

Bechukosai 2014

1.

### Self-growth

Nachlas Tzvi page 323

“If you will follow my decrees Etc. then you will eat your bread to satiety”. (26, 3-5)

"אם בחקותי תלכו וגו'. ואכלתם לחמכם לשובע."

The Gemara in Berachos (17b) states that the entire world gets sustained because of Chanina who lived on a small portion of carobs for an entire week. A tzadik (righteous person) gives up his self-earned portion to others. If the tzadik chooses to keep his portion for himself then others will lose out. When all Jews are learning and keeping the mitzvos then everyone will have their own merits. This is what the pasuk means when it says “if you will follow my decrees”, meaning, if everyone will follow the Torah. “Then you will eat your bread to satiety”, meaning, you will not need the merit or portion from someone else aka a tzadik.

2.

### Where will you be in ten years?

“If you will follow my decrees Etc.” (26, 3)

"אם בחקותי תלכו."

Lekach Tov pages 266-267

There was a story of a group of people who were eating. The entire time that they were sitting it was impossible to differentiate between them. However, once they finished their meal and everyone walked away from the table, one person remained in his place. Originally they were unaware why he remained at the table away from everyone else. Subsequently they realized that he was paralyzed and unable to walk. The entire time they were sitting around the table this difference was undiscernible. Afterwards however this difference was glaringly apparent. Rabbi Nachum Zev (son of the Alter Mi’Kelm) explains the same applies to those who learn in Yeshiva. **The entire time they are learning in the Yeshiva it is essentially impossible to distinguish one person from another. Differences are unrecognizable because everyone is going through the same motions. Everyone is dressing the same way, eating the same food and learning etc. They are at the same table. But where will these people be in ten, twenty years from now? The true test will be after leaving the Yeshiva. Who will be able to walk away from the table? Who will chas v’shalom be paralyzed? Who will continue in the correct path of Torah and mitzvos and who will not?** Based on this we can explain the pasuk “if you will follow my decrees etc.” Meaning, who will have legs to properly walk in this world in the way of the Torah. We shouldn’t be embarrassed to serve Hashem around goyim or irreligious Jews. (As discussed in Noach 2015) Yaakov performed mitzvos and served Hashem even around those who were unobservant. “I have lived with Laban” (Berashis 32, 5) Rashi

explains that Yaakov was informing Esav that he lived with Lavan and still kept the 613 mitzvos and didn't learn from Lavan's actions. The gematria (numerical value) of "I have lived (גרתי)" is equivalent to 613. (See Vayishlach) "If you will follow my decrees etc." means whenever and wherever we are. Even when we are around people who are unobservant, we must still follow the Torah. Then the pasuk continues "then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce etc." We will then merit all of the berachos that the Torah assures.

**How can we reach this level of staying strong, learning and remaining observant even after leaving Yeshiva?** Rashi quotes the Toras Kohanim who explains that we should be toiling and rigorously learning. The Gemara in Yevamos (121a) relates that one time Rabbi Gamliel was on a ship. He saw that another ship had sunken. He was pained that Rabbi Akiva was on that ship. Against all odds, Rabbi Gamliel found Rabbi Akiva surprisingly still alive. He asked Rabbi Akiva how he survived. Rabbi Akiva answered דף נזדמן לי (a daf (board) occurred to me). I grabbed this board and whenever there was a wave I was able to overcome it. I ended up successfully floating to shore alive. Rabbi Meir Shapiro homiletically, metaphorically and beautifully explains this Gemara as referring to our lives. We are all surrounded by waves, turbulence and stuff around us. Many distractions and inappropriate sights attempt to distract us from our goals in this world. These stormy waves try to drown us. What keeps us going? The ship's plank aka the daf (page) of the Gemara. Rabbi Akiva told Rabbi Gamliel that his learning saved him. It is most fitting for Rabbi Meir Shapiro to give this explanation, since he founded the daf yomi. The daf Gemara prevents us from drowning in the non Torah matters. Learning Torah keeps us afloat. In the merit of learning we will improve our actions and successfully pass the daily tests that we must grapple with. The Torah we learn is comparable to a shield. It will protect us from negative outside influences that threaten and attempt to drown us. The daf that a person learns, each at his own level, can save him from the difficulties of life; it gives him what he needs to "ride the waves." The daily learning of a daf Gemara strengthens and fills our heart with ahavas (love of) Hashem and emunah (belief). In this merit, all of our actions get better and we will succeed in overcoming life's challenges without harm. This learning will virtually help us deal with everything that comes up in life, all the ups and downs, that otherwise threaten to drown us. (See the illustrated mashal page 51 and Otzer Hamashalim page 189)

**The Or Hachaim Hakadosh has no less than 42 explanations of the pasuk "If you will follow my decrees etc." One of his explanations is; even when we are on the way and not in Yeshiva, we must continue to learn. This is why the pasuk uses a language of halicha/going. This is the secret to remaining spiritually successful, learning.**