

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Bechukotai

32 Omer / 17 Iyar, 5774/May 17, 2014

Vol. 5 Num. 33

This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by the Gutenberg family
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The Place for Personal Gifts

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Parshat Bechukotai, despite consisting of merely two chapters, presents a serious structural difficulty. It begins with the 26th chapter of Vayikra, which unfolds, in a detailed and graphic manner, the rewards and punishments linked to the nation's obedience to the Torah. The chapter concludes with the declaration, "These are the laws, the ordinances, and the teachings given by Hashem... at Mount Sinai." (Vayikra 26:46) Presumably, this concludes the portion of Torah presented at Sinai, and the next segment should present Torah taught at the Ohel Moed in the wilderness - but the 27th chapter of Vayikra also concludes, "These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe... on Mount Sinai"! Why does the Torah separate Chapter 27, with its laws of dedications to the Temple, from the rest of Vayikra?

Splendid Isolation

According to one approach, as suggested by Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (ibid. 25:1, 26:46), the laws of Chapter 27 belong with those of Chapter 26, but they are separated to make a point. Rabbi Menachem Leibtag also takes this tack, contending that Chapter 27 was set apart at the end of Vayikra in order to parallel the beginning of the entire book.

Vayikra begins with "A man from among you, when he will offer a sacrifice" (ibid. 1:2), and ends here with the laws of an individual's gifts to the Temple. These bookends teach us that "despite the centrality of the community, the individual cannot lose sight of the value and importance of his role as an integral part of the communal whole. Secondly, the rigidity of Halacha should not stifle

personal expression. Rather, it should form the solid base from which the individual can develop an aspiring, dynamic, and personal relationship" with Hashem." (Cited from tanach.org).

Marginal location

We find a very different approach in the commentary of Rabbi Ovadia Seferno (ibid. 26:46); he suggests that the laws of Chapter 27 actually are not included in the covenant which contains all the mitzvot from the Aseret haDibrot to the end of Vayikra 26.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (ibid. 27:1) attempts to explain why Chapter 27 is excluded, with an approach opposing that of Rabbi Leibtag. Where Rabbi Leibtag understood the location of these laws to teach the value of an individual's gift, Rabbi Hirsch sees the location as indicating their inferiority:

"These grants are not required according to the law, but stem from subjective feelings... [These are] not part of the laws, the ordinances, and the teachings that Hashem gave as a condition between Himself and Bnei Yisrael, it is not part of those laws the observance of which will yield plentiful blessing and the violation of which will cause all of the suffering mentioned above... The priestly laws do not relate any special value to gifts given to the Temple; it does not see them as extreme piety which is pleasing in G-d's eyes..."

The third way

Seeing the wide chasm between the two opinions, and being somewhat convinced by both, we seek to strike some middle ground. This may be achieved, I believe, by comparing the similar - but not identical - verses which appear in the end of Chapter 26

and 27. The ending of the first chapter mentions "laws, ordinances and teachings", while the second one mentions "commandments". In the first chapter these laws are identified as part of a covenant "between G-d and Bnei Yisrael", and in the second the commandments are instructions directed to the Jews.

The covenant between G-d and our nation is imposed upon the individual. He is born into it, without his agreement and without a way out. There are laws, ordinances and teachings, and should he fail to heed them, he would suffer the consequences. This is the essence of the covenant: Mount Sinai crushes individual freedom, "for to Me Bnei Yisrael are enslaved" (ibid. 25:55).

However, for all of G-d's might and strength, and for all of our weakness, there is one part of us which G-d cannot - or at least does not - take by force. G-d puts forth laws, ordinances and teachings, rewards those who live by them and punishes those who do not, but He cannot successfully command unless the individual is willing to be commanded. The inner will of man is not subdued by force or by social coercion; it must be given voluntarily.

This is consistent with Rabbi Hirsch; the individual's voluntary gift is not part of the eternal covenant which cannot be undone. But Rabbi Leibtag is right, too: the personal gift's separate parshah comes not in order to denigrate it, but rather in order to mark it as the way in which one can ascend from the passive receiver beneath Mount Sinai to the active role of accepting G-d's kingdom atop the mountain.

