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**YU Happenings:** Next Tuesday, May 11, this year's last chug with Rabbi Krug will take place at 10:20PM at 36 Laurel Hill Terrace, apt. 6E, at the home of Avital and Darren Levin.

**Shabbat Davening Times at the Yeshiva:**

Micha Erev Shabbat: 7:05 PM

Shachrit: 5:10 AM

Mincha: 6:50 PM



*The Yeshiva at the Kotel's Lag Ba'Omer bonfire*

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## HaRav Nebenzahl on Parshat Behar-Bechukotai

**HaRav Nebenzahl asks that his Divrei Torah are not read during Tefillah or the Rabbi's sermon**



Printer Friendly Sicha

### Being Rewarded for Mitzvah Observance

"Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai saying" (Vayikra 25:1), the Torah then goes on to outline the mitzvah of Shmitta, letting the land lay fallow every seven years. Rashi asks: "what is the matter of Shmitta next to Mount Sinai?" - why, of all mitzvot, did the Torah emphasize that this mitzvah was given at Har Sinai, why was it not sufficient for the Torah to simply say: "vayedaber Hashem el Moshe lemor"? Among the answers given is cited in Rashi: "just as with Shmitta its general rules, and its details, and its fine points were stated at Sinai, so, too, with all of the commandments their general rules and their fine points were stated at Sinai."

The Torah is teaching us that just as Shmitta was given by Hashem at Har Sinai and was not a mitzvah that Moshe Rabenu simply made up, so too the entire Torah comes from Hashem. I believe there is still a point which requires explanation. Does the fact that a mitzvah in the book of Vayikra was given at Sinai prove that the mitzvot in Sefer

Devarim was given at Sinai? Furthermore, why was Shmitta chosen as the source for belief that the Torah comes from Hashem?

I came across another answer which, combined with what we have just cited from Rashi, can help give us a clearer understanding. We read in this week's parsha: "if you will say: 'what will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We will not sow and we will not gather our crop!' (Vayikra 25:20). The Torah answers: "I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three years. You will sow in the eighth year, but you will eat from the old crop; until the ninth year, until the arrival of its crop, you will eat the old" (ibid. 21). A human being cannot promise such a thing, for by providing the exact timing of it - the sixth year, he is risking being branded a liar. From here we see that the Mitzvah of Shmitta is a testimony that the entire Torah is from Hashem and was given at Har Sinai.

It is true that the Torah promises us reward for observing all mitzvot, we are commanded to honor our parents: "so that your days will be lengthened and so that it will be good for you" (Devarim 5:16). The reward referred to here, however, is in the Next world: "so that it will be good with you to the world that is entirely good, so that it will be long to the world that is entirely long" (Kiddushin 39b). Because the reward awaiting us is in the Next World, we have no tangible way in this world of knowing whether or not the Torah is absolute truth. Other religions also profess that if one performs certain deeds he will be appropriately rewarded.

Performance of other mitzvot, as we have just mentioned, offer no proof to the veracity of the Torah. This includes the mitzvah to give maaser, of which we are told that we are permitted to test Hashem: "Bring all the tithes into the storage house, and let it be sustenance in My Temple, test Me, if you will, with this, says Hashem, Master of Legions, see if I do not open up for you the windows of the heavens and pour out upon you blessing without end" (Malachi 3:10). Being that the prophet does not provide a specific time frame for this blessing, if it has not yet taken place, we have no way of ascertaining whether or not it will in the future.

The fact that only Hashem can promise such a blessing is proof that the Torah comes from Him. The Torah chose a mitzvah which clearly comes from Hashem as the basis for teaching us that all mitzvot were given at Sinai. Why does Hashem offer us this blessing for observing the mitzvah of Shmitta? Because Shmitta is a very difficult mitzvah to observe. Chazal attribute the following pasuk to those in Eretz Yisrael who observe the Shmitta: "mighty people who observe His words" (Tehillim 103:20). We see that one who observes Shmitta is referred to as mighty - how is he supposed to feed himself and his family without planting, sowing, etc? This amounts to a very difficult test of faith. Hashem therefore promised a blessing on the sixth year so that people would not be afraid of this mitzvah. Even with Hashem's promise, many over the generations did not observe this mitzvah - Chazal attribute this as the reason for the seventy year exile in Bavel.

