

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON PARSHAS BECHUKOSAI - 5757

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Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"l on Parshas Bechukosai (Shiur date: 5/25/76)

Berachos Ukelalos (referred to as the Tochecha) are found in Vayikra (Bechukosai) and Devarim (Ki Tavo). The Gemara (Megilla 31b) comments that one is permitted to pause in the middle of the Tochecha in Ki Tavo while one may not do so when reading the Tochecha in Bechukosai. The Gemara explains that the Tochecha in Bechukosai was given in the plural form and Moshe relayed them "Mpi Hagevurah", with a direct transmission from Hashem. The Tochecha in Ki Tavo was given in the singular form and Moshe stated them on his own, "Mpi Atzmo". Tosfos immediately comments that Mpi Atzmo means that they were given through Ruach Hakodesh.

The Rav asked why we distinguish between parts of the Torah to say that this part came from Pi Hagevurah while this part came from Pi Moshe? ALL of Torah is Mpi Hagevurah, divinely given by Hashem, so why distinguish within the Tochecha?

The Rav explained that in the Tochecha in Bechukosai, Moshe was given the Berachos Ukelalos as the representative, as well as a member, of Knesses Yisrael. Moshe's role was that of a messenger to transmit the message from Hashem to Bnay Yisrael. Hence the plural form is used to include all of Bnay Yisrael. In Ki Tavo, Hashem wanted that Moshe should speak to the people using his own name and warn them of the consequences of their actions if they do not follow the Torah of Hashem. However, in both Bechukosai and Ki Tavo, the Berachos Ukelalos were determined and ordained by Hashem.

In Bechukosai, Hashem speaks directly to Bnay Yisrael, for example and I will provide rain in its proper time. Moshe is included as a recipient of this favor from Hashem, just like all other members of Knesses Yisrael. Moshe's role was limited to his being the appointed messenger to relay the message to Bnay Yisrael. There are 2 parties involved in the covenant in Bechukosai: Hashem and Knesses Yisrael, and there is one messenger who is also a member of the second party: Moshe.

In the covenant of Ki Tavo, the role of Moshe changed. The nature of this covenant was with each individual member of Bnay Yisrael, for example it says "Vhayisa Meshuga" (and you will become depraved) in singular form. Hashem wanted that Moshe should be the Mashbia, the one who administers the oath, to Bnay Yisrael. In this Tochecha, there are 3 parties involved in the covenant: Hashem, Moshe and Knesses Yisrael.

The Rav asked why was Moshe's role different in each of the Tochachot? The Rav explained that the first Tochecha was given by Hashem to Moshe prior to the breaking of the first Luchos Habris. We find in Parshas Mishpatim that Moshe sprinkled blood on the people and said that Hashem is making a covenant with Bnay Yisrael based on ALL these things, "Al Kal Hadevarim Ha'ayleh". This Bris included the reading of the Berachos Ukelalos from Bechukosai. According to Rashi, this ceremony took place right before Bnay Yisrael received the Torah at Sinai, on the fourth day of Sivan. That is why we read Bechukosai prior to Shavuos, as its contents were part of the covenant that Hashem made with Knesses Yisrael at Sinai. The second Tochecha was given after the breaking of the Luchos and the receipt of the second set of Luchos, in fact 38 years later in Arvos Moav. What changed in this time?

The Rav said that according to the Bais Halevi, prior to the breaking of the first set of Luchos, there was no difference between Torah Sh'bichtav and Torah Sh'beal Peh. Torah Sh'beal Peh was to be a written portion of Torah Sh'bichtav. The breaking of the Luchos was the event that changed the character of Torah Sh'beal Peh from a written one to one that was to be

handed down via the Mesorah. So when Moshe gave the Tochecha in Ki Tavo, this difference between Torah Sh'beal Peh and Torah Sh'bichtav had taken place. It is interesting to note that in the Krisas Bris in Parshas Mishpatim that revolves around the Berachos Ukelalos that are mentioned in Bechukosai, the Torah uses the phrase "Al Kal Hadevarim" while in Devarim, it uses the phrase "Al Pi Hadevarim". The difference is that in Mishpatim Torah Sh'bichtav and Torah Sh'beal Peh were to be transmitted in the same way. In Devarim, where Torah Sh'beal Peh existed as an oral tradition, the Torah uses the phrase "Al Pi" to indicate that Torah Sh'beal Peh as a unique entity was included in this covenant. After the breaking of the Luchos, Torah Sh'bichtav alone was to be written, while Torah Sh'beal Peh was Nimsere L'Moshe, transmitted to Moshe and he was charged with the responsibility of transmitting it to Bnay Yisrael, hence the term Mesorah, which means that it was given to Moshe.

With this, the Rav explained the role of Moshe in each Tochecha. In Bechukosai, where everything was to be included as part of Torah Sh'bichtav, Moshe's role was limited to a plain messenger, he is not yet considered to be Rabban Shel Yisrael, teacher of Israel. Hashem alone is the Mashbia of Bnay Yisrael. Hence the Gemara says that Moshe said these Berachos Ukelalos Mpi Hagevurah. However with the receipt of the second Luchos, Torah Sh'beal Peh was given exclusively to Moshe. He became Rabban Shel Yisrael, teaching it to each and every member of Bnay Yisrael and was rewarded with the Karnay Ohr. Therefore the Gemara says that Moshe said them Mpi Atzmo, to indicate that he was the Mashbia of Bnay Yisrael and the covenant obliged Bnay Yisrael to follow Torah Sh'bichtav and Torah Sh'beal Peh.

