



## Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Tavo | Sichah 1

### The Verse:

The *Parshah* opens with the procedure for bringing *bikkurim*, the first fruits, to Jerusalem, and then continues with the declaration a person made upon fulfilling the obligation to separate and give the various tithes. Following this declaration, the Torah says: “Today, Hashem, your L-rd, commands you to perform these statutes... and you shall observe and perform them with all your heart and with all your soul.” (*Devarim* 26:16)

### The Rashi:

*And you shall observe and perform them* — A heavenly voice blesses him: “You have brought *bikkurim* (first fruits) today — you shall repeat this next year.”

### Rashi’s Thought Process:

We would assume that the phrase, “you shall observe and perform them” is a command. But Rashi interprets it as a Divine blessing because of the context. The previous verse, which concludes the individual’s declaration, is a request for Divine blessing: “Gaze down from Your holy abode... and bless your people Israel...” (*Devarim*, 26:15) And the following verse praises the Jewish people for their spiritual maturity: “You have distinguished Hashem today to be a G-d for you...” Thus, Rashi concluded that this verse is a form of blessing as well, “A heavenly voice blesses him: You have brought *bikkurim* today — you shall repeat this next year.”

## **The Questions:**

Granted, Rashi's interpretation that this phrase is a blessing is justified. How, though, does Rashi conclude that this blessing was specifically that the person would bring *bikkurim* the following year, and not a blessing relating to tithing? The section immediately preceding this blessing is the declaration for tithing, while the section concerning *bikkurim* is further removed!

Additionally, how does Rashi conclude that the blessing was given by a "Heavenly voice," a miraculous phenomenon not evident from a literal reading of the verse?

## **The Explanation:**

The declaration in the preceding passage was made during the fourth year of the seven-year *shemittah* cycle by a person who has properly separated the various tithes of the first three years of that cycle. If the blessing would be that "you shall repeat the separation of tithes next time," meaning, after the third year, that would be a curse, and not a blessing. For this would imply that the person waited until the end of the third year to separate all the tithes for the preceding three years, when the proper practice is to separate each year's tithe in its time.

Therefore, Rashi interpreted this blessing as referring to *bikkurim* which are taken to Jerusalem annually. "You have brought *bikkurim* today — you shall repeat this next year" is certainly a blessing.

As for the separation between the section of *bikkurim* and the blessing — there is an allusion to *bikkurim* in the preceding verse after all. The tithing declaration concludes, "bless... the ground that You gave us... a land flowing with milk and honey." (*Devarim* 26:15) The honey referred to here is date honey (Rashi's commentary on *Shemos* 13:5), a food which is not subject to the obligation to tithe. Strictly speaking, we are to tithe "grain, wine, and oil." (*Devarim* 14:23) Dates **are**, however, a fruit from which a person brings *bikkurim*. Thus, the reference to date honey in the preceding verse

invokes the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*, leading to the blessing in the following verse, “You have brought *bikkurim* today — you shall repeat this next year.”

The textual support for Rashi’s assertion that the blessing was given by a “Heavenly voice” is the theme of *bikkurim* itself. The *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* is structured as “measure for measure,” acknowledging G-d taking the Jewish people out of Egypt and establishing them in the Land of Israel. Because G-d “brought us to this place,” therefore, “I have brought the first fruit of the ground.” (*Devarim* 26:9-10)

G-d, too, participates in this reciprocal dance. Because the person makes his declaration by “calling out” with a loud voice (Rashi *Devarim* 26:5), so too, G-d’s blessing is announced by an audible “Heavenly voice.”

### **Rashi’s Inner Dimension:**

The *Alter Rebbe* writes that “today” refers to Rosh Hashanah. (*Likkutei Torah, Ki Savo*, 41c) This aligns with Rashi’s interpretation that “today” refers to *bikkurim*, another “first.” The *Tzemach Tzedek* further explains that the “first fruits” of *bikkurim* allude to the Jewish people, who were the “first” to arise in G-d’s thought, as it were, prior to G-d conceiving of the Torah or Creation. (*Or Hatorah, Ki Savo*, p. 1,033)

This deepens the resonance of “today” as alluding to Rosh Hashanah. The Divine service of Rosh Hashanah is to commit one’s essence, the “*bikkurim*” of one’s soul, to G-d and His *mitzvos*. Thus, the phrase “today” alludes both to the day of Rosh Hashanah, and to the spiritual theme of the day, the service of “*bikkurim*.”