

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON BECHUKOSAI - 5760

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From: Don't Forget[SMTP:sefira@torah.org] genesis@torah.org To: Counting The Omer Reminder List Subject: Day 37 / 5 weeks and 2 days Tonight, the evening of Friday, May 26, will be day 37, which is 5 weeks and 2 days of the omer. Sefira - the Counting The Omer Reminder Mailing List Copyright © 2000 Project Genesis, Inc. This list has been dedicated in memory of HaRav Yerachmiel Baruch ben Elazar Friedman, and Chaya Gittel bas haRav Ben-Tzion HaCohen Rosenfeld

From: Torah and Science torahandscience@avoda.jct.ac.il
Bechukotai Thoughts on the Tokhachah
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The book of Vayikra climaxes with Parashat Bechukotai whose centerpiece is a choice that the Almighty presents to the Jewish People.< Rewards are promised for observance of to the commandments (Vayikra 26:3-13) whereas punishments are assured for non-observance to same (Vayikra 26:14-46).< This section is popularly known as the ⚭Tokhachah (Reproach). ⚭ Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966) raises an interesting point in his classic Oznayim Latorah (Vayikra 26:3 s.v. Im Bechukotai [final]) that bears serious consideration in our generation.
The Torah details the rewards for mitzvah observance within the span of 11 verses but finds it necessary to enumerate the specific punishments for noncompliance with Divine ordinances in a string of 33 sentences.< Furthermore, the structure of the promised reward is singular in its level:

If you follow My laws and are careful to keep My commandments, I will provide you with rain at the right time B I will grant peace in the land B I will turn to you, making you fruitful and numerous B

On the other hand, there is a series of punishment levels that are concomitant with the continuing obduracy of the Jewish People:

But this is what will happen if you do not listen to Me, and do not keep all these commandments.< If you come to denigrate My decrees, and grow tired of My laws, then you will not keep all My commandments, and you will have broken My covenant.< I will then do the same to you.< I will bring upon you feelings of anxiety B

If you still do not listen to Me, I will increase the punishment for your sins sevenfold.< I will break your aggressive pride B

If you are indifferent to Me and lose the desire to obey Me, I will again increase the punishment for your sins sevenfold.< I will send wild beasts among you B

If this is not enough to discipline you, and you are still indifferent to Me, then I will also be indifferent to you, but I will again increase the punishment for your sins sevenfold.< I will bring a vengeful sword against you B

If you still do not obey Me and remain indifferent to Me, then I will be indifferent to you with a vengeance, bringing yet another sevenfold increase in the punishment for your sins.< You will eat the flesh of your sons B

B'S'D' Why, then, are there such striking differences between the presentation of the rewards and punishments?< One presumes that there were always varying levels of devoutness amongst the Jewish People.< Should not the level of reward be commensurate with the level of righteousness?< Why is only level of punishment discussed?

Indeed a similar challenge could be posed to the Mishnaic verse (Sanhedrin 10:1), ⚭ All Israel has a share in the World to Come. ⚭ Is every Israelite guaranteed an equal portion within the World to Come regardless of relative merit?< Rabbi Ovadia of Bertinoro (Ibid., s.v. Kol YisraEeil) suggests that the Mishnah merely proclaims that each Jew is guaranteed a share in Olam Haba; individual shares, however, are not necessarily equal.< Irving N. Bunim (Ethics From Sinai, volume 1, page 6) paraphrased Rabbi Ovadiah's interpretation as follows:

Now, the size of the share in the World to Come which every Jew has, is not mentioned.< But you need not deal in real estate to know that parcels of land differ in size.< One may have a lot measuring twenty by one hundred feet; another may own an area of one hundred by one hundred.< Furthermore, a plot of land can be acquired in various ways; you can purchase a lot; someone may give it to you as a gift; or you might even inherit a family estate.< In the World to Come, however, the size of your lot will depend solely on what you have been able to create by your own deeds during your lifetime.< You alone are responsible for your future.< No one can arrange it for you.< For better or worse, your share in the World to Come will ultimately depend on your moral and religious growth and achievement.

Why did the Torah condense the rewards for mitzvah observance within one level; should there not have been several levels of reward, dependent upon the spiritual achievements of the Jewish People?

Rav Sorotzkin suggests a solution based upon Rabbi Yaakov Es Talmudic dictum (Kidushin 39b), ⚭ The reward for fulfilling a mitzvah is not given in this world. ⚭ How, then, is one to understand the material blessings that are covenanted by the Almighty in reward for mitzvah observance?

All of us are servants of the Almighty whose task is to fulfill the Will of their Creator (Pirkei Avot 2:20):

Rabbi Tarfon said, ⚭ The day is short the work load is large, the workmen are lazy, the reward is great, and the master (BaEal Habayit) is insistent.

The Talmud (Baba MetziEa 83a) records:

If one hired laborers B in a place where it is customary to give the workers food he must give them food.

The material blessings that G-d showers upon us are merely the provisions that a master offers to his laborers.< Indeed, the reward for fulfilling a mitzvah is not given in this world.< Thus, only one level of material reward is detailed.< The punishments that are specified in the Tokhachah, however, are intended to serve as catalysts for people to repent.< This is patently clear from a cursory reading of the text itself.< Should a person repent he would thereby garner a fulfilling portion in the World to Come.