The Rambam asks (on the verse Lo Kam Navi Od Byisrael Kmoshe) that in Parshas Vaayra, Hashem tells Moshe that He appeared to Avraham by a different name. The Midrash comments that Hashem is saying that the patriarchs were on a higher level than Moshe. The Rambam explains that Moshe must be looked at from 2 points: before and after the breaking of the Luchos. Indeed, prior to the breaking of the first Luchos, the patriarchs were on a higher level than Moshe. Though Moshe was the messenger charged with the task to relate the Berachos Ukelalos and the covenant with Hashem to the people, this did not, in and of itself, raise him above the patriarchs. Only with the second Luchos, did Moshe become the Adon Haneviim, the greatest of all prophets. Essentially, Moshe became a part of Torah. This greatness was expressed through Moshe's role as teacher of Israel, transmitter of Torah Sh'beal Peh and the Mashbia of Bnay Yisrael obligating them to keep for all time the Torah Sh'beal Peh that he taught them. The Krisas Bris in Ki Tavo was different in that it included both Torah Sh'bichtav and Torah Sh'beal Peh.

It is because of this status of Moshe, that not believing in Moshe is tantamount to not believing in Hashem. The Gemara says that "Moshe Mpi Atzmo" means that Moshe in his role of teacher and Mashbia said them. The Tochecha is repeated in Devarim because the one in Bechukosai involved only Hashem and Bnay Yisrael. In Ki Tavo the Tochecha is between Hashem, Moshe and Bnay Yisrael.

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Peninim on the Torah Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Hebrew Academy of Cleveland Parshas Behukotai

If you will walk in My laws. (26:3) Rashi cites Chazal who maintain that "halichah b'mitzvos," walking in Hashem's mitzvos, refers to intensive Torah study. One who diligently applies himself to studying Torah merits the blessings detailed in the parsha. Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, cites Chazal in the Talmud Yoma 35b who suggest a possible scenario of the

dialogue that ensues in the Heavenly Court on the Day of Judgment when each human being stands before Hashem. If a poor man is questioned regarding his lack of Torah study and he replies, "I was poor and too busy earning a living," he is admonished for not following the example of Hillel who studied Torah amidst abject poverty. To the rich man who excuses his lack of Torah study due to his overwhelming preoccupation with his business affairs, the rejoinder is, "Were you wealthier than R' Elazar ben Charsam who rejected his awesome wealth so that he could study Torah?" Finally, to the wicked man who justifies his lack of Torah Study and his nefarious behavior, saying, "I was handsome and preoccupied with my evil inclination," the court says, "You were not more handsome than Yosef ha'tzaddik who triumphed over his yetzer hora." Thus, these three groups of people, the poor, the rich and the wicked are all accountable for their lack of Torah study.

We learn a lesson from Chazal's words. While we recognize each group's circumstances and position in life, each must still respond to the question, "Why did you not study Torah?" Three great tzaddikim, each in his own way, stand as the standard by which we measure all people. Is this appropriate? Should we not make some concession to the fact that we are only ordinary people, while they are giants. Their exemplary behavior may have been natural for them, but it is not for us. Why should their level of commitment obligate us all? Rav Chaim explains that Torah study is different. It represents the very essence of one's eternal existence. In the area of mitzvos, we may make concessions and justify our actions. We cannot do this when we are dealing with eternity. Since Torah is the source of one's nitzchiyus, eternal life, we are all equal in this regard. When it comes to living, no distinction exists between the great tzaddik and the simple Jew; they both need life!

When one is seeking a luxury item, it makes sense that each pursue it according to his own refined taste. If an individual lacks bread or water, regardless of his station in life, he will pursue it with resourcefulness and vigor. This is Torah! It is indispensable; it is basic; it is an essential prerequisite for life. Every man must realize his individual potential. Rav Chaim adds one more point. We see from Chazal that one is not merely judged for the amount of time he has expended studying Torah. He is judged according to how close he has come to realizing his potential. One can study all day and become a profound Torah scholar. If, however, he has not achieved the profound level of erudition of which he is capable, then he must answer for his failure to do so. It only makes sense that when we are dealing with an individual's life, anything short of the total goal is not acceptable.

And I shall set my face against you and you shall be smitten before your enemies. They that hate you shall rule over you. (26:17) Toras Kohanim delineates between chut and t'vua in that the soneih is an enemy from within, while the oyeiv is an external enemy. We will fall prey to the bitter hatred of our internal enemies, those who despise the Torah way of life, who blame our nation's sorry state of affairs upon those faithful to the Torah, rather than upon those who have totally defected from the Torah way of life. The schism created by these misguided Jews grows to the point that our external enemies use it as an opportunity for increased antagonism. It is hard to accept the fact that one's affliction has been internally catalyzed. What greater persecution can there be than one which is the product of a brother's hatred?

From the beginning of our history, the enmity of brother to brother, of Jew to fellow Jew, has been our most serious problem. The Torah Shelimah cites a striking Yalkut which addresses the dialogue that ensued when Yosef took Shimon prisoner. When Yosef was about to arrest Shimon, the other brothers wanted to intervene. Shimon told them to retreat; he would be able to handle the problem alone. Yosef dispatched seventy Egyptian soldiers to take Shimon into custody. Shimon gave forth a loud scream which overpowered the soldiers and knocked out their teeth. Yosef thereupon sent his son Menashe with instructions to place a steel chain around Shimon's neck. Menashe struck Shimon once, afterwards placing the chain on Shimon. Menashe's action seemed effective. As Shimon submitted to his incarceration, he exclaimed, "This blow is from my father's home." Simply, Shimon was attributing his punishment to his father's home, a reference to his lack of respect for his father. Horav Chaim Pardes, Shlita,

suggests that Shimon was intimating that Menashe's blow was greater and more penetrating because it came from his "father's" home - a member of his own family. The pain incurred by a brother is more devastating than that brought on by seventy Egyptians. The pain inflicted by a Jew, a brother, is harder to swallow than the blows of gentiles.

