

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
The Portion of
Behar-Bechukosai

May 14, 2009

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
1. The Most Difficult Circumstance Leads to the Solution	2
2. Contentment and Happiness is Rooted in One's Belief in G'd	3
3. The Sabbatical Year, A Fundamental in Jewish Perspective	4
4. Appreciating Cause and Effect	5
5. The Ultimate Opportunity	6

About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Yad Avraham Institute
New York
May 14, 2009

B"H

Behar-Bechukosai

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

Dean

1. The Most Difficult Circumstance Leads to the Solution

The Torah tells us that the ox, the sheep, and the goat are the only species that qualify to be brought as offerings. The Midrash explains the reason G'd chose only these particular species is based on a verse from Ecclesiastes, "King Solomon writes, 'G'd favors the pursued.' Reb Yosef says, 'In the future G'd will demand the blood of the pursued from their pursuers. Even if it was a tzaddik (righteous) who had pursued another tzaddik. Even if a rasha (evil person) pursued another rasha. Even if a rasha pursued a tzaddik, G'd will favor the pursued. Even if a tzaddik would pursue a rasha (in order to destroy him), G'd will favor the pursued.' Where do we find this in the Torah? We find Abel was pursued by Cain. As a result of being the pursued, G'd favored the offering of Abel and rejected the offering that was brought by Cain. Noah was pursued by the members of his generation. As a result of this, Noah was favored by G'd as it states, **'Noah found favor in the eyes of G'd.'** (He thus survived the Great Flood) Avraham was pursued by Nimrod (The King who decreed that Avraham should be cast into the fiery kiln). Avraham was favored by G'd as it states, **'You are Hashem, G'd who has chosen Avraham and has taken him out of the fiery kiln...'**" Yitzchak was pursued by the Philistines, Yaakov was pursued by Esav, Yosef was pursued by his brothers, Moshe was pursued by Pharaoh, and the Jewish people are pursued by the nations of the world. In all these situations G'd favors the pursued. Therefore, since the ox is pursued by the lion and the sheep is pursued by the wolf and the goat is pursued by the mountain lion, G'd favors these species over others and thus are the only ones that qualify to be brought as an offering.

Why does G'd favor the pursued? Yaakov ascended to the level of being the Patriarch that was worthy of fathering the twelve tribes of Israel, not solely because he was the Patriarch who personified Torah, as it

states, **"Yaakov, the perfect man who dwelt in the tent (of Torah),"** but also because he was pursued by his evil brother Esav. Moshe was chosen to be the faithful of G'd and qualifying him to receive the Torah on behalf of the Jewish people because he was pursued by Pharaoh. Why does G'd favor the pursued?

When one is in a pursued state one is unceasingly and relentlessly hounded by his pursuer. He has no escape or manner to disengage from his pursuer. The pursued has no place to seek refuge. Although the Jewish people, throughout history, have had moments of respite and lulls from being pursued, they nevertheless have not been released from the pursuit of the nations of the world. When they realize that they are the pursued, it is only a matter of time before they realize that there is no solution to their problem. The pursued has only one recourse that can extricate him from his pursuer. He turns to G'd with a depth of understanding that only He can help him. The internalization of this reality establishes a special and unique relationship between the individual (the pursued) and G'd. His circumstance has brought him to understand that all existence is determined by G'd Himself. This is the basis of G'd favoring the pursued, regardless of his spiritual classification.

King David writes in Psalms, "They (rely) upon chariots and they rely upon horses, but we (rely upon and) invoke the Name of Hashem, our G'd." It is important for the Jew to understand that the function of existence on every level is not determined by economic, sociological, or political factors, but rather by G'd Willing the circumstances of existence. Although regarding the nations of the world the process of success and victory manifests itself through physical might, the predicament of the Jewish people is determined by the invocation of Hashem, our G'd. Very often, what we see as a curse and great difficulty in life, ultimately brings about the greatest level of blessing. This was demonstrated by the examples cited by the Midrash. The Jewish people, only are able to come to that special level of understanding and clarity

regarding their belief is because of their predicament of being pursued throughout history. If the Jew would understand and see himself truly in a pursued state it will bring him to the realization that G'd, the Omnipotent One, is the only One that can truly help him. This realization will bring about the ultimate redemption and the coming of Moshiach speedily in our day.

