

# O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI · 17 IYAR 5774 - MAY 17, 2014 · VOL. 21 NO. 34

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### FATHER'S WORDS

“But if you will not listen to Me...” (26:14)

A bright red bouncy ball bounds into the middle of a busy highway followed by a small child in hot pursuit. The driver of a large truck slams his foot on the brakes and screeches to a halt inches away from the child. The child looks at the driver with a somewhat bemused expression. The driver holds his hand down on the horn for several long seconds, rolls down his window, shouts an intelligible stream of invectives at the errant child, rewinds his window and proceeds about his business.

Five minutes later, this scene is repeated by a different driver, and some ten minutes later a third truck again screeches to a halt narrowly missing the same child. However, this time the driver jumps down out of the cab and chases the child, scrambling over trash cans and fences until he finally catches him. The driver then beats the ‘living-daylights’ out of the child.

Why did this driver react so much more violently than the other two drivers?

The reason is that the third driver is child's father.

The fact that G-d punishes us is a sign that He cares for us.

The Mitteler Rebbe was once sent by his father on a mission to a distant town. On Shabbat Bechukotai he found himself in a small town. Naturally, the Chassidim were delighted to be able to host such a distinguished guest and they followed his every movement in great detail to see if they could learn something from the habits of this great man.

In the middle of the Torah reading, when the *ba'al koreh* reached the “*Tochacha*” — the section that details the dire consequence for the Jewish People for failing to keep the Torah — the Rebbe fell in a faint to the floor. A gasp went up from the crowd as everyone rushed over to see what had happened.

A few seconds later, the Rebbe regained consciousness and the Chassidim asked him if they should call a doctor.

“No,” replied the Mitteler Rebbe. “I am not sick. I fainted because of the shock of hearing the severe words of the *Tochacha*.”

The Chassidim were puzzled. “Surely the Rebbe has heard the *Tochacha* many times before? What disturbed the Rebbe so much more this time?”

The Mitteler Rebbe answered, “It’s as though I’d never heard these words before. Until this Shabbat I always heard the *Tochacha* read by my father. Today it sounded so different!”

The question remains: Didn’t the Rebbe’s father read those same words year after year? Why did it sound so different this time?

Answer: When you know something is coming from your father it’s different.

Sometimes a father has to punish his son severely, but the son is never in doubt that it comes only from a place of love.

Every Jew is able to hear the *Tochachah* in the same way if he listens closely, remembering the words are coming from our Father in Heaven.

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow G-d'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 *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

## TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

## ROSH HASHANA 9 - 15

*“Whoever eats and drinks on the ninth is considered by the Torah as having fasted on both the ninth and the tenth day of the month.”*

This teaching by Rabbi Chiya bar Rav from Difti in a *beraita* on our *daf* is derived from a verse in Vayikra that there is a mitzvah to “afflict” oneself on the day before Yom Kippur. However, as Tosefot explains, this cannot mean fasting, since fasting is prohibited on the day before Yom Kippur. He therefore explains it to teach a special mitzvah to eat on the day before Yom Kippur.

Why is this eating called “you will afflict yourselves” – “*v’anitem et nafshoteichem*” – if it in fact refers to eating? Human “nature is such that a fast which follows a day of eating and drinking is extra tough on a person, both physically and psychologically. One who eats (especially a large amount – Rashi) before the fast is therefore considered as intensifying and lengthening the fast as if it were two days long – on the night and on the tenth” (Shibolei Haleket in the name of Rabbeinu Yeshaya).

• Rosh Hashana 9 a-b

*“A person who goes out during the days of Nissan and sees trees that are blossoming says: ‘Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has made nothing lacking in His world, and created in it goodly creatures and goodly trees to give Mankind pleasure’.”*

This special *beracha* is taught by Rav Yehuda on our *daf* and is codified in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 226:7. There are various conditions required in order to recite this *beracha*, and they are taught in Shulchan Aruch. For example, if one lives in a place where the fruit trees blossom at a different time of year – such as in the southern hemisphere – it is possible to say the *beracha* during that other month according to most halachic authorities; although according to Kabbalistic teachings it seems that one should recite this *beracha* only during the month of Nissan.

• Rosh Hashana 11a

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. To what do the words “*bechukosai telechu*” (walk in My statutes) refer?
2. When is rain “in its season”?
3. What is the blessing of “*v’achaltem lachmechem l’sova*” (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
4. What is meant by the verse “and a sword will not pass through your land”?
5. Mathematically, if five Jewish soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Jewish soldiers be able to defeat?
6. How much is ‘*revava*’?
7. Which “*gression*” of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
8. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
9. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
10. How many years did the Jewish People sin in Israel up till the time the northern tribes were exiled?
11. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written with an extra “*vav*”. From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
12. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies”?
13. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
14. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 “*Toros*” (plural) and not “*Torah*” (singular)?
15. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beit Hamikdash* and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
16. If a person says, “The leg of this animal shall be an *olah* offering”, the animal is sold and sacrificed as an *olah* offering. What is the status of the money received for the animal?
17. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beit Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *Yovel* what happens to the field?
18. Where must “*Ma’aser Sheini*” be eaten?
19. When a person redeems “*Ma’aser Sheini*” what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
20. How does a person tithe his animals?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to This Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g. Shabbat nights).
3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land on their way to a different country.
5. 26:8 - Two thousand.
6. 26:8 - Ten thousand.
7. 26:14, 15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvot*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvot*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvot*, denying that G-d gave the *mitzvos*, denying the existence of G-d. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
8. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
9. 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *Shemita* and *Yovel* years.
10. 26:35 - 390 years.
11. 26:42 - In five places in the Torah Yaakov’s name is written with an extra “*vav*” and in five places the name Eliyahu is missing a “*vav*.” Yaakov took these *vavs* as a pledge that Eliyahu will one day come and announce the redemption of Yaakov’s children.
12. 26:41 - G-d Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies’ land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, G-d will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
13. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak’s ashes (who was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before G-d.
14. 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on *Har Sinai*.
15. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person’s ability to pay.
16. 27:9 - The money is ‘*chullin*,’ meaning it does not have ‘holy’ status, except for the value of the animal’s leg which does have ‘holy’ status.
17. 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *Yovel*.
18. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
19. 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
20. 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and every tenth animal he marks with a rod smeared with red dye.

# Abarbanel

## ON PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

The Parsha begins with a description of the agricultural benefits and national security that the Jewish nation will experience in the Land of Israel if the people observe the commandments of the Torah. Abarbanel is bothered by the fact that only physical rewards relevant to our physical existence are mentioned. Why doesn't the Torah mention the most important reward for observing the commandments: the spiritual reward experienced by the soul after death in the World-to-Come.

Abarbanel relates six explanations from other commentators before stating his own answer.

**Rambam:** Ultimately, G-d wants us to observe the commandments without any expectation of reward. Even though the true reward is a purely spiritual one, the Torah mentions only the physical rewards since they will remove the obstacles that prevent us from serving G-d properly.

**Ibn Ezra:** Although the true reward is the spiritual one in the World-to-Come, it is difficult for most people to relate to this esoteric and mysterious concept. G-d mentions only the physical rewards and punishments, which are apparent to everyone.

**Rabbeinu Bechaya:** He explains (unlike the Ibn Ezra) that the immortality of the soul and its rewards in the World-to-Come are actually an intrinsic, universal and natural aspect of human understanding. The Torah comes to teach us that reward and punishment in the physical world is actually a profound illustration of the miraculous nature of Divine Providence, an idea not normally accessible to human reason. How else can we explain that man's performance of a particular commandment can have a direct effect on weather or health?

**Rabbeinu Nissim and Kuzari:** The most important principle required to strengthen the commitment of the Jewish People to Torah observance is their direct experience with Divine Providence. From the beginning of history, with the exception of individuals like Avraham, even the most profound thinkers have viewed the universe as a clockwork mechanism governed by fixed laws. Their intellectual powers led them to seek a rational and logical explanation of all physical phenomena. The idea that these laws were the result of the will of an omnipresent G-d and could be overturned at any time for any individual or group was com-

pletely foreign. G-d knew that the only way to solidify the commitment of the Jewish nation was to demonstrate this Divine Providence in a tangible manner in the physical world. A promise of reward in the next world would not be sufficient.

**Rav Saadiah Gaon:** One of the attractions of idolatry was that it created a link between idolatrous practices and physical rewards. In order to counteract this belief, the Torah emphasizes that physical rewards are actually the result of *refraining* from these idolatrous practices and observing the commandments.

**Rabbeinu Nissim and Kuzari:** The reward for the soul in the next world is actually alluded to in several of the verses that describe the physical rewards at the beginning of the Parsha. For example: "I will place my sanctuary among you", "I will walk among you", "I will be G-d onto you and you will be a people onto me." All of these verses refer to the G-dly connection of our souls to a higher spiritual existence. Whereas other religions dismiss any possibility of real accomplishment in this world and point only to the next world, we believe that the soul, even while contained within the limitations of the body, is capable of attaining lofty heights of spirituality. In effect, the body follows the soul. The promise of physical or bodily rewards for the performance of the commandments demonstrates this reality. If the soul can achieve this when contained within the body, how much more so will it soar when it is freed in the next world! In effect, the promise of reward in this world is actually a promise of reward to our true essence, our souls.

**Abarbanel:** The Parsha focuses on physical rewards only because it is referring to the nation as a whole. When a majority of the nation is observing the commandments, then physical reward is possible. However, when a majority is negligent in its observance, their dire consequences enumerated later in the Parsha are possible. But the reward that accrues to the soul in the next world does not depend on the behavior of the nation as a whole. Rather, each of us is judged individually, regardless of the behavior or our brethren. When the nation is judged favorably and is physically rewarded, even the transgressors can benefit, and vice versa. But this is not the case for the soul's ultimate reward and punishment.

## THE BITE OF THE SNAKE

From: Shlomo

Dear Rabbi,

How come G-d punished all the generations for the sins of Adam and Eve? The Torah says if the children do not continue with the sins of their fathers they will not be punished for those sins. Did their children continue the sins of Adam and Eve?

Dear Shlomo,

This is a good question. To answer yes, the children being punished because they continue to sin might be true generally speaking, but it's not sufficient in light of the Talmudic statement that lists four people who never sinned, yet died nevertheless "from the bite of the snake." That is, they died from the curse that followed Eve's encounter with the snake. So why were those four people punished?

There are different approaches to answer this question.

One is that Adam's sin changed the whole of creation, creating a new reality. Therefore, we were furnished with a new type of life, new parameters and new tools to deal with this new reality, to complete our task in the new creation. The curses, such as toil, pain of childbirth and death, are all part of the plan now, somehow necessary to give us the opportunity to accomplish our purpose. Those who died sinless, therefore, weren't being "punished." Rather, they were simply born into a new reality in which these negative factors are a necessary part.

Another approach is found in the Kabbalah. The Kabbalistic works say that Adam's soul was a very "large" soul, a mosaic of all future souls. These souls were then disseminated after his death among all his descendants. In this sense, every soul participated in the sin and so also has to atone.

Sources:

- *Shabbat 55b*
- *Shelah, Shavuot 213*

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

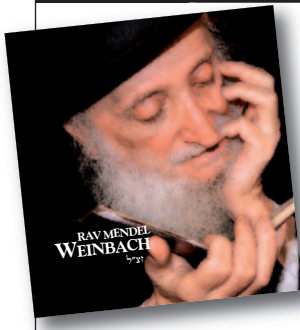
## MERON – THE HOLY HAIRCUT

As Jews throughout Israel and the world gather on Lag B'Omer at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron, many of them will be parents bringing their three-year old son for his *chalake* – the traditional first cutting of his hair.



One of the most touching sights on this day, which is the anniversary of the death of the great Sage, is that of little boys with long pre-haircut hair dancing on the shoulders of their fathers while all around them Jews are singing the praise of Rabbi Shimon.

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## THE SHEMONEH ESREI - THE FIRST BLESSING (I)

The first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei is called *Avot* (Forefathers), because it begins by mentioning Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. In contrast, this blessing concludes with the phrase “Shield of Avraham” instead of saying “Shield of the *Avot*”, thereby giving Avraham greater status than both Yitzchak and Yaakov.

### You Will Be a Blessing

Our Sages explain that G-d hinted to Avraham when He said, “And you will be a blessing, (*Beresheet* 12:2)” that the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei would be represented by him. Thus, in order to express that Avraham is the main character of the first blessing, only his name is mentioned at its end.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev explains the deeper meaning behind this discussion. There are three attributes through which G-d governs all creation: the attribute of G-d’s love and kindness; the attribute of judgment - through which G-d punishes - and the attribute of G-d’s mercy.

When G-d relates to His creations with love, then all the worlds are full with an abundance of good. If, however, He relates to the world with severity, judging the world for its misdeeds, the result can be the opposite. When G-d relates to the world through the attribute of mercy, the world also experiences abundant good. This is because the ultimate purpose of this attribute is also love. G-d therefore feels

great pride and glory, so to speak, when He sees His creations through this attribute, and is therefore motivated to give them good despite their flaws.

Regarding G-d’s attribute of strict judgment, even though on the surface it appears to be the opposite expression of love since it is through this attribute that He punishes the world, nevertheless the ultimate purpose of G-d’s judgment is to facilitate the giving of perfect good afterwards. And so, in truth, the root and essence of the attribute of judgment is also love, even though it is concealed.

It is well-known that Avraham corresponds to the attribute of love and kindness, Yitzchak to severity and judgment and Yaakov to mercy. Accordingly, we can gain new insight as to why all three of the *Avot* are mentioned in this blessing. They represent the three general ways that G-d interacts with His world.

And now we can also understand why we conclude the blessing only with Avraham. Since he represents the attribute of love and kindness — the foundation of the creation and the inner purpose of all of G-d’s attributes — the blessing concludes only with Avraham’s name. This conveys that it is G-d’s love, which is represented by Avraham, that encompasses all — even the attributes of judgment and mercy which are represented by Yitzchak and Yaakov respectively.

## @ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Staff, Alumni and Students*

### PLANTING SEEDS AND HARVESTING TORAH

#### Noach Tuchinsky - Beginners’ Program and Beit Midrash Alumnus

Noach Tuchinsky, age 29, is married and father to three children. He currently lives in Beitar, although he grew up in Hollywood, Florida. Noach attended Hebrew Academy of Greater Miami. He is a two-time alumnus of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem. After learning for two months in Ohr Somayach’s Beginners’ Program in the summer of 2004, he returned to the Ohr Somayach Beit Midrash Program from 2007-2009. He currently learns at Mir in Jerusalem and is a trained *sofer* who is in the middle of writing an English translation of *halachot* in Yoreh De’ah.

After graduating from high school, Noach spent six months at one of the many post-high school *yeshivot* in Israel, and then decided to try out the Beginners’ Program at Ohr Somayach in order to confront the fundamental issues of



belief and observance that had remained unresolved throughout his years of Jewish education. He attended Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb’s lectures and Rabbi Dovid Kaplan’s class. After two months in Ohr Somayach he returned to the US. Although not yet fully observant, the seeds had been firmly planted.

After two years in Touro College he realized that he was ready for more serious learning, and returned to Ohr Somayach to commit himself to learning Torah full-time.

The way Noach describes his experience is typical of many Ohr Somayach alumni. “Ohr Somayach doesn’t ‘make’ people observant. Rather, it gives them logical, rational tools to make their own personal and individualized commitment to a more observant Jewish lifestyle.”