

Fascinating INSIGHTS

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COMING SOON Bez"H

Fascinating Insights—The Sefer (in English)

[Curses that are Blessings](#)

The Baal Hatanya writes of the תוכחה, reprimand, curses, that in truth, they are nothing but¹ blessings.² He quotes the Zohar, which speaks of a hidden and revealed reality. Hashem, Torah, and man exist on a conscious and subconscious level. On the conscious level, these Pesukim appear to be curses. On this level they too serve a blessed purpose to attack the negative forces of existence. No one would consider it a curse when white blood cells mercilessly destroy harmful bacteria in order to protect the body from infection. On the subconscious, hidden level, the soul level, these curses are really blessings. They are not painful experiences we must endure for a greater good, dark clouds with silver linings; they are real blessings. These are such profound blessings, that they can only be expressed in a concealed and disguised manner. They are actually deeper blessings than the ones we can openly recognize!

So the blessings need to be concealed not in neutral terms but in “cursed” language. Only then are they truly concealed. The more sublime and intimate the experience, the more concealed it is. The hidden blessings in the תוכחה are greater than the open blessings that are written in the Torah.

The real prominence of something is the internal, hidden part. A blessing that’s hidden is pure and greater than any blessing said openly in the Torah. When we take a look at the body we have that which is external—fingers, etc.—and internal—heart, lungs, etc. Surely the internal organs are more important than that which is external. A scratch on the finger is insignificant in contrast to one on the lung. The more significant the organ is the more it needs to be protected.

¹ With this we can explain why the תוכחה is read in a lower tone by the Baal Korai, since על פי סוד (mystical, secret interpretation) the תוכחה is really blessings and a secret—סוד—is in a lower tone.

² Likutei Torah 2:48a. See also the Sifsei Kohen, Devarim 28:15 that on a revealed level these are תוכחה while on the hidden level it is Hashem's love, words of love... on the hidden level it is all consolation.

The most sublime blessings are couched in the most dreadful terms. This is because whenever a blessing is bestowed by heaven, it must first pass through the heavenly court, where the prospective recipient is judged as to whether or not he is worthy of the blessing. When the blessing is disguised as a curse, however, it bypasses the forces of strict judgment and can make its way straight to its recipient.

In light of this we can explain the Gemara³ that relates R' Shimon Bar Yochai sent his son, R' Elazar, to receive the blessings of a few sages. They bestowed upon him what sounded like many curses: “May it be Hashem’s will that you sow and not reap...let your house be destroyed...let your table be disturbed,⁴ and may you not see a new year.” His father revealed to him the meaning of their “blessings,” the soul of their words.

The Pasuk⁵ says שורך טובה לעיניך ולא תאכל ממנו חמרך גזול מלפניך ולא ישוב לך ישוב לך מושיע, your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes but you will not eat from it; your donkey will be robbed from before you but it will not return to you; your flocks will be given to your enemies and you will have no savior. The Chida⁶ notes that when the order of these words are reversed, it reads as follows: מושיע לך ואין לאיביך נתנות צאנך לך ישוב ולא מלפניך מושיע לך ואין לאיביך נתנות צאנך לך ישוב ולא מלפניך, “people will aid you. Your sheep will not be given to your enemies. They will return to you. Your donkey won’t be taken in front of you. From them (your ox), you will eat and they won’t be slaughtered before you.” This emphasizes the idea that on the surface these Pesukim appear to be curses but are blessings in their inner meaning.

As a child, R' Dov Ber of Lubavitch, along with the rest of the congregation, would listen to the reading of the weekly Parsha by his father, the Baal Hatanya. One year, the Baal Hatanya was out of town for Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo, which contains the section of תוכחה. After hearing the תוכחה read by the substitute Baal Korai, little Dov Ber was so upset that even a month later his father was unsure whether his son would be able to fast on Yom Kippur. When Dov Ber was asked why he wasn’t disturbed this way when the תוכחה was read in past years, he answered “When my father reads it, no curses are heard.”⁷ When a great person like the Baal Hatanya reads these Pesukim, one hears their subconscious meaning, in which they are blessings.

[Haftarah History](#)

Tosafos Yom Tov tells us that the Haftarahs were established when the wicked אנטיוכס—the king of יון—outlawed public reading of the Torah. The sages of the time, therefore, established the custom of reading a topic from the

³ Moed Katan 9b.

⁴ R' Shimon Bar Yochai explained they meant your table should be disturbed by your sons and daughters—that you should have many young children whose tendency is to disturb things that are on the table.

⁵ Devarim 28:31.

⁶ Nachal Kedumim. Me’am Loaz, Devarim 28:31. See also Hamaor Hagadol, p. 383.

⁷ HayomYom, 17 Elul.

Neviim (prophets)⁸ similar to what was supposed to be read from the Torah.⁹ Indeed, the Avudraham¹⁰ tells us the word הפטרה is rooted in פטור, exempt, as they were now exempt, having fulfilled Krias Hatorah.

So the Haftarah was in place of Krias Hatorah. As a result, there is a minimum of 21 Pesukim in a given Haftarah, corresponding to the seven Aliyos of Krias Hatorah since each Aliya requires at least three Pesukim (7 multiplied by 3 is 21).¹¹ Another allusion is the following: The one who receives the Aliya of¹² Maftir¹³ recites seven Brachos—one before and after his Aliya and five on the Haftarah. This hints to the seven Aliyos of Krias Hatorah.¹⁴ Also, the five Brachos on the Haftarah hints to the five books of Chumash.

Great Geula

There are many parallels between Yovel and Shavuos.

1) We are taught in regard to Yovel דרוך בארץ¹⁵ proclaim freedom throughout the land. Similarly, in regard to Torah (Shavuos) the Mishna says שעוסק בתלמוד אין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה, there is no one as free as one who engages in the study of Torah.¹⁶ Furthermore, the Ramban teaches us that Shavuos is the conclusion from Pesach—ומן חרותנו.

2) Concerning Yovel we are told וספרת¹⁷, you should count seven cycles of Shemita years. This is just as we do in the days that lead up to Shavuos—Sefira—as it says לכם¹⁸.

3) Yovel is the 50th year just as Shavuos is the 50th day from the start of Sefira.

⁸ The Haftarah is read from *Neviim* and not *Kesuvim* because the decree was also on *Kesuvim*. Another reason is because *Neviim* has topics similar to the Parshiyos of the Torah in contrast to *Kesuvim* (Levush, Orach Chaim 284:1).

⁹ Tosafos Yom Tov, Megilla 3:4 s.v. לכסדרן. Even though the decree became nullified, the Minhag didn't.

¹⁰ Shacharis Shel Shabbos, s.v. ולכן.

¹¹ Levush, Orach Chaim, 284:1.

¹² It is unclear whether the Maftir Aliya was intended to be one of the seven required Aliyos or to be an additional Aliya (Megillah 23a). We accommodate both opinions (See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 282:4). On Shabbos and Yom Tov we are allowed to add as many Aliyos as we want. We therefore read Maftir as the eighth Aliya, allowing us to follow both opinions. Even if Maftir is meant to be one of the seven required Aliyos, we may add on to those Aliyos. Thus, by reading Maftir as the eighth Aliya, we are keeping in accord with both opinions. The custom of repeating Pesukim developed in the post-Talmudic era, around the year 500. In Talmudic times, they wouldn't complete the weekly Parsha in seven Aliyos. They would arrange to leave some Pesukim to be read for Maftir and conclude the weekly Parsha, for the first time, with the Maftir Aliya. This change was a result of the Rabbonon Savoroi, sages from the period immediately following the Talmudic era, who instituted that the Kaddish which is said after reading the Torah should be said prior to Maftir. (This was intended to emphasize that the Maftir is not one of the seven Aliyos, but rather an eighth.) For this reason, the weekly Parsha must be concluded before Maftir, since it would be improper to recite a Kaddish in middle of a Torah portion. Thus, the Parsha is concluded, Kaddish is recited, and only then are the last few Pesukim repeated as Maftir (Tosafos to Megilla 23a, s.v. כיוון).

¹³ Maftir is the Aliya which is given to the person who will recite the Haftarah (or the one who will recite the blessings for the Haftarah). Since the Haftarah is culled from *Neviim*, it would seem disrespectful to the Torah if someone was called to read only from *Neviim*, thereby indicating *Neviim* to be of equal importance as the Torah (Shulchan Aruch Harav 282:10). To ensure the proper respect for the Torah, the rabbis instituted that the one reciting the Haftarah should also receive the last Aliya which is read from the Torah (Megilla 23a). This Aliya is called מפטיר, the verb form of the word הפטרה, since its function is to enable the Haftarah to be read.

¹⁴ Levush, Orach Chaim, 284:1. Mishna Brura 284:2.

¹⁵ Vayikra 25:10. דרוך is rooted in the word דר, to dwell since he can dwell where he wants and is not under the domain of others (Rashi ויקראתם).

¹⁶ Avos 6:2.

¹⁷ Vayikra 25:8.

¹⁸ Vayikra 23:15. Actually, it is called Shavuos—weeks—since it is comprised of the weeks of Sefira that we improved ourselves.

4) The Shofar heralds in Yovel. Likewise, at Matan Torah the Shofar was blown.¹⁹ Furthermore, the term used for Shofar there is Yovel as it says במשך היובל, upon an extended blast of the Shofar.²⁰

5) Yovel is the idea of returning to the source. This is seen by a field and slaves as it says איש אל אהותו ואיש אל ושבתם, משפחתו תשובו, you shall return each man to his ancestral heritage and you shall return each man to his family. This is just as when one throws an object up, it must come down—gravity. We see the same at Matan Torah since we went back to our source since we died twice as it says נפשי יצאה בדברו. The Krias Hatorah on Shavuos is from Parshas Yisro, a convert—returning to the source.²² Moreover, on Shavuos we read Rus who also converted. She came back to the source and as it says השבה משדי מואב, who returned from the fields of Moav.²³ Additionally, מואב yields a sum of 49 referring to the 49 levels of impurity and that is what we work on by Sefira. Rus comes to יהודה. Observing its initials we see it spells²⁴ יבל.²⁵

יבל is the source of Moshiach as we say in Lecha Dodi דודי הלחמי על יד בן ישי בית הלחמי. Thus it says יגאלנו²⁶ או דוד או בן דוד (the simple meaning is in regard to a Jew owned by a non-Jew, his uncle or his cousin should redeem him) as דוד consists of the same letters as דוד. דוד rearranged spells בן דוד.²⁷

Every Jew has Geula as it says לבלתי ידח ממנו נדח, no one can be banished from him.²⁸ This is the meaning in גאולה תהיה לו²⁹ as each Jew will have his Geula. The first letters of יהוה-ו-ה וישבו בנים י-ה-ו-ה spell יובל as it is the idea of getting back to the source.³⁰ It says לי בני ישראל, the children of Israel are servants to me, in regard to Yovel. Noticing its initials, we see it again spells יובל since on Yovel we go back to the source, Hashem, as we are עבדי יהוה. Similarly, by Shavuos we become עבדי ה' and we are no longer עבדי פרעה as this is the conclusion of Pesach where it says ויעבדוני. The Baal Haturim³² points out that the terminology of Geula is mentioned 19 times in Parshas Behar. These correspond to the 19 Brachos in Shemoneh Esrei.³³ The Pasuk יגאלנו (which is the same letters as דוד as we mentioned before) corresponds to עירך ולירושלים!

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Ztz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹⁹ Shemos 19:13. Shofar is the source just as קול has no words. Indeed, the Targum on Shofar is יובלא (See Vayikra 25:10, Rashi s.v. Yovel. Shemos, 19:13, Rashi s.v. Hayovel and Unkolos there).

²⁰ Also, Shofar symbolizes freedom [Thus, שופר is the same equivalent as ירושלם (missing a י as it is spelled this way many times in Nach), 586, since this represents Yerushalayim in its exile state.] as in תקע בשופר גדול. The same is with Shavuos as it is also the idea of freedom.

²¹ Vayikra 25:10. The Gemara (Bechoros 55) tells us the Euphrates is the source of the other waters in the world and another name for it is יובל as it says ועל יובל ישלה שרשיו, spreads out its roots along a brook (Yirmiya 17:8).

²² A convert has a Jewish Neshama. It is just lost among the non-Jews and has no rest until the person becomes Jewish.

²³ Rus 1:22.

²⁴ Furthermore, Moshiach comes from Rus.

²⁵ Yovel is also spelled missing the ו as in Vayikra 25:50.

²⁶ Vayikra 25:49.

²⁷ See Baal Haturim 25:49.

²⁸ Shmuel 2,14:14.

²⁹ Vayikra 25:48. It may take Gehinom or a Gilgul but every Jew has Geula. The Arizal says even ישו has... after 50,000 Yovels.

³⁰ Emunas Itecha, Behar-Bechukosai, תשמח.

³¹ Vayikra 25:55, 42.

³² Vayikra 25:52.

³³ This alludes to the idea to be גאולה לתפילה (Brachos 9b).