

## Do you Spurn the Commandments?

This weeks reading is taken from **Parashat Bekhukotai** (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3–27:34*). The last Torah portion of the book of Vayikra / Leviticus speaks of the reward for obedience and the consequence of disobedience and how the Lord will work specifically in each persons life based upon how one lives. The Lord God in heaven says, ג אִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאָת-  
 26:3 *If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, (NASB)* speaking of being obedient to His commands. If we seek to do what is right, and to live in the way the Lord wants us to live, then He will cause us to prosper (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3-13*), He will cause us to live at peace, and His presence will dwell in the midst of His people. On the other hand, the Lord says, ד  
 וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֵת-כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה: טו וְאִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּמָּאֲסוּ וְאִם-  
 26:14 אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטֵי תִגְעַל וְנִפְשְׁכֶם לִבְלַתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי:  
 26:15 *But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, (NASB)* then He will work in the life of His people to draw them back. Note how the MT states תִּגְעַל וְנִפְשְׁכֶם meaning *“to abhor, loathe, or be vilely cast away,”* by your soul. This is a very significant statement that we should make ourselves aware of because it is related not only to the place of the Torah in our lives, but also to the motivation in our hearts for serving the Lord. Do you abhor God’s Law as a believer in Yeshua the Messiah? (e.g. *Which commandments do you not like?*)

The Torah portion continues speaking of what the Lord will do to those who abhor His Torah. The Lord God in heaven will cause us to fall before our enemies, he will cause us to be terror stricken, and to waste away with diseases, and sap our strength if we do not care about His commandments. The work that we do will fail, and our enemies will remain hostile towards us if we loathe His commandments. Even the ground itself will not respond to sowing seed and the animals will attack us if we spurn His commandments. Do you believe there are certain commandments we are allowed to ignore today in Yeshua the Messiah? The point of these things is written explicitly saying, כג וְאִם-בְּאֵלֶּה לֹא תִנְסְרוּ לִי וְנִהְלִי-

יָקָרִי: *26:23 'And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me (NASB)* This phrase is repeated in *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:18, 21, 23, and 27*. The point of this warning is given in *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:40-42* which states the purpose of these things are to lead us to repentance. Therefore, Parashat Bekhukotai is very significant for understanding why weakness, illness, and hardships are brought into our lives today. If we hold on to sin, and make sin a way of life, will faith in Yeshua cause these things to be taken away if one remains unrepentant? Remember that living in sin is synonymous to breaking the covenant of God, and the covenant connects these things to our faith in Yeshua, according to Parashat Bekhukotai. Let's discuss this a little further. The Scriptures we are looking at are from *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:11-28*.

