

LAMPLIGHTER

26 Iyar
Parshas
Bechukosai
1246
3 June
5776/2016

PUBLISHED BY THE CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD

LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Bechukotai, begins with the words "Im bechukotai teileichu - If you will walk in My statutes."

The Talmud explains that this verse is a standing request G-d makes of the Jewish people. G-d is constantly pleading with His children to keep His holy Torah.

Furthermore, because the request emanates from G-d, it simultaneously imbues us with the power and the strength to fulfil it. "Bechukotai" thus also represents G-d's promise to us that we will do so. We will walk in the Torah's statutes. We will observe the Torah. And not one Jew will be cut off from the Jewish people.

There are three categories of commandments in the Torah: judgments, testimonies, and chukim - statutes.

Which mitzvot (commandments) are considered judgments? Judgments are commandments that are compelled by human logic, rational laws that society would keep even if the Torah had not commanded us to observe them. Human understanding alone would have led us to realize their necessity.

What are testimonies? Testimonies are mitzvot that we would never have arrived at without the Torah. Nonetheless, once G-d commanded us to obey them, we are able to understand their rationale. These commandments are acceptable to the human mind and are comprehended by the intellect.

Statutes, however, are entirely above and beyond our understanding. We do not know why we are supposed to observe these commandments. Mitzvot falling into this category are the red heifer and the prohibition against wearing garments containing shaatnez (a mixture of wool and linen).

Although the Torah states, "If you will walk in my statutes," the intention is that we keep all three types of commandments: judgments, testimonies and statutes. Why then does the Torah specifically mention "statutes"?

The Torah's use of the word "bechukotai" contains an important lesson: that a Jew should observe all of the Torah's mitzvot for the sole reason that G-d has commanded him to do so. It doesn't matter whether we understand a mitzva rationally or not; we must demonstrate the same degree of obedience when fulfilling all of G-d's commandments. Judgments, testimonies or statutes - all mitzvot are to be performed in a manner of "walking in My statutes."

Thus "bechukotai" is not only G-d's plea that we keep His Torah, but instructs us in the proper manner of observing all mitzvot: obedience to G-d's will. At the same time, "bechukotai" is G-d's promise that we will succeed.

Adapted from Volume 1 of Likutei Sichot

Beyond Rebuke

By Yossy Goldman

My cholesterol is sky high, the boss is unhappy with my performance, my wife thinks our marriage is a mess and now the lousy car broke down. For G?d's sake, why does everything happen to me? Do I deserve this? Am I really such a terrible person?

Sound familiar? As a rabbi, I have certainly heard this and similar questions asked many times over the years. Implicit in the question is the assumption that any suffering or misfortune that befalls us must be some form of divine retribution; surely, it must be a punishment from G?d. But if I'm such a good guy why then should I deserve such punishment? And, if on top of that, we also believe that G?d is good, then this is really too mind-boggling for a mere mortal like me to work out.

So what if I told you that divine punishment is only one of many possible scenarios to explain your predicament? There are a great many possible explanations and interpretations for human suffering. In fact, it might not be a punishment at all. So don't be in such a hurry to make all these assumptions.

The Torah reading of Bechukotai (Leviticus 26:3-27:34) includes a section known as the Rebuke. It is an ominous warning of the troubles that will befall Israel should we stray from the G?dly path. The mystics teach that even those frightening punishments are, in reality, hidden blessings that cannot be perceived at face value.

I remember hearing an interesting analogy on this theme from the well-known author Rabbi Dr A.J. Twerski. A mother takes her toddler to the doctor. The doctor prepares to give the child a vaccination by injection. The kid isn't stupid. He sees trouble coming, so he doesn't make it easy for the doctor. In fact, mom must hold the child down while the doctor administers the injection, and throughout, the kid is screaming and shouting. Not a minute later the child is suddenly burying his face in mom's shoulder, desperately seeking solace in his mother's embrace. And the question is why? Was mom not an accomplice to the crime when she held him down while the doctor attacked him? Why is this child suddenly finding comfort on mom's shoulder? She is the enemy!