Therefore, several levels of punishment were provided to enable a person to take stock of his spiritual standing.< More severe punishments serve with increasing urgency to warn a person to repent before matters become even worse.< Were graded levels of reward offered, one might become haughty, G-d forbid.

This point can perhaps be derived from an incident involving our Patriarch YaEakov.< The Torah describes his vision in a dream during the midst of his journey towards Charan as he fled from his brother Eisav (Bereishit 28:12):

A ladder was standing on the ground, and its top reached up towards heaven.< G-d's angels were going up and down on it.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Ibid., s.v. Sulam) observes that the ladder was meant as a symbolism for people to elevate themselves

spiritually.< One notes that a ladder is comprised of individual rungs via which one can take measured steps.< Thus it is significant that YaEakovEs dream showed heavenly angels, rather than human beings, ascending the ladder.< Only angels can know where they stand in the spiritual realm.< The human ascent is best accomplished in more vague terms.< Thus the Torah (Shemot 20:23) instructs that the altar of sacrifice was to have a ramp rather than steps.< Rising in oneEs level of avodat Hashem is best accomplished by the gradual incline of the ramp rather than the measurable increments of individual steps.

Indeed, YaEakov was unaware of his precise spiritual level.< Upon awakening from his dream he vowed (Bereishit 28:20-22):

If G-d will be with me, if He will protect me on the journey I am taking, if He gives me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and if I return in peace to my fatherEs house, then I will dedicate myself totally to G-d.< Let this stone that have set up as a pillar become a temple to G-d.< Of all that You give me, I will set aside a tenth to You.

It is difficult to understand YaEakovEs use of the conditional Lif in light of the earlier Divine promise (Bereishit 28:15):

I am with you.< I will protect you wherever you go and bring you back to this soil.< I will not turn aside from you until I have fully kept this promise to you.

Ramban (Bereishit 28:20 s.v. Im) notes that YaEakov did not doubt G-dEs promise.< Rather, he was fearful that his own sins might cause the forfeiture of the promises (shema yigrom hacheit), for this is no assurance for the righteous in this world.< Tzadikim never take their devoutness for granted and are never fully self-assured in this world.< Ramban makes a similar point regarding Avraham (see Bereishit 15:2 s.v. Vayomer).< Similarly, the Torah (Bereishit 32:8) later describes YaEakov as frightened and distressed on the eve of his reunion with his brother Eisav.< Why?< Midrash Bereishit Rabah (76:2) explains that YaEakov feared that he was spiritually deficient in comparison to Eisav!

Even as it is clear to us that YaEakov was spiritually superior to his brother he, however, was unsure of this fact himself.< Suffice it to say that we, certainly, can not afford to be smug and self-assured about our own spiritual attainments.< Thus, only one level of blessing is discussed in the Tokhachah.

However, when all is said and done, the list of idyllic blessings is contained within 11 verses whereas the Torah devotes 33 sentences to enumerate the curses in great detail.< Indeed, Ibn Ezra notes (Vayikra 26:13 s.v. Komemiyut):

The empty-headed have asserted that the curses exceed the blessings, but that is not true.< The blessings were stated in a general fashion, the curses in detail, in order to deter and frighten the hearers.

One would do well to study the approaches of Ramban (Vayikra 26:11 s.v. Velo tigEal) and Rambam (Yad Hachazakah, Hilkhos Teshuvah 9:1) in this regard.< Rabbi Meir Simchah of Dvinsk (1843-1926), in his famed Meshekh Chakhmah (Vayikra 26:4 s.v. Venatati), notes that the spiritual and the material form one system.< The flow of nature runs parallel to our conduct; i.e. mitzvah-fulfillment naturally entails a favorable flow of nature.< There is a profound confluence between following to TorahEs way and a beneficent natural environment.

May the omer period, preparatory to zeman matan torateinu, witness a spiritual elevation of our nation so that we realize all of the blessings that are mentioned in our parashah.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Aryeh Weil

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From: Yated USA [SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]

Pirkei Parables Perek 5

Mesholim and Anecdotes that Help Explain Pirkei Avos
BY RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

"Any quarrel," says the Mishnah in the fifth perek of Pirkei Avos, "that is made for the sake of heaven shall, in conclusion, last. However, if the argument is not for the sake of heaven, rather is fueled by selfish motivation, it shall not last." The Mishnah offers Hillel and Shamai as an example of heavenly opponents and of a machlokes l'shaim Shamayim. Their arguments will last forever.

On the other hand, Korach and his entire Edah are the examples given for those whose debates stemmed from egotistical motivations. "Those types of disputes," says the Mishnah, "are doomed to fail."

The Mishnah is, of course, referring to the episode in Parshas Korach, named for Moshe's cousin who contested the kehuna. He gathered 250 followers, and openly rebelled against Moshe and Ahron, claiming that Moshe and his brother underhandedly seized both the temporal and spiritual leadership of Klal Yisrael. Moshe, in his great humility, offered a solution in which divine interference would point to the true leader. Amazingly, Korach and his followers were swallowed alive though a miraculous event, Korach and his followers, were swallowed by the earth, whole and alive.

Yet two questions occur in regards to the Mishnah. By using the expression that, "an argument for the sake of heaven will last," it seems to show that an ongoing argument proves its sanctity. Shouldn't it be the opposite? Shouldn't a heavenly argument ultimately end?

