

## פרשת כי תבא

Parashat Ki Tavoh, contains 98 graphic and frightening curses that Moshe warned the Jews of, should they fail to heed the word of Hashem.

The Gemarah (Megillah 31b) says; that Ezra Hasofer instituted that the curses of Ki Tavoh be read just before Rosh Hashanah, and the curses of Parashat Behukotai be read just before the holiday of Shavuot.

The reason why he instituted that the curses of Ki Tavoh be read just before Rosh Hashanah is so that the year may end along with its curses. (As we read in אחות קטנה on Rosh Hashanah; “תכלה שנה וקללותיה”-“may the year end along with its curses”) By reading the curses just before the New Year, it symbolizes that all of the problems and suffering should end along with the year, and that the upcoming year should be one filled with only blessing.

How does reading about curses help the year end “along with its curses”?

The explanation is a fundamental principle in Judaism.

"ונשלמה פרים שפתינו"-“let our lips take the place of the bulls (sacrifices)”. Today when we do not have the Bet Hamikdash we are not able to perform the ceremonies, and sacrifices that the Torah requires. Instead, we pray and it is through our prayers that it is considered as if we actually have performed what it is that we are mentioning. As we say every morning “let our lips take the place of the bulls” and we proceed to read about the daily sacrifices. We read the Ketoret (incense), in place of actually bringing the Ketoret. We read the למנוצח in the shape of a Menorah, and it is as if we actually lit the Menorah! When we read about a procedure, it is as if we have performed it. Here as well, by reading about the curses it is as if they have actually befallen us, and we have received the punishments that we deserve as a result of our sins. This enables us to have a New Year with blessing, now that we have been cleaned of our sins! It is incumbent upon us to listen intently as the Hazan reads the curses from the Sefer Hatorah, and we should have in mind that by listening with concentration to the curses it may be considered as if they have actually happened, and we are thus painlessly cleansed!

There are 49 curses in Behukotai and 98 in Ki Tavoh. There is a major difference between the 2 sets of curses and that is; the curses of Behukotai were said by Moshe "מפי הגבורה"-“in the name of the almighty”, and the curses of Ki Tavoh were said by Moshe "מפי עצמו"-“of his own accord”. (Obviously Moshe did not add anything to the Torah, it is just that he knew with his holy spirit that he needed to utter these curses and so he did, and this conformed with Hashem’s plan).

How are we to understand that the most merciful leader in our history Moshe Rabeinu would utter such graphic and gory curses against us! Some of the words contained in the curses are so graphic that we don’t even pronounce them! (We instead substitute them for different words) We can’t even imagine the frightening details of these curses! Could it be that our beloved Moshe, who risked his life for us many times over, who defended us when Hashem said that he wants to destroy us as a nation, would utter these curses against us *of his own accord!*? We would think that even if Hashem commanded him directly to curse us, Moshe would have contested and ask Hashem “how can I curse them”?! Not only that, but when we compare the two sets of curses. The curses in Behukotai that were said from Hashem, end off with Hashem comforting the Jews by telling them that he will return them to their land and that all would be well. In contrast, the curse uttered by Moshe in Ki Tavoh double the ones in Behukotai in number (98-45), and they end off with the words “you will be sold as slaves and then will be no one that will want to buy you!” (You will be so despised that no one will want any part of you!)

What a way to end off! Why would Moshe end off his curses with even more devastation than the curses by Hashem himself?!

R’ Moshe Kordevero explains; that the difference between the two sets of curses is as mentioned the ones in Behukotai were said מפי הגבורה-“by the mouth of G-d”, and the ones in Ki Tavoh were מפי עצמו-“by Moshe’s own mouth”. It does not say מעצמו-“from himself”, it says מפי עצמו which is literally “from *the mouth* of himself”. Moshe said the curses from himself meaning from the attribute that *he* represented. The Neshama of Moshe Rabeinu obviously represents mercy. What kind of mercy? A mercy known as תפארת, which combines judgment with kindness in order to sweeten it.

The curses in Behukotai were said **מפי גבורה**, with Hashem's strict judgment. The curses of Ki Tavoh were uttered by Moshe, and this was out of Moshe's intense love for the Jews! By Moshe uttering these curses of his own accord he injected a "sweetener" into the curses! He combined mercy of Hashem with the curses thereby turning them into a sort of blessings!

Where do we see Moshe inserting mercy into the curses?? If we compare the two sets of curses, the ones uttered by Hashem have no mention of Hashem's name of mercy **י-ה-ו-ה**. However the ones uttered by Moshe contain the name **י-ה-ו-ה** **26** times! Moshe inserted the name of Hashem of mercy in order to sweeten the Judgment that the curses contained. It was a great advantage for us that it was Moshe who uttered the curses of his own accord, for by doing so; he was able to apply the mercy of his Neshama into the judgment and sweeten it!

