

# THERE'S GOOD NEWS, AND BAD NEWS

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

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

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## Good News in the Middle of the Tochacha

There is a very long and interesting Ramban in this week's parsha, which attempts to demonstrate that all the terrible things in the *Tochacha* (those things that the Torah predicts will occur if we do not keep the mitzvos), did indeed happen.

For instance, the Ramban says that the *pasuk* [verse] "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

Ramban brings many different examples... "The King which you will appoint over yourself..." refers to Agrippa; the *pasuk* hints to the fact that he was not worthy of being a King.

Finally, the Ramban 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, but rather is a blessing. It is a bit of "good news" in the middle of the bad: the *pasuk* tells us that our Holy Land will not accept our enemies upon it. The Ramban says that this is a great proof of the Divine Hand in action. "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 Ramban, all you need to do is look at *Eretz Yisroel*. Look what happened there for 2000 years when Romans, Arabs, Turks and the British was occupied it.

It had previously been a beautiful and fertile land, but under foreign dominion, it became the most desolate of lands. The Torah assures us that from the day we left *Eretz Yisroel* the land would not accept any other nation or populace. They all tried to settle it, but were not successful.

This is the meaning of what the Torah says, "Your enemies will be desolate upon it". No nation will ever be successful at inhabiting *Eretz Yisroel*, except *Klal Yisroel* [The Jewish Nation].

What would happen if the Indians came to the Federal Government and said, "We made a silly mistake 200 years ago. We sold Manhattan Island to you at a rock bottom price — \$24. We realize that you're entitled to a profit, so we'll give you \$48 for Manhattan"? Or even if they would offer 48 million dollars! Or 48 billion dollars! Guess what? There would be no sale. What has happened to Manhattan Island in those 200 years? Considering its value now, there is no way the Government would ever give it back.

Imagine if other nations had 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? However, as the Ramban says, they were not able to develop the land. In 1948, when we came to ask, "Can we have the land back?" those in power may have thought, "Do you mean that strip of land that's hard like iron, in which nothing grows? Are you talking about that worthless strip of land in the middle of the desert? Good Luck with it!" This is Divine Providence, as promised by the Torah in this week's *parsha*.

I have always wondered – if one examines the Middle East — Saudi Arabia has oil, Qatar, Iraq, Yemen all have oil, every country has oil. Even Egypt has oil. How is it that from our Holy Land, the choicest of all lands, we cannot squeeze a drop of oil (at least until very recent discoveries)? Is this "the Eyes of the L-rd are upon it from the start of the year to its end?"

However, what would have been in 1948, if the British were sitting on a Saudi Arabia? What would have been if they were sitting on a Kuwait? Obviously, they would not have been so eager to give black gold to the Jews. 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* [Belief (in G-d)], if one is unimpressed with all the other miracles and wonders that G-d has performed... Just look at this Ramban, just look at this *pasuk*, just look at that Land. If our eyes are open, we will see the Hand of G-d and His Divine Providence upon us and upon all the Jewish people.

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Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington.  
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. Many of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Behar / Bechukosai are provided below:

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- # 282 – The Physician's Obligation to Heal
- # 328 – Sh'mita and the Heter Mechira
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- # 548 – Marrying for Money
- # 592 – Ribis and the Non-Jew
- # 636 – The Kedusha of the Ezras Noshim
- # 680 – Is Ribis Ever Permitted?
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- # 856 – Distractions When Performing A Mitzvah
- # 900 – Oy! My Tefillin Are Pasul
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- # 987 – Limud HaTorah – Must You Understand What You Are Learning?
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