Points to Ponder

Bechukosai 5782

**אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַ֖י תֵּלֵ֑כוּ If you follow my Chukim (26:3) - Rashi** says that אם בחקתי תלכו means ameilus baTorah. Why then does the Torah use the word תלכו and not תלמדו? The answer seems to be in the midrash that says that Dovid HaMelech said that while he walking to fulfill various tasks, his feet always took him to the beis medrash. **Rav Henoch Leibowitz** ztl. asks: Dovid HaMelech had important things to do and talmud Torah is put aside for important matters. How did Dovid HaMelech give up on these important matters to learn? He answers that there are a lot of things that we think are important, but in reality, they aren’t as important as we think. If we have a love of learning and pull ourselves to the beis medrash, we will find that if we don’t spend as much time on these other “important matters,” we will still be able to properly handle them.

**וְנָֽתַתִּ֥י גִשְׁמֵיכֶ֖ם בְּעִתָּ֑ם I will send the rain in its right time (26:4)** – It seems strange that the Parsha begins with blessings for keeping Torah and Mitzvos that are all physical and material as opposed to spiritual. Why**? Rambam** in his introduction to Perek Cheilek explains that material blessings are not ends in and of themselves but means towards an end. Material rewards enable us to fully focus on and improve our service of Hashem, thereby meriting the world to come. **Rabbi Danny Mirvis** added that the Torah does not reject financial success or physical pleasure. When used properly, they can help us reach the highest levels of holiness and spiritual success. The danger comes when we mistake the means for the ultimate goal. The focus of our lives should not be on what we live with, but what we live for.

**וְנָֽתַתִּ֥י מִשְׁכָּנִ֖י בְּתֽוֹכְכֶ֑ם וְלֹֽא־תִגְעַ֥ל נַפְשִׁ֖י אֶתְכֶֽם: I will set my mishkan among you and my soul shall not be disgusted by you (26:11)** – We are talking about serving Hashem, where did we come to discuss Hashem’s being disgusted by us? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that the Torah is highlighting to us that we should not observe Mitzvos out of HABIT. Rather, Mitzva performance should be done from a sense of Simcha. While one is rewarded for doing Mitzvos out of habit, the reward of Simcha has no greater reward.

**וָֽאוֹלֵ֥ךְ אֶתְכֶ֖ם קֽוֹמְמִיּֽוּת I led you upright.” (26:13) – Rashi** explains the word Komimiyut as perfectly tall and straight. In other words, not only did Hashem give us freedom, he gave us confidence and esteem. **Sfas Emes** adds that there is a dual sense of being upright. One is physical and the other spiritual. At times the “Shtoltzkiet” or stature that comes to us from physical might appear to be in conflict with the shtoltz of the spiritual. However, when we use Torah and Mitzvos as our behavior guides to practice, we can truly walk Komimiyut as we will be avoiding the conflict. One clear time in modern history where this became apparent was in 1967 when the Har HaBayit was returned to our hands.

**אֵ֠לֶּה הַֽחֻקִּ֣ים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים֘ וְהַתּוֹרֹת֒  These are the Chukim , Mishpatim and Toros that Hashem gave between himself and Bnei Yisrael (26:46) –** Where are Chukim and Toros? All that appears in this section seems to be Brachos and curses**? Rav Gifter ztl.** explained that value is established by a person based on what is important to the person. When it comes to the Torah and Mitzvos, we find the value Where we expect to find value that is where we look for it. When a person values Torah and Mitzvos then what s/he will seek to follow will be mitzvos. When one does not seek to find Torah and Mitzvos in his/her life, it is likely because the value is foreign to him/her.

**בְּעֶרְכְּך**ָ֥ **נְפָשֹׁ֖ת Erachin (27:2)** - Why place erchin after the tochecha and not earlier in sefer vayikra where it belongs? The **Kli Yakar** explains that after going through suffering, tragedy and loss, the response is to donate, give and sacrifice. It would be so easy to conclude the exact opposite. What is the point, what is it all worth, look at the tochecha, look at a Holocaust in which 6 million are murdered. What is the value of life, what is any of it worth, does it even matter? Therefore, specifically following the tochecha the Torah teaches erchin, we have value and the response to tragedy is to pledge our value to the continuation of our people. **Rav Chaim Dov Keller ztl.** says we see this elsewhere in the Torah as well.   In parshas Noach we are told about the flood that destroyed the world and erased humanity from the face of the earth with the exception of Noach and his family.  As they reinhabited the world, it would have been so easy to devalue life.  After all, the whole world was just destroyed, what is one more life? Specifically there (Breishis 9:10), the Torah teaches us , shofeich dam ha’adam ba’adom, damo yishafeich, we are prohibited from murder because every human being is of inestimable value and irreplaceable.

**וְאִם־מָכַ֥ר אֶת־הַשָּׂדֶ֖ה לְאִ֣ישׁ אַחֵ֑ר לֹֽא־יִגָּאֵ֖ל עֽוֹד If he sold it to someone else it may no longer be redeemed (27:20)** – **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Soloveitchik** to explain where Elisha ben Avuya (aka “Acher”) erred in his thinking that he heard a heavenly voice that noted that everyone could do Teshuva except for Acher. The idea of an Ish Acher, according to Rav Soloveitchik, was not included in the Bas Kol. The Bas Kol only called the wayward children to return to Hashem. Elisha ben Avuya assumed that similar to one who sells his field to an “Ish Acher” to a foreign person, who cannot be redeemed, he assumed that one who is known as “Acher” also cannot be redeemed. Rav Schachter added that this was in error. EVERYONE has an opportunity for redemption.

**Haftara:**

**בָּר֣וּךְ הַגֶּ֔בֶר אֲשֶׁ֥ר יִבְטַ֖ח Praised be the person who puts his trust in Hashem (Yirmiyahu 17:7)- Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** points out that the source of Beracha in the world begins with Bitachon. Therefore, one who is missing Bitachon and awareness that everything comes from Hashem, then whatever s/he receives from Hashem naturally is actually Hashem giving him more than s/he is entitled to. In other words, one is not entitled to anything naturally. Anything we receive in this world is a result of Hashem’s Chessed to us. The recognition that it is all a blessing should bring us to a better awareness of Hashem and strengthen our Bitachon in the process.