Class # 2– Parshat Behar-Bechukotai: Is Hashem being mean and threatening?

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

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1. [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQZaKwvV11I*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQZaKwvV11I) *-* ***Israeli PM is slammed over conduct in 2014 Gaza war***
2. [***http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/09/middleeast/netanyahu-criminal-probe/index.html***](http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/09/middleeast/netanyahu-criminal-probe/index.html)
3. If the biblical “Mordechai” was an advisor to PM Netanyahu, what would he have done in the months running up to the Gaza war?
4. Why do you think Netanyahu and his top staff did not take the threats seriously?

*Queen Bat Sheva warnings to the young KIng Solomon - Proverb Ch. 31:1-6*

The words of Lemuel, king of Massa [King Solomon], with which his mother [Bat Sheva] admonished him: No, my son! No, O son of my womb! No, O son of my vows!

Do not give your strength to women, Your vigor, to those who destroy kings.

Wine is not for kings, O Lemuel; Not for kings to drink, Nor any strong drink for princes,

Lest they drink and forget what has been ordained, And infringe on the rights of the poor.

Give strong drink to the hapless And wine to the embittered.

*Rambam  - Letter on Astrology from Isadore Twersky, A Maimonides Reader (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1972) pp. 463*

*…”This is why our kingdom was lost and our Temple was destroyed and why we were brought to this; for our fathers sinned and are no more …They did not busy themselves with the art of war or with the conquest of lands…*

*Therefore the prophets called them "fools and dolts" (Jer. 4:22). And truly fools they were, "for they walked after confused things that do not profit" (I Sam. 12:21 and Jer. 2:8).”*

Vayikra - Parshat Bechukotai – Ch. 26 – Blessing & Curses

*Rewards for Obedience*

26:3 If you follow My laws and are careful to keep My commandments, 26:4 I will provide you with rain at the right time, so that the land will bear its crops and the trees of the field will provide fruit. 26:5 [You will have so much that] your threshing season will last until your grape harvest, and your grape harvest will last until the time you plant. You will have your fill of food, and [you will] live securely in the land. 26:6 I will grant peace in the land so that you will sleep without fear. I will rid the land of dangerous animals, and the sword will not pass through your land. 26:7 You will chase away your enemies, and they will fall before your sword. 26:8 Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred, and a hundred of you will defeat ten thousand, as your enemies fall before your sword. 26:9 I will turn to you, making you fertile and numerous, thus keeping My covenant with you. 26:10 You will continue eating the previous year's crops long after their time, and you will eventually have to clear out the old crops because of the new. 26:11 I will keep My sanctuary in your midst, and not grow tired of you. 26:12 I will [make My presence felt](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2706) among you. Thus, I will be a God to you, and you will be a nation [[dedicated](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2707)] to Me. 26:13 I am God your Lord. I brought you out from Egypt, where you were slaves. I broke the [bands](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2708) of your yoke, and led you forth with your heads held high.

*Punishments for Disobedience*

26:14 [But this is what will happen] if you do not listen to Me, and do not keep all these commandments. 26:15 If you come to denigrate My decrees, and grow tired of My laws, then you will not keep all My commandments, and you will have broken My covenant. 26:16 I will then do the same to you. I will bring upon you feelings of [anxiety](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2709), along with [depression](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2710) and [excitement](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2711), [destroying your outlook](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2712) and [making life hopeless](http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=3&CHAPTER=26#C2713).

You will plant your crop in vain, because your enemies will eat it.

Rashi comments:

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| **26:3 -If you follow My statutes:** I might think that this refers to the fulfillment of the commandments. However, when Scripture says, “and observe My commandments,” the fulfillment of the commandments is [already] stated. So what is the meaning of “If you follow My statutes”? It means that you must toil in the study of Torah [for the word for “follow” here, תֵּלֵכוּ, literally means “walk,” which is a strenuous activity (Gur Aryeh)]. — [Torath Kohanim 26:2] |
| and observe My commandments: You shall toil in the study of Torah in order to observe and fulfill [the commandments (Torath Kohanim 26:2). This is similar to, “[Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances…] and learn them, and keep in mind to do them” ([Deut. 5:1)](http://www.chabad.org/9969#v1) [i.e., learn the Torah in order to keep them in your heart and perform them]. — [Sifthei Chachamim] |

**26:15 - thereby breaking My covenant……** Hence, [this verse has enumerated] seven sins, the first leading to the second, and so on, until the seventh, [and the process of degeneration is] as follows: [First, a person] does not learn [the Torah]; then, he [subsequently] does not fulfill [the commandments]; he then despises others who do [fulfill them]; then, he hates the Sages, prevents others from fulfilling [the commandments], denies the [authenticity of the] commandments and [finally] denies the very omnipotence of God.

* 1. Is Hashem treating us like test rats? Rewarding our compliance with food pellets and shocking us for non-compliance?
  2. Why does Chazal enumerate a 7 step progression? Why not just failure to comply?