I will cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols. (26:30)

The Sifra employs a meaningful story to elucidate this pasuk. During the time of the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash, when people were starving to death, Eliyahu Hanavi walked out on the streets of Yerushalayim, seeking out those Jews whose bodies had become swollen from hunger. When he came across a man who was dying of hunger, he questioned his family lineage. After the man responded with the name of his family, Eliyahu asked him about the size of his family. "We were a family of three thousand of which I am the sole survivor," responded the man. "Do one thing," said Eliyahu, "and you will live. Say 'Shma Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad,' and you will be spared the fate of the rest of your family." To this the man cried out, "No! My father never taught me to mention G-d's Name, I will not begin now!" After this declaration of skepticism, the man revealed an idol that he was holding and began to hug and kiss it. While he was doing so, his strength slowly ebbed away. He died resting on his idol. Hence, the meaning of the pasuk, "I will cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols."

If we think about it, are we that far removed from that terrible period of starvation? We live in a period in which the famine is not of a material nature, but a spiritual famine where people are literally starving for the dvar Hashem, word of G-d. Many unfortunates people do not realize how little they must do in order to save themselves from spiritual death. Why? Because their parents never taught them anything about Yiddishkeit. Did they ever have a Shabbos? Did they ever see candles lit Friday night? Were they ever exposed to the beauty of a Yom Tov, the sublimity of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? Is it any wonder that they continue to clutch their self-made idols, their false beliefs in what constitutes morality, even if it delivers them to a spiritual end? By divorcing themselves from any semblance of tradition, they are regrettably severing the last potential bridge of return.

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Aish HaTorah's Shabbat Shalom Weekly by Rabbi Kalman Packouz

True story: A man comes to Israel and requests help from a rabbi to buy mezuzot. He and the rabbi go to a store and the man buys 30 beautiful mezuzot cases. The rabbi asks him, "What about the scrolls?" He replies, "Oh, we're not that religious." Funny thing, there is absolutely no mitzvah to place a mezuzah case upon one's door! Affixing the scroll upon the doorpost is the mitzvah. The case is only to protect the scroll inside and to beautify the mitzvah. ...

... DVAR TORAH: What is the process which leads to the assimilation and destruction of the Jewish people according to the Torah?

The Sifra, the halachic Midrash (commentary teaching the laws) on the book of Leviticus, analyzes the first two sentences of the Tochachah, the Admonitions to the Jewish people if they do not fulfill the laws of the Torah, (Lev. 26:14 -15) and details a seven step progression in the distancing of a Jew from the Torah and for the assimilation of the Jewish people:

1. Not learning Torah.
2. Stop performing the mitzvot, commandments.
3. Abhor others who perform the mitzvot.
4. Hate the Torah Scholars.
5. Prevent others from being observant.
6. Deny that G-d gave the commandments.
7. Deny the existence of G-d.

What is fascinating is that this description of the historical process which we have seen in our lifetime was written close to 2,000 years ago! We see from here that the primary secret to the survival as a people is first and foremost the continued learning of Torah! We should all take this to heart.

ohr@virtual.co.il Ohr Somayach Highlights of the Torah weekly portion
Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 16:19-17:4 To be 'a Jeremiah' is to be a

prophet of doom. For Yirmiyahu was the archetypal harbinger of destruction. In this week's Parsha the Torah enumerates the blessings for keeping Hashem's mitzvos, and the dire warnings of what will transpire if they are neglected. Similarly, in the Haftorah, Yirmiyahu warns of what will happen if the Jewish People continue in their idolatrous ways, lacking faith in Hashem and blindly placing total faith in man. Yirmiyahu's words echo down the corridors of history. 'He who thinks that Berlin is Jerusalem... there will come a thunderous and violent wind which will uproot him from his source.' These words, written by Rabbi Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk, the 'Ohr Somayach,' at the end of the last century, are an uncanny prediction of the storm which was to engulf Europe not many years later.

From the moment of Hashem's irreversible covenant with Avraham, the survival of the Jewish People becomes a natural imperative, no less than the rising of the sun or the flowing and ebbing of the tides.

Anti-Semitism is a force placed into nature. Its sole purpose is to prevent the Jewish People from disappearing into the melting pot of the nations, and 'annulling' the irreversible covenant with Avraham. Assimilation is like a nuclear chain reaction. When a certain critical mass is reached, then the atom bomb of anti-Semitism explodes. The word in Hebrew for 'holy' is kadosh, which means 'separate.' The essence of holiness is the separation of that which is holy from that which is not. When the Jewish People forget that their purpose is to be a holy nation, separated from the other nations, then the non-Jewish world turns around and reminds them of their purpose.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair (C) 1997 Ohr Somayach International

Recommended Reading List Ramban 26:6 Taming of Wild Animals 26:11 Theology of Medicine 26:12 Promise for the Future 26:16 Analysis of Jewish History Sefer Hachinuch 350 Dedicating One's Value 352 Switching Korbanos 360 Animal Tithes ... by Rabbi Reuven Subar

SHABBAT SHALOM: To destroy, or transform?

