

## Parshas Ki Sovo – David Foscote

כא אלול תשע"ה – 4th September 2015 – שבת פ"כ תבוא

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*"You shall come to the Kohen **who will be in those days** and you shall say to him: I declare today to Hashem, **your G-d**, that I have come to the land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give us."* (Devarim 26:3)

The above proclamation is made when one offers up the bikkurim, yet the choice of the language proves interesting. Why are we told explicitly to approach a kohen, *who will be in those days*? Surely, which other Kohen could we possibly approach to perform this act? Secondly, why do we refer to Hashem as the G-d of the Kohen, rather than in our G-d?

The Ramban explains that the possuk teaches us that one cannot bring a Kohen from his own town; rather one must present the bikkurim to one of the kohanim who is from the mishmar currently on duty.

Rashi cryptically tell us that you have none but the kohen who is there, that is, as he is. What does Rashi mean precisely? The sifrei quotes Rabbi Yose HaGlili who discusses this comment. He explains that it would simply not enter our minds to bring bikkurim to a kohen who is not alive at the time. Rather the possuk teaches us that the bikkurim are brought to a kohen who is qualified and presumed, in those days, to be fit.

This last phrase, in those days, ponders the following question: what if our kohen on duty is later found to be invalid? What becomes of the bikkurim? Sifre answers that even in the event where a kohen is found later to be invalid, the bikkurim are nevertheless accepted.

However what if the kohen, currently on duty, is not as great as the kohen who preceded him, or who will be next on duty? Will this result in downgrading our bikkurim from Class 1 to Class 2?

To address this question, Rashi, in Parashas Shoftim, comments concerning the standards of judges: *You shall come to the Kohanim, the Levites, and to the judge who will be in those days...* (Devarim 17:9). Rashi writes: Even if he (the judge) is not like the other judges who were before him, you must listen to him. You have none but the judge who is in your days.

Furthermore, Rashi makes an additional comment in the above sedra (19:27) whereby the Torah discusses the process of testifying as a witness: *The two men and those who have the dispute shall stand before Hashem, before the Kohanim and the judges who will be in those days.* Rashi explains: *Yiftach, in his generation, is like Shmuel in his generation. You must treat him (Yiftach) with respect.*

There is a baraisa in Rosh Hashanah 25a/b which also addresses this debate. The question is asked by the Rabbis: Why are the names of the majority of those seventy elders, who served in Moshe Rabbeinu's court, unspecified? The baraisa answers that a person should not be able to say about any contemporary court that their judge is comparable to those that served on the original court. Rashi writes that although a contemporary judge is unlikely to be on par with Moshe Rabbeinu or Aharon, one could make a comparison with one of the other members. Thus leaving their names anonymous avoids the temptation of making an unwarranted comparison. The baraisa concludes with an apt quote from Koheles (7:10): *Do not say, 'How was it that former times were better than these?' For that is not a question prompted by wisdom.*

We can now begin to draw a conclusion as to why we refer to Hashem as 'your G-d' rather than 'our G-d'. By making this declaration we recognise that the kohen 'who is in our days' is in the first instance a suitable and valid agent in giving over the bikkurim. We acknowledge his special relationship with Hashem; irrespective of whether his stature equates to the kohanim of yesteryear. Sforno writes: the use of the phrase 'your G-d' is often reserved to kings and prophets (see Yehoshua 1:9 Shmuel I 12:19; 15:15). By applying this phrase here, it strengthens the argument that when we approach the kohen 'who is in our days' and declare in the name of his G-d, we are acknowledging that this particular kohen, is not only suitable to act as our agent in receiving our bikkurim, that he has a special relationship with Hashem for which he deserves our upmost respect.