

Parshat Ki Tavo 5782

Don't Miss the Message!

As we read the Parsha leading up to the Tochacha, we read: *"And these Blessings will come upon you and they will reach (overtake) you (v'hisigucha)"* [Devorim 28:2].

Many of our commentators are bothered by the expression "v'hisigucha". Would it not have been sufficient to say, "All these blessings will come upon you?" What does "v'hisigucha" add to this verse? Rav Schlessinger suggests the following:-

The pasuk at the beginning of Parshas Bechukotai tells us, *"And you will eat your bread and be satisfied"* [Vayikra 26:5]. Rashi there cites a Toras Kohanim that explains the brocha "One will eat a little bit and it will be blessed in his intestines." One explanation for this is that although the quantity will be small, the quality will be high, however another is that the posuk means the blessing is that one will be psychologically and satisfied even though he has physically only consumed a small amount.

This second explanation of Rashi may be the ultimate blessing -- to be satisfied and to realise that one has been blessed is the blessing of all blessings. Sometimes Hashem can shower us with good -- health, family, and wealth -- but if we do not realize it, if we are never happy, then what good is the blessing? We need in other words to understand the blessing, to understand we have been blessed and to understand who has blessed us. A person can be impoverished. He can eat just a little bit (as the Toras Kohanim states) and if he is satisfied with it, then he has everything he needs. On the other hand, a person can have fortunes and success, but if he doesn't realise that he has a bracha, then he is a poor man indeed.

We say the pasuk (in Ashrei) three times a day: "You open Your Hand, and satisfy all life, with its desire" [Tehillim 145:16]. We understand the words "Poseach es Yadecha, u'Masbia l'chol chai". What is the meaning of the word "Ratzon" (with its desire)? "Ratzon" means that the recipient will be happy with it; not only physically satisfied, but psychologically satisfied, as well. That too, is what the blessing referred to earlier is about. *"And all these Blessings will come upon you..."*. Fine, but that is not sufficient. *"...and they will reach their purpose (v'hisigucha)." -- the recipient will be happy with the brocha, with the blessing. He will realise that it is a blessing. Without that realisation, one has no brocha.*

With this explanation, Rav Schlessinger, also explains the parallel usage of this word later in our Parsha [Devorim 28:15] *"... and all the curses will come upon you and will reach you (v'hisigucha)." What does that mean?*

That "v'hisigucha" means the same thing. Sometimes a person can have misfortune and he doesn't even realise it. He doesn't realise what is happening to him. He doesn't realise how far he has gone. The curses therefore don't even work! The recipient doesn't "get it." He misses the message of the curse. That is the meaning of "v'hisigucha" in this context -- "the curse will reach you."

Rav Noach Weinberg tells a story about a young man who once said to him, "I don't need to learn or go to a Yeshiva, because G-d and I are close...in fact we are like this (as he showed his fingers twisted together to represent a 'twosome')!" Rav Noach asked, "How do you know that you and G-d are like 'this'?" The young man responded that he was riding his bike along a mountain road and a truck came along, veered toward him, forcing him off the cliff with his bike. He saw himself going down the tremendous embankment and visualized that the end was at hand. All of a sudden, he saw a branch hanging out of the mountain. He reached out and hung on, and was saved, walking away without a scratch. "That's how I know," he said, "that me and G-d are like 'this'!" Rav Noach then asked him, "Did you ever think about why the truck knocked you off the cliff? Maybe *that* is what G-d is trying to tell you."

This was a person who unfortunately experienced a negative incident - he seemingly received a kelala - but the message did not reach him. There was no "v'hisigucha". He didn't "get it." He missed the message. It is very common to hear someone say 'Boruch Hashem' when something good happens to them. How do we approach life when things don't go as we would wish or as we planned or worse still, G-d forbid, when something unpleasant occurs?

We must "get the message" from whatever it is that happens to us. This is like the young man in the story who needed to "get the message" from his incident. Only by receiving the message, can we even begin to consider how to react. The blessing of "v'hisigucha" is that when the blessing comes, we should have the blessing of being satisfied and when, heaven forbid, the punishment sometimes must come, let us not miss that message, either. Let us hear what the Ribbono shel Olam is trying to tell us!

Shabbat Shalom!