### ספר ויקרא פרק כו

יֵאָדָּם וְנִתְּתִי מִשְׁכָּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא-תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם: יב וְהִתְּלַכְתִּי בְּתוֹ-  
 כְּכֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי לְעָם: יג אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר  
 הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִהֵיטֵב לָהֶם עֲבָדִים וְאֲשַׁבֵּר מִטַּת עַלְכֶם וְאוֹלָךְ  
 אֶתְכֶם קוֹמְמוֹת: פ יד וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת  
 הָאֵלֶּה: טו וְאִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּמָּאֲסוּ וְאִם אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטֵי תִגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת  
 אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי לְהִפְרָכֶם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי: טז אֲף-אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה-זֹאת לְכֶם וְהִפְקַדְתִּי  
 עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֶת-הַשְּׁחָפָת וְאֶת-הַקְּדוּחַת מְכֻלּוֹת עֵינַיִם וּמְדִיבַת נֶפֶשׁ וּזְרַעְתֶּם  
 לְרִיק וּזְרַעְתֶּם וְאֶכְלֶהוּ אִיבֵיכֶם: יז וְנִתְּתִי פָנַי בְּכֶם וְנִגְפַתֶּם לְפָנַי אִיבֵיכֶם  
 וְרַדּוּ בְכֶם שְׂנְאֵיכֶם וְנִסְתָּם וְאִין-רָדוּךְ אֶתְכֶם: יח וְאִם-עַד-אֵלֶּה לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ  
 לִי וְנִסְפַתִּי לִיִּסְרָה אֶתְכֶם שְׁבַע עַל-חַטָּאתֵיכֶם: יט וְשִׁבַרְתִּי אֶת-גְּאוֹן עֲזָכֶם  
 וְנִתְּתִי אֶת-שְׁמֵיכֶם כַּבָּרְזֵל וְאֶת-אַרְצְכֶם כַּנְּחָשׁ: כ וְתִם לְרִיק כְּתֹכֶם וְלֹא-  
 תִתֵּן אַרְצְכֶם אֶת-יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הָאֶרֶץ לֹא יִתֵּן פְּרִי: כא וְאִם-תִּלְכּוּ עִמִּי קָרִי  
 וְלֹא תֵאָבּוּ לְשִׁמְעֵי לִי וְנִסְפַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִכָּה שְׁבַע כַּחַטָּאתֵיכֶם: כב וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי  
 בְּכֶם אֶת-חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְשִׁפְלָה אֶתְכֶם וְהִכְרִיתָה אֶת-בְּהֵמַתְכֶם וְהִמְעִיטָה אֶתְכֶם  
 וְנִשְׁמָו דְרָכֵיכֶם: כג וְאִם-בְּאֵלֶּה לֹא תִנְסְרוּ לִי וְהִלַכְתֶּם עִמִּי קָרִי: כד וְהִלַ-  
 כְּתִי אֲף-אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם בְּקָרִי וְהִפִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם גַּם-אֲנִי שְׁבַע עַל-חַטָּאתֵיכֶם: כה  
 וְהִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב נֹקֶמֶת נֹקֶם-בְּרִית וְנִאָּסַפְתֶּם אֶל-עָרֵיכֶם וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי דְבָר  
 בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְנִתְּתֶם בְּיַד-אוֹיֵב: כו בְּשִׁבְרֵי לְכֶם מִטֶּה-לָחֶם וְאָפוּ עֵשֶׂר נְשִׁים  
 לַחֲמֹכֶם בְּתַנּוּר אֶחָד וְהִשִּׁיבוּ לַחֲמֹכֶם בְּמִשְׁקַל וְאֶכְלַתֶּם וְלֹא תִשְׁבְּעוּ: ס כז  
 וְאִם-בְּזֹאת לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ לִי וְהִלַכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְּקָרִי: כח וְהִלַכְתִּי עִמָּכֶם בְּחַמַּת-  
 קָרִי וְנִסַּרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֲף-אֲנִי שְׁבַע עַל-חַטָּאתֵיכֶם:

**Vayikra / Leviticus 26:11-28**

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. 26:14 'But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, 26:15 if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, 26:16 I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up. 26:17 'I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you. 26:18 'If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. 26:19 'I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze. 26:20 'Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit. 26:21 'If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins. 26:22 'I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted. 26:23 'And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me, 26:24 then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. 26:25 'I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands. 26:26 'When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied. 26:27 'Yet if in spite of this you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, 26:28 then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. (NASB)

The Torah speaks of what the Lord will do to those who abhor, loathe, or detest His Torah. Note the way the text is written, these commands are

His, they do not belong to a particular people as is taught today that the commands were only given to Israel and the Greek (non-Jew) can disregard the commands. Remember Last week's study on the Goel (Redeemer) that those who do not have a kinsman redeemer, the determination of justice and redemption falls to the court, which draws in the context of the heavenly court making every man, woman, and child responsible before the Lord God in heaven. Therefore, these concepts of abhorring, loathing, or detesting are brought into the context of the entire world.

*Ecclesiastes 3:14* provides insight into the meaning of this week's text from Parashat Bekhukotai.

### ***Ecclesiastes 3:14-18***

*3:14 I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.*

*3:15 That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by. 3:16*

*Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. 3:17 I said to myself, 'God will*

*judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,' for a time for every matter and for every deed is there. 3:18 I*

*said to myself concerning the sons of men, 'God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.' (NASB)*

According to the author of Ecclesiastes, the Lord works in the lives of men so that we will fear him. The differences between righteousness and wickedness are related to the commandments of God. The Scriptures clearly describe that God's word stands forever. The Torah is not written with "*figurative*" language. Some modern scholars would suggest the Torah is "*spiritual*," or that "*forever*" does not really mean forever, or in some other way try to cloud the meaning of the Torah as it is related to our faith in Yeshua the Messiah and the way we live our lives. Many Christians today claim that the Torah was only for the Jewish people, but they are quick to say that they are not allowed to lie, murder, commit adultery, or break any other of the Ten Commandments except the command-

ment of the Shabbat. The word Torah (תורה) being derived from the word Yarah (ירח) means “*shot, to hit the mark*” whereas Ovven (עוון) means “*to miss the mark, sin.*” Being instructed by God, the Torah is meant to help us to hit the mark, we are given instructions to know how to live for the Lord in heaven. The point is the purpose of commandments of God are to be a wake-up call to remind us of our sins, lead us to repentance, and cause us to turn from sin and to return of turn our lives to the ways of righteousness, justice, and truth, the ways of God. This appears to be the point being made in Parashat Bekhukotai according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:40-46*.