The Rav MiBartenura explains that the principles of the quarrel will retain their places in Torah History, with equal regard to each party. And they will forever remain prominent as Gedolei Yisrael, despite any halachic outcome.

The other anomaly is, that in referring to the kosher argument, the Mishnah refers to the combatants, Hillel and Shammai. Each was on one side of the debate. Yet, in reference to the argument that is labeled as egotistical, it defines the combatants as Korach and his entire Edah.

Weren't the combatants Korach and Moshe? Why is the latter part of the Mishnah inconsistent with the former?

The Malbim explains that any argument for self-serving purposes, ultimately ends up, not as an argument between two noble sides, but rather as internal quarrelling and bickering. The argument was not between Moshe and Korach, but rather it ended up with in-fighting among the original solicitors.

Perhaps a homiletic thought can be used to interpret the Mishnah, as is illustrated with this humorous incident.

On the week following Pesach about fifteen years ago, I began a small rabbanus in an small, century-old shul in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The scent of herring juice permeated the building, and the benches did not creak as they swayed, they kvetched. As old as the furnishings were, the membership seemed older. But the small kehilla's spirit of tradition was feistier than its physical appearance.

My first week as the Rabbi, I was asked to be the chazan for Musaf which included Birchah Chodesh Iyar. After bentching the Chodesh, I was about to say Av HaRachamim, which memorializes Jewish martyrs during the era of the crusades. Then the trouble began.

On holidays or other festive occasions such as Shabbos Mevarchim,

in deference to the spirit of celebration, the sad tefillah of Av Harachamim is omitted. However, the month of Iyar occurs during sefirah, when 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva perished. In conjunction with that tragedy, many kehilos recite Av HaRachamim on Shabbos Mevarchim for the month of Iyar.

I assumed my new congregation did the same and began reciting, "Av HaRachamim." Immediately I heard a shout, and an uproar began.

"M'zugt nit Av Harachamim heint! (We don't say Av HaRachamim today!) We just blessed the new month," announced the President.

"M'zugt ya Av Harachamim der choidesh! (We say it this month!) It's sefirah, a period of mourning," yelled back the vice-president.

"You know nothin'. We never ever say it when we bentsh Rosh Chodesh," yelled the treasurer.

"We always did!" asserted the Gabbai.

The argument was brewing for five minutes then they all began to smile and instructed me to say the prayer as I had planned. Before I continued the service I sauntered over to the old shamash who was sitting quietly through the tumult and asked, "I don't understand? What is the minhag of this shul?"

He beamed. "This shul is 100 years old. And then pointing to the formerly combatant congregants he proudly beamed, "This is our minhag."

The Mishnah gives us a litmus test. How does one know when there is validity to an argument? Only when it is an argument that envelops eternity. The arguments of Shamai and Hillel last until today, in the halls and classrooms of Yeshivos and batei medrash across the world. Each one's view was not given for his own personal gain, rather it was argued l'shaim Shamayim and the element of eternity infused, preserves the argument 'eternally! However, Korach's battle with

Moshe was one of personal gain. Moshe had no issue with them. Really, it was a battle of Korach and his cohorts. Each motivated by reasons revolving around personal interest. It did not last. The argument was as mortal and a fleeting as man himself!

Only a battle with divine intent remains eternal. In a true Torah environment the divrei Elokim Chaim, remain eternally alive. They are both powered by the divinity of Torah, whether it be the minhag regarding a nusach or how to make kiddush.

Rav Shmuel Dishon shlit"a once told me that he was, together with his seven-year-old son, by my zaide, HaGaon Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l for havdalah.

Because he normally stood for havdalah, while my zaide's minhag was to sit, he was afraid that his son would say something negative when seeing Reb Yaakov differ from his own custom.

Rabbi Dishon, therefore, sent the child out of the room. Reb Yaakov understood what was happening and called for the child.

"Let the yingle see that there are different minhagim in Klall Yisrael! That is also a lesson for him."

Chazal tell us that we can be secure in our differences. But only if they are l'shaim Shamayim. For if the machlokes is infused with eternity, then it will remain eternal.

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From: listmaster@jencom.com peninim@shemayisrael.com
Bechukosai

PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM

If you will go in My statutes. (26:3)

Rashi explains that "going" in Hashem's mitzvos does not simply mean following His decrees. Rather, "teleichu," "going" in Hashem's statutes, is a reference to ameilus ba'Torah, laboring in Torah, studying it

with intensity and extreme devotion. Why is ameilus ba'Torah conceptualized as halichah, going/movement? In his commentary Gur Aryeh, Maharal explains that just as an individual travels from place to place, so, too, does one who labors in Torah move onward as he delves deeper into the profundities of Torah. Thus, one who studies with intensity is considered "moving" from place to place because every time he understands Torah "better" as a result of his ameilus, he "moves" upward in his spiritual achievement. How are we to understand this?

Horav Chaim Goldvicht, zl, explains this by first citing an exegesis from Horav Simcha Zissel, zl, M'Kelm regarding Chazal's statement in the Talmud Shabbos 112b, "If the first ones (our predecessors) are like angels (on a spiritual plane), then we are like human beings; if the first ones are like humans, then we are like donkeys." Why does Chazal contrast humans to donkeys? If their goal is to emphasize the distance between generations, could they not have employed a more "dignified" distinction?