Moshe inserted the **שם הויה** 26 times. The number 26 was by no means a coincidence. 26 (aside of it being the value of the name **הויה**) has great significance. It represents the blessing of Hashem having a permanent influence on something.

When Yishak blessed Yaakov he began his blessing with the letter **ו'** (ויתן לך). He ended it with the letter **כ'** (ומברכך ברוך) and **ו'** and **כ'** equal 26. In addition, if we count the words in the blessing of Yishak they total 26 words. Yishak made sure to feature the number 26 in his blessing to Yaakov, in order to give him a lasting Berachah.

We also find, that in our daily Amidah we mention the name of **הויה** 26 times (excluding the Berachah of **ולמלשינים** that was added later). The Rabbis who composed the Amidah put the holy name **הויה** 26 times for an enduring Berachah. Some also have the custom to read chapter 27 of Tehilim that begins with **"לדוד ה' אורי וישעי"**, after both Shaharit and Minha. This chapter contains 13 mentions of the name of **הויה**, and by saying it twice a day we come to mention it 26 times through this Mizmor.

We also see the significance of 26 times **הויה** alluded to in a Pasuk in Tehilim. It says "רבות רעות צדיק ומכלם יצלנו ה'" - "many are the afflictions of a Sadik and from all of them Hashem saves". The word **רעות** numerically equals 676, 26 times **הויה** (26x26 equals 676). Even in the difficulties (רעות) of the Sadik, Hashem's ultimate kindness is hidden. As it says **"ומכלם יצלנו י-ה-ו-ה"** the name of **הויה** is hidden in the troubles in order to save him.

We also find that throughout the holy day of Yom Kippur we recite the “Vayavor” 26 times.

Moshe inserted the name of הויה 26 times to put a permanent sweetening into the curses.

This explains why the Halacha is that by the curses of Behukotai only one person may be called up to the Torah to read the passage, but by the curses of Ki Tavoh we are allowed to interrupt in the middle of the curses and send up someone else. The curses of Behukotai were said מפי הגבורה - with strict judgment, and to stop in the middle and have someone say a Berachah on his Aliyah which is comprised only of curses is inappropriate. However the curses of Ki Tavoh that were uttered by Moshe contain mercy hidden in them. Therefore we may interrupt them, and have someone make a blessing on a new Aliyah since his blessing is not going on curses of strict judgment, only on those that are laced with mercy. This also explains why Moshe did not need to end his curses with consolation, since the consolation is found in the Pesukim themselves!

The two sets of curses also allude to an aspect found in the two days of Rosh Hashanah. It says in the Zohar that the first day of Rosh Hashanah represents “harsh judgment”, and the second day the judgment is דינא רפיא - “lenient judgment”. If not for the second day of Rosh Hashanah representing lenient judgment the world would be destroyed! Who could stand the intense scrutiny of Hashem with strict harsh judgment?! The second day of Rosh Hashanah gives us a chance to be judged in a more lenient manner, and this is what we all need! (If a person spontaneously breaks into tears during his prayers on Rosh Hashanah he should know that he is being judged at that very moment, whether it is on the first day or the second).

The two sets of curses represent the two types of judgment of דינא קשיא and דינא רפיא. The curses of Behukotai represent דינא קשיא - strict judgment, and therefore, contains no mention of Hashem’s name of mercy - הויה. Moshe Rabeinu who cared for us so much wished to bring down a more lenient judgment - דינא רפיא; he therefore incorporated a second set of curses, representing a second judgment, only this one, as opposed to the first one, would be a lenient one. He therefore inserted Hashem’s name of mercy throughout the curses.

This explains why, as mentioned above, Ezra Hasofer instituted that the curses of Moshe be read just before Rosh Hashanah. He was insuring that the Jews be judged with a more lenient judgment of דינא רפיא on Rosh Hashanah.

The Rokeach, in his count of the words of the curses, includes the last Pasuk in the Perek "אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה ה' את משה..." "these are the words that Hashem commanded Moshe etc." Even though this Pasuk is not in of itself a curse, it

is the ending of the Perek and the Rokeach counts it in the number of Pesukim and words of the curses. If we include this Pasuk in the count, we come to total of **27** times that Hashem's name is mentioned. The number 27 is a very significant number as well. If we multiply 26 (the numerical value of Hashem's name) by 27 it equals 702. 702 is the exact numerical value of the words קשיא רפיא-the two types of judgment, and this shows us that the names of Hashem were inserted by Moshe in order to neutralize the two judgments of both קשיא (strict) and רפיא (lenient).

