

Parashat Bechukotai

פרשת בחקותי

Shabbat Iyyar 17, 5771, May 21, 2011

MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of God

<http://www.matsati.com> | matsati@matsati.com

5

How does Walking and Dwelling establish God's Covenant in a way only He could do?

השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Leviticus 26:3-27:34

הפטרה: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14

הברית: Luke 23-24

החדשה

10 *Triennial cycle: Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3-27:15*

In this week's Parashat, from sefer *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3-27:15*, we find the conditional phrase **“אם-בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ונעשיתם אתם:”** meaning *“if you walk in my statutes and keep my commands and so as to carry them out (you doing them)”* then the Lord will give rain upon the land in their seasons and the land will yield its produce and bear its fruit (26:3). Moshe goes on to tell the people the Lord will then bring the harvest of food in its season and they shall eat and be filled and be blessed in fullness. In addition to this, not only will they not fear their enemies, but their enemies will fall before them by the sword and they shall chase their enemies where one person will chase a hundred and an hundred will chase ten thousand. The Lord will put fear in the heart of our enemies. By obeying God and His mitzvot (commands) the Lord says that He will make his dwelling among His people and walk among them saying **“והייתי לכם לאלהים ואתם תהיו לי”** meaning *“and I will be their God and they will be my people.”* These scriptures 26:11-12 are very significant for our understanding the Word of God, God's plan of redemption, and why Yeshua (Jesus) had come to die for our sins. How does walking and dwelling in our midst signify the establishment of His covenant in a way that only God could do?

ויקרא 26:9-13

9 ונפלו איביכם לפניכם לחרב: ופניתי אליכם והפריתי אתכם והרביתי אתכם והקימתי את בריתי אתכם: ואתם יושן וישן מפני חדש תוציאו: ונתתי משכני בתוכם ולא תגעל נפשי אתכם: והתהלכתי בתוכם והייתי לכם לאלהים ואתם תהיו לי לעם: אני יהוה אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים מהות להם עבדים ואשבר מטת עלכם ואולך אתכם קוממיות:

Vayikra / Leviticus 26:9-13

26:9 'So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you. 26:10 'You will eat the old supply and clear out the old because of the new. 26:11 'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. 26:12 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. 26:13 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect. (NASB)

We begin our study by examining an Aramaic translation of the Torah, the Targum Onkelos. To some this may sound foreign, but the Targum is simply another translation of the Bible. The Targum Onkelos is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Torah. As we examine the Aramaic and Hebrew texts, we will be asking ourselves the primary question: “What does the author intend for us to understand in terms of meaning? What does the text mean?” Now, the Targum is a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic. This was necessary to accommodate the returning exiles from Babylon (see *Jeremiah* and *Nehemiah* for the exile and return sipurim (stories)). The Targumim (plural for Targums) are not always a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew text but often included an expanded paraphrase of the Torah passages that contain the theology and perspectives of the translators in their times. The standard Targum of the Torah in Judaism is Onkelos and the standard Targum of the prophets is Jonathan named after Jonathan ben Uzziel the supposed author of the translation. Another Targum is “Pseudo-Jonathan.” Targum Yerushalami (Jerusalem) is the translation for the Writings (except for *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*). The Targum Onkelos is dated to the 2nd Century. In addition to this, note that the basic vocabulary of Aramaic is very similar to that of Hebrew, even though not all of the roots have the same meaning in both languages. Many words have similar meanings in both languages; Aramaic also undergoes certain fixed consonantal changes as the words pass from one language to the other. Thus, the student that encounters an unfamiliar Aramaic word can often guess its meaning by considering whether a similar root exists in Hebrew (common root).

Let’s look in the Targum Onkelos (תרגום אונקלוס) at *Vayikra / Leviticus* verses 26:11-12 and see what we can learn:

תרגום אונקלוס ספר ויקרא פרק כו

ט ואתפני במימרי לאיטבא לכון ואפיש נתכון ואסגי נתכון ואקים ית קנמי עמכון. י ותיכלון צתיקא דצתיק וצתיקא מן קדם ונדתא תפנון. יא ואתן משכני בנייכון ולא תרחק מימרי נתכון. יב ואשרי שכניתי בנייכון ואהוי לכון לאלתא ואתון תהון קנמי לעם. יג אנא יי אלמכון דאפיקית נתכון מארעא דמצרים מלמחי להון עבדון ומברית ניר עממיא מנכון ונדברית נתכון בהירומא. יד ואם לא תקבלון למימרי ולא

10 ואכלתם ישן נושן וישן מפני חדש תוציאו: ונתתי
 11 משכני בתוככם ולא תנעל נפשי אתכם: והתהלכתי
 12 בתוככם והייתי לכם לאלהים ואתם תהיו לי לעם:

I have drawn a few arrows here to show a comparison of the two texts. A simple inspection of the Aramaic text shows some similarities to the Hebrew and it is relatively easy to determine what is being said. In Hebrew it says “I will give/put/place my Mishkhan (tabernacle) in their midst and not reject you” The word “tigal” is from the root להגעיל meaning “to make someone feel disgust, loathe” so God is saying that He will not make His נפשי soul, life, or spirit loath

Vayikra / Leviticus 26:9-13

26:9 'So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you. 26:10 'You will eat the old supply and clear out the old because of the new. 26:11 'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. 26:12 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. 26:13 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect. (NASB)

or feel disgust of the people. The Aramaic translation says God will not make his
70 Word “Memrah” (written as מִמְרֵי meaning “My Word”) to feel disgust toward
them.

Targum : יָא וְאַתָּן מִשְׁכְּנֵי בֵּינֵינוּ וְלֹא תִרְחַק מִמְרֵי יִתְכוּן :

Torah : יָא וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכְּנֵי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא-תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם :

Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you.

(NASB)

Reading *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:12* God told the Children of Yisrael that *“I will
also walk among you and be your God and you shall be My People.”* Did you
80 know that throughout all of Scripture, from Avraham until today, God proclaims
that He wants to be our God and he wants us to be His people?

Targum : יָב וְאַשְׁרֵי שְׂכִינָתִי בֵּינֵינוּ וְאַהְרֵי לְכוּן לְאַלְהֵא וְאַתָּן תְּהוּן קְדָמִי לְעַם :

Torah : יָב וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהָיִיתִי לְכֶם לְאֵל הַיָּם וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי לְעַם :

I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

(NASB)

In the very first covenant, God’s plan was to call forth a people who
would be His own. He proclaimed to Avraham before he had children in sefer
Bereshit / Genesis 16 saying, before Avraham had Yitzchak (Isaac), that *“To you*

90 *I will be God and to your children after you.”*

Through this people (the descendents of Avraham) and by His covenant, God is creating a people who He has redeemed to be holy, righteous, and bring glory to His Name. What is very interesting is that in the Targum Onkelos, God says *“I will place My **“Word”** (Memra) between Me and between you and between your seed.”*

בארשית 16:1-7

א ויהי אברהם בן-תשעים שנה ותשע שנים נראה יהוה אל-אברהם ויאמר אליו אני-אל שדי התהלך לפני והיה תמים: ב ואתנה בריתי ביני ובינך וארבה אותך במאד מאד: ג ויפל אברהם על-פניו וידבר אתו אל הים לאמר: ד אני הנה בריתי אתך והיית לאב המון גוים ה ולא-יקרא עוד את-שמיך אברהם והיה שמיך אברהם פי אב-המון גוים ונתתיך לגוים ומלכים ממך יצאו: [שביעי] ז והקמתי את-בריתי ביני ובינך ובין זרעך אחריך לדורתם לברית עולם להיות לך לאל הים ולזרעך אחריך:

