



ק"ק אהבת שלום AHAVAT SHALOM

בהר-בחוקות' תשפ"ה • ISSUE #116

A MESSAGE FROM THE RAV

My dear kehila,

Mine or His?

If we look closely at the Pesukim discussing the Mitsva of Shemita, we notice a theme. The Torah repeatedly refers to the land and its fruits as "ours". The words "your field", "your vineyard" and "your land" is the common language. One would feel that the Torah is emphasizing the importance of this notion that Eretz Yisrael was given to us. The interesting dichotomy is that the Torah emphasizes this precisely when we are told to keep the Shemita, meaning letting go of the land and not working it in the 7th year. If the land, the field or the vineyard is really ours, should it not be up to us to work it or to leave it whenever we want?

Another interesting thing is that a few Pesukim later the Torah makes a 180 degree turn. In discussing the laws of buying and selling real estate (Vayikra 25, 23), the Torah declares, "For the land is Mine, as you are strangers and dwellers by Me." So, which one is it? Is the land His or has He made it ours?

In reality there is no contradiction. By this dichotomy, and indeed throughout the Parasha, the Torah is teaching us that the owning the land and letting go of it are indeed directly related. Hashem wants us to always be aware that in fact everything belongs to Him and we are just a group of dwellers in His Land. If we follow His directives and commandments, He will in turn let us be considered the owner of the land. So, it's not because we work the field that we own it, rather precisely, because we do not work it on the 7th year that we are considered the owner of it. Similarly, the fruits of the first 6 years are ours only because we let go of the fruits of the seventh year. By not working in our field, we've fulfilled our part in the two-way contract between us and Hashem and in turn He declares us the owner of the land.

We often think that we deserve certain things in life because we've worked for them and earned them. We think we have our money because we work hard to earn it or we are careful to save it. Little do we realize that what guaranteed our income and wealth was the work that we didn't do on Shabbat or perhaps the money which we didn't hold on to and instead gave it generously to Tzedaka.

In short, to the degree that we realize that He is the real Boss, to that degree He directs us in our life and allows us to be in charge. When one wrongfully considers himself to be the boss, that's when he is in big trouble!

שבת שלום
Delivered with love,
Rabbi Hakkakian

UPCOMING WEEK'S SCHEDULE

MINYANIM

SHACHARIT.....Sun 7:30AM, 8:30AM • Mon - Fri 7:00 AM

MINCHA/ARVIT.....Sunday - Thursday 7:50 PM

LATE ARVIT.....Sunday - Thursday 9:40 PM

NIGHT SEDER

Sunday - Thursday @ 8:30 PM

VEHAGITA SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAM WITH RABBI PARIZAD
Sunday Mornings Following 8:30 AM Shacharit

MISHNAYOT PROGRAM WITH RABBI BANDARI
(For Boys 3rd Grade and Up) - Tuesday Nights @ 6:30-7:15 PM

SHIURIM WITH RABBI HAKKAKIAN

Shalom Bayit for Women.....Monday Night @ 8:45 PM

Sha'ar Habitachon for Women.....Tuesday Night @ 8:45 PM

Torah Hashkafa (ספר דרך השם) for Men...Wednesday Night @ 10:00 PM

Navi for Men.....Thursday Night @ 8:30 PM

DAF YOMI

RABBI HAKKAKIAN.....Sunday - Friday 1 Hour Before Shacharit

R' DANIEL REIHANI...Sunday - Friday 8:30 PM, Shabbat Following 1st Mincha

AMUD YOMI (ORAYSA)

(CURRENTLY LEARNING MASECHET TAANIT)

R' MICHAEL BARUCH SAGHI...Sunday - Thursday 9:00 - 9:40 PM

CHAZARAH WITH R' DANIEL KATIBIAN WILL TAKE PLACE ON SHABBAT

SHABBAT ZMANIM

ערב שבת

מנחה ע"ש.....7:00 PM

הדלקת נרות.....8:02 PM

זמן ק"ש/ספירת העומר.....9:02 PM

שבת

בחורי א"ש.....8:00 AM

שחרית.....8:35 AM

סוף זמן ק"ש...8:48/9:24 AM

אבות ובנים.....5:30 PM

מנחה ראשון.....6:30 PM

After Mincha...שיעור/דף יומי

מנחה שני.....7:35 PM

Followed by שלישית עבודה

ערבית מ"ש.....9:04 PM

צאת הכוכבים..9:04/9:34 PM



THE WEEKLY BOOST

Divrei Torah from esteemed members of our kehila

Unfailing Love: The Blessing Behind G-d's Unbreakable Bond R' Chacham Fakheri

In this week's parsha, we encounter the first of the two Tochachot (rebukes) found in the Torah, where G-d warns us of the dire consequences of not keeping His commandments. The curses described are vivid and intense—so graphic that anyone who might question their faith after hearing about the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people need only read this chapter to realize that much of what was warned about in these curses has tragically come to pass. Unimaginable horrors, like women resorting to eating their own children to survive, are not just abstract threats; they are horrors we have witnessed in our own time.

But before this Tochacha begins, there is a small section of blessings—what will happen if we keep the mitzvot. The Torah lists many wonderful rewards: we will have abundance, peace in the land, victory over our enemies, and prosperity in all areas of life. These are the blessings G-d promises.

Then, G-d assures us of His special presence: וְנִתְּנִי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, וְלֹא תִגְעַל נִפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם. “And I will place My Mishkan in your midst...” (Vayikra 26:11). For us, after over two thousand years without the Beit HaMikdash, this is a promise we can hardly even imagine. Yet, the Torah calls it a tremendous blessing to feel G-d's holiness among us. But the verse concludes with an odd phrase: “...and I will not detest you” (וְלֹא תִגְעַל נִפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם).

This conclusion is perplexing to many commentators. After all the blessings G-d promises, why end with a statement that seems to imply, “I will not despise you”? It almost feels out of place—like someone proposing marriage by saying, “I will love you, cherish you, and take care of you... and I will not be disgusted by you either.” It's an odd and anticlimactic way to end such an intimate promise.

One beautiful insight comes from the Shemen HaTov, (quoted by Rav Frand) who explains that it's natural for people who once loved each other deeply to fall into hatred after a breakup. In fact, when people divorce, they can become bitter enemies, sometimes even trying to destroy one another. The intense love they once shared transforms into the deepest resentment.

This verse, then, reflects G-d's awareness of what will happen: He will love and care for the Jewish people, but He knows that they will be unfaithful and will eventually be exiled from the Land of Israel. The Sages and Midrashim often use the analogy of a husband and wife who must part ways to describe G-d's exile of His people.

However, here is the key: Even in the midst of that separation, G-d promises that it will not be like a painful, bitter divorce. He

will never come to despise us, no matter how far we stray. His love will remain unwavering. This is the greatest blessing—G-d's enduring love even in the face of our failings.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (7a) powerfully illustrates this: “When our love was strong, we could have slept on the blade of a sword, but now that our love is not as strong, no bed in the world is big enough to hold us both.” Yet, G-d assures us that even when we falter, His love will never turn into detestation. We will always remain special to Him, and this enduring love is the true blessing—why it appears in the section of blessings, not curses.

In essence, even when discipline is necessary, G-d's commitment to His people is unbreakable. He will never “hate” us, and that is a deep and lasting blessing that transcends the challenges and failures we face.

During the Holocaust, in the horrors of Auschwitz, a young Jewish boy named Yisrael Meir Lau—only 7 years old—was somehow kept alive, shielded by his older brother. After liberation, they were taken to an orphanage. One day, a delegation of rabbis came to visit the children, trying to see which of the orphans might have Jewish roots and could be raised again within the faith.

The rabbis walked into a large hall where the children were eating, and one of them—unsure how to reach these broken, traumatized children—tried something simple. He softly began to say the first words of Shema Yisrael, the most basic declaration of Jewish faith:

”שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד”

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.”

At once, the room went silent. One by one, children began to cry. Then, slowly, they began to finish the prayer from memory, the way their parents had whispered it to them at bedtime before being taken away. These were children who had lost everything—but they hadn't lost that final whisper of connection. The Shema had survived the camps. And so had God's love for them.

That young boy, Yisrael Meir Lau, would grow up to become the Chief Rabbi of Israel.

This story is more than a testimony of survival—it's a living example of the promise in Parshat Bechukotai: “And I will not reject you...” (וְלֹא תִגְעַל נִפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם). Even when the Jewish people were plunged into the darkest depths of history, God's presence and love were not severed. He did not detest us. That little boy didn't just survive; he rose to spiritual greatness, carrying the faith of millions before him.

BN

Mr. & Mrs. Benny Raminfar on the birth of a baby girl!

Mr. & Mrs. Josh Gabay on the birth of a baby boy!

The Ahavat Shalom Community wishes condolences to Rabbi Yaakov Lavian and family on the loss of their father