By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(May 30) "And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. I will cause evil beasts to cease (v'hishbati), neither shall the sword go through your land. You will chase away your enemies, and they will fall before your sword." (Lev. 26:6) What kind of world will exist "in the end of days"? Will the basic structure of the universe remain the same, or will the messianic age inaugurate a radically different physical existence? This speculation was a preoccupation of two great Sages of the Mishna, and their views give rise to two different translations of a word in this week's Torah reading. The opening of Behukotai sounds remarkably redolent of the messianic dream. God promises the Israelites that if we but observe His commandments, our physical needs will be taken care of, and the danger of wild animals will be removed. How are we to understand v'hishbati, "cause to cease" - the Torah's expression for removing these wild animals? The Midrash (Torat Kohanim) records that R. Yehuda defines v'hishbati to mean that God will cause these "evil beasts" to disappear. R. Shimon, however, takes the word to mean that God will cause the evil of these beasts to cease; the beasts themselves will not be destroyed.

Since this is not the only dispute recorded between these two Sages, commentators have attempted to discern a fundamental difference in their positions. The Rogatchover Gaon (Rabbi Joseph Rozin, 1858-1936) draws our attention to the command: "Seven days [of Pessah] shall you eat unleavened bread; but by the first day you shall have caused the leaven to cease to exist (tashbitu) from your homes" (Ex. 12:15). The term for the "destruction" of leavening (hametz) is the same as the term for the destruction of wild beasts. And, true to form, we find the following differences of opinion: "R. Yehuda rules there is no destruction except with fire, but the Sages rule that the leavened substance may be turned into crumbs and scattered to the wind or thrown into the sea." According to the Rogachover, it's a semantic debate: R. Shimon defines tashbitu as the

destruction of an object's primary function. R. Yehuda, on the other hand, insists that destruction involves demolition of the object itself.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, saw it as an ideological difference of opinion. He suggests that R. Yehuda and R. Shimon consistently differ as to what is more significant - the external action or the internal intention. For example, if an individual desecrates the Sabbath without having intended to do so, R. Yehuda declares him culpable but R. Shimon absolves him of guilt.

For the former Sage, it is the action that counts; for the latter it is the intent. In this light, the differences between these two Sages assume a different perspective. For R. Shimon, as long as I no longer intend to eat the leavened bread it has ceased to exist; for R. Yehuda, physical destruction is necessary.

Building on the Lubavitcher Rebbe, I would like to consider the disputes from a more theological point of view: How does Judaism deal with the problem of evil? Is evil an objective force which must be destroyed, or can evil - if we perceive the positive essence of every aspect of creation - be uplifted and redeemed? R. Shimon believes that the ultimate task of the individual is to sanctify everything. R. Shimon is, after all, the teacher of the holy Zohar, the advocate of uniting all worlds and uplifting even the most far-flung sparks.

We presently find ourselves in the period between Pessah and Shavuot, between the physical but still incomplete redemption of the broken matza and the spiritual, all-embracing redemption of the Revelation at Sinai. The hametz (leavening) is the symbol of the raw emotions and base instincts; it is made to "cease to exist" (tashbitu) on Pessah. On Shavuot, however, that very hametz - generally identified with materialism, pride and sexual licentiousness - becomes transformed into two holy loaves of halla on the altar to God. What was forbidden (or evil) 50 days ago has now been redeemed. If anything, Shavuot is a vision of the redeemability of every material object! R. Yehuda insisted on destroying the hametz on Pessah; R. Shimon understood that it would only be necessary to re-route its function. R. Yehuda insists that the evil beasts will be destroyed when all that is evil is obliterated from the earth; R. Shimon maintains that the wild animals will still roam the forests, but that their evil will be transformed, their force and vigor will be utilized positively. R. Yehuda sees the millennium as devoid of Amalek, the nation bent on the destruction of Israel; R. Shimon sees the millennium as devoid of the memory of ancient Amalek, for Amalek will repent and join with Israel.

I pray for the vision of R. Shimon.

Shabbat Shalom

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The Weekly Internet

P A R A S H A - P

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Dedicated by Leibish Polnauer of Rechovot, Israel, in memory of his father, Itzhak ben Natan Halevi Polnauer, who passed away on 28 Iyar 5744, and in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of his grandson, Itzhak Polnauer.

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PARASHAT BECHUKOTAI 5757

TWO WAYS TO

"CEASE" If you go in the ways of the Torah... I will bring peace to the land, and you will lie down without fear. I will cause dangerous animals to cease ("Vehishbati Chaya Ra'ah") from the land, and war will not pass through your land. (Vayikra 26:6) "I will cause dangerous animals to cease from the land" -- Rabbi Yehudah explains this to mean, "I will eliminate them altogether." Rabbi Shimon says that it means "I will curb their dangerous behavior, so that they do no damage" -- but they will still be in existence in the land. Said Rabbi Shimon, "Which is more of a praise for Hashem -- that there be no dangerous animals at all, or that there be dangerous animals who, against their nature, do no damage? You must admit that it is the latter that is a greater praise for Him."

(Torat Kohanim, ad loc.) Two Tanna'im disagree as to the exact interpretation of the verse "*Vehishbatti* Chaya Ra'ah" -- one of the blessings reserved for those who follow the ways of Hashem. Literally, the verse can be translated as "I will cause dangerous animals *to cease*." But in what way will Hashem cause dangerous animals to "cease" when Israel is deserving of His blessing? By eliminating the animals themselves -- or by preserving them but changing their vicious natures? Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Yehudah took opposing opinions on this matter. At first glance this seems to be a simple difference of opinion concerning a technical grammatical point, without practical bearing on any Halachic issue. However, several recent commentators have suggested that this argument is based on a much broader issue which does indeed have significant Halachic implications.

