

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 27 Iyar 5779, the 42nd day of the Omer. We bensch Rosh Chodesh Sivan, which will be this Tuesday. The reappearance of the moon will be early Monday morning at 2:54am and 1 cheilek (about 3 seconds), Jerusalem time. We do say Av HaRachamim.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 542 Hz) (p. 777 S) (p. 500 Hi) (p. 708 AS)

BECHUKOTAI **בְּחֻקֹּתַי** Leviticus 26:3

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED) Rabbi Emeritus
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1. *“If you will follow My ordinances ...”* (26:7). Rashi explains that the Torah promises great reward for toiling in [the study and observance of] Torah. Similarly, Chazal note (Brachot 28b) that we toil and receive reward, while others toil and go unrewarded. The Chafetz Chaim illustrates these *Ma'amarei Chazal* with a parable: A person went to a shoemaker and engaged him to make a pair of shoes for him for which he promised to pay \$100. A week later, when the man came to pick up his shoes, the shoemaker said to him, “I’m sorry, but they are not finished yet. However, since I’ve put a great deal of time and labor into producing them, I would like to be paid for my efforts.” The man replied, “I beg your pardon, but I ordered a pair of shoes, and am obligated to pay you only when the job is completed. Your toil has no value to me as long as the product remains unfinished.” The Chafetz Chaim concludes: The contrary is true in regard to the reward for fulfilling the Torah and Mitzvot. If a person tries his best, and utilizes his capabilities to their fullest in the pursuit of Torah, then he is rewarded even if he is not successful in producing a finished product and understanding and observing the Torah in its entirety. The reward comes for toiling for the sake of Torah.

2. *“If you will follow My ordinances...”* The Divrei Sha’ul notes that Chazal in Sanhedrin interpret the word *Chukotai* as meaning “the laws which I have etched out [and decreed] already.” He compares this to soldiers who are learning how to shoot by aiming their guns and shooting towards the center of the target. However, if they were to shoot first and then draw a circle around the bullet mark, their attempts at marksmanship would be worthless. The same is true in regard to our observance of Torah and Mitzvot. We are obligated to guide ourselves according to the laws which were already established by Hashem. However, we dare not enact laws of our own which are unrelated to the Torah and attribute religious significance to them. This is why the Torah stresses: “If you will go in My ordinances” – in the laws which I have etched out already – then you will merit great reward.

3. 26:31 *“I will lay your cities in ruin and I will make your sanctuaries desolate; I will not savor your satisfying aromas.”* *“In ruin ... desolate.”* Your cities will be devoid even of passersby and there will no longer be groups of Jews making pilgrimages to the Temple (Rashi). HaKtav V’HaKabbalah explains the difference between the two terms. Churban refers to a condition in which something does not function as it should. A synagogue can be described as “in ruin” if it is in disuse, because even if its walls are still standing and in good repair, it is in a state of spiritual destruction, as the Temple was when the people were no longer worthy of God’s Presence. The term

“desolate” is used only for something whose desolation is apparent externally. Thus the land is described below as desolate because it was unplanted and untended. Gur Aryeh explains that the several series of seven punishments end here and refer only to what would happen in Eretz Yisrael. The misfortunes described later in the chapter would occur during the various exiles.

4. *“And I will bring upon you a sword avenging the covenant...”* (26:25). The Netziv of Volozhin said that a king who conquers a foreign country does not punish the inhabitants even though they fought bitterly against him, since they did not commit any crime; they merely wanted to prevent another king from ruling them. However, when members of a king’s own nation rebel against their monarch or aid the enemy, the king punishes them severely, for they have no excuse for their actions. This is what the verse means. If Bnei Yisrael will, *Chas V’Shalom*, rebel against the Torah, Hashem will punish them severely and bring upon them “the sword which avenges the Covenant,” since they will be guilty of having rebelled against their own King.

