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Blessings for Obedience
26: 3-13

Blessings for obedience DIG: Why does this portion begin with a list of rewards for obedience? What does this teach us about human nature? About God's nature? What rewards listed here appeal to you? What kind of life would this obedience provide?

REFLECT: Are the rewards you receive for your faith in God anything like the rewards promised here? If so, how? If not, why? What do your rewards teach you about the "cause and effects" in this life? What possible misuses of this abundant life can you foresee?

Parashah 31: B'Chukotai (In My Statutes) 26:3 to 27:34
(see my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click Af – Parashah)

The Key People are **Moshe and the children of Isra'el.**

The Scene is **the Tabernacle** in **the wilderness of Sinai**.

The Main Events include **God's promises of blessing for those who walk in His statutes and judgment for those who do not obey Him; warnings of being scattered among the nations, but also of remembering the covenant if iniquity is confessed; valuations placed on people, animals, homes, property to be dedicated to ADONAI; "These are the mitzvot which ADONAI gave to Moshe for the people of Isra'el on Mount Sinai."**



The conditions of the covenant at Mount Sinai called for **obedience** in order to **obey** life in the Promised Land. They do not speak of attainment of life in the world to come (in other words the Torah does not bring salvation). They are completely worldly oriented because they are part of the covenant which has to do with life in the Land of Promise, not life in the hereafter. To be sure, there are definite spiritual **blessings** involved. For example, what a wonderful spiritual **blessing** it is to have **the Sh'khinah glory** in **the Tabernacle** dwelling among the people. But this does not have to do with life in the world to come. **The Sh'khinah glory** was intended to be a **blessing** enhancing the appreciation of the enjoyment of the privilege of living in **the Promised Land**.

There is one more piece to the puzzle. **The sages were groping to find some mention of spiritual blessings in Chapter 26 because, quite naturally, they know that spiritual blessings are the only ones which meet mankind's deepest needs, which are spiritual needs.** However, they were looking in the wrong place! They were trying to turn the material into the spiritual in their interpretation of **Chapter 26**.

The more complete clarification, however, of how man's spiritual needs can be fulfilled in found in the B'rit Chadashah, although there are many places in the TaNaKh in which they could have looked (such as in **Psalm 23**, **Isaiah Chapter 53**, and **Jeremiah Chapter 31** just to name a few). Hence, we see the other half of **God's Word** being exposed here. It's like two sides of the same coin. One side says, "We cannot interpret the B'rit Chadashah properly without the TaNaKh." The other side of the coin says, "We cannot fully understand the TaNaKh without the B'rit Chadashah." The TaNaKh looks forward, while the B'rit Chadashah looks back. Both are indispensable for a proper interpretation of the whole Bible.

One of the best illustrations of this idea is right here in our present parashah. If we leave out the description of man's spiritual needs and its subsequent spiritual **blessings** found in the B'rit Chadashah, we will fall into the trap – **as the sages did, who reject the B'rit Chadashah** – of misinterpreting the material **blessings** (and curses) and attempting to make them into something which **they** were not intended to be in the first place. Following the Torah was the condition for **Isra'el** to receive **blessings**. But it was even stronger than that. **Isra'el** agreed to legally bind themselves by oath to follow the covenant – just as **YHVH** did. **God**, naturally, would keep **His** part of the covenant. **Isra'el** was just as bound by covenantal oath to be faithful as well.[524]

The first blessing – rainfall (26:3-5): The first promise of **rain** was a sign of divine **blessing** on them because of the abundant crops that resulted from that **blessing (Deuteronomy 28:12)**. **If you live by My regulations, observe My mitzvot and obey them; 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. 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. Rains** are important to any nation. However, some nations have rain throughout the year. **Isra'el**, and a few others, only have **rain** during the winter months. Hence, **the blessing** promised that **God** would **provide the rain Isra'el needed "in its season."** The meaning of the promise was that the rains would be regular and the harvest productive – so regular and productive that the farmers would still be bringing in the harvest for one season when the sowing for the next season was supposed to begin.

In pagan religions **rain** was also a sign of divine **blessing**, but they attributed it to a storm god like **Ba'al**. It may be recalled how withholding and sending **rain** was at the heart of the contest between **God** and the Canaanite storm god **Ba'al** (see the commentary on **Elijah and Elisha, to see link click Aq – Elijah and the Prophets of Ba'al**). Once **ADONAI** proved that **He** was **God** and the people turned back to **Him**, **Elijah** expected a heavy **rain**. **His** expectation of **rain** was in line with this promise of **rain** for **obedience**. **He** knew it was time to pray for **rain**.

In the B'rit Chadashah, **Yeshua** emphasized the proper priority in such matters. He reminded the people to **seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all the temporal provisions of what they should eat and ware would be given to them** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dt – Do Not**

Worry About Your Life, What Your Will Eat or Drink, or What You Will Wear)**.** This meant that since all **blessings** came from **YHVH**, **obedience** to **God** should be the primary concern.

The second blessing – security and protection (26:6-8): The next **blessing** is summarized in one Hebrew word: **shalom**, meaning *peace*, *wholeness*, or *security*. **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.** These **blessings** were probably more fully enjoyed in Solomon's days than at any other time. But they were short-lived because the periods of **obedience** did not last long. If there is obedience and loyalty to **Ha'Shem** and **His Word**, there is untold spiritual power. In the case of **Isra'el**, this spiritual power would be seen in physical power so that outnumbered **Israelites** would defeat even the greatest of **enemies**. **You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before your sword. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand – your enemies will fall before your sword.** Hence, it appears that these verses are teaching that if **Isra'el** would just be consistent in following Torah, **she** would have peace and security from **her enemies**. Why, then, does **Isra'el** not have peace and security today? This can best be explained by Rabbi Sha'ul of Tarsus. His evaluation of **the Israelites** in his day is just as applicable today. He would say that there are many who appear to be followers of Torah on the outside, but on the inside they are merely following the curse of legalism (see the commentary on **Romans Ct – Praying for the Jewish Community**).

The promise of **peace** given here as a **blessing** for obedience harmonizes with the promises of peace given elsewhere in Scripture and thus forms part of the prophetic element of the Bible. All the prophets envisioned a time when people would enjoy unparalleled peace with no quarrels, no invasions, no wars; in fact, weapons of war would be **beaten into rakes and shovels** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ap – They Will Beat Their Swords into Plowshares**) during the Messianic Kingdom (see the commentary on **Revelation Fi – The Government of the Messianic Kingdom**).

The third blessing – population growth (26:9a): I will turn toward you, make you productive, increase your numbers. This is what **YHVH** promised to **Abraham** (see the commentary on **Genesis Em – Your Name Will Be Abraham, For I Have Made You a Father of Many Nations**) and what **He** is reaffirming here. That is, by multiplying **them** as **the stars of heaven** and **the sand of the sea**, **God** fulfilled the covenant that **He** made with **their** fathers **(Genesis 12:2,**

13:16, 15:5, 22:17 and **Exodus 23:26)**.

The fourth blessing – establishing a promise (26:9b): And uphold My covenant with you. This referred to **the covenant** made through Moshe at Mount Sinai (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bi – The Stipulations of the Covenant**). This was a conditional **covenant**. Its **blessings**, which primarily received full meaning in **the Land**, were dependent on whether or not **Isra'el obeyed** the stipulations of **the Covenant**. That is, if **Isra'el** would follow the Torah consistently and in the manner taught them by **the Holy One**, the covenant would still stand. However, in the book of **Jeremiah**, **God** promised **a New** unconditional **Covenant** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Eo – I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el**). This would lend credence to the B'rit Chadashah writings which says that because of the disobedience of **Isra'el**, **God** would do a new and powerful work among **His people** and **write the Torah on their hearts** causing **them** to follow it by means of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. **ADONAI** will be faithful to the promises that **He** makes by covenant; but participation in the fulfillment of those promises requires faith. Such is the case of **the New Covenant**. The message of the Gospel goes out to all people, promising eternal life (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**); but only those who believe in **Yeshua Messiah** will be numbered among the multitudes called **the children of God (John 1:12** and **Hebrew 2:13)**.[525]

The fifth blessing – God's Presence with His people (26:10-13): ADONAI wanted the relationship **He** had with **Isra'el** to continue to grow. **He** was spiritually dwelling among **the people** of **Isra'el** as **His Sh'khinah glory** filled **the Tabernacle**. Here **God** promised to continue to dwell there as long as **Isra'el** followed **Him** by **obeying** the Torah. Obedience to **His** commands will result in such agricultural abundance that the granaries will have to be emptied to make room for the new crops being harvested. **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.** Moreover, **ADONAI** said, "**I will put My Tabernacle among you."** But wasn't **He** already dwelling among **Isra'el** in the Most Holy Place above the cherubim? Surely **He** was. Yet in the future to come **His** dwelling **Sh'khinah glory** would depart from **the Temple (Ezeki'el 10:18-19)**. The promise is that one day **He** will return **His** dwelling Presence to **His Temple** and cause **Himself** to dwell permanently among **His people** in the New Jerusalem. **See! God's Sh'khinah glory is with mankind and He will live with them. They will be His people, and He Himself, God-with-them, will be their God (Revelation 21:3). And I**

will not reject you, but I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people. This level of intimacy was lost since Eden. If we **will walk in His** mitzvot, **He will walk** among us. In other words, if we will **walk with Him**, **He will walk with** us. **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.**[526]

But the reality of history cannot be escaped. The First Temple was destroyed because **Isra'el** broke the covenant and was unfaithful to the Torah (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gb – The Destruction of Solomon's Temple on Tisha B'Av in 586 BC**). When the Second Temple was built, as magnificent as it was, **the Sh'khinah glory** did not dwell there. Eventually, it too was destroyed (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt – The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Remembered on Tisha B'Av in 70 AD**). As a result, **the Sh'khinah glory** does not dwell on planet earth as it once did.

However, when **Isra'el** comes back to the Torah, it will. How do we know this? For one thing these verses in Parashah B'Chukotai promise this. But for another thing, the B'rit Chadashah teaches that **Yeshua the Messiah** was . . . **the Word made flesh who dwelt among us and we beheld His Sh'khinah glory; the Sh'khinah glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).** For a short time during the Second Temple period **the Sh'khinah glory** was on planet earth – in the person of **the Messiah**. Eventually, **He** went back to be with **God the Father** in heaven (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mr – The Ascension of Jesus**). But **He** assured us that **He** will **return**. And when **He** does, **He** will take up permanent residence in the Most Holy Place in the Temple in Jerusalem (see the commentary on **Isaiah Db – The Nine Missing Articles in the Messiah's Coming Temple**). There we will all see **the** living **Sh'khinah** as we cast our eyes on **the Messiah Himself**! This will be the fulfillment of all the conditions laid out for **blessing** here in Parashah B'Chukotai because at that time all will follow Torah. **"No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know ADONAI,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares ADONAI. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).**[527]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** great **love** that gives every spiritual blessing to those who **love You**. **Messiah Himself** is the greatest blessing!* ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah***

*(**Ephesians 1:3).** How wonderful that **Your** gift of **blessings** is not something tangible that someone could lose or misplace, but **Your** gift of **blessings** is **Yeshua Himself**!*

*It is a wonderful gift of relationship to be **in Messiah (Ephesians Chapter 1)** with eternal **love** and care, for all who put their **love** and trust in **You** as their **Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-10).** You **chose** us **in the Messiah** to be holy and blameless before **You**. **You** prepared the path for **adoption** as sons **through Messiah Yeshua** in keeping with the good pleasure of **Your** will. Praise **Your** glorious **grace** which **You** have given us **in the beloved.** Our **redemption** was purchased **through His blood** which **You** planned with all wisdom and insight. **Your purpose was set forth in Messiah.***

*It is so amazing that **Your** will/ purpose was not to just take those who **love You** to heaven; but it is a relationship **set forth in Christ . . . to unite all things in him. Your** plan was to bring all things together **in the Messiah.** Then we would **all be in Him.** Paul writes that **we were chosen in Messiah** to **obtain an inheritance** so that we who were the first to **hope in Messiah** might be to the praise of **His** glory. **The Spirit of God** is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the **praise of his glory.** What a great joy to be connected to **Messiah Yeshua** as branches are connected to the vine **(John 15:1-5).** Praise **You** that **the Lord** lives within those who **love Him**! **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** In **Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*