

GREATEST BLESSING OF ALL

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 282, The Physician's Obligation To Heal.
Good Shabbos!*

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

Satisfied With Little: The Greatest Blessing of All

We learn in Parshas Bechukosai that among the blessings that G-d gives to us is "You will eat your bread and will be satisfied [Vayikra 26:5]." Rashi (1040-1105) explains that "One eats just a bit and it will be blessed within his intestines." In other words, this blessing is bigger than we would imagine. Perhaps it is the ultimate blessing. This is not a blessing that we will receive an income of several hundred thousand dollars. That is not necessarily a blessing. The ultimate blessing is to be satisfied with what we are given - however little it may be. If a person is happy with what he has, then he will be totally satisfied with life.

The Soforno (1470-1550) relates this idea in Parshas Behar. The following is written regarding the Sabbatical year [when it is forbidden to plant and harvest the produce]: "And if you will say, what will we eat in the seventh year? ... I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period" [Vayikra 25:20-21].

The implication is that we only receive this blessing by virtue of the question "And if you will ask, what shall we eat?" What would happen, if they would not ask the question? Are we to infer that in that case, the crops would not double? Precisely, says the Soforno. If they would not ask the question, there would be no NEED for a quantitative blessing.

There are two types of blessings. One is in quantity and one is in quality. Sometimes we see people around us that we know are earning far less money than we do. Nonetheless, they seem to be happy and satisfied. The wife is happy, the children are happy, everyone seems to be satisfied. We wonder to ourselves, "How do these guys get by? They are making a tenth of what I'm making. How do they do it?" The answer is that they merit having the blessing of "you will eat your bread and be satisfied".

The Beis Av uses this concept to interpret a verse that is said in every daily prayer. "Ashrei" [Psalm 145] is called Hallel haGadol [the "Great Praise"] because it contains the pasuk "You open Your hand and give satisfaction to every living creature with what they desire." [Psalms 145:16]. The pasuk [verse] ends with the word "ratzon" [desire]. Why doesn't the pasuk end with the word "ochel" [food] or the word "lechem" [bread]? What does the pasuk mean when it says that G-d gives them satisfaction with "ratzon"?

The Beis Av answers that the blessing is precisely "ratzon". G-d grants creatures the satisfaction of having what they desire. G-d has the ability, if the people merit, to give them the feeling of satisfaction with what they have. The ability to feel that "I have what I want" is the greatest blessing. Our testimony of G-d's ability to provide that to us is our greatest praise of Him.

Rav Meir Simcha (1843-1926) derives this same idea from the story of the Jewish people asking for water. In Parshas Chukas, G-d told Moshe to speak to the rock and give water "to the congregation AND TO their cattle" (es ha'eidah V'ES b'iram) [Bamidbar 20:8]. We know what happened. Moshe Rabbeinu hit the rock "and abundant water flowed and he gave drink to the congregation AND their cattle." [20:11] (es ha'eidah U'b'iram). Before the incident there is a pause between the congregation and the cattle (with the conjunctive word ES). However after the incident there is no such pause.

Rav Meir Simcha explains that if Moshe would have spoken to the rock and created the tremendous Sanctification of G-d's Name, they would have merited the situation whereby they would not have needed a lot of water. The water that the people drank and the water that the cattle drank would have been totally incommensurate. It would have been a different type of drinking. The people could have been satisfied by one or two gulps of water, because when one does the Will of G-d, one can be satisfied with even a small amount. However, the concept of "being blessed in the intestines" does not exist for the animals - they always need a lot of water. Consequently, in the original command to bring forth water, there was a separation between the people's drinking and the animal's drinking. When they failed to Sanctify G-d's Name, they forfeited the level of being satisfied with a little and as a result, the human and animal drinking became indistinguishable.

At the end of the laws of Shmitah and Yovel, the Rambam [Maimonides] writes "Not only did G-d guarantee the livelihood of the Tribe of Levi, but any person who decides to devote himself to the Service of G-d and throws off from his neck the yoke of 'many calculations', has sanctified himself to be a holy of holies and will merit to have that which suffices for him."

We wonder sometimes, when we see young couples where the husband remains in Yeshiva, who are devoting their lives to the Service of G-d -- and we know that financially they are just barely getting by. We consider it a contradiction to this Rambam. Doesn't the Rambam say that G-d will guarantee them a livelihood? In actuality, the Rambam says that G-d will provide "Davar haMaspik lo" [something that will be sufficient for him]. That does not necessarily mean \$150,000 a year. If a person merits it, the amount necessary to satisfy him may even be a very small amount.

G-d Promises Not To Become Disgusted With Us

The Torah's promise at the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai [26:11] "And I will place my Sanctuary in your midst, and my Spirit will not be reject you" (v'lo sigal Nafshi eschem) seems very strange. After promising the utopian state of His dwelling in our midst - the highest state that man can ever hope to achieve in this world -- G-d "throws in" as part of the blessing "and I will not become disgusted with you". What kind of blessing is that?

Imagine if a greeting card would include a statement expressing love and appreciation for someone and then conclude, "and I am not going to be nauseated by you either!" "Lo sigal nafshi" is a very strong term, indicating total revulsion! What does the verse mean?

The Shemen HaTov makes a very true statement. We all know of people who were married and who lived together for many years until there came a time when the marriage turned sour. The marriage went bad, until the point where the couple got divorced. Unfortunately, by the time people get divorced, they usually already HATE each other. They _despise_ one another. There is no hatred as deep and as bitter as that which can exist between two people that were man and wife, two people who loved each other dearly and then for some reason decided to separate. Sometimes that hatred can be awesome - precisely because of the closeness that they had once shared. Filling the void of this deteriorated love, is sometimes the worst hatred and disgust.

This is the tremendous blessing that G-d guarantees the Jewish people. "I will live with you. I will place my Sanctuary in your midst..." But G-d knew that there would come a day when the Jewish people would behave in a manner that would disgust Him. G-d knew that a time would come when the Jewish people would sink to such depths that He would literally have to "throw them out of the house". The time would come when G-d and the Jewish people would have the equivalent of a separation if not, Heaven forbid, a divorce.

What G-d is promising here is that in spite of all this, in spite of the fact that our powerful love and intimacy has turned into a thing of the past, nevertheless, "I will never despise you". We may do despicable acts, we may be banished from "G-d's abode", but He will never become nauseated by

us. Despite everything, he will never hate us. This is the great blessing that no matter how bad things become, "v'lo sigal nafshi eschem" - "I will never be disgusted by you".

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington.
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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#238). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Onoas D'vorim: Snide Remarks. The other halachic portions for Behar-Bechukosai from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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