תרגום אונקלוס ספר בראשית פרק יז

ז וְאַקִּים יְת קִנְמֵי בֵּין מִמְרֵי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין בְּנֶךָ בְּתִרְךָ לְדִרְיֵהוּן לְקִיָּם עַלְמָם לְמַהְרֵי לְךָ לְאַלְהֵא וּלְבְנֶךָ בְּתִרְךָ:

Here, the Word of God is set, raised up, and established between God and Avraham and his children (seed). In Hebrew It says that God will place His “Covenant” between

Himself, between Avraham and his children. In the Aramaic text (Targum
110 Onkelos) God will place His Memra (Word) between Himself, between Avraham,
and his children. The fascinating aspect of the differences between the two
translations is that in the Aramaic translation the “Word” (Memra) seems to be
synonymous with the “Covenant” of God in the Hebrew text. We know this
because the Hebrew word for “between” is the same root in Aramaic. The
115 primary question for us is *“what does the author intend for us to understand in*

terms of meaning” with respect to the Aramaic and Hebrew texts? The most important point here is that the Memra (Word of God) is through whom the covenant is made. When understanding the nature of a covenant, the most important covenants are those that are issued from God that are made with man.

120 In the Torah, there are three types or categories of covenants; the first is between people, without a reference to God such as the covenant that Avraham made with Avimelech in sefer *Bereshit / Genesis 26*. In this instance a covenant is made as a statement of ideas that are agreed upon (See *Bereshit / Genesis 26:29, 31:50-52*) and then the agreement is sealed with and by an oath (see *Bereshit / Genesis 26:31, 31:48-52*). In this covenant, the two parties (between two men, one man with another) agree and give an oath by their word. Here, the covenant is sealed by an oath, by the “Word” or these two men. The second type of covenant is one that is made by man to God. Throughout *sefer Bereshit / Genesis*, Avraham made a covenant with God and sealed his covenant with blood. In this case, the covenants were sealed in the life and the blood of the animal that was slaughtered. The third type of covenant is where God makes a covenant with man but there is no blood that is spilled. The covenant is sealed by the “Word” of the Lord similar to how the covenant was sealed between Avraham and Avimelech. For example in Parashat Lekh lekha (sefer *Bereshit / Genesis 12*) God calls Avraham to go to the land of Canaan and promises a covenant with his children like it is shown in sefer *Bereshit / Genesis 16*. In this case, the covenant is sealed by the Word “Memra” of the Lord, as indicated by the Aramaic translation and Avraham believes by faith that God will accomplish and fulfill the covenantal promises. These types of covenants are eternal covenants that are established by God’s “Word” (by God Himself). In addition to this, these types of covenants are prophetic in nature, such as in sefer *Bereshit / Genesis 16* in God’s promise to place His Word/Memra/Covenant with Avraham and his children. This type of covenant provides a link/connection to other prophetic covenants that God was going to fulfill. One such very important prophetic covenant God made said He will make with His people is found in sefer *Jeremiah* chapter 31 verses 31-34.

ספר ירמיה 31:31-34

31 הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאמְרֵיהוּה וְכָרְתִי אֶת־בְּרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל
32 וְאֶת־בְּרִית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה: לֹא כַבְרִית אֲשֶׁר
כָּרְתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם בְּיוֹם הַחַוִּיקַי בְּיָדָם לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר־הִמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְאֲנִי בְעַלְתִּי
בָּם נֹאמְרֵיהוּה: כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרֹת אֶת־בְּרִית
יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרַי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם נֹאמְרֵיהוּה נִתְּתִי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי
בְּקֶרְפָּם וְעַל־לִבָּם אֶכְתָּבֶנָּה וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים
34 וְהָמָּה יְהוּיִלִּי לָעָם: וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ
וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דַּע אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי כֹלָם יָדְעוּ אוֹתִי
לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדוֹלָם נֹאמְרֵיהוּה כִּי אֶסְלַח לְעֹשֵׂם
וְלִחַטְאֵתָם לֹא אֶזְכֹּר־עוֹד:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31:31 ‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,’ declares the Lord. 31:33 ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 31:34 ‘They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’ (NASB)