2. Contentment and Happiness is Rooted in One's Belief in G'd

The Midrash cites a verse from Proverbs, “ ‘The one who is overwhelmed with the desire for wealth has an evil eye. He does not know that need (he will be materially diminished) shall come upon him.’ This verse is referring to many individuals. An example of one who hungered for wealth to his detriment was Cain. G'd said to Cain, ‘Your desire for wealth was so great that you wanted to possess the world. However, the result of your drive brought deficiency upon you.’ What was the consequence of his drive for wealth? He became a wanderer (he wandered from place to place until the end of his life). Thus, he had no permanence in existence. Another example of one who was overwhelmed by his desire for wealth was Ephron the Hittite. (He was the one who had sold the cave of Machpelah to Avraham our Patriarch to be the burial location for Sarah, his wife.) After Avraham had asked him the purchase price of the Machpelah, Ephron responded, **‘My lord, heed me! Land worth four hundred shekels; between me and you what is it?’** (Although he was asking Avraham for an enormous sum, he attempted to make it seem trivial between the two of them.) Avraham began to weigh out an unprecedented amount of silver before him...When Ephron saw the enormous pile of silver he became excited. G'd said to him, ‘Because you were so taken by the enormous amount of silver in the end you will have deficiency.’ What was the deficiency? Reb Yehudah bar Levy Bar Shalom said that until Ephron had taken the silver from Avraham, his name when mentioned in the Torah is written in its full form (spelling). However, after he had taken the payment that Avraham had given, his name is written in a deficient form, with the letter ‘vav’ deleted.” The one who is not satisfied with his lot has relevance to the evil eye. It is because he feels materially deficient that it creates envy and negativity towards the success of others. He cannot possibly rejoice in the good fortune of another because his focus is on what he is lacking, which is unending. Chazal tell us that this type of individual will never achieve a sustained status of wealth, but rather he will incur some level of deficiency and want.

The Torah tells us that Moshe had said to the Jewish people in their fortieth year in the desert that when they will come into the Land of Israel they will have abundant material blessing. However, he forewarned them by saying, **“You may come to say, ‘My strength and the power of my arm have brought about this success.’** When the Jew attributes his accomplishments to his own initiative and acumen it will bring about grave consequences. It will cause him to become haughty and arrogant and eventually he will forget that G'd has relevance to his existence. In essence, this individual is denying that G'd is the source of his blessing. When the person believes that his destiny is determined by his own efforts, G'd's response will be, “I will remove Myself from your midst to fulfill what you truly wish to believe.”

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos states, “One's material allocation (sustenance) is set from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah.” Meaning, G'd allocates one's financial needs for the entire upcoming year on Rosh Hashanah. One cannot earn more than what G'd had allotted to him, regardless of his initiatives. In order to draw upon his stipend one needs to take a sufficient level of initiative. This initiative is determined by the dictates and value system that G'd set forth for the Jew in the Torah. As long as one is living his life within the context of the guidelines of the Torah and is sufficiently addressing his spirituality, then his initiative to succeed for the right objective is acceptable. As it states, “Your Torah shall be primary and your livelihood shall be secondary.” One's material should be only a means to a spiritual end. However, if one chooses to pursue material success at the expense of his spiritual obligation, then he will surely be diminished rather than enhanced. The moment one departs from the spiritual path without regard for his obligation as a Jew, he is in essence ignoring G'd, the One who provides all.

If one chooses to utilize the material for the sake of serving His Maker, by dedicating himself to Torah study and mitzvah observance, G'd will provide him the necessary means to bring that about. The allocation that had been designated for him will be realized despite the fact that he is not pursuing the material.

One who believes that his material success is based and determined by his own ability will say, **“My strength and the power of my arm have brought about this success.”** By denying the fact that it was only because of G'd's kindness he is in essence denying G'd's relevance to his life. One who assumes the perspective that success is determined by one's own initiative, will bring him to a state of mind that will not allow him to be satisfied. There

is no limit to what is rightfully his. Ultimately, this will evolve into one who sees others with an evil eye, feeling that their good fortune should be his.

In order to protect one from this mindset, Chazal have legislated and authored many blessings that one must recite in order to acknowledge that every aspect of our existence is determined by G'd's beneficence. Through the articulation of these blessings one acknowledges that G'd is the King of the Universe. This infers that the one reciting the blessing is His subject. In addition, one acknowledges that there is nothing in existence that is not attributed to G'd. One is only able to see because G'd continuously Will's sight to the human being, as it is stated in the blessing. One is able to walk only because G'd firms man's footsteps, etc. Continuously throughout the day, through prayer service and the recitation of blessings, one is reminded that his entire existence is continuously being endowed by G'd.

3. The Sabbatical Year, A Fundamental in Jewish Perspective

The Torah states, "**He (G'd) called to Moshe...**" The Midrash cites a verse from Psalms, "'Bless G'd, His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word.' The angels first do the Will of G'd then they heed His Voice...Who are those who are considered 'of enormous strength?' It is the Jewish people who had declared at Sinai '*Naaseh V'nishma* – we will do and we will listen.' They were willing to accept the Will of G'd before hearing the extent of the obligation upon them. Another interpretation of "*geborei koach*" refers to those who observe the Sabbatical year (*shmita*). Why are they identified as *geborei koach*? The one who remains silent as he sees his fields being treated as if they were ownerless, with their fences being breached and the fruits being eaten by anyone who wishes to do so, is one of enormous strength. This is because it requires unusual fortitude and willpower to suppress one's inclination to demonstrate one's ownership rights to prevent others from plundering the fruits of his labor. Why are they called "*Geborei Koach*?" As it states, 'Who is the strong one? The one who subdues his inclination.'"

Man, by nature, is driven by ego. He has a need to see himself as the master of his own accomplishment and destiny. When that sense of control is taken from him, man becomes irrelevant. His essence, which is his sense of accomplishment, has been taken from him. As Chazal tell us, "If one undermines the livelihood of another it is the

equivalent of taking his soul." If one loses his means of support, why should it be viewed as if he were killed? It is because man identifies and quantifies himself through his accomplishments and successes. By taking one's sense of value it is the equivalent of destroying him. Therefore, the one who is able to remain silent and allow the dictate of G'd to be carried out, is truly mighty in strength (*gebore koach*). This individual is able to subordinate his ego to the Will of G'd.

The Midrash cites a verse from Proverbs, "'The one who is overwhelmed with the desire for wealth has an evil eye. He does not know that deficiency shall come upon him.' To whom is this referring...It is the one who engages in the commercial sale of the produce of the Sabbatical year (which is forbidden.)" King Solomon reveals to us that the basis for one to violate the Sabbatical year is rooted in his evil eye, which stems from one's belief that what he has was created by his own efforts. Therefore, he will not allow others to partake of his produce because he will see his fields as his own exclusive possession. It would seem from the first Midrash that was cited that every person is susceptible to this feeling of helplessness when one witnesses that his ownership rights and accomplishments are irrelevant during the Sabbatical Year. In fact, it is only the one who is able to suppress this natural feeling is classified as "mighty in strength." The one who does succeed is held in esteem for his great accomplishment. There is no negative aspect to this individual. However, the Midrash that cites the verse from Proverbs indicates that violating the Sabbatical year is rooted in the evil eye. Meaning, that one believes that he is the creator of his own fortune.

The basis for one having an evil eye is one's belief that his success is attributed to himself. Consequently, another's success and happiness becomes painful for him because he believes that he is more deserving than his fellow. He does not realize that in fact he is deserving of nothing. Everything that he receives is only a gift of G'd to give him an opportunity to make the right choices in life. One's material allocation is determined on Rosh Hashanah. However if one does not believe this, he will think that whatever he has is his own creation and accomplishment. Thus, regarding the Sabbatical year, when the Torah dictates that the field must be left ownerless so that all may partake of his toil, this individual feels victimized. Therefore, he violates the Sabbatical laws. This is a direct outgrowth of his own perspective of existence which is rooted in his evil eye.

If one understands that his entire existence is determined by G'd and whatever he has is only an

endowment from Him, then he will be able to remain silent while the produce of the Sabbatical year is being removed from his field. He appreciates the fact that whatever he receives in life is a gift. Whatever he does not rightfully have, such as the produce of the Sabbatical year was never meant to be his. There are a number of instances in which the expression "Take for Me" is used in the Torah. Whenever the expression of 'taking' is used in the Torah, regarding an obligation, the fulfillment of that Commandment is for the benefit of the one who is commanded. For example, the Torah states regarding the building of the Mishkan, 'Take for Me Terumah.' The Torah should have written 'Give to Me Terumah (a Portion).' Why then does the Torah use the term "take?" When one gives something, regardless of its material value, as commanded by the Torah, he is the beneficiary of that giving. Thus, in effect, he is taking for himself through giving.

