



Parshas Bechukosai

For the week ending 27 Iyar 5758
23 May 1998

Overview

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow Hashem's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. Sefer Vayikra, the Book of Leviticus, concludes with a detailed description of Erachin – the process by which someone can make a vow to give to the Beis Hamikdash the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

Insights

A CANDLE IN HELL

“But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them...” (26:44)

It was the first night of Chanukah. The single light of the menorah gleamed with a strange radiance. Its light came from neither wax nor oil. For this was a very special menorah; a very special Chanukah. This menorah was an old wooden clog. This candle was made from boot polish. This was Chanukah in Bergen-Belsen.

The Bluzhever Rebbe chanted the first two blessings in the customary festive tune, but the

sound of his voice was dulled with pain. He was about to make the third blessing but then he stopped. He paused, and for what seemed like a long moment he looked around the room at each and every face. And then he made the blessing, his voice filled with strength: “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, who has kept us alive, preserved us, and brought us to this time.” “Amen,” whispered the huddled throng.

Later, one of the men came over to the Bluzhever Rebbe and said “May I ask the Rebbe a question?” “What is your question?” said the Rebbe. “How can you possibly make a blessing thanking G-d for bringing us to this time. Should we thank Him for bringing us to Bergen-Belsen? For bringing us to a time like this?”

“You know” said the Bluzhever Rebbe “I had exactly the same thought. That’s why I stopped in the middle. I was about to ask the Rabbi of Zaner and some of my other colleagues if I could really make that blessing. But then, I caught sight of all the faces looking so intently at that wooden clog filled with black camp shoe polish. I thought, here we are in the depths, in the blackest hole that this world can support. And here are some Yidden lighting Chanukah candles. In spite of all the evil that those murderers are doing, we are lighting candles. And I thought to myself: Master of the Universe! Who is like Your people Israel? Look how they stand, with death staring them in the face, and lovingly hang on to every word of the blessing: Who did miracles for our fathers, in those days at this season.

“And I thought — if now is not the place to thank G-d for bringing us to this time — then I don’t know when is. It my holy duty to say that blessing now.”

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

©1998 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

info@ohr.org.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

In every generation they rise up to annihilate us, but The Holy One rescues us from their hands. A generation is not a long time. Maybe fifteen or twenty years. Our eyes have seen that in every generation they rise up to wipe us out.

Take a walk through the streets of Jerusalem and hear the holy voices of little children learning Torah. That's a sound that echoes down the ages. That's a sound that enemies of the Jewish People have tried to obliterate in every generation. But even in the lands of our enemies, G-d will not forget His people. In spite of our rejection of Him, He will not become revolted by us. He will not reject us. He will gather us from the four corners of the Earth to His land. And He will wipe the tears from our eyes.

BUSY BODY

“Your threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in your land.” (26:5)

Such will be the fruitfulness of the land: You will still be busy threshing when the time comes to harvest the grapes, and when the time comes to plant next year's grain, you will still be harvesting the grapes. (Rashi)

There's an old saying that goes “If you want something done, ask a busy person.”

Constant activity is a blessing. When we are busy, we feel fulfilled and healthy. When we are idle, we look for ways of killing time. We seek amusement and entertainment to take our minds off the emptiness we feel. We become restless and bored. We want to travel, trying to make our life into a glamorous travelogue. This false sense of movement is but a poor substitute for the real voyage, which is spiritual. And that most fascinating and educational of journeys cannot take place in stagnation or boredom, but only in constant activity.

THE SPICE OF LIFE

“And I will destroy your sun-idols.” (26:30)

It's difficult for us to understand the desire that existed once for idol worship. Nowadays it seems unbelievable that someone would want

to worship a doll. But had we been living when the urge for idol worship was alive and well, we would have cheerfully hiked up our coattails and run to prostrate ourselves in front of some piece of wood.

At the beginning of the Second Temple, however, the Sages killed the desire for idols. We now live in a world where we do not know what the desire for idol worship is, and we cannot know. That desire no longer exists.

When the Sages destroyed the desire for idol worship, a figure like a lion of fire came out of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The prophet said: “This is the same yetzer hara (desire for evil) which drew people to idol worship.”

The question remains, however, what was this creature doing coming out of the holiest place on earth? Was that an appropriate home for such a beast?

The urge for idol worship had a holy purpose: that we should overcome it. Overcoming the urge for idol worship was a rung on the ladder to holiness. When the Sages destroyed the lust for idols, they knocked the gloss off the desire for holiness as well; now we live in a world where we have no real idea of what holiness is. We know something is lacking in our lives, but we just can't put our finger on what it is.

After the the Sages killed the desire for idols, they attempted to end the desire for immorality as well. For three days no chicken laid an egg. Seeing that the world couldn't exist without physical desire, the Sages restored it to the world.

The Talmud tells us that Hashem said “I created the yetzer hara (negative urge) and I created the Torah, its antidote.” The word used by the gemara is *tavlin* — which also means spice. Not only is the Torah the only way that a Jew can harness his physical desire so that it does not run riot with destruction, but it is also the spice that puts the zing into life, long after others have become jaded and spent.

Sources:

A Candle In Hell - Story heard from Ilan Grossman

Busy Body - Based on the *Haemek Davar*

The Spice of Life - *Avnei Ezel*

Parshas

Bechukosai

For the week ending 27 Iyar 5758, 23 May 1998

Torah Weekly is available from several sources: • World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il> • Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America . Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details. • E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub weekly {your full name}" to listproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Haftorah: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14

TRUST

There was a wealthy trader who lived in Spain. During the Inquisition he was forced to leave his native Cordoba and flee to Morocco with his wife and two daughters. They arrived there, penniless, after a nightmare journey. Very shortly after their arrival, his wife sickened and died. Then one of his daughters died. Then the other.

"Hashem!" He cried. "You have taken everything from me. You have taken my home. You have taken my livelihood. You have taken my

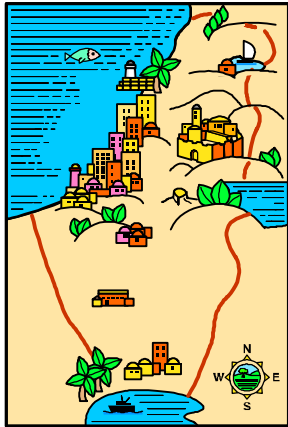
wife. You have taken my beautiful children. But there is one thing you can never take from me: My faith in You."

When a person puts his faith in Hashem, even when it is very difficult for him to do so, he receives help from Heaven. He will find that he comes to a complete trust in Hashem. "Blessed is the man who places his trust in Hashem, and Hashem will become his trust." If a person trusts Hashem — Hashem will become his trust.

(Shir Maon in Mayana Shel Torah)

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



PRICE OF PROSPERITY

"Like your days will be your influx" (Devarim 33:25).

As long as your days are good ones in which you do the will of Hashem, you will enjoy an influx of prosperity; all lands will cause their gold and silver to flow to Eretz Yisrael. That is, Eretz Yisrael will be blessed with a bounty of crops for which all the hungry nations will be anxious to pay gold and silver in order to sustain themselves.

Rashi (ibid)

Parshas

Bechukosai

For the week ending 27 Iyar 5758, 23 May 1998

Torah Weekly is available from several sources:

- World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>
- Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America . Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.
- E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message "sub weekly {your full name}" to listproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.