

MAKE PEACE AND GREET MOSHIACH

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Behar/Bechukosai

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 11, Rationing Medical Care. Good Shabbos!

Make Peace and Greet Moshiach

Parshas Bechukosai contains words of blessing and words of rebuke. The Parsha begins with the message that the world is set up, such that, if the Jewish people keep G-d's mitzvos, blessings will come automatically. Rains will fall at the most convenient of times, ..., ..., and the Jewish people will be able to rest securely in their land.

The Toras Kohanim on this pasuk [verse] asks, "Does this mean we will only dwell securely in Eretz Yisroel, but not in Chutz L'Aretz? What does this mean -- we do have food and drink?" The Toras Kohanim answers that if there is no peace, there is nothing. As long as we are living in exile under a foreign government, there is no Shalom. Without Shalom there is nothing. Shalom is equivalent to everything, the Toras Kohanim continues, as we say in our prayers, "He Makes Shalom and Creates Everything".

As we all know, without Shalom -- Shalom in a community or Shalom in a family -- Shalom between communities and between nations, nothing has any worth. This is not just a Toras Kohanim, this is a Mishneh - - the last Mishneh in Shas [Uktzin 3:12]. "The Holy One, Blessed be He, found no vessel to hold Blessing for Israel other than (the vessel of) Peace."

The Kesav Sofer explains, that when there is no peace, it is usually because people are jealous of their neighbors. When people are constantly comparing themselves to the Joneses or the Goldbergs or the Cohens, then they will never be happy. People will never be satisfied, no matter

how many blessings, no matter how much food and drink they have. If one is being eaten up by that "cancer" which is called kin'ah [jealousy], then he will never ever have an appreciation for what he possess. Therefore, there is no vessel which can hold the blessings -- other than the vessel of peace.

Today, we have in Klal Yisroel a lack of Shalom, even, unfortunately, among our own people. And if we are lacking Shalom, we cannot appreciate our blessings.

In 1980, Rav Yaakov traveled to the Knessiah Gedolah (of Agudath Israel) in Jerusalem. At that particular time in his life, Rav Yaakov felt extremely weak. Rav Yaakov did not feel that he was physically up to making the trip to Eretz Yisroel. But, Rav Yaakov's arm was twisted, he was prevailed upon, and he made the trip. [He was so concerned about his health, that he felt he would not make it back home. He even left word that if he were to die in Eretz Yisroel, he wanted to be buried there, of course.]

Because of his physical condition, Rav Yaakov did not travel around much, nor did he give shiurim, while in Eretz Yisroel. However, Rav Yaakov said, "I want to go to one Yeshiva -- I want to go to Yeshivas Kol Yaakov." Rav Yaakov was taken to this Yeshiva and he got up to speak. Rav Yaakov was crying as he told the students, "My entire life I wanted to greet Moshiach. I now feel that I won't have this merit; I don't feel that I'll live much longer. But, if I can't greet Moshiach, at least I want to be among a group of people that I know for sure, will be among those who greet Moshiach. I know that this Yeshiva will be among those that will greet him."

What was so special about this Yeshiva? Did they know Shas by heart? In Kol Yaakov, are all the Bochrin careful to be on time when davening [daily prayer] starts? Not necessarily. This Yeshiva was so special because they make peace between Ashkenazic and Sephardic bochrin. It was one Yeshiva that had both students of European- Russian descent and of Spanish-Turkish-North African descent and they made Shalom between these two (sometimes at odds) segments of the Jewish people.

We must take this advice from Rav Yaakov. If we want a Segulah that we will be from those who greet Moshiach, we must take action to make Shalom -- between husband and wife; between man and his fellow; between Chassidim and Misnagdim. Make Shalom, and, Rav Yaakov says, be among those who greet Moshiach.

Good News in the Middle of the Tochacha

There is a very long and interesting Ramba"n in this week's Parsha. The Ramba"n tries to show that all the terrible things in the Tochacha, that the Torah predicts will happen, if we do not keep the mitzvos, did indeed happen.