The mitzvah of the Sabbatical year demonstrates the fact that G'd is the Creator and all existence belongs to Him. Thus, if one truly internalizes this, he will be able to remain silent without any difficulty while others partake of his produce. He does not actually need to suppress his inclination because he fully appreciates that everything belongs to G'd and he is the one who is presented with an opportunity. However, if one believes that the world is for his taking, it will express itself through the evil eye. This individual will not be able to remain silent while the fruits of his labor are being plundered. In truth, the one who suppresses his negative feelings while his produce is being taken did not fully internalize this reality. It is still on a conceptual level but not integrated in his emotion.

4. Appreciating Cause and Effect

In the Portion of the Tochacha (curses) the Torah tells us what level of tragedy will come upon the Jewish people if they do not adhere to the dictates of the Torah. Chazal tell us that the value of punishment is to alert one that he has strayed from the proper path. Thus, he would introspect in order to appreciate that wrong that he had done. Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance that when one repents properly, although initially he was seen by G'd as abominable, detestable, and despised after he had transgressed, he will be viewed as beloved, precious, and special. G'd brings difficulties upon the Jewish people so that they should repent and live in conformance with the Torah. Rambam writes that it is only when one becomes confused and distracted that he chooses to stray. The pain and tragedy that befalls an individual is intended to regain the clarity that he presently does not have.

After the Torah discusses three series of punishments that will befall the Jewish people if they do not adhere to His Will, it states, "If you behave casually (kerie) with Me and refuse to heed Me, then I shall lay a further blow upon you..." Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "The word 'kerie' means that the Jewish people will observe the mitzvos in a haphazard manner. Although they had experienced many tragedies, they nevertheless did not repent sufficiently and return to the proper path. Therefore G'd says to them, 'Because you have made My Commandments secondary to your lives, you will become secondary to Me.'" G'd will then intensify the tragedies until the Jewish people fully understand and appreciate their wrong and make the observance of His Will of primary importance in their lives.

The Torah states in the Portion of Haazinu, "I have expended all of My arrows in them (Jewish People)." The Midrash explains that despite all of the tragedies and holocausts that have befallen the Jewish people, they have remained intact - unlike the nations of the world who were destroyed through Divine Retribution that had come upon them. The Midrash compares the predicament of the Jewish people to a wooden beam that remains intact although the archer had expended all of his arrows into it, emptying his quiver. The Jewish people remain intact despite all the difficulties they have befallen them throughout history.

The Midrash tells us that there is no nation that G'd had begun to punish that was not ultimately destroyed. The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and the Romans, have long been destroyed have gone into oblivion as a result of His punishment. Why have the Jewish people survived, despite the extent of G'd's Retribution, while other nations perished? When G'd's wrath had come upon the nations of the world, they chose to defy and rebel against Him, feeling that they were unjustly punished. Rather than recognizing that their punishment was due to their own failings, they intensified their defiant stance against G'd. They were therefore ultimately destroyed as a result of their obstinacy. Conversely, when the Jewish people experience tragedy and suffering, they become introspective and recognize that the failing is their own, thus causing them to return to G'd.

However, the Torah tells us that despite three series of tragedies, the Jewish people will not fully appreciate the wrong that they had done. They will return to G'd only to adhere to His Torah in a "casual (kerie)" manner. Why is this so? Although one may experience difficulties, he will attribute it to happenstance. Rather than understanding that

one's financial downturn is a consequence of his failing as a Jew, he attributes it dismisses it as a result of market conditions. G'd will then intensify his predicament in order to give him the opportunity to repent. Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the first series of tragedies that one faces, as a consequence of his transgressions, will be meted out measure for measure in order to allow the individual to identify its cause. If however, one chooses not to, G'd will continue to punish him in a manner where one is not able to correlate the punishment with the failing. It will thus become more difficult to deduce his failure from the punishment.

Rambam writes in The Laws of the Shofar, "Although the obligation of blowing of the Shofar is a Divine Decree, simultaneously within the blowing of the Shofar there is an allusion (remez). The message that the Shofar conveys is - all those who are asleep or in a deep slumber should awaken. They should introspect and reflect on their past behavior and repent. Part of the repentance process is to remember one's Creator. Those who are in a slumber have forgotten the truth because they are consumed with the vanities of time. They occupy themselves completely with pursuits of vanity and emptiness, which have no value. Gaze upon your souls and better yourselves and abandon your evil ways and improper thoughts."