The Torah commands us to give tzedaka to the poor: "give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the Lord your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings" (Devarim 15:10). A person should give tzedaka because Hashem commanded us to do so and because we believe that He will bless us - tzedaka should be given with joy at the opportunity to do so. Indeed there are many people who truly love giving tzedaka, however unfortunately there are plenty of people who do not wish to give. If they would only believe in Hashem's promise for blessing then they would certainly give. In fact the Rambam writes that no one will ever become poor as a result of giving tzedaka - this does not mean that there will not be any poor people, but that tzedaka will not make someone poor. Those who do not love giving tzedaka may read the promise of Hashem's blessing but they are not internalizing the words. Tzedaka is not used as the example because the Torah does not state precisely when we will receive this reward. It is only with regard to Shmitta that we find a promise and an exact time for the reward.

The Rishonim ask why the Torah does not describe for us what Olam Haba looks like and what we should expect there. The Rishonim offer two answers to this question. The first answer is that even if it would be described for us, we do not have the tools or senses with which to understand - just as a blind person cannot understand the difference between red, green, blue, and brown. We may tell him that blood is red, grass is green, the sky is blue, and the ground is brown, but in fact this has no meaning to him. By the same token, Olam Haba is not something we could begin to understand. Another answer is that were the Torah to explain to us the incredible rewards waiting for us in the Next World we would no longer perform mitzvot lishma but our motivation would be simply in order to receive a reward. Hashem wants us to perform mitzvot simply because He commanded us to.

I would venture to say that these two explanations are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand we have no way of understanding what Olam Haba is, but even if we were to understand it, this would detract from our performance of mitzvot lishma.

There are those who claim that letting the land remain fallow every seventh year is good for the land. If so, we would see the blessing on the eighth year - following the Sabbatical year. There is no natural reason for the sixth year to be any different than the previous ones. It is thus clear that the blessing is a result of observing the dictates of the Torah. Many have observed in our day, that settlements that observed the laws of Shmitta were rewarded with abundance. The blessing is not something natural but a reward Hashem gives us for observing this mitzvah.

The Gemara relates the following incident: "The Roman regime once enacted a decree that the Jews not keep the Shabbat, that they not circumcise their sons, and that they cohabit with niddot (not adhere to the laws of Family Purity). R' Reuven ben Istroboli went and cut his hair (to hide the fact that he was Jewish) and went and sat together with them. He said to them: 'one who has an enemy, does he want him to become poor or become rich?' They said to him: 'to become poor.' He said to them: 'if so, let them

not do work on the Shabbat so that they should become poor.". The Romans were convinced by his argument and the decree against Shabbat observance was annulled. R' Reuven now tried to have the other decrees rescinded: "he said to them: 'one who has an enemy, does he want him to become weak or to become strong?' They said to him: 'to become weak'. He said to them: 'if so, let them circumcise their sons on the eighth day, and they will become weak.'" They were impressed with this argument as well and revoked the decree against circumcision. He then tried to have the decree against observing Taharat HaMishpacha rescinded: "He said to them: 'one who has an enemy, does he want him to increase or decrease?' They said to him: 'to decrease'. He said to them: if so, let them not cohabit with niddot (i.e. let them observe the laws of Family Purity which limits the time a man may cohabit with his wife)." They accepted this argument and annulled that decree as well.

At a later stage when the Romans realized that R' Reuven was Jewish they reinstated the decrees. These decrees remained in force until R' Shimon bar Yochai and R' Elazar ben R' Yossi managed to have them nullified. What difference did it make to the Romans that R' Reuven ben Istroboli was Jewish, did he not present them with convincing arguments, did they not find his logic flawless? When they realized that in actual fact he observed the mitzvot which they had banned, it became clear that he could not believe a word of what he was saying! If he did not believe what he was saying, why should they?