For instance, the Ramba"n says that the pasuk "G-d will return you to Egypt in boats" refers to the days of Titus when the Jews were loaded onto boats and shipped as slaves to Egypt. The Ramba"n brings many different examples ... "The King which you will appoint over yourself..." refers to Agrippa. The pasuk hints at the fact that he was not worthy of being a King.

Finally, the Ramba"n says that the pasuk [26:32] "I will make desolate the Land, and your enemies who dwell upon it will be desolate" (V'shamemu aleha oyeveichem hayoshvim bah) is not a Curse, rather it is a Blessing. It is "Good News" in the middle of the Tochacha. The pasuk tells us that our Holy Land will not accept our enemies upon it. This, says the Ramba"n, is a great proof (of the Divine Hand) and Promise for us. "For there cannot be found throughout the world a land that had been so good and fertile (which now became so desolate and inhospitable)".

If you want to be a Believer, says the Ramba"n, all you have to do is look at Eretz Yisroel. Look what happened there for 2000 years when it was occupied by Arabs and by Romans and by Turks and by the British. It had been the most beautiful and under foreign dominion it became the most desolate. The Torah assured us, that from the day we left Eretz Yisroel, it would not accept any other nation or populace. They all tried to settle it, but none were successful.

This is what the Torah means when it says "Your enemies will be desolate upon it". No nation will ever be successful in inhabiting Eretz Yisroel, except Klal Yisroel.

What would happen, if the Indians came to the Federal Government and said "You know, 200 years ago we made a silly mistake. We sold you Manhattan Island at a rock bottom price -- \$24. We realize you're entitled to a profit, we'll give you \$48 for Manhattan. We'll give you 48 million dollars? We'll give you 48 billion dollars?" Guess what? No sale. What has happened to Manhattan Island in those 200 years? For what it is worth now, there is no way the Government would ever consider giving it back.

Imagine if the Goyim would have been successful in making Eretz Yisroel profitable. Imagine if in 1948, it was a beautiful and productive land. Would they have consented to returning it to the Jewish People? But as the Ramba"n says, they were not able. In 1948, when we came to ask, "Can we have the land back?" "You mean that strip of land, that's hard like iron, in which nothing grows? That worthless strip of land in the middle of the dessert? Good Luck with it!". This is Divine Providence, as promised by the Torah in this week's parsha.

I have always wondered - one looks in the Middle East -- Saudi Arabia has oil, Quatar, Iraq, Yemen, every country has oil. Egypt even has oil. How is it, that from our Holy Land, the choicest of all lands we can not squeeze a drop of oil? This is "The Eyes of the L-rd are upon it from the start of the year to its end"?

But what would have been in 1948, if the British were sitting on a Saudi Arabia? What would have been if they were sitting on Kuwait? Obviously they would not have been so eager to give up black gold. This is part of "Your enemies will be desolate upon it".

The upshot of all of this, is that if we seek a lesson in Emunah, if one does not believe in G-d for all the other miracles and wonders that He has done... Just look at this Ramba"n, just look at this Pasuk, just look at that Land. If one's eyes are open and one is not blind, one will see the Hand of G-d and the Divine Providence upon us and upon all the Jewish people.

Glossary

Chutz L'Aretz -- Outside the Land (of Israel)

Shalom -- Peace

Shas -- All of Talmud; acronym for Shisha Sidrei, Six Orders (of the Mishneh)

Moshiach -- Messiah

Segulah -- A treasure (used in the context of having special merit)

Tochacha -- (Section of the Torah dealing with) rebuke (for sins)

Emunah -- Belief (in G-d)

Hashgocha Prottes -- Personal Divine Providence

Personalities & Sources:

Kesav Sofer--Rav Avrohom Shmuel Binyomin Sofer of Pressburg (1815-79)

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky--(1891-1986) Lithuania, Toronto, New York City.

Ramba"n -- Rav Moshe ben Nachman (1194-1270); Spain; Eretz Yisroel.

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