II Rav Yosef Rosen of Dvinsk (d. Russia, 1936 -- known more commonly as "the Rogatchover Gaon," after his place of birth) proposed that the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah in our Midrash is perhaps based on Rav Yehudah's own opinion in a different context. In Pesachim (21a) there is a Mishnah that states the following: "Rabbi Yehudah says the disposal of Chametz (in preparation for the Pesach holiday) must be carried out by burning it. But the other Sages say that one may even crumble it and scatter it in the wind or throw it into the sea." According to the Sages, any method of disposal which renders the Chametz inedible satisfies the demands of the Torah for the "disposal" of the Chametz. The Gemara (ibid. 27b) quotes the Sages as defending their position by quoting the verse "By the first day [of Pesach] you shall cause all Chametz to cease ("Tashbittu") from your houses" (Shmot 12:15). This implies, claim the Sages, that any method of "causing to cease" suffices. Even crumbling the Chametz and dispersing it makes it "cease to exist," since it can no longer be used as a food. The words of the Sages clearly imply that if the *quality* of the Chametz, i.e. its defining characteristics, have changed, then it has "ceased to exist." Rabbi Yehudah, however, rejects this argument. He apparently interpreted the word "Tashbittu" in a more limited sense. It may be suggested that he read the word to mean a complete, total destruction of the item in question -- i.e., an obliteration of the actual "quantity" [= presence] of the Chametz, and not simply a change in its defining qualities. The words "Tashbittu" (in reference to Chametz) and "Vehishbatti" (in reference to the dangerous animals of our Parasha) are two conjugations of the same root. Since Rabbi Yehudah interpreted the word as implying total destruction when it concerned Chametz, he interprets the word in this way in our context as well -- the dangerous animals will cease to exist in Eretz Yisrael altogether. Rabbi Shimon, however, must have been one of the "other Sages" who interpret Tashbittu as causing an object to become nonfunctional. He therefore explains the word similarly in our Parasha. The animals will be there, but they will not act in their vicious manner!

III Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen, a contemporary of the Rogatchover who also lived in Dvinsk, in his Torah commentary "Meshech Chochmah," explains that Rabbi Shimon, too, is basing his interpretation on an opinion that he himself openly expressed elsewhere.

The Gemara (Berachot 35b) records a disagreement concerning the interpretation of a passage in the second paragraph of the Shema prayer that we recite twice daily (which is taken from Devarim 11:14). The Torah, when listing the blessings reserved for those who hearken to Hashem's Mitzvot, states, "I will send the rain in its time... and you will gather your grain, grape and oil crops." The Torah tells us that those who do the will of Hashem will gather their own crops. Rav Yishmael infers from this that although we are bidden to study the Torah "day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8), the Torah allows us to pursue our livelihoods in a normal fashion as well. It is entirely acceptable for even an outstanding scholar to indulge in agricultural pursuits. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, however, protests: "If someone would plow during plowing season, sow during sowing season, harvest during harvest season, etc., what would become of Torah study!" Rather, says Rabbi Shimon, the second paragraph of the Shema speaks of a situation where the people are *not* completely dedicated to the will of Hashem and

are thus still tilling the soil. They can be rewarded for "hearkening to Hashem's Mitzvot" when they act in this manner, but they have not yet reached the *highest* level of divine service. When one has attained the loftiest of spiritual heights, he abandons all material pursuits and Hashem, in return, sends others to perform his labors for him in order that he may remain free to engage in Torah study. Rav Yishmael's "compromise" of toiling while studying Torah is not an acceptable one, in Rabbi Shimon's extremist view. (See Parasha-Page, Ekev 5755.) Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's views on this matter are evident elsewhere in the Talmud as well. In Shabbat 33b it is related that Rabbi Shimon [bar Yochai], upon seeing people plowing and planting their fields, exclaimed in disbelief, "These people are forsaking eternal life (Torah study) for transient life (pursuit of a livelihood)!" In Shabbat 11a we find that Rabbi Shimon did not even take a break from Torah study in order to pray the daily prayers. The Gemara (ibid. 10a) reasons that praying during time that one could use for studying the Torah may also be called "forsaking eternal life for transient life," since we pray for Hashem to grant us a livelihood and our other physical needs (Rashi ad loc.).

