

Parshas Bechukosai

This week's Parsha is Bechukosai, which traditionally can be joined with the previous Parsha, Behar, but this year is separate. The Parsha begins with blessings that will be given to the Jews for keeping on the righteous path, versus later in the Parsha what would happen if Chas Vishalom the Jews didn't.

The Torah emphasizes the negative, detailing the potential curses at length, while the blessings are brief. Why might this be? Could the Torah be trying to motivate us more effectively by highlighting the consequences of straying from the righteous path rather than simply enticing us with the promise of blessings?

A simple answer is one should know the punishments and what to be fearful of to "stay in line" and serve Hashem. There are specific sins for which we would be punished, as Rashi and Mepharshim explain, on 26:19 that the splendor of power refers to the Beis Hamikdash, which were destroyed, either for the three cardinal sins (as with the first Beis Hamikdash) or with baseless hate (but otherwise righteous as with the second Beis Hamikdash).

Here's an interesting point: the answer may be found in words used while the pesukim are telling the punishments: "imi b'keri," which means to act casually. This phrase holds a deeper meaning that we can explore.

Essentially, our lives are positive and full of blessings; the world is full of darkness

and bad things. When you "act casually" and distance yourself from Hashem, all that darkness becomes readily apparent and seems like a punishment. When you make the time and work to consistently stay connected to Hashem, your life and the world become recognizably blessed, even for minor things like waking up in the morning. When you are in a negative space and do not recognize Hashem and His omnipotence, everything seems dark and terrible. When you do not act casually to Hashem, you don't have to be told all the blessings; everything is a blessing. It takes work to be in a state of mind where you see everything as a blessing; arguably, in a state of being close to Hashem, this becomes the lens through which you exist.

Every situation we find ourselves in or are placed in by Hashem can be viewed as a joyous blessing or a negative curse. For example, what happened to me when I once asked for a Bracha based on an emotional situation for some smooth sailing? A disastrous event occurred not 24 hours after I asked for the bracha, and I was distraught. But then I took stock of the situation and realized that the adverse event had to take place that could be prevented. But the event's timing couldn't have been better, and it all turned out for the good. It took time to recognize Hashem working everything out as it needed to. Living with Hashem and having Hashem with you, not casually, will allow you to see the world in the positive blessing that it is, as opposed to the cursed dark place it can be, heaven forbid.

Good Shabbos