

Parashat Bechukotai / פרשת בהקתי

Shabbat Iyar 19, 5768, May 24, 2008
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When things go well do you forget about the Lord?

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Leviticus 26:3-27:34

Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14

B'rit HaChadashah: Matthew 21:33-46; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Reward and Punishment, the consequences for obeying or disobeying HaShem's Mitzvot (commandments) are what we find in the concluding Parashat in Sefer Vayikra (book of Leviticus). While reading this week's parsha, I found myself thinking upon a small dilemma that relates to reward and punishment. The thought that occurs to me is this: When you obey Hashem and he rewards you for your faithfulness, once things start going well, do you forget about the Lord? What I mean is do we begin to take for granted certain spiritual things once G-d's blessings begin.

Leviticus 26:3-18

26:3 "If you live by my regulations, observe my mitzvot and obey them; 26:4 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. 26:5 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. 26:6 "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. 26:7 You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before your sword. 26:8 Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand -your enemies will fall before your sword. 26:9 "I will turn toward you, make you productive, increase your numbers and uphold my covenant with you. 26:10 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. 26:11 I will put my tabernacle among you, and I will not reject you, 26:12 but I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. 26:13 I am ADONAI your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would not be their slaves. I have broken the bars of your yoke, so that you can walk upright. 26:14 "But if you will not listen to me and obey all these mitzvot, 26:15 if you loathe my regulations and reject my rulings, in order not to obey all my mitzvot but cancel my covenant; 26:16 then I, for my part, will do this to you: I will bring terror upon you - wasting disease and chronic fever to dim your sight and sap your strength. You will sow your seed for nothing, because your enemies will eat the crops. 26:17 I will set my face against you - your enemies will defeat you, those who hate you will hound you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you. 26:18 If these things don't make you listen to me, then I will discipline you seven times over for your sins.

John Wesley, and Anglican clergyman, evangelist and cofounder of Methodism gave a warning and a challenge to the protestant reformers of his day. He said the following:

“I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches.”

Reading through the Tanach we see an entire nation falling into this pattern whereby Ha’Nevi’im (The Prophets) warn during times when ancient Israel thrived. Whenever economic prosperity occurred and peace prevailed, Israel attended less and less to the mitzvot in the Torah and more towards relying upon men in military power and alliances for their security. The Nevi’im (Prophets) called this “they forgot G-d.” Could even Adam and Eve’s brief moment in Paradise demonstrate to us from the beginning our inability to handle prosperity, and that we turn from G-d when things go well and turn back to G-d out of need?

The stern warning in this week’s parsha should bring to memory how we need to be focused upon Adonai and his Holy Word for the explicit purpose of being reminded of our need for His Mercy and Grace. David said: *Psa103:2 Bless ADONAI, my soul, and forget none of his benefits! (CJB)*; telling himself to never forget the good things G-d has done. Forgetting G-d’s goodness is a sin, here are some reasons why (i) forgetting leads to unbelief and rebellion, (ii) forgetting makes us do foolish things, and (iii) forgetting ignites G-d’s anger. (See *Psalms 106:7, 13, 20-23*)

If you find yourself in a time of prosperity, spend time each day to reflect upon G-d’s goodness so you do not lose sight of the source of those blessings.

Deuteronomy 8:10-14

8:10 So you will eat and be satisfied, and you will bless ADONAI your God for the good land he has given you. 8:11 "Be careful not to forget ADONAI your God by not obeying his mitzvot, rulings and regulations that I am giving you today. 8:12 Otherwise, after you have eaten and are satisfied, built fine houses and lived in them, 8:13 and increased your herds, flocks, silver, gold and everything else you own, 8:14 you will become proud-hearted. Forgetting ADONAI your God - who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you lived as slaves; (CJB)

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever