



5779 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Parashat Ki Tavo / פרשת כי-תבוא

The Center of the Agricultural Cycle

Our parsha opens with two agricultural mitzvot: Bikkurim and “Vidui Ma’aser.” On a certain level, these mitzvot represent the beginning and the end of the cycle of agricultural mitzvot. Bikkurim is performed with the first fruits of the season that the farmer joyfully marches to Yerushalayim and presents to God in the Beit HaMikdash. Then, he thanks God for the Land of Israel and his personal plot. Vidui Ma’aser occurs in the 4th and 7th year after the time when one “remove[s] the holy [portion] from the house.”¹ The farmer proclaims that he properly fulfilled all of the agricultural mitzvot and once again thanks God for the Land in general and one’s plot in particular.

On the surface, these agricultural mitzvot should not be limited to a specific location. After all, the farmer is partially thanking God for the entire Land of Israel. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the Torah highlights the significance of Yerushalayim in the context of discussing these mitzvot. Most obviously, the mitzvah of Bikkurim requires the farmer to travel to the Beit HaMikdash and interact with the inhabitants of Yerushalayim.

Yerushalayim is mentioned, though more subtly, regarding Vidui Ma’asrot. While the mitzvah can be performed anywhere, the final sentence of the farmer’s declaration is: “Look down from Your holy dwelling, from the heavens, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground which You have given to us.”² What is God’s abode in the heavens? The Or HaChaim explains that this refers to the heavenly Yerushalayim that is parallel to its terrestrial counterpart.

What should we make of these references to Yerushalayim? Why does the Torah emphasize the importance of a city of stone when relating to agricultural mitzvot? Perhaps the answer is that our commentators explain that all of our material bounty flows through the Beit HaMikdash and the city

¹ Devarim 26:13. Translation is adapted from Chabad.org.

² Devarim 26:15.



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of Yerushalayim.³ It is from there that blessing spreads to the rest of the Land of Israel and later to the entire world.

This is perhaps most highlighted the special blessing in the Grace After Meals that is dedicated to Yerushalayim. At first glance Yerushalayim has little to do with the food that we eat. However, upon further reflection we realize that Yerushalayim is the conduit through which all material blessings come into our lives. It is for this reason that Yerushalayim is highlighted when the Torah discusses Bikkurim and Vidui Ma'asrot – the bookends of the halachik agricultural cycle.

May we all realize that all blessing and bounty in our lives flows through Yerushalayim.

³ See the following shiur from Rav Zalman Melamed for sources: <https://www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/1486>.