Shabbat observance brings us blessing, we do not become poor because we do not work on the Shabbat. Blessings often happen in an unnatural manner. After suffering the bondage in Egypt for so many years, Hashem smote Pharaoh with nine plagues. Finally when it came to the tenth plague we read: "Hashem had disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people" (Shmot 12:36). Is this the time for the Egyptians to love the Jewish people, after suffering so much from them? It is precisely when we follow the Torah that Hashem makes sure that the other nations love us - when we bring the Korban Pesach and other mitzvot. When we try to become close to them, they drive us away. Many Jews in Germany tried to assimilate and thought that it was important to be a good German - Berlin was Yerushalayim. This is not the way to get the other nations to love us, the way to do so is to keep the Torah - whether or not the other nations love us is not something natural. There is no need for us to beg the nations for love, Hashem takes care of us.

May we steadfastly observe the mitzvot of Shmitta and all the other mitzvot of the Torah and thereby merit Hashem's hastening the redemption speedily in our day. Amen.

### **Staff Dvar Torah by Rav Tzvi Shiloni**

#### **Walking with Torah**

Parshat Bechukotai opens with the pasuk: "im bechukotai telechu ve-et mitzvotai tishemru" "If you will follow My decrees and observe My



commandments and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3). Rashi comments: "'if you will follow My decrees' - shetihyu ameilim baTorah - that you should be laboring in the Torah". Much has been said and written with regard to these words of Rashi. How does Rashi know that "if you will follow My decrees" refers to Torah study, and furthermore what is his source that the Torah study referred to here refers to ameilut - toiling.



Extensive and fascinating insights have been offered by the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh, by the Kli Yakar, and countless others. I would like to add just one more small thought.

Perhaps Rashi notes the unusual use of the verb telechu which in context means "to follow" but literally means to walk. This verb appears incongruous with mitzvah performance, especially chukim. The verbs asiyah - to do, or perhaps shmira - to safeguard, are more commonly used with regard to mitzvah observance. The verb halicha - to walk, generally has the connotation of movement, growth, and purposeful goals that are not generally associated with the performance of a singular act of a chok such as refraining from wearing kilayim or the sprinkling of the parah adumah.

Anyone who has ever been in a Yeshiva is well aware that real growth, in a Jewish sense, results from a person's deep involvement in the study of Torah. It is the delving into and the struggling with the words of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and of Chazal that lead a person down a path of self-awareness and spiritual growth.

When we study Torah, more specifically when we are ameilim - toiling - in Torah we can actually feel as if we are walking along a path that is going to enlighten our life and bring us to a closer relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

The first words Hashem spoke to Avraham Avinu, the first Jew, were lech lecha - literally - "go for yourself". The Torah describes the last day of Moshe Rabenu's life in terms of "vayelech Moshe", even though we have no evidence that he was walking anywhere. The essence of a Jew's life is to walk, to move, to grow.

As HaRav Bina Shlit"a always says: "in Judaism you are either going up or going down". Being a Jew means to resist the temptation to stagnate - from the very beginning of one's journey in life, until his very last day. His journey is fueled by ameilut baTorah, and this is what will carry us to our final destination.

### **Student Dvar Torah by Moshe Rapfogel, Shana Alef, MTA**

This week we read the double parsha of Behar-Bechukotai. Parshat Bechukotai begins with the pasuk: "im bechukotai telechu ve-et mitzvotai tishmeru" "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3). Rashi asks what is the meaning and significance of the opening words "if you will follow My decrees". Perhaps it refers to accepting and following mitzvot. This cannot be, because the continuation of



the pasuk discusses "observe My commandments", obviously the opening words are referring to something else.

Rashi therefore explains that the opening words of the pasuk refer to being *ameilim baTorah* - toiling in Torah. Rashi continues by stating that whoever does not toil in Torah begins a descent of seven levels:

- Step 1: - A person will not toil in his learning
- Step 2: - He will not learn at all.
- Step 3: - He will not keep mitzvot.
- Step 4: - He is disgusted by others who learn Torah.
- Step 5: - He tries to prevent others from learning Torah.
- Step 6: - He despises the Rabbanim who teach Torah.
- Step 7: - He gives up the covenant between himself and Hashem.

HaRav Leff Shlit"z explains that this process of a seven step downward spiral corresponds to seven levels of guilt. When a person feels guilty about not doing something (such as learning Torah or keeping mitzvot), he avoids even thinking about it and eventually despises and is even disgusted by people who are doing that which he is trying to avoid. They end up hating Rabbis who are teaching Torah and even try to prevent them from spreading Torah.

How do we avoid falling trap to this terrible downward spiral? By following in the ways of Hashem - *im bechukotai telechu* - literally "if you will walk with My decrees". Rashi explains that Hashem will walk with us in Gan Eden - whether we are speaking of learning Torah, performing mitzvot, or working on acquiring good middot - that extra *ameilus* - that extra effort will result in amazing reward. The other side of the coin is that if all a person desires is to go through the motions and see how quickly he can get this out of the way, then how quickly he will fall.

The choice is ours - why not put in that little extra effort, it is easier to remain on the right path before having, G-d forbid, descended down those seven levels.

## **Visitor Log, Mazal Tov's, Tehillim List**

### **Visitors**

#### **The following people learned/visited Yeshiva**

- Rabbi Dr. Hillel Davis (Vice President, Yeshiva University)
- Dr. Scott Goldberg (Director, Institute for University-School Partnership, YU)
- Rabbi Ari Solomont (Director, Yeshiva University S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program)
- Rabbi Shalom Berger (E-Communities Director of the Lookstein Center)
- Mr. Michael Kranzler (Admissions Director, Yeshiva University)
- Rabbi Steven Burg (International Director, NCSY)

- Sam Pleeter (5742)
- Zachary Ruben (5766-67)

### **Mazal Tov**

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh wishes a Mazal Tov to:

- Rav [Yoel](#) and Shoshana Rackovsky on the birth of a grandson, son to Achinoam and Yehoshua Skydell
- [Gershon](#) (5768) Heyman on his marriage to Yaffa Schwartz
- [Stuart](#) (5750) and Fraidy Forgash on the birth of their son, Yehudah Aryeh.

### **Baruch Dayan Emet**

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh regrets to inform you of the passing of:

- Mendel Emanuel grandfather of [Yosef](#) (5766,68) Gillers

The following members of our extended YNA family need our tefilot:

#### **Printer Friendly Tehillim List**

- |                                      |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ● Taube Yehudit bat Temma Gasia      | ● Avraham David ben Miriam Goldeh |
| ● Zev Eliezer ben Chaya Shaindel     | ● Ephraim Yitzchak ben Golda      |
| ● Chaya bat Grunia                   | ● Margalit bat Rachel             |
| ● Yitzchok ben Shayna Ita            | ● Yaacov ben Baila                |
| ● Moshe Zanvel ben Brindel           | ● Leah bat Eidel                  |
| ● Gershon Yitzchok ben Mottel Tzerel | ● Ester Bas Lea                   |
| ● Rueven ben Tova Chaya              | ● Miriam Rivka bat Adina Leah     |
| ● Rivka Margalit bat Etta            | ● Chaya Esther bat Golda Rachel   |
| ● Chaya Meira Mindel bas Chava Golda | ● Shayna bas Chava                |
| ● Sarah Nechama bas Russ Malka       | ● Eliezer ben Sorah               |
| ● Chaya Sarah bat Fanya Luna         | ● Fruma bat Rochel                |
| ● Elazar ben Nouber                  | ● Yonatan Moshe ben Devorah Tova  |
| ● Na'ava Bat Ami bat Sara Leah       | ● Naomi Sara bas Henna Miriam     |
| ● Gilad ben Aviva                    | ● Fruma bas Ita                   |
| ● Edmund ben Nazira                  | ● Tinok ben Esther Sharon         |
| ● Ditza bat Vardit                   | ● Freida Bat Chaya Sara           |
| ● Yechiel Michel Shlomo Ben Miriam   |                                   |



And of course we are always davening for the safe return of Gilad Shalit (Gilad ben Aviva)

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### **[Send Us Your Announcements](#)**

**Please, if you have any smachot or chas v'shalom, less happy occasions, [let our office know](#) so we can keep everybody updated. Are you visiting Israel?- [let us know](#)! We'd love to host you for a shabbat meal, davening, a shiur and would love for you to stop by.**

**Shabbat Shalom,**

Rav Bina, Netiv Aryeh  
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh

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