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Yirmiyahu was the last major prophet of the first Beit haMikdash, and his experience may well have been the most bitter of any prophet in Tanach. He lived in the 5th century BCE (according to Seder Olam), and his task was to warn the Jews of his day that time was short and destruction was coming. The nation did not heed Yirmiyahu's words; instead, they beat him and imprisoned him (Yirmiyahu 20 and 37), threw him into a cistern (ibid 38) and threatened to kill him. (ibid)

Rembrandt's *Jeremiah Weeping Over the Destruction of Jerusalem* is hauntingly evocative of the mood of Yirmiyahu's book; the image of the despairing prophet of G-d, leaning upon his book of warnings, backlit by flame and devastation, has captured the imagination of millions over the past four centuries. Indeed, the word "jeremiad" was coined to refer to a prophecy of doom and gloom. Throughout his misery, though, Yirmiyahu carried with him a Divine promise, "I am with you, to save you." (ibid 1:8)

At times, Yirmiyahu was instructed to act out scenes in order to convey a message to the nation. These ranged from wearing a yoke upon his neck to demonstrate the enslavement of the Jews by the Babylonians (ibid. 27), to smashing a jug to demonstrate the

smashing of Judea (19), to purchasing a field and preserving the deed in order to demonstrate our eventual return to the land. (32)

According to the Talmud (Bava Batra 15a), Yirmiyahu authored his own book, the book of Melachim, and the book of Eichah.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah, like Parshat Bechukotai, conveys a message of punishment and reward. Particular sins to be punished are idolatry (Yirmiyahu 17:1-2) and corruption (17:11), as well as a general lack of faith in G-d (17:5).

Interestingly, our haftorah reverses Parshat Bechukotai's structure of presenting blessings for good conduct (Vayikra 26:3-13) and then punishment for bad conduct (ibid. 26:14-41). Our haftorah first presents punishment (Yirmiyahu 17:3-6) and then blessings (17:7-8). Perhaps this is because Moshe addressed an audience that was presently righteous, to warn them away from sin, while Yirmiyahu addressed a sinful audience and attempted to win their allegiance to mitzvot.

Our haftorah concludes with a sentence that our Sages imported into the amidah's berachah for health, "Heal me, G-d, and I will be healed,

save me and I will be saved, for You are the source of my own glory." (17:14) This verse is particularly important within a haftorah that identifies G-d as the source of certain illnesses, as punishment; the Jew who has been punished says to G-d, "I know that You have punished me, but I also know that You are my Healer."

Baruch haGever

The end of *birkat hamazon* includes a verse (17:7) from our haftorah. As the passage is explained by Radak, Yirmiyahu says, "The man who trusts in G-d is blessed; G-d will be his security." However, Rabbi Baruch haLevi Epstein (Baruch she'Amar to Avot 2:2) explains the sentence differently.

Rabbi Epstein suggests that there are two kinds of faithful people. There are faithful people who choose a path toward fulfillment of their needs, and then trust in G-d to help them succeed, but there are rarefied individuals, of even greater faith and deeds, who live to satisfy Divine expectations, and who look only to G-d to fulfill their needs. According to Rabbi Epstein, this verse may be read to refer to both such people: "The man who trusts in G-d is blessed, and [even moreso] the one who makes G-d the repository of his entire trust."

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613 Mitzvot: #380

Pesach Sheni

The korban pesach celebrates our nation's formation, the origins of our national connection to G-d, and our belief in Divine supervision of, and intervention in, the world. This message of the korban pesach is so spiritually critical for the Jewish nation that G-d gives every Jew two opportunities to participate. One who misses the first Pesach on the 14th of Nisan is able to bring the korban one month later, on the 14th of Iyar (Mitzvah #380). The korban is brought on the 14th of Iyar and eaten on the night of the 15th of Iyar; the celebration is called Pesach Sheni.

Like the korban pesach brought in Nisan, the korban brought on the 14th of Iyar is eaten with matzah and marror (#381), and other rules are likewise retained: nothing of the korban may be left over until morning (#382), and one may not break any bones from the korban (#383). However, only the laws of the original korban pesach that pertain directly to the korban are applied to Pesach Sheni; one may own chametz on Pesach Sheni (although one may not eat it with the korban), one may perform melachah on that day, and there is no seven-day celebration. Also, Hallel is not recited when eating the korban of Pesach Sheni.

There is some debate regarding whether we are instructed to recite the story of leaving Egypt when eating the korban pesach of Pesach Sheni. This mitzvah might be linked

specifically to the night of the 15th of Nisan, which was the night before leaving Egypt. (Sfat Emet to Pesachim 95a)

It is often noted that when the Koreich paragraph in our Haggadah describes the practice of combining the korban pesach with matzah and marror, it quotes the verse of Pesach Sheni (Bamidbar 9:11) instead of the verse of the first Pesach. (Shemot 12:8) Various ideas are suggested to explain this; according to the popular approach of the Belzer Rebbe, by using this verse we express our wish that Mashiach should come before the 14th of Iyar, and we should be able to bring Pesach Sheni. (For more regarding this question, see Pesachim 120a; Chatam Sofer Orach Chaim 140; Avnei Nezer Orach Chaim 383:8; Meishiv Davar 1:32; Minchat Chinuch 380; Seder haAruch 108 note 11 and 151:12-14.)

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Biography

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook

Rabbi Netanel Javasky

[The following is excerpted from a longer biography by Rabbi Netanel Javasky.]

Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook was born in Latvia in 1865. Recognized as a prodigy at a young age, he joined the famed Volozhin Yeshiva, and developed a fond relationship with the Rosh haYeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv). His stay in Volozhin was under two years, but the Netziv is quoted as saying that had the entire Volozhin Yeshiva been founded just to teach Rav Kook, it would have been a worthwhile endeavour. His brilliance and inquisitive nature combined to lead him to the study of subjects not commonly explored in the traditional Yeshiva settings of the time, including Tanach, philosophy, Hebrew language and mysticism. Becoming a Rabbi at the age of 23, Rav Kook, in his early years, served the communities of Zaumel and then Bausk.

In the early years of the 20th century, immediately before emigrating to Israel, Rav Kook published three articles on the topic of Israel; the ideas in these articles would form a basis for his philosophy on this subject. In 1904 Rav Kook became Rabbi of Jaffa, and his broad impact was instantly felt. He had great respect and love for all Jews, and considered them all as pioneers in the spiritual redemption. Rav Kook explained that the Jew was made up of two components: the inner *pindele yid* and the route which he has set out upon with his actions. Even if one was weak in the latter, there was still the heart and soul of a Jew that could be loved and encouraged. Rav Kook's love and affection towards the secularists was often seen by his opponents as compromising Halachah, supporting those who were anti-religion.

Rav Kook was in Europe during the outbreak of World War I, and he used the opportunity to spread his desire that religious Jews settle the Land and influence its development. Soon after his return home, he was appointed as the first Chief Rabbi.

Rav Kook wrote prolifically on Jewish thought and the development of the Jewish land; new works of his writings continue to be published today. In 1924 he founded Yeshivat Merkaz haRav - named posthumously in his honour - known today as the bastion of Religious Zionism and as a place which has become synonymous with the teachings of Rav Kook. Rav Kook passed away in 1935, but his influence continues to be felt to this very day.

Torah and Translation

Exile and Return

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook

Shabbat ha'Aretz, Introduction

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

תכונת האומה ברדתה הוסיפה ירידה גם לתכונת רוח הארץ, שהוא מתאים עמה, התאמה נצחת בחולשת נשמת האומה, לא תתן סגולת הארץ את תפקידה. רוח הארץ, רוח ארץ חמדה המלאה שירת קדש ורננת י-ה, ירד מטה מטה. "ותטמא הארץ ואפקד עונה עליה ותקיא הארץ את יושביה." רוח האומה בכללה ספג אל תוכו יסודות רעים וזרים עד אשר העיב את טהרתו העצמית...

שני היסודות, האומה והארץ, אשר בבריותם הם מוסיפים זה לזה כל כך לית חן, כל כך אמצ' ועז, החלו משפיעים זה לזה בחלותם לרעה ולזועה, עד אשר הוכרחה לקחת מעמד הרפואה הרחמנית האכזריה, הניתוח הנורא, התרחקות האומה מהארץ "ומפני חטאינו גלינו מארצנו ונתרחקנו מעל אדמתנו..."

ישראל בגולה עזב את דאגתו מכל עניינא חל מצד כללות האומה. שם את עיניו ולבו רק בשמים ממעל. לבו לא הלך עוד להרבות חיל, רכב וסוס, ככל גוי על אדמתו. ובכלל לא היה עוד לכלל האומה שום עסק חומרי. יחד עם זה חדל לעגב אל כל תזנוני הגוים הרבים, ורוח' החל לפעמו להשכיל על ערך האדם ומעלת נשמתו, וכן להוקיר ביחוד את ערכה הרוחני של האומה ויתרונה האלקי. התורה נתחבבה עליו מזהב ומפז רב כבימי נעוריו הטובים...

ומעת אשר התרחק מארצו פנה תמיד אליה, אבל לא במבט גס, לא ככל שוכן ביתחמר המשתוקק אל ארץ מסורתו מפני שהיא משביעתו לחם ומספקת לו את חפציו החמריים, כי בעינים מלאות חיבת קדש הביט אליה, אל סגולתה הפנימית, המתאימה לתשוקה האלקית אשר החלה לשוב לתוכו. כן הארץ התנעה מטומאתה.

The character of the nation, in her descent, stimulated descent for the character of the spirit of the land as well. The land is paired with the nation eternally, such that when the spirit of the nation is weak, the land's splendour will not fulfill its role. The spirit of the land, the spirit of a desirable land filled with sacred song and the praise of G-d, descended ever lower. "And the land became impure, and I visited her sin upon her, and the land vomited out her residents. (Vayikra 18:25)" The spirit of the nation, as a whole, absorbed into itself negative, foreign foundations, until they clouded her inherent purity...

