

Bechukotai
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DEDICATION

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Esther and Hatzlacha for Avrohom Chaim Ben Gittel

Perspective On G-ds Fearful Warnings and Threats

A. Context

1. The blessings: 26: 4-13:- Purpose and Plenty

26:4

נִתְּנִי גִשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיּוֹ:

I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit

26:12

וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ-לִי לְעָם:

I will be ever present in your

midst: I will be your God, and you shall be My people

2. The Curses: 26: 14-25- Emptiness, emotional Illness, depression

26:16

אֶף-אֲנִי אַעֲשֶׂה-זֹאת לָכֶם וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֶת-הַשְּׁחָפֹת וְאֶת-הַקְּדָחַת מְכֻלּוֹת עֵינַיִם וּמַדִּיבַת גִּפְשׁ וְזָרַעְתֶּם לְרִיק וְזָרַעְתֶּם וְאָכְלוּ אֹיְבֵיכֶם:

I in turn will do this to you: I will wreak misery upon you—consumption and fever,^{*} *consumption and fever* Precise nature of these ills is uncertain. which cause the eyes to pine and the body to languish; you shall sow your seed to no purpose, for your enemies shall eat it.

3. Rik and Keri and Mikra

26: 20,21

וְתִם לְרִיק כְּחֶכֶם וְלֹא־תִתֶּן אֶרְצְכֶם אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הָאָרֶץ לֹא יִתֵּן פְּרִיָּו:

so that your strength shall be spent to no purpose. Your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

וְאִם־תֵּלֶכְוּ עִמִּי קָרִי וְלֹא תֹאבֹדוּ לְשִׁמְעִי לִי וְיִסְפַּתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִכָּה שִׁבְעַת כְּחַטֹּאתֵיכֶם:

And if you remain hostile toward Me and refuse to obey Me, I will go on smiting you sevenfold for your sins.

4. 26:44-45:-The endurance of our Brit

וְאִף־גַּם־זֹאת בְּהִיוֹתָם בָּאָרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם לֹא־מֵאַסְתִּים וְלֹא־גַעֲלֹתִים לְכַלֹּתָם לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

Yet, even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them: for I am their God

וְזָכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית רַאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי־אֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם לְהַיּוֹת לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי ה'

I will remember in their favor the covenant with the ancients, whom I freed :
.,:from the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God

B. Chinuch: style and substance- Look at the product

1. 7--17--37-67

Ages 1-3: Toddlers begin to understand the idea of rules, and can start to respond if told not to do something. While they begin to realize that others have feelings and needs, it can be difficult for toddlers to resist acting impulsively. For example, when an 18-month-old wants a toy, he or she is as likely to grab it from another child. At this stage, children do not yet have the ability to truly distinguish between right and wrong on their own. Instead, they rely on parents to define morality, and learn that “right” is being obedient. By consistently offering guidance and correction, parents teach children about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and that consequences follow actions.

Ages 4-5: Rather than just being directed by adults, preschoolers begin to develop their own ideas of right and wrong based on what they learn in their families. With increasing sociability and a growing understanding of the feelings and rights of other people, “moral intelligence” develops as well. While they still need lots of guidance and reminding, children now begin to develop a strong sense of justice and awareness of acceptable behavior. By discussing ethical situations and talking about feelings to develop empathy and compassion, parents can help children develop a moral code. Through offering positive guidance and setting clear boundaries, expectations, and consequences for moral behavior, parents can help preschoolers clarify values and build ethical behavior for life.

2. Rabbi J. Sacks-

The whole idea contained in the 13 Attributes of Compassion ([Shemot 34:6-7](#)) is that God’s love and forgiveness are stronger than His justice and punishment. Why, therefore, are the curses in this week’s parsha so much longer and so much more emphasized than the blessings?

The reason the curses are so dramatic is not because God seeks to punish, but the exact opposite. The Talmud tells us that God weeps when He allows disaster to strike His people: “Woe to Me, that due to their sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple and exiled them [My children] among the nations of the world.”([Brachot 3a](#)) The curses were meant as a warning. They were intended to put off, scare, discourage. They are like a parent warning a young child not to play with electricity because it is dangerous. The parent may deliberately intend to scare the child, but they do so out of love, not severity.

3. General and Specific

Ibn Ezra 26:14

The empty heads say that there are more curses than blessings. However, they do not speak the truth. What Scripture does is to speak of the blessings in general terms. However, it lists the curses in detail in order to frighten and scare the listeners. What I say will be clear to the one who reads the text carefully.

This means that after each warning in the form of “... if you do not listen...”, there are only 2 or 3 verses containing curses. However, we recall that in the case of the blessings, after “if you follow My laws”, we read ten verses in a row, abounding in blessings!

4. Plenty Vs Insufficiency

26:6

It is here that we turn to the Ramban. NACHMANIDES examines the notion of the removal of vicious animals (verse 6). He wishes to understand the difficult phraseology

“In the view of Rabbi Yehuda the text reads simply; that vicious animals will not enter the land. In the wake of the plenty and other blessings of goodness, the cities will fill with people and (due to the increased population gaining greater control over the land) wild animals will not venture near a populated place

. But Rabbi Simeon's opinion states that ‘they will cease causing harm’ i.e. the evil (violence) of the animals will cease to exist in the world. This is correct FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF ISRAEL'S FULFILLMENT OF THE COMMANDMENTS WILL BE AS THE WORLD WAS AT ITS VERY BEGINNINGS BEFORE THE SIN OF ADAM. No beast attacking man. As it states (Talmud Berachot 33a) ‘It is not the serpent which kills but sin which kills.’” (commentary to 26:6)

C. Fear based motivation or understanding of how societies fail?

Rashi 26:15

וְאִם-בְּחִקְתִּי תִמְאָסוּ וְאִם אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטִי תִגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי לְהַפְרֹכֶם

אֶת-בְּרִיתִי:

if you reject My laws and spurn My rules, so that you do not observe all My commandments and you break My covenant,

TO BREAK COVENANT — denying the great principle of the existence of God (Sifra, Bechukotai, Section 2 3). — Thus you have here seven sins the first of which brings the second in its train and so on to the seventh

And these are: He has not studied; and therefore has not practiced the . commandments; consequently he scorns others who do practice them; he hates the Sages; prevents others from practicing; denies the Divine origin of the commandments; and finally denies the existence of God

D. MetaPhysical Context

Ramban:

*And I will give peace in the Land;*⁷

and My soul shall not abhor you, and similarly, and I will walk among you allude to the [Divine] attribute which our Rabbis have called Shechinah (the Divine Presence), of [the root found in the expression], And I will set 'mishkani' (My dwelling) among you and as the Rabbis say:⁷⁵See Rashi to Deuteronomy 30:3. "The Shechinah (Divine Presence) dwells with Israel." And in Bereshith Rabbah they have said:⁷⁶Bereshith Rabbah 19:13. "The Divine Presence was mainly in the lower world."⁷⁷That is, even after Adam committed the first sin, the Divine Presence was still mainly in the lower world. With each progressive sin on the part of mankind, this Presence withdrew to the remote heavens, until the patriarchs appeared and gradually brought His Presence back into the lower world. When the Tabernacle was completed and His Glory came to dwell therein, the process of return was completed. Thus the Garden of Eden [i.e., the World of Souls] and the World to Come [after the resurrection] are mentioned here⁷⁸In the expressions: And I will set My dwelling and I will give peace in the Land (Verse 6), as hinted to above to those who know [the way of Truth].