



לעילוי נשמת

David ben ImaShalom

Sha'arei Eliyahu

Table Talk

פרשת בהר-בחקותי

Lessons of the Parasha

This week we have a double header. We read Parashat **בהר** and **בחקותי**. The first parasha talks about the **שמיטה**, and all the laws in regards to the **יובל** (Jubilee year). This parasha is a classic example of **אמונה** (Emunah) and **בטחון** (Bitachon) in Hashem, because Hashem tells us to stop working the field for a whole year and that He will provide for us. The promise is to provide on the sixth year of harvest enough to last for the sixth, seventh and eighth years.

The second parasha talks about Mitzvot. If a person keeps the Mitzvot and the Torah then Hashem promises that the rain (**פרנסה** – sustenance) will come on time. However

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

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| Mincha | 7:20 PM |
| Candle Lighting | 7:51 PM |
| Shacharit | 8:30 AM |
| Shabbat Derasha | 5:45 PM |
| Mincha | 7:25 PM |
| SUNSET | 8:09 PM |
| Aravit (Shabbat Ends) | 8:59 PM |
| Rabbenu Tam | 9:23 PM |

SHORT & SWEET

In this week's parasha in the 4th Aliya we read **אם-בחקותי תלכו** - *If you follow My statutes*. If you follow My Torah **אם** will protect you. Throughout history we had great protectors against our enemies from Amalek we had Aharon (א) and Moshe (מ), from Haman we had Ester (ס) and Mordechai (מ) and in the future Eliyahu (א) and Moshiach (מ) will protect us from the entire world.

~ R' Yosef Akilov

if the Torah and the Mitzvot are not kept then G-d Forbid many **קללות** (curses) and punishments are sent to this world.

Towards the end of the double header the parasha lists forty-nine such curses. Why are we required to read these forty-nine curses before Shavuot, which usually falls out after the reading? The answer is that there are two types of judgment. One judgment is physical and the second type of judgment is spiritual judgment. On Rosh HaShanah we go through a physical judgment where Hashem sits on His throne of Judgment and Judges every single being in the world, from the smallest insect to the largest mammal. As well as a spiritual judgment where Hashem determines how high we can reach. This is why before Rosh HaShanah we read Parashat Ki Tavo, which has ninety-eight curses (49*2) in the weeks leading up to Rosh HaShanah.

As we said earlier before Shavuot we read forty-nine curses. Why do we need to read curses again? Because on Shavuot our spirituality is being judged. Hashem Judges our Torah learning. Did we accomplish what we were supposed to this past year in regards to our Torah observance? Have we utilized every moment that we possibly could have in order to stay on track?

This may also explain why the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died during this time period. Being that these days are predisposed to judgment what might not have been harmful during one time of year was dangerous around this time. And being that the students of Rabbi Akiva were as great as they were that tiny mistake seemed great for them to have done.

But during the prayers of **עשרת ימי תשובה** (10 days of Repentance) we say Tichlei Shana V'Kilelotecha, Tachel Shana U'Birchotecha. Let the year pass with all its curses and the new year come with all its blessings. Before Shavuot we have the same phrase as we pray that the year where we failed to attend our daily or weekly classes pass and that the new year where we will strive to attend all our classes and prayers consistently. Hashem should help us in growth both physically and spiritually Amen!

~ R' Yosef Akilov

Shabbat Shalom U'Mevorach

1. Why should you choose to buy things from a Jew before buying from an idolater?
2. What year was the first Shemita?
3. Is one allowed to kiss his father or son in shul?
4. What did Rav Chisda tell his daughters when they asked him why he barely rests from his strenuous learning schedule?
5. Why does Hashem frequently bless Kollel fellows with large families?
6. What is the reward of one who pays his pledge to Tzedakah promptly?

1. It is a mitzvah to patronize Jewish-owned stores. Just consider what the money is going to be used for! If you give business to a Jew he will likely use the money to pay tuition to Yeshivot so his children can study the holy Torah, but if you give business to an idolater the money will likely go to nonsense and entertain promoting anti-Torah values. {Rashi 24:14, Torat Kohanim}

2. In the year 2488, Yehoshua bin Nun led the Bnei Yisrael in their conquest of Eretz Israel. Fourteen years later they were in total control of the land that year was 2502. Seven years later they observed the first Shemita, in the year 2509. {Ramban Hilchot Shemita 10:2}

3. One must not kiss relatives or friends in a Shul. We must show that our love and fear for Hashem is unparalleled. {Shulchan Aruch}