The answer is that every child knows intuitively that his mother loves him and wants only the best for her child. Even if there seems to be a momentary lapse, he knows it will be short-lived. After the fleeting test of faith, the innate and essential bond of love between mother and child is quickly re-established.

And so it is with our Father in Heaven. Sometimes we may feel angry; it seems as if he has joined forces with Satan. Why does He allow all these terrible misfortunes to befall us? And yet, we know that he really and truly does love us. After all is said and done, we are His children. Does the mother in the clinic hate her child? Is she punishing him? G?d forbid. Does the doctor want to hurt the child? Of course not so, just as a child is comforted by his mother, so is the Jew comforted by the knowledge and conviction that G?d loves us.

To us it may remain a mystery but to G?d there is a cosmic, eternal plan. The child doesn't understand or appreciate an injection and neither can we fathom the divine "vaccinations" we must put up with from time to time. Nevertheless, we accept in good faith that somehow there is a reason - and even a good reason - behind all our problems. It may not be revealed to us in this world, only in the next. So we do need a fair amount of patience. Personally, I'm prepared to handle living in suspense.

In our moments of misery and days of distress, let us remember that our loving Father in Heaven is surely no less caring than the mother in the doctor's rooms.

Slice of LIFE

One week before Chanuka 1979, a well-known and distinguished Rabbi active in outreach in South Africa named Rabbi Shabsi Katz (of blessed memory) was entering the Lubavitcher Rebbe's office for a private audience.

Most of what the Rebbe said was personal but at one point he asked Rabbi Katz if he knew anything about the condition of the Jewish prisoners in the South Africa penal system. Rabbi Katz did. He often visited prisons to help the prisoners. He answered:

"The conditions there are in many ways inferior to those in the U.S. but the South Africans do have respect for the Jewish holidays and allow the prisoners to observe them."

"What about Chanukah?" asked the Rebbe. "Do they allow the prisoners to light Chanukah candles?"

"No," Rabbi Katz answered. "That is a problem. In fact I began working on it last year with no results. It's too late to do anything for this year because Chanukah is only a few days away but as soon as I get home I'll work on it for next year. I'll have to arrange a meeting with the ..."

"But what about this year?" the Rebbe interrupted.

Rabbi Katz was just beginning to shrug his shoulders as though to say it was impossible when the Rebbe continued.

"When you leave my room, go to the front office and ask one of the secretaries to use the phone. Call the official in charge of the prisons in South Africa and ask for permission for Chanukah lighting . . . this year."

"But Rebbe," Rabbi Katz tried to protest, "it is now four in the morning over there and the chief of the jails is a very high official. He used to be a general in the army. I can't call him now! He'll be furious. I'll do it first thing in the morning."

But the Rebbe didn't agree. "Chassidim do not compromise with the truth. Not only that but when the general sees that you called him at such an hour, he will realize the importance of the matter."

The Yechidut ended, Rabbi Katz left the Rebbe's room went to the office, asked for permission, and lifted the phone. He realized that he dare not think even one normal thought or he wouldn't go through with it.

He didn't have the general's phone number so he called his secretary there, got the number, and requested that she call the general first and prepare him.

He opened a book of Tehillim (Psalms), read for a few minutes, closed his eyes for a second, said a prayer . . . and dialled.

The General answered. The Rabbi spoke apologetically.

"Hello General, this is Rabbi Shabsi Katz. Excuse the hour but it is urgent."

Surprisingly, the general spoke in a pleasant and friendly tone. "Yes. Hello, Rabbi. Oh, no problem. How are you? Yes, how can I be of help? It must be important."

Rabbi Katz felt that a miracle was occurring here and continued. "Err . . . I am now in New York by the Lubavitcher Rebbe who is concerned about the Jewish prisoners in South Africa."

"Yes?" the general was interested.

"The Rebbe wants the Jewish prisoners to light Chanukah candles. He knows that if they celebrate Chanukah in such a dark place as prison, it will put light, hope, and joy into their lives."