The number 702 (27 times the name of הויה) is also connected to the holy Shabbat. The numerical value of שבת is 702. Shabbat is the day when we are free from strict judgment. As we say in Kiddush "ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי" which can be understood as; Elokim (strict judgment) ceased on the seventh day. On Shabbat we are under the mercy of Hashem, and are free from the aspect of דין. This is why we do not blow the Shofar on Shabbat Rosh Hashanah. The purpose of the Shofar is to mitigate the severity of judgment, but on Shabbat the judgment is minimized by the day itself!

We now understand why Moshe inserted 27 mentions of הויה into the curses. He was drawing on the holy Shabbat (702) to sweeten the judgment of the curses, as well as the judgment of קשיא ורפיא (702)!!

In addition, we find that Moshe hinted to the importance of Shabbat and to what results in Chas Veshalom not properly observing it. The Pasuk says (Pasuk 47) that the curses come "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה" "as a result of not serving Hashem with joy". The first two words of the Pasuk תחת-אשר can also be understood; תחת (lit: *under*) the word אשר. The letters "under" the word אשר (meaning, the letters that follow the letters א-ש-ר), are the letters ש-ב-ת. Showing us that as a result of not properly observing Shabbat we are punished with curses ח"ו.

The day of Shabbat is the aspect of sweetening judgment, and we merit this by properly respecting and observing the holy Shabbat. As mentioned, Shabbat equals 702 which is 27 times הויה. We also find that we are supposed to add to Shabbat by starting earlier and finishing later than the required times. It is ideal if one is able to accept Shabbat two hours before sunset, and to extend an extra hour at the end of Shabbat. This brings us to a total of 27 hours of Shabbat alluding to the 27 times הויה that the Shabbat contains.

Shabbat sweetens the judgment much like the aspect of תפארת which combines חסד and דין, and creates an even greater level of kindness.

יעקב represents חסד (kindness), דין (judgment) represents יצחק, and אברהם represents a "combination" of kindness and judgment called "תפארת".

This is why Shabbat is called "the portion of Yaakov" -נחלת יעקב אביך because it has the power of sweetening the judgment just like יעקב-תפארת. Yaakov lived 147 years. If we add the curses of Behukotai (49) and the curses of Ki Tavoh (98) it totals 147. This shows us that the power of Yaakov which stands for the power of Shabbat and תפארת has the power to nullify the 147 combined curses of Behukotai and Ki Tavoh.

Moshe as well stood for this trait of תפארת, this is hinted in the Amidah of Shabbat when we say "ישמח משה במתנת חלקו...כליל תפארת בראשו נתת", showing us the connection between Shabbat and the aspect of תפארת and Moshe Rabeinu.

In light of recent events, we must also be reminded that in addition Shabbat is our claim to the holy land of Israel. When we observe Shabbat, we attest to the fact that Hashem created the world in six days. The fact that it was Hashem who created the world is our only claim to the land. The first Rashi in the Torah explains; that the reason why Hashem began the Torah with בראשית was "כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם" "נחלת גוים". To show everyone that he created the world, and he can do what he pleases, and Hashem chose to give the land of Israel to us.

The more we respect and observe the Shabbat, the more we display this concept of Hashem creating the world, and therefore the more we solidify our right to the land of Israel.

Throughout the years Israel has been coveted by those from Yishmael, as well as those from Edom. The children of Yishmael observe Friday as their “holy day”, and the children of Eisav- Edom observe Sunday as their “holy day”. Shabbat sits in the middle of those two days in order to neutralize them, (as the Arizal writes in the Azamer Bishvachin: ימינה ושמלה ובנייהו כלה). This is why we are advised to accept Shabbat early (taking part of Friday), and end it late (taking part of Sunday) thereby neutralizing the power of Friday-Yishmael and Sunday-Eisav. The Zohar says that the word בראשית is comprised of the words ירא-שבת (one who fears Shabbat), again showing us this concept that observance of Shabbat attests to Hashem’s creation of the world, and therefore our right to the land of Israel.

We see from all of the above the awesome power of Shabbat to sweeten the judgment, to save us from the curses, to minimize both the דינא קשיא ודינה רפיא, to solidify our Emunah in Hashem’s creation of the world, and to enable us to merit the holy land of ארץ ישראל without it being contested by others.

May we strengthen ourselves to honor and observe the holy Shabbat to the best of our ability, and merit all of the wonderful blessing that comes along with it, and may we merit seeing the eternal Shabbat of the coming of the Mashiach במהרה בימינו אמן!