

Ki Sovo – Mark Neuberger

כא אלול תשע"ו – 24th September 2016 – שבת פ' כי תבא

The Sedra begins with the Mitzva of Bikkurim which describes how new fruits have to be brought to the Beis Hamikdosh and a declaration made expressing our gratitude to Hakodosh Baruch Hu for his kindness to us.

Following this Parsha is the Mitzva of Vidui Maaser. The obligations of Maaser (tithing one's produce) follows a seven-year cycle. In years 1, 2, 4 and 5 Maaser Sheni is taken to Yerushalayim and eaten there. In years 3 and 6 Maaser Sheni is not taken but Maaser Oni is separated and given to the poor. On the last day of Pesach of the following years (Years 4 and 7) Vidui Maaser is declared. The owner states that he has given his Maasaros (tithes) meticulously and according to all the laws. The Vidui ends with the tefilloh asking Hakodosh Baruch Hu to "look down on Your people Yisroel and the Land which You have given to us as You promised to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey." (The mitzvah of Vidui Maaser does not seem to apply nowadays but there is a mitzvah of Biur Maaser to destroy the coins used to redeem Terumos and Maasoros every 4th and 7th year.)

With no other mitzvah is there a declaration – at the end of Succos for example there is no Mitzva to stand up and state that we have lived in a Succah and taken the Arba Minim. Why is the Mitzva of taking Maasros distinguished in this way? Furthermore the declaration is called a Vidui (confession) but in actual fact the person is declaring how he has observed the mitzvah of Maasaros – what confession does he need to make?

The Akedas Yitzchak explains that from the earliest times generous people have supported the less fortunate and people may think that this is why we take Maasoros – as some type of social obligation. However that is not why we take Maasoros. We do so because that is the will of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. If we look at the wording this point is reinforced – "according to Your commandment which you have commanded me.....I have not transgressed any of Your commandments or forgotten them. This is why I have separated Maasoros.

In a similar vein that is why the declaration is called Vidui (confession) which has to be spoken aloud. If a person wishes to repent and change it is not enough just to think it – he has to declare it and bring it into the physical world. At the time when he has fulfilled all his Maasoros obligations he has to verbally remind himself of how he is obliged to keep all the Mitzvos in the way that we are commanded.

The Vidui Maasoros ends with a request – "Look down from Your holy dwelling place and bless Your people Israel." We ask that just as we have shared our wealth with those who need it, please share Your blessings be shared with us who certainly need it. Surely it cannot be coincidental that we read this a few days before Rosh Hashonoh. Hopefully we have kept the all the Mitzvos that came our way during the previous year as carefully as possible in order to fulfil the Rotzon Haborei. May He look down from His holy dwelling place and bless us during the coming year."

Lilui Nishmas my Father Hechover Reb Yitzchok ben Shimon z"l who leined this Sedra for his Barmitzvah, 89 years ago in the IRG, Frankfurt-Am-Main.