IV We find that when a person becomes devoted to Hashem and His service to his utmost, Hashem protects him from even the natural dangers posed by vicious animals. Daniel was thrown into a pit full of hungry lions (Daniel 6), yet he was on such a lofty spiritual level that the animals miraculously left him unharmed. The Gemara (Berachot 33a) speaks of Rav Chanina ben Dosa, who covered the hole of a poisonous snake with his foot, inciting the animal to bite him. However, instead of the scholar being harmed it was the snake who died from the bite! As Rav Chanina ben Dosa termed it, "It is not the viper that kills; it is the sin that kills!" When a person is without sin he cannot be hurt by even the most dangerous of animals. Similarly, in Makkot 11a the prophet Elijah [=Elijah] informs Rav Yehoshua ben Levi that if he would be on a high enough spiritual plane, not only would he himself be protected from wild animals, but all those who lived in Rav Yehoshua ben Levi's region would be protected as well! It is for this reason that the prophet Yeshayah tells us that in the Messianic era "a baby will play by the viper's hole." (Yeshayah 11:8). In the times of the Messiah there will be no more sin and people will reach the highest spiritual levels possible (ibid. 1:9). A situation will thus be reached where wild animals would be rendered harmless (see Ra'avad, Hil. Melachim 12:1). However, Hashem only bends the rules of nature in order to protect the righteous during moments that the righteous people are involved with otherworldly concerns (see Shabbat beg. of 30b, Makkot 10a). When they are preoccupied with their spiritual growth, they are "freed" of the physical travails of this world. It is as though they are momentarily transported to the more spiritual realm upon which their minds are dwelling. Even the righteous are subject to the everyday laws of nature, however, when their minds are involved with their own physical needs. It is clear that all the magnificent rewards in this week's Parasha that were promised to the Jewish people if they follow the Torah's commandments were meant to be given only if they reached the *optimum* level of doing Hashem's will (see Rashi 26:2, Ramban 26:6). According to Rabbi Shimon, then, the Bnai Yisroel will only receive these benefits if they abandon all physical and mundane pursuits in their never ending quest for attaining spiritual heights. If these are the type of people we are dealing with, says the Meshech Chochmah, then it is possible to promise them that although dangerous animals will *not* completely disappear from the land, they would present no physical threat. Since the people would be using every waking moment for attaining spiritual growth, at no time would they be vulnerable to the physical dangers of vicious animals. Therefore, Rabbi Shimon can interpret the word "Vehishbatti" to mean that the animals will be present, but will be rendered harmless. According to Rav Yishmael, on the other hand, even people who are engaged in mundane activities as well may be considered to have achieved the highest level of doing Hashem's will. They are eligible for the blessings listed in this week's Parasha even if they tend to their fields and otherwise earn their bread during part of the day, since they can still be described as maximally performing the will of Hashem. For such people, though, it would be hazardous to coexist with wild animals. If they

Even in the face of death Rabbi Akiva could see only the soul of the human being, the sanctity of Torah, and the greatness of a people who live by its laws.

Lag Ba'Omer is not a commemoration of death; it is a commitment to life. It's not a symbol of destruction; it's a call to rebuilding, a charge to understand that even after the greatest tragedy we can rebuild, if we have faith in G-d and a commitment to life, if we learn to live for the sake of Heaven.

That's the secret of how we Jews managed to emerge from a Yom Hashoah to achieve Yom Ha'Atzmaut in just three years! Really, our history defies all rational explanation. We, who were forced down into the darkest depths of the graves of Auschwitz, somehow reached up and leaped to the dizzying heights of Redemption and the Rebirth of the State of Israel in less time than it took for the world to blink. We achieved Jewish sovereignty, considered dead and buried almost over 1900 years ago! What other explanation for this is there except for two: the Hand of G-d, and the tenacious faith and spirit of the Jew!

Chaim Weizman once visited a camp just after it was liberated. A Jew approached him and said: "What do we do to avenge?" Weizman replied: "A Jew doesn't avenge. A Jew builds!"

Out of the ashes of destruction a Jew renews his faith in G-d, his faith in history, and in life. That's how the Jew outlives even the greatest of his enemies! We live for the sake of Heaven.

That's Rabbi Akiva's message: Where others see destruction, we see the seeds of rebirth. Where others see death, we see sacrifice. Where others see exile, we see the road back to redemption. We have endured exiles, Crusades, pogroms, blood libels, persecution, wars, and terrorism. We have lived, and have become stronger and more dedicated to G-d than ever before. We have learnt well the lesson of Rabbi Akiva. We must live for the sake of Heaven.

Shabbat Shalom.

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beautiful insight from the work Shemen HaTov. The Shemen HaTov explains that it is a wonderful thing when two people love each other. But, unfortunately we know that when two people have loved each other and then they fall apart, there is no greater hatred than love spurned. In general, people who divorce are unfortunately the best example of people who hate each other. People who loved each other and shared everything, but Heaven Forbid get divorced, are at war with each other. They get down in the gutter and try to destroy each other. Nothing is worse than former lovers who now hate each other. What this verse is saying is that G-d is promising, that he will love and cherish and take care of the Jewish people. But G-d prophesizes that He Knows that they will not be faithful and He will have to chase them out of Eretz Yisroel. The Sages and the Medrashim use the analogy of a husband and wife who have to separate to explain G-d's need to drive the Jewish people out of their land. G-d then informs, that when I split with you -- it will not be a bitter divorce. Even then, I will never come to hate you. I will never detest you. Even when I have to send you out and we have to -- so to speak -- divorce, I will always love you, I will never detest you. This is the greatest blessing. The Gemara in Sanhedrin [7a] gives a powerful description: "When our love was strong, we could have slept on the blade of a sword, but now that our love is not strong there is no bed in the world that is big enough to hold us both." G-d however says, that is not the way it will be when He finds it necessary to discipline the Jewish people. He will never detest us. We will always be special. This is a special Bracha. That is why it appears in the Brochos and not in the Curses.

