

Parshas Bechukosai

This week's Parsha-Bechukosai is the last parsha of Chumash Vayikra.

The first Rashis on the parsha help answer some interesting questions for example why the posuk chooses to repeat- chukosai (my statutes you will follow) and then continues and says "mitzvosai tishmeru..." (and my laws you will perform them). It seems that the language is repetitive. Rashi explains this is to tell us that Hashem is telling us to labor in learning Torah, which Rashi explains on Mitzvosai tishmeru, that one needs to labor in learning Torah.

This makes sense for the following reasons. The Chukosai- statutes, are laws decreed by Hashem for which there is no reason other than Hashem telling us to keep them. In terms of laws, they are the ones that try as we might to rationalize them, we do them for the simple reason that Hashem told us to. Then Hashem continues and says "mitzvosai tishmeru" that is the rest of the categories must also be kept. Learning Torah is a form of crowning Hashem as our king, because we believe this is the basis for all we do.

Next, on both words, Rashi attributes no specific mitzvah other than working in learning Torah. The Mishne in Peah 1:1- which we say in davening everyday- "Eilu Devarim sh'ein lohem Shiur" these are things which have no measure. The mishneh concludes with "Talmud Torah Kineged Kulam"- learning Torah is equal to all of them. This means, that in order to serve Hashem as greatly as possible, we must follow the Torah. And the Torah is the basis for everything we follow- just as

Chukim don't have a rhyme reason or rationale.

The reward for this is rain and crop in its time. For an agrarian society, this is paramount to sustenance. For us, individually, although we may not farm, we ought not take for granted food security, and sustenance. But on an individual level it could also mean that the reward for learning Torah is a living. Rashi points out, that even trees of the field that flower and blossom or bear fruit many years after planting are counted in the "in its time" blessing.

The reward of food security and sustenance means there can be peace in the land (as stated further in the pesukim). Then the posuk references the uniqueness of the Jewish people- that is when we conquer our enemies, it will be 5 overpowering 100, and 100 will pursue 10,000 and your enemies will fall. We saw this with the many wars unfortunately fought in Israel, and even Israel's independence, that few will conquer many. This parallels that which we learned back in Bereishis that Yakov (the "weak") will overpower Esav (the mighty)- the young will rule the old etc. (Rashi uses the language of the weak, and that the enemies of the Jews will fall in an "unnatural" manner – as explained in Rashi).

The next posuk (9) says "ufanisi aleichem, v'hifreisi eschem..." I will turn to you, and I will make you fruitful and multiply.... Rashi on Ufanisi-I will turn, I will overlook my concerns to pay your reward. That is the work we do in the world will be paid properly regardless- it seems- from our potential iniquities.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe asks in a sicha on paying workers on time the following. We know that everything Hashem commands us to do, he does himself (as it says Magid D'varav liyakov...). A day laborer is required to be paid end of the day; this is a law in the Torah (Vayikra 19:13). If so, how can Hashem wait until "the world to come" to pay us for our reward?

A simple explanation would be that our work is for a lifetime, so our payment so to speak, comes at the end of the contract. But more than this- earlier in the posuk, Hashem said he would bless us with fruits and rain "in its time". Meaning we will be properly paid for our work. By working all week, and paying workers on time, the merit- as explained in Likutei Torah- is to be satiated with a second soul on Shabbos. But the reward it seems to be the timely delivery of sustenance, as Hashem stated earlier. (Biyomo Titen Scharo- on his day he must pay- the first letters are an ambigram for Shabbos).

Hashem also says- V'hisalachti b'sochachem- I will walk amongst you. Rashi explains- means I will stroll with you in Gan Eden- like one of you, but there will be respect for Hashem. This means that ultimately by serving Hashem, learning torah- we can become one with Hashem, in a familiar and known way (as opposed to what it says later, that if we act chummy (casual- imi b'keri), and disrespectful there are negative ramifications.) By striving to this level, we are achieving a bond with Hashem that is the ultimate expression of oneness and connection. We must remain in our bodies with Neshamos, but our souls all cleave to be closer to Hashem. Hashem says- learn Torah, follow in my ways, and

you will come to a point where I will be known to you in a common way.

Towards the conclusion of the negative things that would befall us if we don't heed in the ways of Hashem- the posuk 26:42 says I will remember the covenant of Yakov (spelled with an extra vov). Rashi explains there are 5 times in the Torah where Yakov is written with an extra vov, and Eliyahu (hanavi) is written without a vov- Yakov took the letter as security so that Eliyahu will come and redeem Yakov's offspring. This then fits with the same earlier quoted blessing of what makes the Jews unique, that the winning that will happen will be unnatural (but by the Hand of Hashem)- as relayed to Rivka when she was pregnant with her twins.

Rashi also explains why the patriarchs were listed in reverse order. The reason is Yakov the youngest is alone sufficient for us to merit Mashiach, but if not, then because of Yitzchak, and if not, surely because of Avraham. Again thematically- when we are referred to Mashiach, the youngest is stated (of these three) according to Rashi's explanation.

The Haftarah from Yirmiyahu 16:19-17:14 explains the evils of idolatry-in comparison to the blessings that would befall us with faith in Hashem. Posuk 5 states that we cannot out our faith in man, as this will turn us away from Hashem. Therefore, our faith must be in Hashem. This isn't to say that we cannot trust humans, rather we must realize humans are vessels from Hashem, but it is Hashem who is the master of all and rules all. As the Haftora concludes- begging Hashem to heal me (us).

Good Shabbos