



*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value,
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45*

28th May 2022 27th Iyyar 5782

Bechukotai - ‘In My Regulations’
Leviticus 26:3 -27:34

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim,
Blessings for a great Shabbat, and for the week ahead. From Shabbat to Shabbat may the name of the Lord be praised!

Have you ever wondered what it might mean to be a ‘covenant breaker’ and what the repercussion might be.

The word ‘covenant’ in Hebrew is ‘Berith’ Strong’s H1285. There is another word that is associated or tied (excuse the pun) to this word it is , ‘Masoreth’: Strong’s 4562 It means ‘bond’. This is from the root ‘Asar’ H631, which means: to tie, bind or imprison.

The word ‘berith’, in Hebrew, is a legal term that denotes an allegiance, alliance, or treaty that has been made, and in particular to one being made with a monarch — as with a constitution.

The opening passage of this week’s parsha, brings to an end the third book within the Torah. Bechutokai, meaning ‘ In My regulations’, the Lord will affirm the binding agreement between Him and Israel.

Let us read:

Lev 26:3 **“If you live by my regulations, observe my mitzvot and obey them;** 4 then I will provide the rain you need in its season, the land will yield its produce, and the trees in the field will yield their fruit. 5 Your threshing time will extend until the grape harvest, and your grape harvesting will extend until the time for sowing seed. You will eat as much food as you want and live securely in your land.

6 *“I will give shalom in the land — you will lie down to sleep unafraid of anyone. I will rid the land of wild animals. The sword will not go through your land. 7 You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before your sword. 8 Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand — your enemies will fall before your sword.*

9 *“I will turn toward you, make you productive, increase your numbers and uphold my covenant with you. 10 You will eat all you want from last year’s harvest and throw out what remains of the old to make room for the new. 11 **I will put my tabernacle among you, and I will not reject you, 12 but I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.***

Mishpatim, in the book of Exodus, chapter 21, is also the parsha concerning the Covenant code and begins:

Ex 21 **“These are the rulings you are to present to them:**

2 “If you purchase a Hebrew slave, he is to work six years; but in the seventh, he is to be given his freedom without having to pay anything.

Together with Leviticus, the book of the ‘Priestly Laws’, YHVH cements the covenant with the layman and the priest. Last week we read once again about the Sabbath or Shemita year and the year of Jubilee.

Parsha Bechukotai, presents to us, quite visually, the double edged sword of YHVH’s word. On one edge we see the wonderful blessings that He bestows and on the other edge the judgements He must sadly bring upon those who refuse to, or willingly break the constitution He has drawn up for His nation and the land His people will occupy.

We must remember , that Israel does not possess the land God has given them to occupy, but are only custodians of it, and thus cannot live how they want or in accordance to their own laws. To live in the land the people must obey His regulations. In this way, they will abide in peace and the land will prosper and yield its crop in abundance.

I have met many people who see the God of the Old Covenant as somewhat of a vengeful, angry and harsh disciplinarian, somehow removed from the God of the Renewed Covenant. Though they may have a point, YHVH is the same God of both covenants. We see the discipline and anger of God prevailing through the narrative because the people simply keep breaking His regulations. He still loves them, and like a good father, He must bring good discipline.

The themes of the prophets speak in general of: redemption and restoration, but first the subject of sin must be addressed. Repentance must be sought because judgment is coming. Restoration, through the coming Messiah, the servant of God, and the atonement must also happen so that the final restoration during the Messianic age will occur.

In this moment of time, we in our generation, are witnessing an unprecedented process of change. We hear the news and the tumultuous series of events that pervade our world and effect our lives on every media platform available.

Our eyes must remain on what is written by God, because what is written is the voice of God in ink.

Though chaos ensues, the stabilising factor is that the God who made our world is in control over every force and power, cosmic and earth bound, natural and manmade, that governs and influences us.

We must be aware that our world is temporal and passing away, and though this may be the case, we look to what will come to replace it, and so we look to the new and the then, not to the now and the what was. God in effect, is moving backward toward us and we are moving toward Him in a backward motion because restoration is taking place. It is all a mystery and a paradox.

Our lives look toward the future, whether it is death to a finite outcome, or an eternal life, all of creation will end up in a place of fulfilment. God’s plan will make everything complete.

Redemption does not work through a set of arbitrary and ambiguous rules. It happens because the rules make it happen, just as the rules of reproduction make the way for the birth of a child.

Redemption is a painful process, and so is the extraction of anything. God's people for example, are being extracted from the world to be inhabitants of a new world, with a new life. Giving up what we know and understand to walk into the unknown is frightening, but we are not doing it on our own and there is no need to be afraid. The Lord has told us that we will not walk alone, and that if we put our trust in Him, all will be well. But for Him to walk with us and we with Him means that the extraction must bring about an exchange.

Matt 16:24, Then Yeshua told his *talmidim*, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him say 'No' to himself, take up his execution-stake, and keep following me. 25 For whoever wants to save his own life will destroy it, but whoever destroys his life for my sake will find it.

This is the cost, but yet it does not match the price that Christ paid for us to receive the honour of becoming a disciple.

In earthly terms, just think of an alcoholic or a drug user, or anyone else involved in some kind of addiction. For them, the extraction from their addiction demands that their body and mind are purged of the toxins and their toxic effect. It is a painful process and in order for them to change they must live according to an established set of regulations.

Toxicity is the result of leaven. It is the contamination that breaks down the integrity of the matrix.

Yeshua warned that the teaching of the Pharisees destabilised God's word and the effect that it had on the people, specifically their relationship with Him. Matt 16:11-12.

As a result, judgement is to begin in the house of the Lord.

Refusing to walk or be governed by God's regulations makes for wickedness and such a person is called a *backslider*.

Jeremiah 13:14, "Return, backsliding children," says *Adonai*; "for I am your master. I will take you, one from a city, two from a family, and bring you to Tziyon.

In this passage, we read that the Lord refers to Himself as 'Master'. This is because one who returns from his wickedness must learn again who YHVH is. He must learn to become a servant before he can become a son. The sinner must learn the ways of God. The word for 'backslider', is 'Shuvav' or 'Shobab, Strong's H7726. It means: turn away, apostate. It is the opposite of one who has made 'Teshuvah'(Shub or Shuv) Strong's 7725.



'Shuvav' contains two 'Beth's'. Beth means house and thus it denotes that the backslider has removed themselves from one house, the house of YHVH to another. He no longer is entitled to the benefits that come by residing in the house of the Lord. His heart and loyalty are divided.



(SHUVAV)'Turn Away

YHVH calls this idolatry and this will separate Himself from the person who chooses not to be with Him.

Yeshua said, a person cannot serve two masters. Matt 6:24. "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

However, though the backslider may prefer another arrangement, YHVH remains faithful. We have been called into a relational contract with Him not the other way around. Despite His beloved

choosing another over Him, He waits with patient endurance for her to return to Him. In this process the breaking of covenants ensue in order for new ones to arise. They however, are built upon previous ones and strengthen the bond between all of them. Once again we see the redemptive process, the price and the pain. From out of the world, people are choosing to return back to God and becoming people of the 'Way' and accepting the covenant Christ renewed and looking into the teachings of YHVH's Torah. There is a great return happening and there is an even greater one to come.

Speaking of relationships, I am sure that many of us amongst the married, will agree that marriage is not easy, and often a great compromise. I once heard it say, 'marriage is the union of two incompatible people in an impossible situation'.

The rise of divorce increases and is extremely high even among believers. There is a cost in agreeing to live according to the marriage covenant; it is giving up ones self for the other. What is saddening, is that many couples don't want this. The marriage vow is no longer forever, it seems, but only for as long it lasts, and in addition and this is the arrogance, the betrothed on the wedding day will bring God into their agreement.

Is God who is all knowing of any outcome, a hopeless romantic and just likes weddings? Can we simply include Him in our arrangements? We need to think of this when making solemn vows. I am sure He is saddened when He sees a marriage fail and the lives that are affected by such breakdowns. He knows the feelings acutely.

Finally before we leave this study, the word 'Chukot', is found in the word of the title for this parsha. 'Bechukotai' means: statutes, or regulations, and chukot is profound in that it means the laws of God are engraved as if in stone, and thus unchanging.

As we read thus far, through Exodus and Leviticus, we see that God has now established laws between man and man, and between God and man. As we are called to be priests unto the Lord, holy and sacred to Him, it is incumbent on us that we walk in these divine regulations and continue to teach them to each generation.

As we close, we consider a sobering thought. Wickedness is going to be judged; the prophets tell us so. As the time of the end draws near we know that if we draw near to the Lord and obey Him in all His ways, and resolve to walk in the path set before us, His judgements will not come near us. We have His grace — that ensures that He will hold us under His hand of protection.

David Praises the Lord for Rescuing Him.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spoke the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said:

Psalm 18

**1. "I love You [ferently and devotedly], O Lord, my strength."
2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and the One who rescues me;
My God, my rock and strength in whom I trust and take refuge;
My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower—my stronghold.**

Be blessed and walk in the Light of His love and may this shabbat bring harmony and peace to your week.



Numbers 6:

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Shabbat Shalom

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Additional reading:

Haftarah B'chukkotai: Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 16:19–17:14

B'rit Hadashah: Yochanan (John) 14:15–21; 15:10–12; 1 Yochanan (1 John)

Glossary

*Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (Aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (Tanakh)*

*Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)*

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**), otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki, was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.