

Tzofia *Tzofia Keshet Freide Malkah bat Sarah Yochevet v'Yehoshua Simcha*

Parashat Ki Tavo

September 7, 2017

The Torah portion this week is *Ki Tavo*, and we are reading from *Sefer Devarim*, the Book of Deuteronomy. Today I will read chapter 26, verses 1-3.

Moshe and the Israelites are still in the desert preparing to enter the Promised Land. This week Moshe continues his very long speech to the Israelites before they enter the Promised Land, focusing on many more of the rules that they should observe when they enter and settle to live there. One of these rules is that they should present the first fruits of their harvest to the Kohen, the priest, as a way of giving thanks. The farmer presenting these first fruits recited a story familiar to us from the Haggadah.

Once they cross the Jordan to enter the land, they are responsible for putting up stone pillars coated with plaster that are inscribed with the laws of Torah. The Israelites are reminded, once again, to be faithful to God's *mitzvot* so that the nation will experience blessing not curse.

Questions

1) In the second verse of my *parashah* it tells us to take part of the first fruits we've harvested from the promised land and bring them to the place that God will choose. Can you think of another place in Torah where God tells someone to go to a place that God will show them, but doesn't give the person the name of the place right away? <<pick 3 people>>

When we first meet Avram in parashat *Lekh Lekha*, God tells Avram to leave his home and go to the place God will show him.

2) Why do you think God would tell someone to go to a place that God will show them without mentioning the name of that place? <<pick 3 people>>

Maybe it's like a cliff hanger. It could be God's way of keeping the Israelites on their toes and paying attention for what comes next. Sometimes surprises can also help build excitement.

3) When the Israelites bring the first fruits, to the Temple they are supposed to give the basket to a *kohen* or priest who then places the basket in front of the altar. The person who brings the fruits then tells the story of having gone down to Egypt and being in slavery. Then the person tells God the story of how God brought them out of slavery, and took them to the Promised Land where they had success as a farmer and were able to harvest and bring these first fruits to the Temple. The person bringing the fruit is then supposed to share their fruit and eat it with people who do not have land of their own--the Levi'im and any people who had joined the Jewish people, but were not members of a tribe. What do you think the person who harvests the first fruits from the Promised Land might feel by doing this?

First of all I'd feel so happy to be able to harvest the very first fruit from the Promised Land! Bringing them in a basket to God might feel a little like giving the fruit to God--showing that, really, the harvest does not just belong to the farmer. God had an important part in it, too. Finally--by sharing the first fruits with people who do not have any land of their own--it might feel like God is giving the fruit back to us to share with others. Sharing with others, particularly people who don't have land of their own, is a nice thing to do and would probably make me feel better about eating the first fruits than if I just ate them by myself.