The Alter M'Kelm explains that a disparity in quality and disparity in quantity are quite different from one another. When the contrast is in quantity, then, even if the difference between both subjects is great, we can still view the smaller, or lesser, of the two as related in some manner to its greater, or larger, counterpart. They are of the same essence, distinguished only by size or number. When the distinction is in quality, however, no basis of comparison exists. The distance between the two is so vast because they are comprised of two different essences. We are not talking about numbers, we are addressing the essential nature and composition of each subject. It is as impossible to comprehend angels as it is for a donkey to comprehend a human. To paraphrase the "Alter": "If we were able to combine a number of human minds we could meld them into one 'super mind.' If we were to meld together many minds of donkeys, however, we would still not come close to creating a human being."

This is Chazal's lesson for us. The difference between generations, from those that are closer to the generation that accepted the Torah to our generation today, is not a quantitative distinction, but a qualitative one. Just as humans can never be compared to angels, so, too, can donkeys never be in the same league as humans. Two generations - the past and the present - may both be studying the same Torah. The distinction between the two is not merely in the amount of Torah studied or the profundity that each has achieved. Each has had a totally different experience. One is like a human; the other is not. If we view the previous one's Torah experience as a human experience; if we look at the individuals as mortals, then we must realize that our generation is totally removed from theirs, to the point that we are like mere donkeys. We have absolutely no area in which we are similar to them. In the area of the spiritual experience, comparisons defy description and definition. It is not that one is simply greater than another; they are comprised of a completely different nature!

The concept of makom, place, is a term that expresses the individual's spiritual plane in regard to The Makom, Hashem. Just as the word "place" defines one's physical standing in relation to something, so, too, does makom delineate one's spiritual standing. This idea is reflected in Chazal's reference in Pirkei Avos 6:6: "One who recognizes his makom, place" or to Avos 2:14, "Do not judge your friend until you reach his makom, place." or Kesubos, 103b, "One who fills the makom, place, of his ancestors in wisdom and fear of the Almighty." Indeed, when Moshe Rabbeinu implored Hashem to "show me now Your glory," Hashem responded, "Behold there is place near Me; you may stand on the rock" (Shemos 33:21). In his Moreh Nevuchim, Rambam explains that this place is a reference to a unique spiritual position to which Hashem elevated Moshe, so that he would be able to perceive a greater perspective and understanding of Hashem's glory. Last, when Adam ha'Rishon sinned, Hashem asked him, "Ayeica?" "Where are you?" (Bereishis 3:9). Where is your place? You have fallen in spiritual

position as a result of your sin.

Thus, we understand the concept of halichah, movement, as depicting a change in one's spiritual standing. Ameilus, toiling in Torah, has the power to transform an individual in a manner unlike any other mitzvah. One who clings to Torah lishmah, for its own sake, clings to Hashem! This conviction enhances one's essence as well as elevating his spiritual standing. Ameilus ba'Torah, indeed, changes one's makom. Even if one changes only a little, he is no longer on the same spiritual plane. He has changed his place. This is how he becomes a mehalech, goer. With this thesis in mind, we have but a glimpse of the difference between a true ben Torah, who devotes all of himself to Torah, laboring and toiling in its endeavor, and his counterpart in the secular world who, regrettably, does not avail himself of this opportunity. They are two totally different individuals.

If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them. (26:3) What is the purpose of the phrase, "v'asisem o'som" "and you will perform them"? Obviously, if one is following Hashem's statutes and observing His mitzvos, he certainly is performing them. The text appears to be somewhat redundant - or is it? The Baal HaTurim notes that the word "o'som," "them," is spelled aleph, taf, mem, which spells the word "emes, truth. This leads him to suggest that the Torah is focusing upon the necessary attitude one must maintain for mitzvah performance. It must be with an "emes," with truth, with integrity, with a passion and enthusiasm, not complacency, lacking feeling or intensity.

This is consistent with Chazal's dictum in the Talmud Nedarim 81a, when they ask: Why is it uncommon for a talmid chachom, Torah scholar, to produce sons who are also scholars? They attribute this to the fact that they do not make a Bircas haTorah, blessing the Torah, before they begin to study. Nachlas Tzvi cites the Ran who quotes Rabbeinu Yona in his sefer, Megillas Setarim, who explains that Torah study has always been considered an active pursuit. Throughout history everyone has studied Torah. This brings Chazal to question why the Bais Hamikdash was destroyed. If people had been studying Torah, what more could have been expected of them? They responded that, while it is true that they studied, it was not their primary focus in life. They also studied. It was not important to them. Hence, they did not feel the need to begin their daily study with a blessing. The brachah was irrelevant, because the learning was inconsequential. Hashem demands that we perform mitzvos with a passion, with enthusiasm. We should be excited to act on behalf of Hashem to perform His mitzvos with "emes."

Nachlas Tzvi cites an incredible story related by the Bendiner Rav zl, in his sefer Yechahein Pe'er. In the city of Nickolsburg, a group of laymen came to the rav, the famous Rav Shmuel Shmelke of Nickolsburg, to tell him that there is a butcher/shochet in the city who constantly slaughters glatt kosher. This was considered to be unusual, given that some animals are naturally prone to have some physical blemishes that would render them not glatt. Rav Shmelke decided that he would go to observe the shochet during one of his sessions and see for himself if the animals were really glatt kosher. After spending a day with the shochet, he was amazed that, indeed, every animal was glatt kosher.

Rav Shmelke summoned the shochet to his home and asked him how it came to be that he had such remarkable good fortune. The shochet responded that every time he went to the market to purchase animals, he would meet a Jew who would point out to him which animals to purchase. "If this is the case, then I must go with you to the market to meet this person," said Rav Shmelke. They agreed to go a few days before Pesach, since the shochet would be filling a large order for Yom Tov. They met at the market on the appointed day. After being introduced to the man in question, he asked him, "How do you know which animals are glatt kosher?" "Rebbe," responded the man, "I do not

know on my own. Before I go to the market, Eliyahu Ha'Navi appears to me and points out which animals to use. It seems that those animals are the gilgulim, reincarnated souls, of animals that were destined to be korbanos, sacrifices, in the Bais HaMikdash. These animals must be eaten by Jews on Shabbos and Yom Tov in order for them to achieve their tikun, spiritual correction, and enter the Eternal World." Obviously, Rav Shmelke was taken aback with the man's response, particularly his "familiarity" with Eliyahu Ha'Navi. He turned to the man and asked, "If Eliyahu Ha'Navi is so close to you, why do you not ask him why Mashiach has not yet come to redeem us from this galus, exile?" "Rebbe," the man responded, "in just a few days it will be Pesach. I am sure that Eliyahu Ha'Navi will grace my home during the Seder. I will ask him this question and relay to you his response to you."

During Chol HaMoed, the Intermediate Days of the Pesach festival, Rav Shmelke traveled to this person to find out what Eliyahu Ha'Navi had revealed to him. When he came into the man's home, the person said, "Rebbe, I asked Eliyahu Ha'Navi your question, and he told me that an illusion to the answer is found in the Mah Nishtanah." The Four Questions are actually four queries and requests of Hashem regarding the exiles to which we have been subjected. "Why is this night different from all other nights," means "why is this exile different from the other exiles?" Night has often been used as a metaphor for the darkness of galus. Each question concentrates upon a different exile. The last question centers on the present galus. The answer to why this galus is different, why each of the previous exiles had an end while this one does not seem to have an end in sight, is that during the other nights, exiles, we either sat or reclined, but on this night we only recline. This means, that during the other exiles there were people who made Torah study their primary vocation. They studied, relegating their mundane labor to secondary focus. Basically, they would sit and study Torah. During our exile, our attitude towards avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty, is "kulanu mesubim," totally from "subim." Subim is the bran of the wheat, the inferior, hard portion of the wheat. This means, that we serve Hashem without our heart and soul. We are cold and distant in our avodas Hashem. Is there any wonder that the galus continues?

Our reality can be summarized by a single word: attitude. If our attitude changes, we may hope to have a positive response from the Almighty.

I will lay your cities in ruin, and I will make your sanctuaries desolate. (26:31) The Midrash on Megillas Eichah relates that Rabbi Yochanan was able to render sixty expositions on the pasuk, Eichah 2:1, "The Lord consumed without pity all the dwellings of Yaakov." Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi, however, rendered only twenty-four expositions.

Rabbi Yochanan was not necessarily greater or more erudite by virtue of the fact that he was able to render more interpretations. It is just that Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi lived in a time closer to the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash than Rabbi Yochanan did. Thus, when he began to speak he would remind himself of the Bais Hamikdash and begin to weep. After he wept, he was consoled. His emotional state limited his application of the pasuk which recounts the destruction.

We must endeavor to understand the consolation that Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi had just because he lived prior to Rabbi Yochanan. One would think that the closer one is to the churban, destruction, the greater proximity he is to tragedy, the greater his reaction would be. Does an individual's sensitivity and emotion increase as he becomes more distant chronologically from the tragedy?

Horav E. M. Shach, Shlita, explains that both of these great Tannaim had one concern: that the terrible churban would not be forgotten. As long as one remembers the majesty of hashroas ha'Shechinah, the Shechinah's repose in the Bais Hamikdash, the impression that this repose engendered would remain imbedded in the Jew's psyche. When one becomes "accustomed" to the loss, when

complacency and acceptance cool the effects of the tragedy, then there is a serious fear that the Bais Hamikdash will be forgotten. People learn to live without a Bais HaMikdash, without Kohanim performing the avodah, service, without the incredible revelation of Hashem's glory and the holiness this engendered. Time heals - it also dulls the sensitivity and tempers the emotion.

Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, who lived closer to the churban, saw that the people still remembered; the pain and sorrow were still vivid in their minds; the grief was yet fresh. He did not need more than twenty-four ways to describe the loss. Rabbi Yochanan, who lived in a later generation, was more removed from the churban. He needed greater stimulation to arouse his sense of mourning. The consolation for the destruction is commensurate with the degree of grief. The more one weeps, the greater is his nechamah, consolation. The more one acknowledges the loss, the greater is his awareness of the holiness and majesty that once was. This awareness is in itself a source of solace.