### ***Vayikra / Leviticus 26:40-46***

*26:40 'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me 26:41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. 26:43 'For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. 26:44 'Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. 26:45 'But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord.' 26:46 These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the Lord established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai. (NASB)*

מ וְהִתְנַדְּדוּ אֶת-עֲוֹנֵם וְאֶת-עֲוֹן מִוְלָדֵיכֶם וְהִלְכוּ עִמִּי בְקָרְבִי: 26:40 *If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me (NASB)* coupled with the statements saying, כִּג וְאִם-בְּאֵלֶיךָ לֹא, 26:23 *‘And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me (NASB)* being repeated in *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:18, 21, 23, 27*, the warning in Scripture with the bad things happening are meant to lead us to repentance. The most significant aspect of these Scriptures is the Lord saying though the people reject the commands of God, the Lord will not reject or abhor them to destroy them (26:44) but He will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors who He brought out of Egypt (26:25). The Lord will establish His covenant in the midst of their unfaithfulness. This doesn't however give us a license to sin. The mercy of God is meant to allow us time to perform Teshuvah and turn from our sins.

The rabbis have the following to say concerning these Scriptures.

### ***Rashi on Leviticus 26:14, Part 1***

*BUT IF YE WILL NOT HEARKEN UNTO ME to study the Torah laboriously in order to fathom the textual interpretation of the Sages..., I also will do this unto you, etc. One might think that this refers to the fulfillment of the commandments! When, however, Scripture states immediately afterwards: “and ye will not do [all my commandments]”, it is evident that the fulfillment of the commandments is mentioned there! How, then, must I explain לי תשמעו לי? Obviously as meaning: “But if you will not hearken unto Me to study the Torah industriously” as I bid you do when I said אם בחקתי תלכו (cf. Rashi on v. 3). And what is the force of the word לי? (To express this idea would it not have sufficed to state: ואם לא תשמעו?) It implies that your disobedience is directed לי against Me. The word לי is used only in the case of such a one who knows his Master and yet of set purpose rebels against Him (i. e. the entire chapter containing these threats of*

*punishment is addressed only to such a person, not to one who sins against God unwittingly). Similarly in reference to Nimrod: (Genesis 10:9) “a mighty hunter before (לפני) the Lord” which means that he knew Him and yet of set purpose rebelled against him. Similarly in reference to the men of Sodom: (Genesis 13:13) “[But the men of Sodom were] evil and sinful against the Lord (לה) exceedingly” — they knew their Master and yet of set purpose rebelled against him (Sifra; cf. Rashi on those two verses).*

Rashi speaks of being laborious in our study of God’s word and that these Scriptures speak of one who knows his Master, referring to the Lord God, and those people having known the Lord purposefully rebel against Him. Rashi is speaking on *Vayikra / Leviticus 26* concerning those who willfully spurn the command of God as opposed to those who unwittingly sin. Do you willfully spurn the commands of God? Or, do you only willfully spurn certain commands? (e.g. “*Oh that is the Old Testament, those commands don’t apply...*”)

### ***Sforno on Leviticus 26:15, Part 1***

*ואם בחקותי תמאסו, that you do not only ignore them but actively despise them;*

Sforno speaks of those who not only ignore the commands, but actively despise them, so much so that they live their lives in willful rebellion rejecting some commands while possibly accepting others. Does that sound familiar?