5. In the Bechukotei section of the Sefer HaBrit, the Torah traces the seven steps of those who cease to study Torah. This progression is as follows (see Rashi): (a) Diligent study ceases; (b) Mitzvot are no longer fulfilled; (c) Animosity is developed against those who perform mitzvot; (d) The Rabbis are detested; (e) Attempts are made to prevent others from performing mitzvot; (f) Denial of the authenticity of mitzvot; (g) Denial of the existence of God. The Parshah then goes on to enumerate the catastrophes which will befall the nation if they do not repent. After each admonishment, God says, “If you simply consider what has befallen you thus far as happenstance (*keri*), then I will heap tragedy upon you sevenfold.” This spiral decline is actually what occurred to Bnei Yisrael as they left Egypt. They did not wish to leave Egyptian soil and to learn Torah. More of this spiritual decline can be cited from the Torah and the Midrash.

HAFTORAH

(p. 551 Hz) (p. 789 S) (p. 887 Hi) (p. 1179 AS)

JEREMIAH **יְרֵמְיָהוּ** 16:19

After the Parshah’s lengthy prediction of troubles, the haftorah presents a short but powerful description of the lonely Jew who weathers the pain and suffering which goes with Hashem’s punishments. This Jew will eventually hear the nations of the world renounce their foolish idol worship but first he will develop the requisite trust in Hashem which will serve him in difficult times. Baruch HaGever, “Blessed is the man,” says Yirmiyahu, “who places his trust in Hashem and for whom Hashem is the sole source of confidence.” This verse means that we should not only put our trust in Hashem that He will bring about our personal and national salvation, but also that we should trust that He alone helps us, and not any of the means He may use to help us, such as wealth, health or other people. Such a man knows that other forces are not truly responsible for assisting us. Trust in Hashem is what will heal the suffering Jews of their pains – *“if He heals us, we will be healed; if He saves us, we will be saved, for only He is our praise.”*

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QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI 5779
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

I. From the Text

1. What is the first thing mentioned in the Torah as a reward for observing the Mitzvot? (26:4)
2. What is the biggest blessing? (26:6)
3. What number surfaces repeatedly in the Tochachah/Admonition? (26:18)
4. Why are many women using one oven? (26:26)
5. What is the valuation of a Jewish male between the ages of 20 and 60? (27:3)

II. From Rashi

6. What is the "right" time for it to rain? (26:4)
7. What is the secret blessing of "you will eat your bread with satisfaction"? (26:5)
8. "I will place My Sanctuary among you..." (26:11). Where is "My Sanctuary"?
9. Why will the Jewish people be punished for the sin of their fathers? (26:39)
10. Is it possible for a person to pledge the value of a cow's leg as a gift to the Holy Temple? (27:9)

III. From the Rabbis

11. What ill-advised conclusions will Jews reach while in Exile? (Hirsch)
12. Why was the Babylonian Exile 70 years?
13. After the Babylonian Exile, how many Jews left Babylonia to return to Eretz Yisrael? (Ezra 2:64)

IV. Haftorah : Jeremiah

14. What Berachah in the Shemoneh Esrei is taken from the the end of this Haftorah?

V. Relationships

- a) Gad - Menasheh
- b) Yocheved - Yehudah
- c) Tzipporah - Gershon
- d) Dinah - Zerach
- e) Avraham – Haran

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI 5779

1. The rain will come in a good time, and the land will yield its produce.
2. There will be peace in the land.
3. Seven (Rashi: There are seven sins and seven punishments, and the cycle will continue.)
4. Due to the lack of firewood.
5. 50 shekels.
6. When people are not walking outside, as on Friday night.
7. You will eat a little bit and feel satisfied.
8. In the Holy Temple in Yerushalayim.
9. Because they have accepted those sins as their own.
10. Yes
11. Jews in Exile will think that the Mitzvot only apply to Jews in Eretz Yisrael. Jews in foreign lands adapt to new conditions.
12. In punishment for the 70 Shemittah years that Bnei Yisrael did not observe in the time of the First Holy Temple.
13. Only 42,360.
14. Heal us, Hashem, and we will be healed.

Relationships

- a) Uncle Gad
- b) Uncle Yehudah
- c) Mother Tzipporah
- d) Aunt Dinah
- e) Brothers