Sponsored in memory of Mrs. Seliga Ahuva (Schur) Mandelbaum by her parents Rabbi Doniel & Shoshana Schur

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Parshat Bechukotai Independence and Freedom

Rosh Hayeshiva HARAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG, SHLITA

We are now in the time period between Pesach and Shavuot, which are connected through the Mitzvah of Sfirat HaOmer. In recent years, two other festive days have been added to this period of the Jewish calendar, Yom Haatzmaut [Israel's Independence Day] and Yom Yerushalayim.

One who is "independent" is generally defined as one who has self-rule and is not under the control of others. However, this alone is insufficient for one to be considered truly free. Rav Kook, zt"l, points out that there can be a capable slave, who despite his slavery is self-motivated and carries himself with an air of freedom. Conversely, there can be a person who is unfettered by others, yet he is not truly free, either because his actions are decided based on what others consider good and proper, or because he is subjugated to his own desires and impulses which he is unable to overcome. True freedom is the ability of a person or nation to live his life based on his true self, and not merely upon societal norms.

This is the message behind Chazal's comment: "Charut al haluchot - engraved on the tablets' (Shemot 32:16). Do not read "charut" [engraved] but rather "cheirut" [freedom], for only one who is involved with Torah is truly free (Avot 6:2). What is the connection between engraving and freedom? Unlike writing, in which ink is applied externally onto paper, engraving is in the very item itself. Therefore, only through studying Torah and engraving its lessons in our hearts do we become free men, since then our physical existence is in synch with our internal soul.

On Pesach we were redeemed from slavery and achieved national independence. This process, however, was not concluded until Shavuot when we received the Torah, which made us free men. In this way, Pesach and Shavuot form a single unit.

In our days, there are those who see Yom Ha'atzmaut as the crowning glory of the renewed existence of Bnei Yisrael. However, we cannot consider ourselves a free nation based on political independence alone. So long as we are eyeing foreign cultures and abandoning our essence, the redemption is incomplete, and we are not yet free men. The liberation of Jerusalem, nineteen years later, added the spiritual dimension which provides the internal strength of our nation.

The blessings in our parasha open with the condition, "Im bechukotai telechu" - "If you follow My laws" (Vayikra 26:3). Rashi (based on the Sifra) explains this to mean that you toil in My Torah. This requirement goes far beyond the mere performance of the mitzvot. The fulfillment of the blessings is dependent upon our living a comprehensive lifestyle

based on the Torah which must be engraved in our hearts.

In parshat Acharei Mot we are commanded, "Do not follow the ways of Egypt where you once lived, and do not follow the ways of Canaan to where I will be bringing you; nor shall you follow any of their practices" (Vayikra 18:3). Rashi comments that the end of the verse does not merely prohibit sinning like them, as that is already stated in the first half of the verse. Rather, it refers to adopting their customs, such as theaters and stadiums.

"Practices" is not used in the sense of "laws", but rather in the sense of lifestyle, aspiration and environment. Theaters are the key ingredient of the recreational culture commonplace with the nations. The practices that we follow, however, and that are engraved in us, are expressed by the motto - that you toil in the Torah. "Do not follow their practices" is contrasted by "If you follow my laws."

The blessings conclude with the phrase "Vaolech etchem komemiut" - "I led you upright" (26:13). The Sifra comments on the word "komemiut" - "Like the double height of Adam." Adam's height was two hundred cubits. The Maharal explains that one hundred indicates perfection. Two hundred indicates double perfection, in both the physical and spiritual sense. We are thus promised that if the Torah is engraved in us, and our physical way of life matches our spiritual one, then our perfection will be in both realms. This is, perhaps, the meaning of our daily prayer, "lead us `komemiut' to our land." Rav Kook, zt"l, remarked in his siddur, "like the double height of Adam," since the body and soul together are a full height, physical and spiritual.

<http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2000/05/25/Columns/Columns.7298.htm>

SHABBAT SHALOM: We're b-a-a-c-k!

BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(May 25) "And you will I scatter among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you; and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities a waste." (Lev. 26:32)

The relationship between G-d and Israel is often compared to a marriage. The biblical Song of Songs, the Friday evening Sabbath prayer "Come my beloved, greet your bride," and many of the customs linking a Jewish wedding with the revelation at Sinai all point toward this stunning metaphor. Indeed, when a Jew dons his tefillin each morning, he is putting on a wedding ring: "I shall betroth you to Me forever; I shall betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and compassion; I shall betroth you to me in faithfulness, and you shall know G-d." (2:21-22)

The problem with these words is that we would like to believe that our relationship to G-d is an eternal one, yet divorce statistics suggest that contemporary marriage is more temporary than permanent. Furthermore, add to this fact the biblical law which forbids a husband from taking back a wife who has committed adultery, and our metaphor slams the door on the return of Israel to her Husband in Heaven after having been involved in foreign entanglements!

What we must do - as indeed the Bible does - is to add to our symbol of husband and wife a second metaphor: the unique bond between the Israelite and the Land of Israel.

One of the Torah's major motifs, constantly repeated in our prayers, benedictions and festivals, is the incomparable relationship between the Jewish people and the Land. Every significant prayer, from the daily amida to the Grace After Meals, serves as an occasion on which we emphasize the tie between the land and the people, the people and the land.

Israel is a part of the very air we've been breathing during our almost 2,000-year exile. After all, what better way to keep alive the dream of Israel than to thank the Almighty after every meal with bread "for the land [of Israel] and the sustenance," and to climax each Yom Kippur fast and Pessah Seder with the declaration: "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

The relationship between the land and the people has a parallel in the relationship between husband and wife. For example, the people have obligations to the land, (the Sabbatical shmita year, when the land must lie fallow, and various prohibitions of mixed plantings, etc.), just as a husband has obligations towards his wife for food, clothing and conjugal rights. In the sexual relationship, a wife "gives" herself to her husband, and the land "gives" its produce to the people. The word used for entering the land, ki tavo (Deut. 26:1) comes from the same verb used for sexual intercourse, biya. Regarding the jubilee year, the Torah specifically

says that in the 50th year the land is sanctified, and sanctification (kiddushin) is the precise mishnaic term for betrothal.

BETRAYAL between husband and wife results in divorce, and betrayal between the people and the land also results in divorce - exile. Hence this week's portion, Behukotai, is known for its chastisements, and at its climax, the Torah delineates what will happen if the people don't keep the land's sabbaticals: "And your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. Then shall the land be paid back her [disregarded] sabbaticals." (Lev. 26:34)

Rashi even calculates that the 70 years of Babylonian exile correspond to the number of sabbatical and jubilee years ignored by the people during their 430-year presence in the land. The land will insist on being paid. However, just as the jubilee year guarantees that individual parcels of land are eventually returned to their original owners and so the land becomes redeemed, similarly does the Bible guarantee that ultimately the land of Israel will return to the people of Israel, and then we will be redeemed. G-d's covenant with Israel promises an eternal relationship between the land and the people, between G-d and His nation.

Thus the sting of the curses is ameliorated by the eventual affirmation: "Then shall I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac and so also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." (Lev. 26:42-43) These verses reflect not only return but forgiveness. The metaphor of the land holds the possibility of repentance - and therefore redemption.

Last week's reading from the prophets (Jeremiah 32) gives this idea practical significance. Jeremiah is the prophet of doom, who must foretell the destruction of his beloved Jerusalem, and the exile of his errant nation. In the midst of his tear-drenched elegies, his uncle Hanamel asks him to redeem his ancestral land in Anatot, outside Jerusalem. Jeremiah writes out a contract and pays a high price in order to buy back (redeem) his uncle's property.

At first glance, Jeremiah's action defies all logic! How can the prophet who foresees Israel's doom and banishment pay good money for real estate on the very eve of destruction? One can imagine what a nosedive the real estate market must have taken during the period immediately prior to the prophesied destruction!

But Jeremiah's action is the ultimate expression of Jewish faith that the relationship between the people to the land is eternal. Jeremiah demonstrated by his purchase and "redemption" that it's only a question of time before the "children shall come back to their own border" (Jer. 31:16), and that "there will yet be heard in the cities of Judea sounds of joy and happiness, sounds of brides and grooms."

And Jeremiah was right! The children have returned.
Shabbat Shalom

From:RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY :podolsky@hakotel.edu] To:
Shiur List Subject:Parshas Bechukosai

Learn With Your Feet!

"I originally intended to keep learning after yeshiva, but you know how it is... things sort of got in the way. First it was a job, then summer school, recreation, friends, etc. I felt bad, but the problem was bigger than me. As my learning decreased, so did my desire to learn. At this point, I feel light-years away from the Bais Medrash (Study Hall)."

How many times have I heard those pain-filled words! So many sincere people, simply overwhelmed! Is there any hope? Are there any practical solutions?

Our Parsha opens up with, "If you will walk in my Chukim (statutes)..." Rashi on the spot interprets this as referring to the need to learn Torah assiduously. This leads us to ask two obvious questions:

1. Why is the diligent study of Torah described as a Chok?
2. Why does it say that one should *walk* in this Chok? What do feet have to do with learning?

The Ohr HaChaim (who, incidentally, gives no less than forty-two explanations for the first verse) provides a most beautiful and meaningful answer:

Dovid HaMelech (King David) writes, "I considered my ways, and returned my feet to Your testimonies (Tehillim 119:59)."

The Medrash elaborates: "Dovid said, 'Master of the universe, every day I would decide to go to a certain place, to a certain house; but my feet would bring me to the synagogues and to the halls of study.' This is what is meant by, 'and I returned my feet to Your testimonies.' (Vayikra Rabba 35:1)"

There are many distractions on the way to the Bais Medrash. Many important chores must be done; many important people must be greeted; many important matters must be attended to. No one is depreciating their importance. But they have a way of disrupting our schedule. Learning is often pushed aside; breathing is often pushed aside. Torah is life (Devarim 30:20). Life must always take precedence.

The solution is: Take extra care to set fixed times for Torah study, and keep to them no matter what.

According to the Zohar, the first question we will be asked when we ascend to the Heavenly Court is: Did you set fixed times for Torah study (Zohar Medrash HaNe'elam Chaye Sarah 127b; See also Moreh Nevuchim 3:54). Note that the first question is not how well we understood our learning, or how profoundly we delved, but rather how firmly established it was.

When a person establishes set times for learning, and relates to them as a Chok -- an immutable, Divine statute -- his nature will adapt itself accordingly. By instituting an unswerving regimen of punctuality regarding our Torah learning, our biological time-clock will kick in. Soon, we will no longer need an alarm clock to remind us; we do it automatically.

So much so, that even when our conscious mind forgets and arranges other appointments instead, our feet themselves will guide us to our prior commitments, to what really counts. We will have metamorphosed into a "Ben-Torah" -- a veritable son of the Torah.

Some may exonerate themselves: "I try to be punctual, but somehow it just doesn't work out!" Let them ask themselves, when was the last time they came late to a movie, or a professional sporting event? It is simply a question of priorities.

The solution, let your feet do the learning! Be punctual, let no Seder (fixed time for learning) begin late, make promptness second-nature, and nothing will stand in your way. You will have become a Ben-Torah.

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Weekly-halacha for 5760

Selected Halachos Relating to Parashas Bechukosai
BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

TORAH READING for PARASHAS BECHUKOSAI This week's public Torah reading of Parashas 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 ha-Sofer's ordinance that Bechukosai be read at least two weeks(1) before the festival of 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 Parashas 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 all 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 tochachah will be the last aliyah (acharon), so that the Torah reader who is a kohen will be called for the aliyah of the tochachah. Although the general rule is that whenever two parashiyos are connected, it is proper to connect them at the fourth aliyah(11), we do not follow the 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 this parashah, as with every parashah that completes the reading of an entire Chumash, 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 the same as that of "Moshe"(21).

FOOTNOTES: 1 In a unique case (when Rosh Hashanah at the beginning of a leap year falls on a Thursday) Bechukosai is read three weeks before Shavuos. 2 Be'ur Halachah 428:4, quoting the Levush based on Megilah 31b and Tosfos. 3 There are a number of early sources who express this fear, see Magen Avraham 4 28:8 quoting Maharil; Kaf ha -Chayim 428:34 quoting Sefer Chasidim. See also Rama O.C. 53:19. 4 Chelkas Yaakov 3:174 reports that this was the custom in Belz in Europe. 5 Be'ur Halachah O.C. 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 O.C. 428:6, according to the understanding of the Machatzis ha-Shekel. Divrei Yisrael 1:61 testifies that this was the prevailing custom in Hungary. 8 Sho'el u'Meishiv 5:9. 9 Ha-elef Lecha Shelomo 63; Minchas Elazar 1:66; Igros Moshe O.C. 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 Be'ur Halachah. 13 Mishnah Berurah 53:58; 428:17. 14 O.C. 428:6. 15 Kaf ha-Chayim 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 She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 78:3. 16 Magen Avraham 428:8. 17 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 78:4; Kaf ha-Chayim 428:38. 18 See Maharam Mintz 85. See also Rama O.C. 139:11 and Pri Chadash, ibid. 19 See Shulchan ha-Kriyah O.C. 139. 20 Bein Pesach l'Shavuos, pg. 145. 21 Elef ha-Magen 669.

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Insights to the Daf: Kesuvos 52-53

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Kesuvos 53 REDIRECTING ONE'S INHERITANCE QUESTION: The Gemara mentions Shmuel's teaching that it is improper for a person to give all of his possessions to one child and not let it be split equally among all of his children, even if one of his children is "bad." Why, then, did Avraham Avinu, in his lifetime, give all of his possessions to Yitzchak (Bereishis 25:5-6)? He left nothing for Yishmael and left only gifts to the children of his Pilagshim before sending them away!

ANSWERS: (a) Yitzchak's situation was different, because Avraham was told in a prophecy that the only child that would be considered his descendant would be Yitzchak. (KLI YAKAR -- the RAMBAN also hints to this answer in Bereishis 25:6; see also MAHARSHA to Sanhedrin 91a.)

(b) The DA'AS ZEKEINIM (end of Parshas Chayei Sarah) writes that Yishmael was not considered a rightful heir of Avraham because Yishmael was Megayer after his birth, and a "Ger she'Nisgayer k'Katan she'Nolad Dami." Thus he was not Halachically related to Avraham.

As far as the children of the Pilagshim were concerned, those children were only born after Avraham Avinu had already given away everything to Yitzchak. He already gave his possessions to Yitzchak at the time that he married Rivka, as we see in the verse (Bereishis 24:36).

(c) RAV ELYASHIV (in He'oros b'Maseches Kesuvos) answers that we see from our Sugya that it is permissible to give a gift to one's daughter, even though it will then not be split among the sons, because there is a purpose to it -- it will help the girl get married. Accordingly, since Avraham Avinu gave all of his money to Yitzchak in order for Eliezer to be able to find him a proper wife, it had a purpose and it was certainly permitted to give all of his possessions to Yitzchak.

(d) RAV MOSHE FEINSTEIN zt'l (IGROS MOSHE, Choshen Mishpat II:50) writes that when the Gemara says that one should not take away one's possessions from one son and give it to another son, even from a bad son to a good son, it is only referring to a bad son who is slightly disrespectful towards the Torah, or a son who has bad character traits. If, however, the child is a heretic and desecrates Shabbos and is raising his children in his evil ways, then certainly a person is permitted to give his possessions to the son who observes the Mitzvos, and doing so is commendable. One does not have to take into account that perhaps his grandchildren from the other son will do Teshuvah, since it is unlikely and uncommon.

The TCHEBINER REBBE (in DOVEV MESHARIM 1:97) uses this to explain why Avraham Avinu gave all of his possessions to Yitzchak. The other children were clearly not going to grow up to be Shomer Mitzvos and their children would not be part of the Jewish people.