Midrash Rabbah on Vayikra states the following:

### ***Vayikra Rabbah 35, Parashat 1***

*If you will walk in my statutes: This is what is written (Psalms 119:59), “I considered my ways and I turned my feet to your testimonies.” David said, “Master of the universe! On each and every day I would consider and say, ‘To place x and to the home of y am I walking,’ but my feet would bring me to the synagogues and to the Houses of Study. - this is what is written, “I considered my ways and*

*I turned my feet to your testimonies.” Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Acha, “‘I considered’ the giving of the reward for the [fulfillment of] the commandments and the loss for the sins, ‘and I turned my feet to your testimonies.’” Rabbi Menachem the son-in-law of Rabbi Elazar BeRebbe Avina said, “‘I considered,’ what You wrote us in the Torah, ‘If you will walk in my statutes’ and what is written there? ‘And I will give peace in the land’ (Leviticus 26:6). [Likewise (Leviticus 26:14)] ‘And if you will not listen to me,’ what is written there? ‘And I will add to punish you’” (Leviticus 26:18). Rabbi Abba the son of Rabbi Chiya said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, “‘I considered’ the blessings and ‘I considered’ the curses - the blessing are from [the first letter,] alef to the [last letter,] tav; the curses are from [the letter,] vav to [the letter before it,] hay - and not only that, but they are backwards (in reverse order). Rabbi Avin said, “[The intention is that God is saying,] ‘If you merit it, behold, I will reverse for you the curses into blessings.’” When is that? When you observe my Torah. This is what is written, “If you will walk in my statutes.”*

אם בחקותי תלכו - הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים קיט) חשבתי) אם בחקותי תלכו - הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים קיט) חשבתי) דרכי ואשיבה רגלי אל עדותיך. אמר דוד: רבש"ע! בכל יום ויום הייתי מחשב ואומר: למקום פלוני ולבית דירה פלונית אני הולך והיו רגלי מביאות אותי לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות, הדא הוא דכתיב: ואשיבה רגלי אל עדותיך. ר' הונא, בשם ר' אחא אמר: חשבתי מתן שכרן של מצות והפסדן של עבירות, ואשיבה רגלי אל עדותיך. ר' מנחם חתנא דר' אלעזר בר' אבינא אמר: חשבתי מה שכתבת לנו בתורה: אם בחקותי תלכו ומה כתיב תמן? ונתתי שלום בארץ. ואם לא תשמעו לי מה כתיב תמן? ויספתי ליסרה אתכם. ר' אבא בריה דר' חייא, בשם ר' יונתן אמר: חשבתי ברכות חש-בתי קללות. ברכות מאל"ף ועד תי"ו קללות מן וי"ו ועד ה"א ולא עוד, אלא שהן הפוכות. אמר רבי אבין: אם זכיתן הריני הופך לכם קללות לברכות. אימתי? כשתשמרו את תורת, הדא הוא דכתיב: (אם בחקותי תלכו)

The rabbis look at *Vayikra / Leviticus 26* and call upon David's words

saying *“I considered my ways and I turned my feet to your testimonies”* meaning that he turned his feet to walk in God’s ways which is a testimony unto the Lord God in heaven. David actively sought the places of study to learn about the Lord for the purpose of drawing near to the Lord. Do you seek the places of study for the purpose of learning about the Lord, about Yeshua the Messiah, and for drawing near to the Lord? If not, why not?

The point of the study this week on Parashat Bekhukotai is to understand why bad things happen. We are told according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 26* that bad things happen as a result of disobedience and for the purpose of leading us to repentance. This week’s Torah portion is very significant for understanding why weakness, illness, and hardships are brought into our lives today. The point is the Lord wants to bless us, however sin causes bad things to happen for the purpose of drawing us to repentance and to turn to the ways of God. With this thought in mind, remember what is written in the Gospel of John.

### ***John 9:1-8***

*9:1 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 9:2 And His disciples asked Him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?’ 9:3 Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 9:4 ‘We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 9:5 ‘While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.’ 9:6 When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, 9:7 and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. 9:8 Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, ‘Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?’ (NASB)*

There are situations however when hardships, difficulties, weakness, or illness are brought into our lives that may not be by reason of sin in our lives. Just as Yeshua said in *John 9:1-8*, the blind man was not made blind because of his own sin or the sin of his parents or anyone else. His blind-

ness was purely for the purpose of the glory of God. The Lord knows our past, present and future. He knows what we are about to do, and He has orchestrated our lives for the purpose of causing us to seek Him. The blind man, due to his infirmity, consistently sought the Lord in heaven and when the Messiah of God came near he desired for the son of David to have mercy on him. Our illnesses are not always to be taken as a punishment from God. It may purely be for the purpose of keeping us humble before him.

What we may take away from this week's study is if we hold on to sin, and make sin a way of life, the Lord will work in our lives to draw us back to repentance and truth. Our faith in Yeshua will not prevent this from happening, especially if one is unrepentant. Living in unrepentant sin is synonymous to breaking the covenant of God, and the covenant connects these things to our faith in Yeshua the Messiah, according to Parashat Bekhukotai.