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ravfrand@torah.org "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas
Bechukosai - I Love You and I Will Not Be Disgusted by You

In this week's parsha we find the first of the two Tochachas that are present in the Torah. G-d warns us about what will be if we do not keep the Torah. The curses enumerated are very graphic - and if one, after hearing of all the terrible tragedies which have befallen the Jewish people, now has doubts about Emunah [faith (in G-d)], all he has to do is read this chapter and he will realize that everything that has been warned of in these curses has unfortunately been fulfilled. Unbelievable descriptions such as women having to eat their children in order to survive are things that we have unfortunately seen in our own lifetime. But, before the Tochacha begins, there is a relatively small parsha of Bracha [Blessing] -- what will be if we keep the mitzvos. The Torah enumerates many wonderful things. We will have plenty, there will be peace in the land, we will be able to conquer our enemies, we will become populous and prosperous -- all the wonderful things. And then G-d promises us that He will live with us: "And I will place my Mishkan in your midst..." [Vayikra 26:11] (This is a blessing, that unfortunately, after 2000 years of not having a Beis HaMikdash, we cannot even contemplate; but it is a tremendous blessing to be able to feel G-d's holiness in our midst.) But that same verse which begins by speaking of G-d placing His Mishkan in our midst ends with the words "...and I will not detest you" (v'lo sig-al nafshi eschem). The commentaries are bothered by this verse; it does not seem to make any sense. Here G-d is telling us how much He loves us and is promising us all the Brochos, so is this the place to conclude with the sentiment "I will not despise you?" Imagine, a fellow proposes to a girl. After going out on a number of dates, he is finally ready to "pop the big question." He begins, "I am going to love you, I am going to cherish you, I am going to take care of you..." and then he concludes, "...and I am not going to be disgusted by you either." Imagine... How far would that would get him? That, at first glance, would seem to be what this verse is saying. The words "sig-al nafshi" have connotations of being nauseating and despicable! What does the verse mean? I saw a

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SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS BECHUKOSAI
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

If you will follow my decrees... "Chazak, Chazak V'nischazeik!"

TORAH READING FOR PARSHAS BECHUKOSAI This week's public Torah reading of Parshas Bechukosai, though seemingly no different from any other, is, in fact, governed by a set of special halachos. Let us take the opportunity to review them:

WHEN IS BECHUKOSAI READ? Bechukosai is sometimes read together with Behar and sometimes not. Several factors enter into this determination, among them Ezra Hasofer's ordinance that Bechukosai be read at least two weeks(1) before Shavuos. The reason for the two-week hiatus is based on our tradition that Shavuos is considered a New Year, a Day of Judgment for the fruits of the tree. We are careful, therefore, to be finished with Parshas Bechukosai - in which the Admonition, the tochachah and its curses, occupy a central role - before this Day of Judgment and New Year begin(2). For the same reason we are careful to read Parashas Ki Savo, where the other portion of the tochachah is written, at least two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, so that "the old year may be ushered out along with its curses" WHO IS CALLED TO THE TORAH FOR THE READING OF THE TOCHACHAH?

In the past, deciding whom to call to the Torah for the reading of the tochachah was a serious point of contention. Many people, among them great scholars, felt that being called to the Torah for this portion was a bad omen that would result in tragedy and misfortune(3). Over the years, the situation deteriorated to the extent that a congregant would have to be paid to accept the aliyah(4), and if no one would agree to be "hired", the Torah reading of the week [and of Parashas Ki Savo] was omitted altogether(5). In other communities, shul decorum was shattered while congregants fought and argued as to who, in their opinion, should! be punished by being called up for this portion(6). In other communities, the gabbai publicly announced

from the bimah that whoever wished to do so should volunteer for the aliyah(7), while in other communities this part of the reading was read by the Torah reader without anybody being called up(8). Most poskim were critical of and dissatisfied with any of these options(9). Consequently, it has become customary in many shuls for the Torah reader himself to be called(10) upon to read the tochachah. Indeed, even if the reader is a kohen, the aliyos must be rearranged so that the tochachah is included in the aliyah of the kohen. Even when Bechukosai is read together with Behar, it should be arranged that the aliyah for the tochacha will be the last aliyah, so that the Torah reader who is a kohen will be called for the aliyah of the tochachah. (A kohen may be called up to any aliyah past the required minimum of seven.)

Although the general rule is that whenever two parshios are connected it is proper to connect them at the fourth aliyah(11), we do not follow this rule in this case(12). If, mistakenly, the gabbai called a person other than the reader to the aliyah of the tochachah, that person may not refuse the aliyah. Even if he knows that the gabbai had malicious intentions when calling him up, he still may not refuse the aliyah once he has been called up. If, however, he knows in advance that he will be called, he may walk out of the shul before being called up(13). It is prohibited to "interrupt" during the reading of the tochachah, i.e., the portion cannot be broken into two or more segments to accommodate more aliyos(14). If, however, a mistake was found in the Sefer Torah during the reading of the tochachah, a new sefer should be brought out and the reading continued. In the opinion of several poskim, this is not considered to be an "interruption" because the same person who was called to the Torah remains there(15). The custom is to read the tochachah in a lowered tone of voice(16). Care must be taken, however, not to read it too quietly, lest it not be heard by the congregation(17).

CHAZAK! CHAZAK! V'NISCHAZEIK! At the end of the parshah, the custom is for the congregation to call out "Chazak! Chazak! V'nischazeik!" Several reasons are offered for this custom(18). The person who was called up for this aliyah should not say chazak. Since he must still recite the final blessing after the Torah reading, some poskim consider reciting chazak as an improper interruption (hefsek)(19). The custom is that the reader repeats chazak after the congregation. The Sefer Torah should be closed at the time so that it does not appear as if those words are being read from the Torah(20). Some have a custom to say the word 'Chazak' three times since the numerical equivalent (gimatria) of the thrice-repeated chazak - 345 - is "Moshe"(21).

