Kohen which will be in our days, even if he’s not on the level of earlier generations. However, the Ramban is unsatisfied with this teaching<sup>4</sup>. We find a similar one with the *mitzvah* not to rebel against the Sages. We are to heed their words, even if they’re not on the level of earlier generations. This teaching makes sense, but why would we need the same teaching with respect to the Kohanim and *Bikkurim*?

Furthermore, why do we need to declare: “I state today to Hashem your G-d”. This guy is standing in the Temple, about to recite the entire *Bikkurim* passage of thanks. What’s the need for this prelude? Also, why does he stress, “your G-d”, specifying Hashem’s relationship with the Kohen. It’s the guy bringing the *Bikkurim*’s G-d too! Also, in the rest of the *parsha* the Torah is speaking to the bringer and nevertheless it says many times “your G-d.”

The *Bikkurim* passage recounts our exile in Egypt and our subsequent redemption. It would appear that our main gratitude for the Exodus is not so that we could enjoy the fruits of the Land of Israel. Rather, it’s that we were brought close to Hashem in His service. Even if the promised land were a barren wasteland, G-d forbid, the main point is that we accepted the Torah and that we could live in the holiest place on earth. Still, even with this tremendous goodness we have been bestowed, we add praise and thanks to Hashem for the additional kindness of placing us in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Therefore, when we come to the Temple, before we even lower our fruit baskets from upon our shoulders, we speak to the Kohen. We don’t want it to appear even for a moment that we’re solely interested in the fruits. We therefore prelude by stating that Hashem has brought us to the land. Not just any land, but the holiest land on earth, which was promised to our forefathers. Even if the land were barren, G-d forbid, we would be just as appreciative. Only afterwards do we lower the basket onto the ground and give praise and thanks for the fruits of the land.

When it comes to praising Hashem for the holiness with which He has infused in us through His *mitzvos*, the Kohen is the leading receiver of holiness. From him, holiness is spread throughout the nation. Therefore, the bringer of *Bikkurim* says, “Hashem your G-d”. However, when it comes to Hashem’s bounty in the land and in the fruits, the owners are prime. Their work in the land transmits Hashem’s bounty to the Kohen. Therefore, in the rest of the *parsha* it says to the bringers, “Hashem your G-d”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on Toras Moshe to Deuteronomy 26:3

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Sifrei Devarim *ad. loc.*, brought by Rashi *ad. loc.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ad. loc.*

However, perhaps the bringer of *Bikkurim* might think that when it comes to Torah learning and *mitzvah* performance, he trumps the Kohen of his days tenfold. Why then should the bringer say, “Hashem your G-d” to the Kohen, excluding himself and singling out Hashem for this Kohen? Therefore, the verse warns us that we have to suffice with the Kohen of our days. Even though he isn’t like those of earlier generations, still, Hashem has chosen him and made him the pipeline to Hashem’s bounty, and all manners of holiness.

Good Shabbos