



"Joy:The Secret of Godly Giving"

Series: "Lessons for Living: A Christian Walk through the Torah"

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- Ki Tavo | כי תבוא | "When you come in" ["Torah: Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8"](#)



For those who are new to our Torah study, let me remind you of exactly what we are doing each week at Union Grove. Ezra the Scribe, who lived around 350 BC was born in Babylon. He came on the scene after the last of the ancient prophets had spoken. He journeyed down to Jerusalem where he was appalled to see the Jews living compromised lives. They had intermarried with non-Jews. They had forgotten much of what the Torah had commanded them. One of his works was taking the Torah and dividing it up into 54 **parshah** "portions" by which it could be read in its entirety in the scope of a year. This was done in the hope of the people returning to the reading of God's Word. It was a sort of "read the Bible in a year" plan.

These portions are read each week in Judaism with a specific portion being read on a specific Sabbath of the year. As we walk through the Torah, we study the portion that is designated for the Saturday prior to the Sunday that we do our study. Today's portion is called **Ki Tavo** literally meaning "When you come in". Moses is giving instructions of what the people are to do when they come in to the land. This portion includes a final exhortation. It includes an interesting instruction concerning the writing of the Torah onto stones that are to be plastered at the point where the people will cross the Jordan. There is a host of blessings for obedience with corresponding curses for disobedience. And finally, they are instructed on renewing their covenant with the Lord. Imagine that to be sort of a renewal of wedding vows between God and His bride Israel.



The part that caught my eye this week is the Ceremony of the **Bikkurim**; the celebration and offering of the "first fruits". I think it captures the

sheer JOY that a believer should experience in godly giving. Please open your Bibles to Deuteronomy Chapter 26 and read along with me beginning at verse 1.

- 1 “Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it,
- 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put *it* in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name.
- 3 “You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare this day to the LORD my God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’
- 4 “Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.
- 5 “You shall answer and say before the LORD your God, ‘My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation.
- 6 ‘And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us.
- 7 ‘Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression;
- 8 and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders;
- 9 and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
- 10 ‘Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O LORD have given me.’ And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God;
- 11 and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household.<sup>1</sup>

Church, this is the confession of the first fruits. This is done singularly and collectively. It is a reminder of God's constant presence in our lives. All that we are, and all that we have, and all that we enjoy come from our Father above. We get so distracted in life that we often forget that our jobs, our wealth, our health, our friendships, our church body, our spouses, and even our next breath comes from Him. You're going to miss what this teaching is about if you are focused on the quantity of your giving. This teaching is about listening to God about what you are supposed to give, and having the right heart attitude when you do give. It is about HOW you give. If you are not giving JOYOUSLY then your offering will be unworthy.

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<sup>1</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Dt 26:1–11). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

God commanded the Israelites to go through this ceremony of remembrance and then thanksgiving as they approached the New Year (in the Jewish Calendar) so that they would end the year with gratitude for all they had experienced.

We see in this passage that in verse two they each went and saw the first of the fruits that God had given them. Note that these pilgrims didn't give out of what they had left at the end of the week or the end of the month. They gave of their first fruits trusting God would give them all that they needed. I remember when my father died, I examined his checkbook as I was the executor. Each and every month the first checks written were to the work of the Lord to various ministries. Dad was saying, "God I will honor you with my first fruits and I will trust you to fill my basket again." In the same way, these pilgrims assembled a joyous gathering and they made a joyous procession in taking of these first fruits up to the Temple to offer them to God.

In the declaration of First Fruits each pilgrim declared the history of coming out of slavery and how God had delivered him or her from the oppressor. This is a picture of absolute and full joy. In a similar way our giving is motivated out of our gratitude for all that God has done for us. He gave the sacrifice of His one and only Son Jesus. He gave it all. It is a free gift. I think it is interesting that the ancient Hebrews divined an acronym out of the word for basket. The cryptic meaning of basket was "Words". Words are important. As we offer up our praises and as we offer up our words of thanksgiving, they are fruits along with our treasure that we lay down before the Lord in worship. It is a basket of thanks. It is a basket of joy.