4. He told his daughters that one can only learn Torah and acquire good deeds during his lifetime, and he didn't want to waste that precious time sleeping. He told them that he will have plenty of time to rest when he dies. {Gemara Erwin, The Midrash Says}

5. Generally, one of the rewards of tolling in Torah is having a large family. {Rashi 26:9}

6. The Midrash guarantees that the one who pays his Tzedakah pledges quickly will be granted the privilege to someday donate to the Beit Hamikdash in Yerushalayim and fulfill his pledges there. {Vayikra Rabbah 37:4}

The Written and Oral Torah

All of the Mitzvot which were transmitted to Moshe Rabbeinu on Mount Sinai were given to him along with their respective explanations, as the verse (Shemot 24) states, “And I have given you the tablets of stone and the statute and the commandment.” The Zohar expounds this verse as follows: “The statute” refers to the Written Torah and “the commandment” refers to the Mishnah, which represents the Oral Torah. Similarly, in the Blessing of the Torah we recite daily, we state, “Who has given us a Torah of truth” which refers to the Written Torah, “And has imbued us with eternal life” which refers to the Oral Torah. (Shulchan Aruch, Chapter 139)

The entire Torah was written by Moshe Rabbeinu in his own handwriting before his passing (Baba Batra 15a). He gave one Sefer Torah to each tribe. Moshe Rabbeinu did not record the Oral Torah in writing; rather, he transferred it to the Elders, Yehoshua bin Nun, and the rest of the Jewish nation orally. It is for this reason that it is called the “Oral Torah.” Although the Oral Torah was never written down, Moshe Rabbeinu taught it entirely in his Bet Din to the seventy Elders and to his disciple, Yehoshua.

Many great sages received the teachings of the Oral Torah from Yehoshua. Throughout the times of the Judges, the elders of the generation received the Torah from their teachers and passed it on to their students until the year 2700 when Shemu'el Ha'Navi, who was the first of the Prophets, received the Torah from the Elders and transmitted it to his students, the Prophets. They, in turn, transmitted the Torah from generation to generation until Ezra the Scribe who received the Torah from the last of the Prophets.

Ezra's Bet Din was referred to as the “Members of the Great Assembly” of whom the last member was Shimon Ha'Tzadik (in the year 3580).

Shimon Ha'Tzadik received the Torah from all of them and transmitted it to his students. The Torah was then transmitted from teacher to student for six generations until the generation of Hillel and Shammai.

Hillel and Shammai, their students, and their students' students for six generations until Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi are referred to as the “Tannaim,” the Sages of the Mishnah. Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi authored the Mishnah and concluded the Tannaic era (in the year 3940).

From the times of Moshe Rabbeinu until Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi, no one authored a work meant for teaching the Oral Torah; rather, in every generation, the head of the Bet Din or the prophet in those days would write down the main points of the teachings he received from his teacher and he would transmit these teaching orally. Similarly, all other leaders would jot down for themselves what they received from their rabbi along with new laws that emerged which they had not heard from their teachers by expounded the Thirteen Attributes through which the Torah is expounded (such as “Gezera Shava,” when the same word appears in two seemingly unrelated contexts at which point laws are derived from one to the other) and they would transmit this to others orally. (An example of this appears in the passage of the Haggadah: “Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya said: I am close to seventy years old and I have not merited finding a source obligating one to verbally acknowledge the Exodus from Egypt at night until Ben Zoma came along and expounded this from a verse etc.” This means that until this time, there was no clear tradition about this matter and the Sages disagreed about it until Ben Zoma expounded the verse the way he did, at which point the Sages accepted his view, for the method of expounding verses in the Torah was not subject to disagreement as it was passed down from Moshe Rabbeinu from generation to generation.)

This is the way the Oral Torah was transferred until Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi came along and collected all of the laws, explanations, and teachings that were transmitted by Moshe Rabbeinu, his students, and their students throughout the generations and compiled the “Mishnah” and taught it to other scholars publicly, until it was acknowledged by the entire Jewish nation.

The reason Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi did this and did not leave the transmittance of the Oral Torah as it was is because he saw Torah students dwindling, more suffering and tragedies befalling the Jewish nation with the control of the Wicked Nation (the Roman Empire) spreading throughout the world, and the Jewish nation being exiled from one corner of the earth to another; he therefore authored a work for all generations to study in order to preserve the Torah and let it not be forgotten amongst the Jewish nation. Although it was forbidden to write down the Oral Torah (see Gittin 60b), Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi permitted himself to do so in order to prevent the Torah from, G-d-forbid, being forgotten.

Throughout his life, Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi and his Bet Din taught the Mishnah to the masses. His greatest disciples included: Rabbi Chiya, Rabbi Hoshaya, Rav, Shmuel, and Rabbi Yochanan. Rav compiled the “Sifra” and “Sifri” which explain the sources of the Mishnah. Rabbi Chiya compiled the “Tosefta” which explains the matters discussed in the Mishnah. Similarly, Rabbi Hoshaya compiled Baraitot further explaining the words of the Mishnah.

The sages that lived after Rabbi Yehuda Ha'Nassi, in Israel for four generations (approximately one hundred and fifty years) and in Babylon for seven generations (approximately three hundred years), were called “Amoraim,” the Sages of the Gemara. The first Amoraim in Israel were Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish; three generations of students received the Oral Torah from them until the completion of the Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) approximately three hundred years after the destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash. The first generation of Amora'im in Babylon was that of Rav and Shmuel; they transferred the Oral Torah for six generations until the generation of Ravina, Rav Ashe, and their students who completed the Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli) approximately four hundred years after the destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash.

From Moshe Rabbeinu until Rav Ashe there were forty generations who received the Oral Torah from one another for a total of approximately one thousand seven hundred years; Moshe Rabbeinu himself received the Torah from Hashem, blessed be He. The entire Oral Torah was transferred from Hashem to the Jewish nation through Moshe Rabbeinu. Our Sages added some enactments and decrees to prevent one from transgressing Torah law. They likewise instituted several Mitzvot, as we shall soon discuss, which is also included in the enactments of the Oral Torah (as the Gemara in Masechet Yoma 28a states that Avraham Avinu even kept the laws of “Eruv Tavshilin” as he kept both the Written and the Oral Torah).

The Gemara is meant to explain the words of the Mishnah where explanation is necessary, to explain any other laws enacted by any Bet Din since the times of Moshe Rabbeinu, and to explain any other customs and establishments set forth by the Sages of each generation and not given to Moshe Rabbeinu at Har Sinai.

The entire Jewish nation accepted upon themselves and their progeny forever not to deviate in the slightest from the words of the Gemara. There is no varying custom regarding this issue and all are bound by the contents of the Talmud whether with regards to the explanations of Torah commandments, such as the fact that the “fruit of a goodly tree” refers to an Etrog, or with regards to any rabbinic Mitzvah or enactment, such as the Mitzvot of Chanukah lights and Eruv Tavshilin.

The sages in the generation following the completion of the Talmud are called “Savoraim” and they inserted short reasons and practical halachic decisions into the Talmud. The entire Savoraic period lasted approximately one hundred and fifteen years. The sages who lived for the four hundred years after that are called the “Geonim”. This era included Rav Sa'adia Gaon, Rav Natronai Gaon, Rav Hai Gaon, and Rav Achai Gaon. These sages established the Torah in Israel and in Babylon and some were Rosh Yeshivas who disseminated Torah to the public. Following this period, the Jewish nation dispersed around the world and was no longer centrally located primarily in Israel and Babylon. The sages from the period after the Geonim until approximately six hundred years ago are called “Rishonim”. Some earlier Rishonim included Rabbeinu Yitzchak Alfassi (Rif) and Rabbeinu Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi); some later Rishonim included Rabbeinu Nissim (Ran) and Rabbeinu Shlomo bar Tzemach (Tashbetz) among many other scholars in Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, and other countries. These scholars authored responsa, commentaries on the Talmud, and many works on Mussar and Kabbalah. After this period, the scholars are referred to as “Acharonim”; this title includes Maran Ha'Shulchan, Maran Ha'Chida, Rabbeinu Yosef Haim, and the luminaries of the past generations. The Jewish nation must follow the rulings of the Acharonim based on the rules of deciding halachic matters, such as following the majority opinion in situations where the Poskim disagree and the like. It is for this reason that Jewish communities from around the world have different customs regarding things which are not fundamental aspects of the Torah, for the rabbis in each of these places following the completion of the Talmud disagreed about certain matters of Torah law not discussed in the Talmud.

All of these sages delved in the Talmud, solved its mysteries, and explained its content, for the Talmud is a deep sea and one must toil endlessly in order to understand its meaning and to derive the laws from within it and from the other sages that preceded it as Hashem has commanded us.