FOOTNOTES: 1 In a unique case (when Rosh Hashana at the beginning of a leap year falls on a Thursday) Bechukosai is read three weeks before Shavuos 2 Biur Halachah 428:4 quoting the Levush based on Megillah 31b and Tosfos. 3 There are a number of early sources who express this fear - see Magen Avraham 428:8 quoting Maharil; Kaf Hachayim 428:34 quoting Sefer Chasidim. See also Rama OC 53:19. 4 Chelkas Yaakov 3:174 reports that this was the custom in Belz in Europe. 5 Biur Halachah OC 428:6. 6 In one community the gabbai, a tailor, "punished" a competing tailor with this "honor". The gabbai did not live out the year - heard from Harav Y. Kamenetsky. 7 Rama OC 428:6, according to the understanding of the Machatzis Hashekel. Divrei Yisroel 1:61 testifies that this was the prevailing custom in Hungary. 8 Shoel Umaishiv 5:9. 9 Haelef Lecha Shlomo 63; Minchas Elozar 1:66; Igros Moshe OC 2:35 10 Generally, when the reader himself receives an aliyah, there is no need to call him by his name, since he is standing at the bimah regardless - Rama 139:3 and Mishnah Berurah 8. For unexplained reasons, this is not the custom in many places. 11 Mishnah Berurah 282:5. 12 Mishnah Berurah 428:17 and Biur Halachah. 13 Mishnah Berurah 53:58; 428:17. 14 OC 428:6. 15 Kaf Hachayim 143:38; 428:32. There are dissenting opinions who hold that the reader should continue reading until the end of the tochachah, see Pischei Teshuvah 428:6 and Sheorim Hametzuyanim B'halachah 78:3. 16 Magen Avrohom 428:8.

17 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 78:4; Kaf Hachayim 428:38. 18 See Maharam Mintz 85. See also Rama OC 139:11 and Pri Chodosh, ibid. 19 See Shulchan Hakriyah OC 139 20 Bein Pesach L'Shavuos pg. 145. 21 Elef Hamogen 669.

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OUT OF THE DEPTHS -- DRASHA PARSHAS B'CHUKOSAI by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

This portion contains the tochacha, the stern admonitions and treacherous warnings of what will happen to the Jewish people lest they not observe the Torah. Of course, the prescient predictions of misfortune are preceded with a bounty of blessing if we keep the Torah. Unfortunately, however, the good comes with the bad, and the unfavorable penalties are not omitted. They are hauntingly clear and undiluted. The Torah details calamity with Divine accuracy. It predicts enemies with foreign tongues will come from foreign lands to capture us. The Torah forewarns that these conquerors will not act like most, to leave the subjugated in their own land. They will, says the Torah, disperse the Jews throughout the entire world. Frightfully, the parsha foreshadows the horrors of the inquisition and Holocaust with descriptions of barbarism, Jews betraying Jews, and mass starvation. The predictions are amazing in their accuracy; and more depressing, we were the victims. It's a very difficult parsha, but the Torah must apprise us about the pain and suffering we will eventually endure. This essay is in no way attempting to answer why those bad things happened to good people. But two thousand years before the events, the Torah predicts events that are unprecedented in the annals of conquerors and the vanquished. And it happened. Yet the Torah doesn't end it's tochacha only with notes of despair.

The strong admonitions close with a promise that, though we will be spread throughout the world we will always yearn for our homeland, feel connected to it, and that an enduring spirit and love for Judaism and our Father in Heaven will never cease. Three thousand years and countless massacres, crusades, inquisitions later it still works. Pretty powerful. That would have been a great way to end off quite a depressing portion. It would have even been a wonderful way to end the Sefer VaYikra. But the Torah ends the portion with quite an anticlimactic group of laws. Immediately after the tochacha, it discusses the laws of erechin. A person has the right to donate his own value or the value of any of his possessions to the Temple. He can declare his home, his animals, even himself as subject to evaluation. Moreover, the Torah assesses a value to any living soul. And that value, whether 30 silver shekels or 50 shekels, is to be donated to the Temple. What connection is the last part of the parsha to the stern and ominous portion that precedes it?

After the Nazis invaded the small village of Klausenberg, they began to celebrate in their usual sadistic fashion. They gathered the Jews into a circle in the center of town, and then paraded their Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam, into the center. They began taunting and teasing him, pulling his beard and pushing him around. The vile soldiers trained their guns on him as the commander began to speak. "Tell us Rabbi," sneered the officer, "do you really believe that you are the Chosen People?" The soldiers guarding the crowd howled in laughter. But the Rebbe did not. In a serene voice, he answered loud and clear, "Most certainly." The officer became enraged. He lifted his rifle above his head and sent it crashing on the head of the Rebbe. The Rebbe fell to the ground. There was rage in the officer's voice. "Do you still think you are the Chosen People?" he yelled. Once again, the Rebbe nodded his head and said, "yes, we are." The officer became infuriated. He kicked the rebbe in the shin and repeated. "You stupid Jew, you lie here on the ground, beaten and humiliated. What makes you think that you are the Chosen People?" >From the depths of humiliation clouded in dust, the Rebbe replied. "As long as we are not the ones kicking

and beating innocent people, we can call ourselves chosen."

The Kotzker Rebbe explains that the Torah follows the portion of tochacha, the story of Jews kicked and beaten from their homeland, with an even more powerful message. No matter what happens, we have great value as individuals, and as a nation, now and for eternity. Hashem understands that even in the depths of the Diaspora each and every one of us is a great commodity. Lying on the ground, beaten and degraded, a Jewish man, woman, or child can declare his value to the Temple, for no matter how low any nation considers him, G-d values his great worth. And he is considered cherished for eternity. Until the great day when all the nations of the world will also realize the precious value of the tiny nation that dwells amongst them. Good Shabbos

Dedicated in memory of Joseph Michael by Dr. & Mrs. Ernest Goldmann

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