

PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

A 'GAN EDEN' ENVIRONMENT

1. Vayikra 26:3-46 is commonly referred to as the 'tochacha' [rebuke], for it warns Bnei Yisrael of the terrible punishment, should they not follow God's laws. However, the first eleven psukim describe the potential reward, should Bnei Yisrael keep those laws.

As your review this 'positive side' of the tochacha (i.e. 26:3-13), see if you can find any textual parallels to the Torah's description of the relationship between man and God in Gan Eden, as described in Breishit chapter 2.

If so, can you suggest any thematic similarities as well?
[Are you familiar with any Midrashim that find certain aspects of Gan Eden in the Land of Israel?]

2. Review 26:12, noting the phrase 've-hithalacht betochachem...' and its context in this entire section. How does this pasuk relate to Gan Eden?

Relate your answer to Rashi's commentary on this pasuk!

See Ramban on this pasuk as well for a very interesting and important explanation concerning how the Torah relates to 'olam ha-ba' [the world to come]!

3. In what manner is the tochacha in Parshat Bechukotai similar to the tochacha in Parshat Ki Tavo (i.e. Devarim perek 28)? In what manner is it different?

Based on their content, why do you think that each tochacha is included in its respective Sefer? [In other words, how does it relate to the theme of each sefer?]

Relate to Vayikra 18:24-29.

See also Ibn Ezra on 25:1!

Compare as well Vayikra 26:3-5 to Devarim 11:13-17.

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

1. The opening pasuk of the tochacha relates to the '**chukim**' and '**mishpatim**' that Bnei Yisrael must keep (less they be punished). Note as well 26:14-15, and how the Torah refers to both of these words as mitzvot.

In your opinion, which specific **chukim** and **mishpatim** (and hence mitzvot) are these psukim referring to?

Relate to the following possibilities:

1. Only the laws of shmitta & yovel, i.e. Vayikra chapter 25.
2. All of the laws found in Sefer Vayikra.
3. All of the laws of the Torah.

Attempt to explain the logic behind each of these possibilities.

2. From a 'technical' perspective, why should chapters 25 and 26 in Sefer Vayikra be considered one unit?

In your answer, relate to the new 'dibra' that begins in 25:1, noting how it doesn't end until the end of chapter 26. [Note as well the next new dibra begins in 27:1.]

Relate this to your answer to the above question.

3. In what manner does the tochacha (i.e. chapter 26) thematically relate to the laws of shmitta & yovel in chapter 25?

In your answer relate to 26:34-35, as well as 26:3-5.

[Note as well the last 7 psukim of Sefer Divrei Hayamim!]

3. How does the tochacha thematically relate to Vayikra chapter 18? [Note especially 18:1-5, 18:24-30.]

How does it relate to the theme of the 'second half' of Sefer Vayikra? Attempt to relate your answer to 26:46!

4. Considering that Sefer Vayikra is a 'book of laws', can you explain why the tochacha would have formed an appropriate conclusion for the entire Sefer?

What does one usually find at the conclusion of a set of laws?
[Relate in your answer to 26:46!]

5. Is there a logical progression from chapter 26 to chapter 27?

If so, what is it? If not, in your opinion, where in Sefer Vayikra do the laws in chapter 27 belong?

Note 27:14-25. Based on these details, how does this chapter relate to chapter 25?

Based on that parallel, would it have made more sense for the Torah to record these laws within chapter 25 (or at least before the tochacha in chapter 26)?

6. Note 27:34. What mitzvot does this pasuk refer to? How does this pasuk relate to the final pasuk of chapter 26?

How do both these psukim relate to the opening pasuk of chapter 25?

7. In what manner is Vayikra chapter 27 similar to Vayikra chapters 1-3? In what manner are these units different?

8. Can you explain why Sefer Vayikra prefers to conclude with chapter 27 instead of chapter 26? Relate to the primary topic of each chapter.

See Ibn Ezra at the beginning of chapter 27.

PART III - PARSHANUT

1. Review 26:46, noting how it forms a 'summary pasuk'. In your opinion, what does it summarize? In other words, what do the words 'chukim, mishpatim, & torot' refer to?

See the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, & Sforno on this pasuk.

Why do you think that each commentator offers a very different answer?

See also Chizkuni to Shmot 24:7 ['sefer ha-brit']!

What leads Chizkuni to his conclusion?

Based on the previous shiurim on the 'two halves' of Sefer Vayikra, can you suggest an alternative interpretation?

2. In 26:9, God promises that 'He will keep His covenant'. In your opinion, what covenant (brit) does this pasuk refer to?

Compare this pasuk with Breishit 6:18, 9:1,7,11-12; 17:7-8; and Shmot 6:2-5. How do these sources enhance your understanding of 26:9?

See now Ramban on Breishit 6:18, especially towards the end [from 've-al derech ha-emet...'].

In relation to 've-hakimoti et briti itchem' in 26:9 -

First, see Rashi's commentary on this pasuk.

What causes Rashi to explain that this pasuk refers to a **new** covenant, as opposed to a fulfillment of the original covenant?

Next, see Ibn Ezra. In your opinion, why does Ibn Ezra mention specifically 'kochvei ha-shamayim' and 'afar ha-aretz'.

Relate this to the beginning of the pasuk!

Finally, see Seforno. Note how he refers to the psukim of brit mila. Can you explain why?

In your opinion, what is the underlying reason for this three-way 'machloket'?

be-hatzlacha,
menachem