150 God says: *'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (NASB)* In 31:32, the Lord says that this is not the covenant that He cut/made with your Fathers in the day that He delivered them by the hand from eretz Mitzrayim (land of Egypt). This is a new covenant, a different covenant, an eternal covenant a covenant that

155 says will cause God to: **וְהָיְתָי לָהֶם לְאֵל הֵים וְהָמָּה יְהִיוּ-לִי לְעָם:** that *"I will be there God and they will be a people to me."* Here, not only is there a parallel with our Torah text, also God declares that He will make a new covenant that will lead to Him being our God and us being His people. The presentation of these Mitzvot (commands) in the Parashah is contained within the eternal covenant that God is going to make with His people. Now, based on our understanding of the covenantal systems through the bible, the three types, man with man, and man with God and God with man, the covenant God is going to make with us, this new covenant will be sealed by His Word (Memra) and by blood. The one thing we know for certain is that God always comes through on His promises and man always falls short on keeping his promises. Therefore, God, in His timing, brought His Word, His "Memra" into the World in a unique and special way that satisfies the covenantal promise that He made in *Jeremiah 31:32*, **לֹא כְבָרִית אֲשֶׁר פָּרַתִּי אֶת-אֲבוֹתָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּי בָרַחְתִּי מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר-הִמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת-כְּבָרִיתִי וְאָנֹכִי כִּי פָעַלְתִּי בָם נְאֻם-יְהוָה:** making a covenant that was unlike the covenant He had made with our fathers in the past. God was doing something different, something new, and something wonderful.

170 The way this new covenant was accomplished was that God caused His Memra (the Word) to become flesh as recorded in the Ketuvei Shelachim (Apostolic Writings). In Yeshua (Jesus) God established His covenant with His people by His Word (Memra) and by the blood of the Word (Yeshua's death). It was in this way that God, by His Word "Memra" becoming flesh enabled God to seal the covenant He made with us by his Word (the Memra) and by blood. Let's look at the scriptures in *John 1:1-14*.

ΤΟ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ ΑΓΙΟΝ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ^ο

1 ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς
 2,3 ἦν ὁ λόγος * οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν * πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ
 4 ἐγένετο καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν * ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ
 5 ἦν καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων * καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ
 6 φαίνει καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν * ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἄ-
 .
 .
 .
 14 οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν * καὶ ὁ
 λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν
 δόξαν αὐτοῦ δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρὸς πλήρης χάρι-
 15 τος καὶ ἀληθείας * ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν

Here *John 1:1* describes the function of the creative Word of God, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* When the apostle John wrote his gospel, he was aware of the “Memra” (Word) and its use in the Tanach (Torah, Neviim, Ketuvim). The Memra is used being synonymous with God, in the Targumim, the Aramaic translations of the Tanach. Note that the “Word of the Lord” (“Memra of the Lord”) is used in substitution for the “Melach Adonai” the “Angel of the Lord” in many places throughout the Torah in the Aramaic translation. The author of the Aramaic translation was saying that the “Memra of God” (Word of God) is the very presence of the Lord Himself. Take for example, the Memra walking in the Garden of Eden as God (compare the Targum with the Hebrew text from sefer *Bereshit / Genesis 3:8*). For more on this read here <http://www.matsati.com/wbf.pdf>. In addition to this, the Memra is through whom the covenant is established as we saw in *Bereshit / Genesis 16:7*. Those who read from the Targumim, the Aramaic translations of the Torah, would have understood what the Memra was and is the Word of the living God. By writing about the Word (Logos) of God, John was portraying the Messiah as both being a messenger from God and sharing the nature of God. *John 1:14* goes on to say “Sarx egeneto” meaning “flesh became” here the Word of God put on flesh, meaning He became a man. It says that by taking on flesh, the Word of God “eskenosen” tented, tabernacle, made His dwelling, or pitched His tent. Certainly this is an allusion to sefer *Shemot / Exodus 25:9* and God’s promise to tabernacle with His people as we saw in this Parasha and in the prophetic covenant God was going to make (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:11-12, Jeremiah 31:31-34*). The Hebrew translation of the Greek text in *John 1:14* say “lavash basar” which translates as “wore flesh” meaning that the Word (Memra) put on flesh like the wearing of clothing and then “yishcon” meaning that when the Memra (Word) put on flesh, He dwelled, or tabernacle “betochemu” in our midst.

