

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 34

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B'HUKOTAI

17th Iyar 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 26, verses 3 - 5 and

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 26, verses 6 - 9

- ✚ Hashem informs Bnai Yisrael that if they walk and follow in his path by adhering to all the 613 mitzvot's then they will be blessed.
- ✚ These blessings include having a prosperous year in which the right amount of rainfall will descend at the right time, so the land will produce the best and maximum quantity of crops; and allowing the land of Israel triumph over all of her enemies, enabling her to be at constant peace.
- ✚ Hashem's Shekinah (spiritual essence) will forever dwell in the Mishkan as a sign that Bnai Yisrael are his chosen people.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 26, verses 10 - 46

- ✚ However if Bnai Yisrael don't listen to Hashem and defy him, then unfortunately they will have to suffer the consequences and be severely punished.
- ✚ Hashem lists forty nine different punishments he would mete out for their disobedience. Including: Physical punishments such as suffering from swelling of the joints, high temperature, as well as being constantly attacked by their enemies; Agricultural punishments i.e. drought and famine and Natural-orientated disasters, for example enduring a plague of wild animal, life threatening diseases etc.
- ✚ Other forms of punishments are also mentioned such as the land of Israel's total annihilation and being forced to flee once more into Golus (Exile).
- ✚ Yet despite all of this Hashem will always remember his covenant he made with Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov of not destroying Bnai Yisrael completely and will ultimately forgive them and return them back to their promised homeland to live in peace once more.

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 27, verses 1 - 15

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe, if a person articulates a notion of donating a gift to the value a human life, for the Mishkan. They must follow a particular formula that takes into consideration of the person's age, gender and how much they can realistically afford without harming their health and the wealth fare of their family.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 27, verses 16 – 21 and

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 27, verses 22 -27

- ✚ If a person pledges an animal, a house or a field to Hashem, they must be evaluated by a Kohen first. Once the value has been determined it is redeemed for the exchange of money which is then given to the Kohen.
- ✚ Land which was purchased and then consecrated by the buyer can also be redeemed, but it reverts back to its original owner when the Jubilee year arrives.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 27, verses 28 - 34

- ✚ Someone who wishes to redeem his Ma'aser (the Tithe that is set aside from the persons land and produce is set aside for Hashem) may do so, on the condition they add one fifth of the Ma'aser's value first.
- ✚ The correct method of how the Ma'aser is calculated and evaluated from either herds of cattle or flocks of sheep is to count each animal individually as they are herded into a pen and every tenth one is put aside to be given as Ma'aser.

Haftorah – Yermeyahu (Jeremiah) Chapter 16, verse 19 – Chapter 17, verse 14

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The Prophet Yermeyahu rebukes the people of Israel for their idolatrous ways and for not having faith in Hashem.
- ✚ Yermeyahu conveys Hashem's words of wrath towards those who do not put their trust in Him, by foretelling exile as their punishment and of Hashem blessing the ones who do.
- ✚ Yermeyahu emphasizes his point by comparing Man to a Tree. "If we put our faith in people, we will be like a tree craving for water in the desert. Not knowing if they are going to find enough to survive. However, if we place our trust in Hashem. We will be like a tree near a river. Never fearing where its water will come from, even during a drought."

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ The Haftorah discusses the punishments that await those who disregard G-d's law, and the blessings that are the lot of those who follow the Creator's wishes. This follows the theme of this week's Torah reading which details at length the blessings and curses.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

B'hukotai begins by offering blessings for following Hashem's footsteps and adhering to his commandments, "I will give rain in their seasons, and the earth will yield its produce ..." These blessings include agricultural bounty, security and peace. Conversely, Hashem then expresses in quite strong language, the curses he would implement if we choose not to follow in his footsteps and disobey him.

On first reflection on these verses, I found myself asking the same theological question asked since the beginning of time. Why do the good law abiding people seem to suffer more hardships for doing the right thing, while those who break it seems to avoid being punished for their actions? This week's Torah portion is very different to the way I perceive the world is being run. You only need to read a newspaper to know that good people suffer every day. So why aren't individuals blessed or cursed like for like?

On carefully reviewing these passages for a second time, I realised that Hashem's words are not directly pointed at any individual but is entirely addressed in the plural. Implying the text does not promise reward and punishment for my own choices or actions but instead what the community decides as a collective.

This concept of communal consequences for behaviour is a built-in feature of our world's structure in which we live in. On a global level, if we cooperatively care for the environment then we are collectively benefiting from living in a cleaner world. Conversely, if we pollute the air and water, then we all suffer the devastating health consequences of living in such a world. On a social level, if we all unite in creating a society that values kindness, then we are rewarded with the joy of living in a caring community, whereas if our society glorifies hatred, jealousy, anti-social behaviour etc. then we unfortunately have to suffer the consequences.

This week's Parsha is teaching us a valuable lesson. Not only do we as individuals make sure we are behaving and doing the right thing but we all have an obligation and a responsibility as a community to teach and act in the correct manner we would all like to live.

May Hashem only shower us all with his blessings, so we can all live in harmony with each other in peace. Amen

שבת שלום
S h a b b a t S h a l o m !