The Jewish people need to understand that their predicament in the world is not happenstance. The world is in a state of instability not because of financial or political dynamics but because people have strayed from the path of truth. The Jewish people are referred to by the verse as "a sheep who that is surrounded by seventy wolves (70 root nations of the world." Hadrian, the Roman Emperor had said to Reb Yehoshua Ben Chananiya "The Jewish people are a tough flock." Meaning, despite all of the onslaughts of the world against them, they survive. Reb Yehoshua Ben Chananiya responded, "Great is the Shepherd (G'd) who tends to His flock." Although the Jewish people may be in a precarious and unstable position, their security and guarantee is determined by the Shepherd and their adherence to the Torah.

5. *The Ultimate Opportunity* (emor)

Maharal of Prague explains that whenever the Jewish people celebrate a holiday, it is more than merely commemorating an historical event of the past. Whatever spiritual energies and influences that caused the events of

the past to come about are released again at that time every year. For example, every year during the time of Passover, the time of our redemption, G'd makes available the spiritual influences of redemption and freedom. Just as those who left Egypt were taken out through the Strong Hand of G'd, so too every Jew can be redeemed from spiritual and physical bondage every year during that same period of time by G'd. However, in order to be a beneficiary of those forces/influences one must create an appropriate setting, which is the equivalent of a receptacle to contain them. This is done by creating and replicating a setting that is similar to the one that had been at the time of the original event. Although many of the practices that we do at the Seder are only Rabbinical, such as the eating of the bitter herbs and the drinking of the four cups of wine (through which we commemorate the four expressions of redemption); nevertheless, these practices contribute to the replication of the moment of redemption.

The Torah obligates one to tell over the story of the bondage and exodus at the Seder. This positive commandment is fulfilled through the recitation of the Haggadah and participating in various rituals throughout the Seder. The Gemara in Tractate Menachos tells us that when one recites the verses of the portion of the Torah that relate to the burnt offering or any other offering, G'd values it as if one actually brought that particular offering. This is based on a verse from Hosheia, "We paid for the oxen with our lips." Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that this principle does not only apply to the portions of the Torah that relates to offerings. Any mitzvah that is not within one's grasp to fulfill, if one should study the mitzvah and recite the verses that pertain to the mitzvah G'd values that recitation and study as if he had fulfilled the mitzvah.

It is stated in the Shema, "**You shall love Hashem your G'd with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources...**" One is obliged to demonstrate his love for G'd to the point that he is willing to die for His sake. Ramchal explains that if one recites the various verses of the Shema with the intent that should the occasion arise, he would give his life for G'd, it is valued as if he did in fact die for the sanctification of G'd's Name.

King David writes in Psalms, "We die for you every day." Simply, one could explain the verse is referring to the sacrifice that the Jewish people have made throughout history by giving their lives for His Glory. However, the *Yesod V'Shorish Ha'Avodah* cites the Zohar that explains that this verse is referring to the fact that every Jew can give his life multiple times for G'd throughout his lifetime. If one recites certain verses of the

Shema and other instances throughout the prayer service, and has in mind that if the occasion should arise that he would give his life for G'd, it is considered that he gave his life multiple times.

Chinuch explains that when one counts the days leading up to the giving of Torah at Sinai, he is in fact replicating a similar level of anticipation and yearning that the Jewish people had experienced during this period of time. The Sinai event was the greatest moment of existence because creation had reached its purpose through the acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people. One should understand and appreciate that every year on Shavuot those same influences and energies that were made available at Sinai are once again present for the Jew to benefit from. The process of becoming G'd's chosen people that began with the exodus from Egypt and continued for forty-nine days until the Sinai event, will determine for every Jew the degree that he will be a beneficiary of the influences of Sinai. The degree of anticipation and spiritual growth from day to day will determine one's capacity to be a beneficiary of those influences. This is the value of the mitzvah of counting the days of the omer.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Chulin –Gid Hanasheh
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Kamah
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00-2:00 pm	Ramchal: Derech Hashem Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45 th FL.)

Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm	Torah Insight Based on the Parsha Location: Yad Avraham
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Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Daas Tevunos Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm	Duties of The Heart Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL)