

KI SAVO (DEUTERONOMY 26:1-29:8)

A Basketful of Thanks

2009 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Bikurim – First Fruits. The farmer in Israel is commanded to give something back to G-d: *When you enter the Land that G-d is giving to you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it. You will take of the first of every fruit...and put it in a basket, and go to the place upon which G-d will choose to rest His Name.* (Deuteronomy, 26:1-2) The farmer would go out to his field. He would examine his olive orchards and his vineyards. As soon as he saw the first bud that became a ripe fruit, he tied a string around it for future identification. (“This Bud’s for You!”) At harvest time, he would take that olive, or that cluster of grapes, or that wheat stalk and bring it to Jerusalem in a basket, where it would be presented to a Kohain. (He could bring more, and they often did, but the actual requirement was to bring the very first fruit that became ripe.) Once the basket is brought to the Temple in Jerusalem and placed in front of the Altar, he is required to make a declaration of thanksgiving that was, basically, an overview of Jewish History: ...”*An Aramean tried to destroy my father* (Laban – from Aram – tried to kill Jacob – See “Watch Out For WHAT Car?”) *He* (i.e., my father, Jacob) *descended to Egypt and he lived there, few in number, and there he became a nation that was great, strong, and numerous. The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us, and placed hard work upon us. Then we cried out to G-d, the G-d of our forefathers. G-d heard our voice and saw our affliction, our travail, and our oppression. G-d took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with great awesomeness, with signs and with wonders. He brought us to this place, and He gave us this Land; a Land that flows with milk and honey. And now, behold! I have brought the First Fruit of the ground that You have given me, G-d!*” (Ibid, verses 5-10) ---

----- Quite a speech. The farmer expressed his appreciation for G-d’s Divine Providence that protected our People from extermination, grew us into a powerful nation, emancipated us from Egypt, gave us all prime real estate, and produced a bountiful harvest for us to enjoy. G-d has been very good to us. A colleague of mine, Rabbi Avigdor Litmanowitz, shared with me an observation that was expressed at his Bris by his father. (He must have a good memory!