The two foundations, the nation and the land, which in their health added to each other such favour, such courage and strength, began in their illness to influence each other negatively, revoltingly, to the point where it became necessary to initiate the merciful/cruel medical initiative, the awful surgery, distancing the nation from the land, "And due to our sins we were exiled from our land, and distanced from our territory..."

In his exile, Israel abandoned his national [as opposed to individual – MT] concern for mundane matters. He turned his eyes and heart only to the heavens above. His heart did not pursue accumulation of strength, chariots and horses, like every nation upon its land. In general, the nation as a whole no longer had material pursuits. Together with this, he ceased lusting after the strays of the many nations, and the spirit of G-d began to move him to insight into the value of man and the level of his soul, and to value especially the spiritual worth of the nation, and her spiritual greatness. The Torah became more beloved to her than great quantities of gold, as in her good youth...

And from the time he was distanced from his land, he continually turned to her. Not coarsely, not like all of the inhabitants of clay who long for the land of their portion because it sates them with bread and provides for their material needs, but with eyes filled with love of the sacred he looked to her, to her inner splendour, which matches the Divine thirst which had begun to return to the nation. And so, too, the land shed her impurity.

This Week in Israeli History: 17 Iyar, 1965 - The Alignment

Rabbi Adam Frieberg

17 Iyar is Shabbat

As the 1965 elections for the sixth Knesset approached, the Left was nervous. At the end of the fifth Knesset, the Cherut and Liberal Party had formed a right-wing alliance known as *Gachal*, an acronym for Gush Cherut-Liberalim (Freedom-Liberals Bloc), led by Menachem Begin. Worried about *Gachal*, Mapai and Achdut HaAvoda united to form “the Alignment”, whose full name was *HaMa'arach L'Achdut Poalei Eretz Yisrael* (Alignment for the Unity of the Workers of the Land of Israel). This new party, which was formed on 17 Iyar (May 19) 1965, won 45 of 120 seats, making it by far the largest party and defeating *Gachal*, which won 25 seats.

While each of these alliances grew each side's numbers significantly, both Left and Right experienced splintering. David Ben-Gurion led a breakaway of eight MKs from Mapai to form *Rafi* (*Reshimat Poalei Yisrael*; Israeli Workers List), while seven MK's broke away from the Liberal Party to form the Independent Liberals.

Following the election, Mapai's leader, Levi Eshkol formed a coalition government with the National Religious Party, Mapam, the Independent Liberals, Poalei Agudat Yisrael and two Israeli Arab parties associated with the Alignment: Progress and Development, and Cooperation and Brotherhood.

During the Six Day War, Alignment leader and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol invited *Gachal* to join a national unity government. The party remained in the government after the war, and kept its place when Golda Meir became Prime Minister following Eshkol's death in 1969.

On January 23rd, 1968, Mapai and Achdut HaAvoda merged with *Rafi* to form the Israeli Labor Party, and the Alignment ceased to exist. *Rafi*'s leader, David Ben-Gurion, refused to join the Labor Party, and formed a new party, the National List.

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Highlights for May 17 – May 23 / 17 Iyar – 23 Iyar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
SHABBAT MAY 17				
7:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
Pre-minchah	R' Adam Frieberg	Pirkei Avot	Shaarei Tefillah	
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	This week: Chaverim
SUNDAY MAY 18				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah: Internet Minyanim	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	With light breakfast
9:00 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Halachah in Contemporary Israel On-line shiur in Hebrew: http://www.torontotorah.com/online		
MONDAY MAY 19				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Chabura: Times of Davening	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University students
7:30 PM	R' Shlomo Gemara	The Prophets of Israel: Yoel	Bnai Torah	Not this week
7:45 PM	R' Josh Gutenberg R' Mordechai Torczyner	Parshah Business Halachah: Lending	Shaarei Shomayim	Community Beit Midrash Night
TUESDAY MAY 20				
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Living Midrash	Shaarei Shomayim	
8:30 PM	R' Adam Frieberg	Laws of Shabbat	Shaarei Tefillah	
WED. MAY 21				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Jew and Her Food, Wk 3	BEBY	
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Yehoshua	101 Tangreen Circle	For women only
7:30 PM 9:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner R' Yehoshua Weber	Ethics of Lending Responsa: Yom ha'Atzmaut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Community Beit Midrash Night
THU. MAY 22				
10:15 AM	R' Aaron Greenberg	Laws of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University students
8:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Beitzah	BAYT	Community-wide Yachad Program
FRI. MAY 23				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Contemporary Halachah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced