

# Vayoel Moshe

## Parashat Behar-Bechukotai

A collection of talks and lessons, on the weekly Parasha and Holidays, from the scion of the holy lineage, Rabbi Yoel Pinto, son of our holy and esteemed Admor, Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, Chief Rabbi of Morocco. Torah thoughts, novelties and explanations, precious teachings to illuminate the Parasha and Holidays, rich with novelties in all realms of the Torah, esoteric reflections, from throughout the weekly portions and Holidays. •Issue No. 2 •Behar-Bechukotai, 5784



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### Parashat Bechukotai

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### Preparation for Shavuot

A Heavenly voice is heard from Mount Sinai. This voice says to return to God, and is heard by the heart

אם-בְּחֻקֹתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

"If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3)

**Due to man's composition his natural inclination is to seek to break boundaries. One who is able to defeat his inclination will be blessed with immense sustenance.**

In this week's Parasha, Bechukotai, the Torah relates the reward that one will receive for abiding by the word of God over his own will and comfort. The Parasha also relates consequences for one who disobeys the will of God. At first, the Torah expresses that if Am Yisrael will observe His commandments, He will open the rain channels of Heaven. The Torah then states that if they will not follow the commandments,

then God will hold back the rain from falling. This idea, that rain is used for reward and punishment is found elsewhere. The Torah states (Devarim 11:13-14)

וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם... וְנָתַתִּי מָטָר-אֲרֻצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ



יִרְה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ

which translates to: "And it will be, if you heed to My commandments that I command you this day...I will give the rain of your land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain". A few verses later the Torah asserts the consequence:

וְעָצַר אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה מָטָר

which translates to: "and He will close off the heavens, and there

**Life advice** | From the teachings of the Admor Rabbi Josiah Pinto Shlita

## Life as a work of art

The evil inclination seeks to make man fear perfection. There was a beggar who used to travel the world to collect funds. He told his story to the people to make them have mercy on him. He then married a woman, and thought to himself "how will I bring livelihood to my family?" Soon after, his wife was due to conceive, and he told the midwife "when you bring out the child break his leg so he will limp and people will have mercy and act charitably with him." She did as he commanded. When his wife conceived again, he told the midwife to do the same. However, when the

third child was born he was especially beautiful, and the midwife said "how can I damage such an angelic child?" She refused, and the child was born complete. The father became anxious and said "what will be with my son? He's too beautiful! He will never have livelihood!" This is the exact advice given by the evil inclination. One must ignore this, and follow the path to perfection with conviction. Life is analogous to a piece of art. Some places are dark, and some are light. The darkness is part of the image, and it is incomplete without it.

will be no rain”.

### **Why is rainfall always the reward for fulfilling the commandments?**

The Apta Rabbi, in his work “Ohev Yisrael” (Chiddushim Leshabbat Kodesh) asks the following question. We know that God’s reward and punishment follows the path of “measure for measure”, as stated in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 90a): all measures dispensed by Hashem to His people are dispensed measure for measure”. This means that when God rewards or punishes, the reward or the punishment will relate to the deed. If so, asks the Apta Rabbi, why is God’s promised reward or punishment always whether rain will be the result? For not every commandment is directly connected to rain.

The answer to this question can be learned from the following lesson of Rabbi Shlomo Efraim of Lunschütz in his work, Kli Yakar (to Bereshit 1:6). Kli Yakar explains that God in His endless wisdom, created man from certain properties. Due to these properties man desires to break his boundaries and go against the will of God.

### **Man is composed of three forces: Heaven, earth, and sea**

The Kli Yakar extrapolates from the beginning verses of Bereshit that God created man from three forces: Heaven, earth, and sea. Man is composed of spirituality and physicality, as well. The spiritual part of man comes from Heaven; from the place where the souls are, which is under the Heavenly Throne. The physical part of man was created from a mixture of earth and the sea. This is taught in the words of Rashi’s commentary on the following verse (Bereshit 2:6):

וַיֵּצֵא מִן־הָאָרֶץ מִיֵּשֶׁבֶת אֶת־כָּל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה

which translates to: “And a mist ascended from the earth and watered the entire surface of the ground”. Rashi explains that God first moistened the dust, as a kneader would, and then created man (as the next verse states - “And the

Lord, Hashem formed man of dust from the ground”). God then placed the soul, which was taken from Heaven, into the body created from earth and the sea. This is hinted to in the name of man, which in Hebrew is אִישׁ. The word אִישׁ is also the abbreviation of אֶרֶץ יָם שָׁמַיִם, which means earth, sea and Heaven.

The Kli Yakar continues on with another insight. He points out that throughout the Midrashim we see that these three, Heaven, earth, and sea strive to fill the entire physical reality. They each desire that their existence fill the entire physical world, and replace any other physicality that was ever created.

### **Since man was created from Heaven, earth, and sea his desire is to breakthrough boundaries**

The Kli Yakar thus explains why man has an inclination to go against the will of God. For the three elements that comprise man: Heaven, earth, and sea all desired to stretch beyond their limits and fill the world. Therefore, since creations invariably have the characteristics of what they are composed of, man thus desires to cross the borders that God set for him.

Nevertheless, man ought to learn from those three elements in order to control his inclination. Even though the three elements wished to take over the entire physical existence, when God commanded them to their boundaries, they listened to His word. Even though man is imbued with the inclination to drift from God’s limits, he must control himself.

After studying this lesson of the Kli Yakar, we can now explain how God’s system of reward and punishment through rain is connected to the method of “measure for measure”.

### **Rainfall connects all three elements**

The following passage from the Talmud (Ta’anit 9b) describes how

rainfall utilizes all three elements: Heaven, earth, and sea. The Talmud states: “Rabbi Eliezer says: The entire world drinks from the waters of the ocean (evaporated ocean water is the source of rain). As it is stated: And there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground” (Genesis 2:6).

God’s method of reward and punishment therefore connects to rain, because rain is created from the same elements as man: Heaven, earth, and sea.

In order for God to combine these three aforementioned elements (i.e. have it rain), which each desire for the other to not exist, man must control his desire to cross the boundaries God set. Thus, if man is to defeat his natural inclination and control his desire to cross God’s boundaries, God will then combine the three elements that have an inclination to cross their limits. Conclusively, rainfall is “measure for measure” for reward and punishment.

God wishes to fulfill all of one’s needs. In order for Him to do so, one needs to fight his inclination (which originates from the three elements) that compels him to violate the will of God. If man is to control these inclinations, he will surely be blessed with the mercy of God; measure for measure.

### **The covenant between God and man is that God will not hold nature back from serving man, while man must abide by the word of God**

This lesson is consistent with what the holy book Chovot Halevavot (Cheshbon Hanefesh 3:6) teaches. He says as follows: When one feels compelled to act against the Creator, and break his covenant, he should stop and think. He should put to heart all he sees in the world. All exist by the word of God, and guard His covenant. Does one see anything leaving the confines of God’s service, rebelling against His word or breaking His covenant? Conversely, man’s place in the covenant is to ensure that he

fulfills the word of God.

The Chovot Halevavot furthermore says that one should think: has God ever broken his covenant (e.g. has the sun not risen one day?)? How

then, can I break “my side of the deal”?

One who stands steadfast and honors his Creator, fights his inclinations, is most precious in the

eyes of God. Moreover, he will receive great blessing and grace, akin to the level of the most righteous individuals.

### Preparation for Shavuot

## A Heavenly voice is heard from Mount Sinai. This voice says to return to God, and is heard by the heart

The lofty and holy day of Shavuot is approaching. This is the day that God gave the Torah to Am Yisrael (the people of Israel), and separated them from all nations to be His holy people. The older generations relate that they were able to hear the voice of God relaying the commandments to them, and perceive the miracles that were done for Am Yisrael in the desert. In order to properly prepare ourselves for this day, in which we receive the Torah afresh, we must examine the words of Moshe regarding the receiving of the Torah. The Torah states (Devarim 5:19):

אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה דִּבֶּר הַשֵּׁם אֶל־כָּל־קְהֵלְכֶם בְּהַר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ הַעֲרָפֶל קוֹל גְּדוֹל וְלֹא יָסָר

which translates to (based on Onkelus): “The Lord spoke these words to your entire assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the opaque darkness, with a great voice, which did not cease”. In Rashi’s commentary to that verse, he explains “did not cease” means that God’s voice will never cease, and will be powerful forever. A heavenly voice pours out daily from Mount Sinai, and will eternally, as stated in Pirke Avot (6:2): “every day a heavenly voice goes forth from Mount Sinai and makes proclamation, and says: “Woe unto humankind for their contempt towards the Torah”.

This is rather perplexing, for is it so that a voice is heard from Mount Sinai daily? If this is true, someone would have reported it by now. If one would try and answer that it

is voiced but nobody can hear it, it remains difficult to understand. For if nobody can hear it, what is its purpose?

### The Heavenly voice is there to inspire man’s heart

The holy Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement answers this question with a profound insight. At times, a person feels inspired or awakened to return to God, follow His ways or study Torah. These feelings of inspiration come about from this Heavenly voice that pours out of Mount Sinai. These feelings are experienced even by Jews who are very far from observance of the Torah.

This is what the holy Zohar refers to when it discusses a “higher awakening”. This higher awakening is one that God sends to man to inspire him to walk in the path of holiness and purity, and return to His Torah.

Yet, at times one does not heed the call of awakening that he feels in his heart. In a sense he is ignoring a calling from God. For this inspiration does not originate from him; rather, it was sent by God.

### All of Am Yisrael perished during the giving of the Torah, and God revived them with dew

It is not for no reason that this Heavenly voice pours forth specifically from Mount Sinai, the place of the giving of the Torah. Before Am Yisrael received the Torah, God already informed them that if they don’t return to Him, He will stretch

out His arm to them and lift them. This can be inferred from the following passage from the Talmud (Shabbat 88b): From each and every commandment that emerged from the mouth of the God, the souls of the Jewish people left their bodies, as it is stated:

נַפְשֵׁי יִצְאָה בְּדַבְרָה

which translates to: “My soul departed when he spoke” (Shir Hashirim 5:6). And since their souls left their bodies from the first commandment, how did they receive the second commandment? Rather, God rained the dew upon them that, in the future, will revive the dead, and He revived them.

Why did the souls of Am Yisrael leave their bodies after hearing every utterance? Moreover, why did God rain the dew upon them to revive them?

### Am Yisrael perished at the receiving of the Torah to signify that they cannot fulfill all the commandment perfectly, and will at times sin

When Am Yisrael received the Torah, they saw the immense amount of commandments and restrictions that they were taking upon themselves, and were worried they would not be able to fulfill them fully. Therefore, when they heard the commandments being uttered by God, their soul left them – as a message to God that they are incapable of keeping all the commandments perfectly. The message was meant to relay to God the following. One who does not guard the commandments is considered as if

he is dead. Thus, when they died, they were relating to God that at times they would falter in the observance of the commandments, and be "dead".

In order to alleviate the worry of Am Yisrael, God rained dew upon them and revived them.

**Dew comes down from Heaven without any assistance from the earth, so too God inspires man to repent even if man does not initiate**

God related to Am Yisrael in the Prophets (Hoshea 14:6):

אֶהְיֶה כַּטֵּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

which translates to: "I will be to Israel like dew". It is well known that there is a distinction between rain and dew. For rain, comes down when the water from the ground evaporates into the clouds. However, dew comes down regardless of the water from the ground.

With this we can now understand why God used dew specifically to revive Am Yisrael. When Am Yisrael sent the message to God that they were worried they would not be able to fully comply with all His laws, God sent back a message. He sent back the message of dew, which represents the idea of a "higher awakening". God was telling Am Yisrael that they would not

completely lose track of the Torah, for He would send down His higher awakenings. This is what is meant by the aforementioned verse

אֶהְיֶה כַּטֵּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

God was relating to Am Yisrael that He would always be there to send down the dew that would inspire and awaken them to return to the Torah.

Therefore, the heavenly voice comes specifically from Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai is the place where God communicated to Am Yisrael that even if they falter, he will provide them with inspiration to repent and return to His ways.

**The Chafetz Chaim used to say "Why should we hold back the return of the King, God to His home"**

If Am Yisrael would heed to their inner voice that inspires them to return to God, then all of everyone would be fully righteous, and the Mashiach (Messiah) would come speedily.

This lesson could be accentuated by studying the words of the Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim describes in his work, Kevod Shamayim (ch. 3) the following. When Avshalom rebelled against his father King David, most of Am Yisrael sided with Avshalom and wanted

to kill King David. God saved King David, and Avshalom was killed by Yoav Ben Tzurureya. Subsequently, Am Yisrael returned to King David's side, and wanted him to rule as king. However, the elders of Yehuda were hesitant and did not want David to return to kingship so quickly. King David, from his place of hiding then sent to Zadok and Eviatar to speak to the elders of Yehuda, and said as follows (Shmuel 2:19:12):

לָמָּה תְהִי אַחֲרָיִם לְהָשִׁיב אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלַיִכִּיתוּ

which translates to: "Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace?"

The Chafetz Chaim says that this question applies to each and everyone in Am Yisrael. For God promised that He will not bring Mashiach until all of Am Yisrael is worthy of redemption. Henceforth, anyone who doesn't repent and change his ways is holding back Mashiach from coming. One who doesn't repent should ask himself: Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace?

One should therefore listen to the inner Godly voice that is calling for him to repent. Sooner than later. For through this will God return to His home, Jerusalem. May it be speedily in our days.

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