The general was impressed. He actually thanked the Rabbi for waking him and concluded:

"Rabbi tomorrow is my day off but I won't take a vacation. I will send letters to all the jails in South Africa ordering that all prisoners be allowed to light their menorahs. Is that all right?"

Rabbi Katz thanked the general profusely and hung up.

Early the next morning he stood beaming with joy at the entrance of the Rebbe's headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway, and when the Rebbe arrived, he gave him the good news.

The Rebbe smiled, thanked him for the news, and asked him to come to his office after the morning prayers.

Now, this was very unusual to say the least. Every instant of the Rebbe's time was precious (for example, the Rebbe received and answered more letters daily than any man in the world, even the president of the U.S.A.) and rarely did the Rebbe make such a request.

So, an hour later Rabbi Katz was again standing before the Rebbe figuring that the Rebbe wanted to thank him. But it wasn't so . . . there was yet another mission!

"Do you know" the Rebbe said seriously, "that New York is the only state in America that does not allow its prisoners to light Chanukah menorahs? I want you to contact the head of the prisons here and tell him that you just received permission for the prisoners in South Africa to light menorahs and there is no reason why it should be forbidden here."

"But Rebbe," Rabbi Katz protested, "I don't know anyone in New York. At least in South Africa I vaguely knew someone, but not here."

"This is no problem," answered the Rebbe. "Go to Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht and ask him for help. He knows everyone."

Again Rabbi Katz left the Rebbe's office for another seemingly impossible task. He located Rabbi Hecht, told him what he wanted

but Rabbi Hecht solemnly replied.

"Sorry, nothing is open today. Maybe tomorrow I can help but today it's impossible. No one is in their offices."

But when Rabbi Katz told him the entire story, Rabbi Hecht picked up the phone and started calling one person after another until, at about the tenth call, he raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"Hello commissioner? Hey, am I lucky to get you! Rabbi Hecht here. How are you? How's the wife and kids? Thank G-d! Oh me? Thank G-d, I'm fine! Listen, I have a very important Rabbi from South Africa that has to talk to you!" And he handed the phone to Rabbi Katz.

The results were unbelievable. First of all it "just so happened" that they caught the commissioner in a good mood. And most important, he was really impressed. "Well," he said, "if in South Africa where there are so few Jews they light Menorahs then for sure we have to let them do it here. Rabbi, I promise you that from this Chanukah on every Jewish prisoner here can light candles!"

Rabbi Katz thanked the commissioner and Rabbi Hecht and ran back to 770 to inform the Rebbe of the second miracle.

He caught the Rebbe just exiting his room for the afternoon Mincha prayer and motioned that he had succeeded. Again the Rebbe requested to see him in private after the prayer.

Rabbi Katz was almost getting used to the unusual but this time the Rebbe had a different message; he wanted to reward Rabbi Katz with a gift. At first the Rabbi refused but finally he agreed: "I want a Tanya (important Chassidic book) from the Rebbe as a Bar Mitzvah present for my son."

The Rebbe told him to go again to the front office where there were waiting four gifts: A Tanya translated into English for his son, a regular Tanya for himself, a Chabad book called "Challenge" for the general in South Africa, and another called Aishet Chiel for the general's wife.

When Rabbi Katz returned to South Africa, the first thing he did was call the general to thank him for his help and to tell him that he had gifts from the Rebbe that he would bring him tomorrow.

But before he could finish his sentence the general announced, over the protests of the Rabbi, that he would be at the Rabbi's house to get the gifts in a few minutes. And, sure enough, shortly thereafter the general was knocking on Rabbi Katz's door.

He shook the Rabbi's hand and explained his haste. "When a man sits in New York and thinks about people on the other side of the world he never saw before in order to make them happy with Chanukah candles, well . . . that is what I call a true leader. And when a leader like that sends me something, I want to see it as soon as possible!"

Published by The Chabad House of Caulfield in conjunction with the Rabbinical College of Australia and N.Z.

Editors: Ovadya Rogalsky & Tzali Reicher
P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA

Email: lamplighter@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

The Lamplighter contains words from sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.

ISSUE 1246

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Our Sages say that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was "well-versed in performing miracles." Indeed, he was so spiritually elevated that although he lived in the time of the destruction of the Holy Temple, for him it was as though it never happened; he did not experience exile. However, the principal association of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai with the redemption is as it is said, "With this work of yours [the Zohar] ... they shall go out of exile with mercy." (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shabbat Emor 5747-1987*)



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Freely translated
Lag B'Omer 5731 (1971)

Free translation of a letter of the Rebbe to the 16th Annual Convention of N'Shei UBnos Chabad. The Convention is taking place this year on the Shabbos when we bless the Hebrew month of Sivan, the month of Matan Torah (the Giving of the Torah). And inasmuch as everything is by Divine Providence, this is an opportune moment to dwell on one of the aspects of Matan Torah which also has a direct bearing on the convention.

Torah from Sinai begins with the Ten Commandments, of which the first two: "I am G-d your G-d," (the root and foundation of all positive mitzvos [commandment]) and "You shall have no other gods" (the root and foundation of all prohibitions) proclaim the Unity of G-d.

A precondition to Matan Torah was the unity of the Jewish people (as it is written, "And Israel encamped [in the singular form] there facing the Mountain" - indicating, as our Sages explain, "as one man with one heart").

The essence of Matan Torah is to realize in the material world the Unity of G-d, through the "one nation on earth" (the Jewish people), fulfilling the 613 mitzvos of the one Torah."

At first glance it is difficult to understand how such unity can be achieved, considering that G-d Himself created mankind as diverse individuals, differing in their opinions ("as they differ in their faces so they differ in their minds"), living in a world which He likewise created varied as to climate and physical features.

How can a whole nation attain true unity within itself and bring unity into such a diversified world?

The explanation is to be found in the verse, "And they stood themselves under the Mountain" - all of the 600,000 adult men, with their wives, sons, and daughters.

This means that as they were about to receive the Torah, they all submitted themselves to it so completely that all mundane matters ceased to exist for them; their self-effacement (bitul) and joy from this brought true unity to every one of the 600,000 individual men with their families, and brought the unity of G-d into the world through the one Torah.

The Jewish people began with one family that of our father Abraham and ever since then the Jewish family has been the foundation of our people.

In the family, too, each member is a separate individual, with a particular function and purpose in life assigned to him or her by Divine Providence. Unless there is unity in the family, there can be no unity of the Jewish people.

How is family unity achieved?

In the same way as is mentioned above: When all the members of the family accept the One Torah from the One G-d in such a way that the Torah and Mitzvos are the only essential thing, and all other things merely secondary, having a significance only insofar as they are related to the essence - then there is true unity in the family.

In attaining this family unity - bearing in mind too that Jewish families are the component parts of the Jewish people and hence the basis of the unity of Klal Yisroel [the Jewish people] as mentioned above - the Jewish mother and daughter have a most important part, being the Akeres haBayis [foundation of the home], as has been underscored on previous occasions.

Needless to say, this said unity must be a constant one, without interruption; which is to say, it must be expressed not only on certain days of the year, or certain hours of the day, but on every day of the year and in every hour of the day.

This means that a Jewish home must be wholly based on the foundations of the Torah and mitzvos, and so permeated with the spirit of its dedication to Torah and the joy of mitzvot that this should also be reflected in one's conduct outside the home, in the street, and in one's entire environment.

Herein lies the essence of the "integrity and unity of the Jewish family and of Jewish family life" - the main theme of this year's convention.

It is hoped that this point will be brought out at the convention with the proper clarity and forcefulness - together with its aim and purpose - its realization in daily life, in keeping with the basic principle of our Sages of blessed memory: "The essential thing is the deed."

CUSTOMS CORNER

Wastefulness

"When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees." - *Deuteronomy (20:19)*

The rabbis of the Talmud explained, "If during times of war we are forbidden to cut down our enemies' trees, then we certainly may not destroy productive trees in times of peace." And it doesn't stop with trees. Destroying or ruining foods, clothes, dishes, plants, springs of water, or anything else that could be of benefit to someone is out of bounds, even if they have no owner.

A WORD

from the Director

The blessing for the month of Sivan, in which the Jews received the Torah, comes from Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan. This blessing is that the month shall be a successful one, as we say in the Blessing for the New Month: "May the Holy One, Blessed be He, renew it for joy, for deliverance and for consolation." We conclude this blessing with the words, "and let us say, Amen," meaning these blessings should be translated into reality.

Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan differs from all other Shabbos Mevorchims, in that "Av Harachamim" (said before the Mussaf prayer), which is omitted on all other Shabbos Mevorchims, is said on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan. The reason for this, writes the Alter Rebbe in his Shulchan Aruch, is "because of the decrees [against Jews] which occurred in those days."

However, these decrees occurred many years before the Alter Rebbe's times, and the Mittlerer Rebbe writes that in our times the decrees have been abolished, and such tragedies (conversions, etc.) will not occur again. Thus, when the Alter Rebbe writes in his Siddur that we say "Av Harachamim" on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan, those decrees of a previous era did not apply anymore. In general we find that at certain times, special customs and enactments were made. When the situation which produced those customs changed, the customs and enactments were abolished. In our case, since the Alter Rebbe writes that we say "Av Harachamim" on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan (although the original reason, the decrees, no longer applies) we must conclude that there is a positive reason for saying it.

That reason is that we thereby transform the tragedies and decrees to good, similar to the future era, of which it states (Yeshayahu 12:1) "I will thank You, O' G-d, that you were angry with me." G-d's anger refers to the darkness of the times of exile, and the obstacles to fulfilling Torah and Mitzvos. We will thank G-d for the opportunity given to us to reveal G-dliness in such dark conditions of exile, for the G-dliness thereby produced, is infinitely loftier than if there were no darkness in the first place. Greater satisfaction (to G-d) is derived from transforming something which was previously evil to good, than from something which was always good.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED

Once...

Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of Sanz, known as the Sanzer Rav, was deeply involved in the mitzva of tzedaka (charity), giving with an open hand from his own funds and soliciting from others as well. In keeping with the rabbinical dictum that charity collectors should travel in pairs, he always went on his rounds with a respected member of the community.

One time Rabbi Chaim set about to collect a large amount of tzedaka for a certain wealthy man who had gone bankrupt. He and a trusted companion went about from house to house soliciting funds, when they came to the elegant home of one of the richest men in the city. They entered the beautifully appointed anteroom and were shown to a velvet sofa where they were served tea from a silver tea service while they waited for the master of the house to appear. After a few minutes a well-dressed gentleman entered and greeted the illustrious Rabbi warmly.

The Rabbi and his companion requested that the wealthy man donate the large amount of five hundred rubles for an unspecified "worthy cause."

The rich man considered their request for a few moments and then asked, "Tell me, exactly what is the cause you're collecting for? Is it for some public institution or for a private person?"

Rabbi Chaim replied that he was collecting for a wealthy citizen who had lost all his money and gone into bankruptcy. But this answer wasn't sufficient for the man, and he began to inquire further about the identity of the person.

"I'm sorry," replied Rabbi Chaim, "but I cannot divulge the man's name, since that would cause him terrible embarrassment. You'll just have to trust me when I tell you that he's a very deserving individual."

The rich man refused to be dissuaded from his curious pursuit of the man's identity. "Of course, I trust you implicitly, and I would be only too happy to donate even several thousand rubles to help you, but I would first like to know to whom I'm giving the money."

At this point the man who was accompanying the Rabbi interjected his opinion that perhaps it wouldn't be so bad to divulge the man's identity in this case. Certainly the rich donor wouldn't allow the information to leave the room, and it was a wonderful opportunity to amass the large amount of money to help a fellow Jew rebuild his life.

But Rabbi Chaim would say only that the man had up until recently been one of the pillars of the community and had himself contributed to many worthy causes before his unfortunate business collapse. Again he protested that he couldn't and wouldn't publicize the man's name.

The rich man, far from being silenced, was even more aroused in his curiosity. "If you tell me his name I will give you half of the entire amount you need."

His fellow collector again tried to convince the Rav to tell the man's name, in view of the tremendous sum of money involved, but to no avail.

"You must understand," he replied, "that even though the sum you are offering is more than generous, the honour of this Jew is more important and valuable to me than any amount of money! If you were to give me the total sum that I require, I would still refuse to reveal the identity of the recipient!"

The rich man's countenance changed suddenly and he became very still.

He quietly asked Reb Chaim to step into an adjacent room, for he wished to speak with him privately.

Standing alone with the Rabbi, the rich man broke down into bitter sobbing. "Rebbe," he began, "I, too, have lost my entire fortune and am about to enter into bankruptcy. I was too embarrassed to tell this to anyone, but when I saw how scrupulously you guarded the other man's privacy I knew I could trust you. Please forgive me for testing you in such an outrageous manner, but I am a desperate man. I needed to know for sure that under no circumstances would you tell anyone about my terrible situation. I am in debt for such a huge sum, I have no hope at all of repaying it. I'm afraid that I will have no choice but to leave my family and go begging from door to door!"

The Sanzer Rav left the home of the rich man, and needless to say, not a soul ever heard a word of their conversation. Less than a week later he returned to the same man's house with a large sum of money. He had been able to raise enough money to rescue not only the original intended recipient, but this one as well. They were both able to pay off their debts and resume their businesses successfully.

The role of the saintly Sanzer Rav in this affair became known only many years later after he had gone to his eternal reward.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments... (Lev. 26:3)

One might think that walking in G-d's statutes refers to the fulfilment of the commandments. But the verse continues and states, "And keeps My commandments." So, the keeping of the commandments is explicit. How then can it be explained? According to the Sifra, walking in G-d's statutes refers to "toiling in the study of the Torah." The above can be clarified even more according to Chasidic philosophy. Since studying the Torah is really one of the statutes mentioned in the first part of the verse, the explanation "toiling in the study of Torah" must have a unique twist. It teaches us that all of our "toil" everything that we work at in our lives, must be permeated totally with the teachings and ethics of the Torahe. (*Sharit Menachem*)

If you walk in my statutes, and keep My commandments...and you shall eat your bread with satiety and dwell in safety in your land. And I will give you peace. (Lev. 26:3-6)

One might say: There is food and there is drink, but if there is no peace, there is nothing. For this reason, after enumerating all of the tangible blessings for keeping the commandments, the Torah states "And I will give peace in the Land." For peace is balanced against everything. (*Rashi*)

If you walk in my statutes... (Lev. 23:6)

The Baal Shem Tov explains: If a person gets to a point where his spiritual service become like a "statute," an unbending decree-and he is not able to move Then he must walk - he cannot stay in that place. He must invigorate, renew, add to his spiritual service until he is able to go forth to a higher level. (*Keter Shem Tov*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 3 JUNE 2016

BEGINS	ENDS
4.51MELBOURNE	5.51
4.54ADELAIDE	5.52
4.43BRISBANE	5.38
6.10DARWIN	7.02
4.40GOLD COAST	5.36
5.02PERTH	5.59
4.36SYDNEY	5.34
4.41CANBERRA	5.40
4.32LAUNCESTON	5.35
4.54AUCKLAND	5.54
4.41WELLINGTON	5.45
4.26HOBART	5.31
4.38BYRON BAY	5.34

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD
PARSHAS BECHUKOSAI • 26 IYAR • 3 JUNE

FRIDAY NIGHT	CANDLE LIGHTING:	4.51 PM
	MINCHA:	5.00 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	5.25 PM
SHABBOS	TEHILLIM:	8.00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9.51 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10.00 AM
	THE MOLAD FOR THE MONTH OF SIVAN	
	WILL BE ON SUNDAY 5 JUNE	11.44 AM
	MINCHA:	4.45 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	5.51 PM
WEEKDAYS	SHACHARIS: SUN-FRI	8.00 AM / 9.15 AM
	MINCHA:	4.55 PM
	MAARIV:	5.40 PM