This Torah portion and the next two or three are those leading up to Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) and the Jewish New Year. It is a time to recommit ourselves to obedience and blessing. This portion warns of the curses that inevitably come with disobedience. Interestingly, in Hebrew the curses and warnings are singular, applying to each person who is disobedient. These are not threats. They are just a warning of what follows a life of ingratitude and disobedience. A thankful life is a joyous life. A joyous life is a blessed life.



### **What about us? What does "joyful giving" look like to the Christ-Follower?**

I don't think before today I've ever really given a teaching about "giving" to this body at Union Grove. I have however been careful to tell you that all that you are and all that you have comes from God and all of your resources belong to God. God gave you a certain number of days that you will live. That was a gift to you and you will be on earth until He takes you home. You are accountable to Him for that time. So, time is one of the resources that you must give back with joy. Secondly, your talents all come from God. Your talents are part of the resources that as an act of worship you give back to the Lord sacrificially and I might add joyfully. And lastly, every cent that you

have ever made was a gift from God. Jesus didn't say "If you give", He said "when you give." (Matthew 6:2-3) It is a spiritual principle that part of all the monetary wealth that you gather is to be given back to Him.



### **Giving is not about Coercion - Not a Legal Duty**

Guys, this is not about coercion. It is not about a legal duty. Your time, talent, and treasure is the resource pool from which you give. It should be part of what you gather together, and offer back to the Lord your God. It is part of what goes into your basket which you "take up joyfully to the temple". I can just imagine the pilgrims going up to the temple shouting and singing, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." Do you sing such a song in your heart when you are on the giving side of things? God wants you to have such an attitude. You see He is telling us in these verses that it is ALL about the attitude within your heart. And not only that, God wants to bless you as you give.



### **Are Blessings We Receive Proportional to Our Giving?**

The blessings we receive seem to be proportional to what we give. Listen to the words of Paul in his letter to the Corinthian church:

<sup>6</sup>The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Paul seems to add here that if we give of our time, talent, and treasure in a sparing (let's say stingy) way, part of the divine economy of things is that we will reap little in our lives. When we are stingy, God doesn't let us reap bountifully.

This might motivate some in here to think, "I'll give bountifully so I'll get a good return on my gift." In his next sentence Paul nixes that idea, by telling us that ATTITUDE is what matters. We must have the heart of those pilgrims who went up to Jerusalem joyfully with their baskets full to give to the Lord. Paul tells us, "God loves a cheerful giver." It does not say, "God loves a cheerful investor". He tells us that we are to give as our hearts have discerned. That means after prayer and

meditation we are to give what God puts in our hearts. This may be 10% (which is where we get our word, tithe). It may be 20%. It could mean 30%, 40%, or even 50%. In Christ we live under grace and not under the law. So the Holy Spirit could even move you on occasion to give 100% of some income that you have. Attitude is everything. It isn't the size of the gift in your hand, it's the size of the heart in your gift.

I once heard a sweet old saint say, "Until I gave God His ten percent I received no blessings in my life." I also heard him say, "Give until it hurts". I don't think I quite agree with either of these. Maybe when he started disciplining himself to give, it then opened his eyes to God working in his life. But I would say instead, "Open your heart to what God is whispering into your soul, and give what He whispers. Then, don't give until it hurts, give until you feel the blessing of the Lord. Give until it surprises and shocks even you. "



**Our takeaway:**

True giving is a joyful response triggered by gratitude for all God has done for you. It is the giving back of part of the time, talent, and treasure that God has loaned to you.

If your heart is right with the Lord, you will always be on the lookout for how you can 'give'—

does that teen need a listening ear? Does that elderly person need a ride, or a meal? I see many examples in our fellowship every week of people caring for and giving to other people, both in and out of our church body. This is what true Christian giving looks like. Additionally, when we are prompted to give monetarily to our church, it keeps the air conditioning on, buys paint for the walls, and gets the bulletins printed. Do not ask what someone else is giving—ask what you might give.

Giving is an integral part of the life of the Believer. Whether you put money in the plate, teach Sunday school, reach out to and extend care to other members of the Body, or merely attend and bathe the church and its work in prayer—our giving is how we say "Thank you" to God for all He has done for us. And as we bring this 'basket' to the Lord's altar, may we do so with ALL JOY, and may He be well-pleased with our gifts.

Let us Pray

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