וְהַדְבָר לְבָשׁ בָּשָׂר וַיֵּשְׁבֵן בְּתוֹכֵנוּ וְאֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ רָאִינוּ כְּכְבוֹד בֶּן
 יְחִיד לְאָבִיו מְלֵא חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת: וַיּוֹחֵן הָעֵיד עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא לְאָמֵר

Here the Memra became flesh, and brought the atoning sacrifice to make peace between you and me, and the Lord God. The Word acted on our behalf to establish an everlasting covenant fulfilling prophetically what God has promised so many hundreds of years ago. In this way we see God doing all of the work of drawing us near and confirming His Word by His Word in the blood of the Word in Yeshua the Messiah. This is how we understand Yeshua (Jesus) to be God, God the Word, the Memra, the Creator and Sustainer of life (see sefer *Colossians 1:15-20*).

Do you see now how important it is to believe in God’s Word, and to remain in the Word? Yeshua taught His disciples this: *“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free”* (*John 8:31-32*). We who abide in the Word, abide in Yeshua, the truth of the Word (Memra) is that which sets us free—free to serve Yeshua, free to be His true disciples, free to accomplish the work He has given us

235 to do. Those who would try to turn you from the Word know, at least the spiritual
forces behind them know, that falsehood or “bad information” does the opposite
by placing us back into bondage. If we do not study the Word and believe in
Yeshua for salvation, we are disabling ourselves from being His disciples as God
intends and hinders us from accomplishing the kingdom work God wants to begin
in our lives. How do we guard ourselves against terror and against bad
information? We dare not rely upon tradition, be it from Rabbinic or Christian
sources, tradition can and will lead us astray. We must commit ourselves to the
240 disciplined study and application of the inspired Scriptures seeking to know and
understand the text, what it means, and how it is to be applied to our lives both
individually and corporately. Let us dedicate ourselves once again to the work of
being Yeshua's true disciples. Have you placed your faith, and trust in Yeshua?
Is God walking and has God established his dwelling place in your life? If your
245 answer is not an emphatic “YES” then say the following prayer with me. Maybe
you have already placed your faith in Yeshua and you would like to renew your
walk, your faith, and your life in Him again. Come say the following prayer with
me.

250 Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of Your Word and for making an everlasting
covenant by Your Word in Your Son Yeshua. I believe the Scriptures that
Yeshua (Jesus) had come as the Word of God, took on flesh, and lived a perfect
life. I believe that Yeshua laid His life down on my behalf. I believe by faith that
255 Yeshua established an everlasting covenant in His blood for me. Please forgive
me of my sins, heal me both spiritually, and physically, and help me to begin the
work of Your kingdom as a disciple of Yeshua the Messiah. Lord please come
into my life and make your dwelling place in me. I ask you to send your Ruach
HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) to dwell within me, to lead me and guide me in life and
260 as I study Your holy Word. I thank You Lord for all of the gifts You have given,
I now want to give a gift back to You, the gift of a life lived for you. Thank You
for the mercy you have shown me all of these years and the new mercies you are
showing me today and will show me tomorrow. To Your Name be the glory, the
honor, and the praise. In Yeshua’s Name I pray!

265 Amen

270 **What to pray:** *Thank the Lord for the gift of His Word, the gift of His Son, and
the gift of everlasting life. Thank the Lord from lifting the burden of sin and
setting you free.*

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

275 הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever