



“If you will abide by My decrees” Means that You Should Labor in the Torah

The 42 Interpretations of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh on the Passuk Bechukosai Correspond to the 42 Journeys in Galus that Will End in the Merit of Torah Study

This week’s parsha is parshas Bechukosai. Let us focus on its opening pesukim (Vayikra 26, 3): **“אם בחוקותי תלכו ואת מצוותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם ונתנה הארץ יבולה ועץ השדה יתן בריו, והשיג לכם דיש את בציר ובציר ישיג את זרע, ואכלתם לחמכם לשובע וישבתם לבטח בארצכם, ונתתי שלום בארץ ושכבתם ואין מחריד.”** **If you will follow My decrees and observe My mitzvos and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will yield its produce and the tree of the field will bear its fruit. Threshing will overtake vintage for you, and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat bread to satiety, and you will dwell securely in your land. I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you . . .**

Rashi comments based on the Toras Kohanim: **“If you will follow My decrees”: One might think that this is a reference to the fulfillment of mitzvos . . . that is already stated in the verse. What then is meant by the phrase “if you will follow My decrees”? That you should occupy yourselves in the labor of Torah; “and observe My commandments” signifies that you should labor in the Torah in order to observe and to fulfill that which you learn, as it says (Devarim 5, 1): “And you shall study them, and you shall observe them to perform them.”**

As we know, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh wrote 42 interpretations on the passuk: **“אם בחוקותי תלכו”**. The central theme in all of these interpretations is the vital importance of Torah-study—especially Torah that is learned l’shma. He also emphasizes how the study of Torah elevates a person to loftier levels.

The divine kabbalist Rabbi Chaim Shaul Dweck, ztz”l, says that he heard from his Rav and mentor, the esteemed Rabbi Mordechai Weingarten, ztz”l, who was the Rav in the Beis Midrash of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh in the holy city of Yerushalayim, that the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh proposed these 42 novel interpretations while he was in galus. They are related to his having heard someone speak disparagingly of a talmid-chacham.

With the utmost respect and appreciation, I would like to propose to our esteemed readership an explanation of my own as to why the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh chose to propose specifically 42 new interpretations of the passuk **“אם בחוקותי תלכו”** when he went into galus. It should be apparent to anyone who reviews these interpretations that he could have abridged them very easily by combining several of them into one. Clearly, it was important to him to present precisely 42 interpretations.

Moshe Is Reluctant to Redeem a People Who Neglect Their Obligation to Study Torah

Let us begin this discussion by referring to the illuminating words of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh on the opening passuk of parshas Tetzaveh (Shemos 27, 20). He relies on a teaching in the Zohar Chadash (Bereishis) that the future geulah will be led by Moshe Rabeinu, but only on the condition that Yisrael will engage in the study of the Torah that was given to Moshe on Sinai.

”בוא וראה שלא גלו ישראל אלא על ביטול תורה, שנאמר ויאמר ה' על עזבם את תורתִי. אמר הקב"ה, בגלויות הראשונות חזרו בזכות אברהם יצחק ויעקב, עכשיו הם חטאו בתורה שנתתי למשה, כשישובו ויעסקו בתורתו, בזכות משה אני גואלם.”

The only reason that Yisrael were exiled was due to the neglect of Torah, in keeping with the passuk (Yirmiyah 9, 12): “But Hashem has said: Because of their forsaking My torah . . .” HKB”H said: “The first three redemptions were in the merit of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Now, however, they have forsaken the Torah that I gave to Moshe. So, when they repent and engage in his Torah, I will redeem them in the merit of Moshe.”

With this in mind, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh says: וְלִזָּה” נתארך הגלות, כי כל עוד שאין עוסקים בתורה ובמצוות אין משה חפץ לגאול עם” —this is the reason for the lengthy exile; so long as Yisrael do not occupy themselves with Torah and mitzvos, Moshe is unwilling to redeem a people who are remiss in Torah study. He is referring to that which he writes in parshas Vayeichi (Bereishis 49, 11): **The words of the Zohar hakadosh are well-known (Mishpatim 120a). Moshe is the redeemer who redeemed our forefathers; he will redeem us and return the children to their proper place, as it is written (Koheles 1, 9): “מ'ה ש'היה ה'וא שיהיה” [literally: “that which was, it will be”]; the first letters of this phrase spell Moshe.** It is as if the passuk is stating by dint of allusion that “that which was” — i.e. Moshe — “he will be” once again.

This seems to be at odds with a teaching in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 98b). There we are taught that the Melech HaMashiach will be David HaMelech; for it is written (Yechezkel 37, 24): **“ועבדי דוד מלך עליהם”—my servant David will be king over them.** To reconcile this discrepancy, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh explains that Mashiach’s neshamah will incorporate both Moshe Rabeinu and David HaMelech.

This then is the hidden meaning of the passuk: וְאֵתָהּ תִצְוֶה” —את בני ישראל—you are destined to reunite with Bnei Yisrael at the time of the future geulah. (The term “תצוה” alludes to being part of a group, a “tzevet” or “tzavta.”) There is a condition, however: “וּיְקַחוּ אֵלֵיךְ שִׁמּוֹן זֵית זָךְ”—they must study Torah diligently; for, we know that Torah is compared to oil, since it illuminates the world. It must be pure, l’shma, without any ulterior motives. Additionally, the passuk specifies: כְּתִית”

—they must subject themselves to hardships for the sake of the Torah. As they elucidate in the Gemara (Berachos 19, 14): **“שׂאִין דְּבַרֵי תוֹרָה מִתְקַיְיֵמִין אֲלָא בְּמִי שִׁמְמִית עֲצָמוֹ עֲלֶיהָ, שְׂנֵאמֹר: “This is the Torah of a man who dies in a tent.”** This concludes this sacred insight.

The Ohr HaChaim Says of Himself:

”משיח ה' שמו חיים”

We will now present another comment from the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh related to a passuk in parshas Re'eh (Devarim 15, 7): **“כִּי יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאֶחָד אַחֶיךָ בְּאֶחָד שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ אֲשֶׁר: “if there shall be a destitute person among you, any of your brethren in any of your cities, in the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother.** He sees this passuk as an allusion to our obligation to hasten the coming of the Melech HaMashiach, who is like a “destitute person” while we are in galus, since he longs to come already to redeem us. He wants to come in the merit of our good deeds and, in particular, in the merit of the mitzvah of tzedakah. Here is what he writes:

”וַיִּצְוֶה ה' לְכָל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁלֹּא יֵאֱמָץ אֶת לִבּוֹ וְגו', אֲלֵא יִתְחַזַּק בְּכָל עוֹז וְתַעֲצוּמוֹת לְמִלְאוֹת חֶשֶׁק הָאֶחָד הַמִּיּוּחָד בְּאַמְצָעוֹת מַעֲשֵׂה בְנֵי אָדָם, וּבִפְרֵט בְּמִצְוֹת הַצְדָקָה דְּכֹתִיב בְּצִדְקָה תִּכְוֶנֶנִי. וְגַמֵּר אֹמֵר מֵאֶחָד הַבְּיּוֹן, פִּירוֹשׁ מְסִיבֵת אֶחָד הַבְּיּוֹן הַיְדוּעִי, שִׁיעִרֶיךָ אָדָם בְּדַעְתּוֹ שֶׁהַמַּעֲשֵׂה הוּא לְתַכְלִית דְּבַר זֶה שֶׁל מְשִׁיחַ ה' שְׂמוֹ חַיִּים.”

Hashem commanded every Jew not to harden his heart toward Mashiach. Instead, a Jew should employ all of the power and means he possesses to satisfy the will of the special, designated Mashiach, because his arrival depends on man’s good deeds, in particular, the mitzvah of tzedakah, as it is written (Yeshayah 54, 13): **“Establish yourself through righteousness (tzedakah).”** The passuk concludes by saying: **“Against your destitute brother”**—which may be interpreted as a reference to the Mashiach—the well-known destitute one. Hence, one should have in mind that every good deed he performs is for this specific purpose—to hasten the arrival of the anointed one of Hashem, whose name is Chaim.

He writes that the day a person is born and exits his mother's womb is analogous to the exodus from Mitzrayim. Then a person travels one journey after another until he reaches the upper "erezt hachaim." Certainly, these journeys were recorded in the Torah to guide a Jew along the proper path—so that he will know which path to choose as he moves from journey to journey throughout his life.

Now, we have a vital principle: "אין בכלל אלא מה שבפרט, ואין בפרט אלא מה שבכלל"—when a "klal" (a general category) is followed by a "praht" (a specific example) or vice-versa, they help define each other. Thus, we can deduce that just as every individual Jew completes 42 journeys in his lifetime; so, too, the entire people of Yisrael complete 42 journeys throughout their exiles. This coincides with the allusion of the Megaleh Amukos presented above that the first letters of the words "א'לה מ'סעי בני ישראל" are the same as the first letters of the four galuyos א'דום מ'די ב'בל י'זון galuyos.

In this light, we can better appreciate the words of encouragement offered by the Tzror HaMor: **Hashem recorded these journeys to instill in us a deep belief in the future geulah. Concerning the travails we endure in galus, we are to rest assured that Hashem sees all of our exiles and especially this difficult fourth one. He recorded these journeys to promise us beyond a shadow of a doubt that He will sustain us and redeem us from this galus. It will be just like "yetzias Mitzrayim," where they suffered backbreaking labor for many years; yet, Hashem sent them saviors to rescue them from their suffering.**

Now, if we examine the tefilah of "אנא בכח", which is based on the "shem mem-Beis," we see that we are praying for the geulah from the 42 journeys travelled in galus. For instance, the first line corresponds to the midah of chesed, the first of the seven midos: "אנא בכח גדולת ימינך תתיר צרורה"—**please, by the power of Your great, right hand, set the captive nation free.** We are beseeching Hashem to employ the midah of chesed, represented by His right hand, to free the people of Yisrael who are being held captive in galus.

"אם בחוקותי תלכו"

א'ליהו מ'שיח Is an Acronym for אם בחוקותי תלכו

Now, upon reviewing the pesukim that present the reward for Yisrael **"abiding by the decrees of HKB"H"**—namely, for

toiling in the study of Torah—we find that they relate to the future geulah. For instance (Vayikra 26, 6): **"ונתתי שלום בארץ: ושכבתם ואין מחריד והשבתי חיה מן הארץ—I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you. I will cause wild beasts to withdraw from the land.** The Midrash Shochar Tov explains (Tehillim Mizmor 120): **"ונתתי שלום בארץ. אימתי יהיה כן, והשבתי חיה רעה מן הארץ, ואין חיה רעה אלא חזיר, שנאמר יכרסמנה חזיר מיער, זה עשו הרשע."** When will this transpire? Now, the wild beast alludes to Eisav HaRasha, who is compared to a wild pig (Tehillim 80, 14): **"The boar of the forest ravages it."** In other words, there will be peace in the land at the time of the future geulah, when the descendants of Eisav HaRasha are removed from the land.

This coincides magnificently with a beautiful remez presented in the sefer Minchah Belulah in relation to the words **"אם בחוקותי תלכו"**. He points out that the term **א"ם** alludes to all of the redeemers in our history: **א'הרון מ'שה** in Mitzrayim, **א'סתור מ'רדכי** in the times of Haman, **א'ליהו מ'שיח**, **le'asid la'vo**. The term **א"ם** is an acronym for each of these pairs of saviors. Let us tie this into our current discussion. We learned that Moshe Rabeinu is reluctant to redeem Yisrael, so long as they are remiss in the study of Torah. Therefore, the Torah assures us: **"אם בחוקותי תלכו"**—if Yisrael fulfill their obligation of devotion to the Torah, they will warrant the future geulah led by the redeemers alluded to by the term **א"ם—Eliyahu and Mashiach**. At that time, the promise will be fulfilled: **"I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you. I will cause wild beasts to withdraw from the land."**

We now have cause to rejoice, because we can begin to appreciate to some small degree the workings of HKB"H. As the Ohr HaChaim attests, the neshamah of Mashiach was in him: **"מ'שיח י'ו ו'שמו ח'יים"**. He had to go into galus for the kavod of the Torah. In galus, he introduced 42 novel interpretations of the passuk **"אם בחוקותי תלכו"** teaching us how to best study Torah in preparation for the future geulah. By completing the requisite 42 journeys of galus while toiling in the study of Torah, the obligation of **"אם בחוקותי תלכו"** will be fulfilled entitling us to the geulah led by **Eliyahu and Mashiach**, swiftly in our times! Amen.

An Incredible Story Related to the 42 Interpretations of “Bechukosai” Presented by the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh

This story is presented in the sefer “שנים עשר שבטי ישראל” authored by Rabbi Moshe Yair Weinstock, ztz”l. He heard the story from the brilliant tzaddik, Rabbi Yisrael Yitzchak Reisman, ztz”l, a “dayan” in the holy city of Yerushalayim, who had heard it from one of the chief kabbalists in Yerushalayim, the divine Rabbi Chaim Shaul Dweck, ztz”l, the author of Eifah Sheleimah on the Arizal’s Otzros Chaim. He in turn had heard the story from his Rav and mentor, the esteemed Rabbi Mordechai Weingarten, ztz”l, who was the Rav in the Beis Midrash of the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh in Yerushalayim.

The Ohr HaChaim hakadosh was a craftsman who wove strands of gold manually. It was lucrative work and only required him to work a few hours a day. He sufficed with a small sum for himself and used the rest to support Torah scholars who studied in his Beis Midrash. It was his custom to distribute challot and meat to the talmidei-chachamim at the conclusion of every week. He would purchase a calf, they would slaughter it, and divide up its meat in honor of Shabbas. Since it was a small village, they only had to slaughter a few animals.

On one occasion, all of the animals were deemed “treif” except for the one slaughtered by the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh, which was kosher. One of the wealthy men, a prominent man in the community, heard that the ox slaughtered by the Ohr HaChaim was deemed kosher. He approached the Rav and requested a portion of meat in honor of Shabbas. The Rav explained to him apologetically that the meat was intended exclusively for poor talmidei-chachamim, and he did not wish to leave even a single talmid-chacham without meat in honor of Shabbas.

In the midst of this conversation, a talmid-chacham entered. As was his sacred custom, the Ohr HaChaim handed him a portion of meat. In a fit of anger, the rich man exclaimed in a disparaging tone, “What, even this one is a talmid-chacham?!” The Rav did not react to this remark and remained silent.

On the night of Shabbas Kodesh, the Ohr HaChaim dreamt that he was being held accountable in the heavens for having heard the rich man disparage a talmid-chacham without protesting. Hence, it was decreed in the heavens that he must accept upon himself to suffer the burden of galus for an entire year. Due to the kedushah of Shabbas, he remained where he was. On Motzaei Shabbas, however, immediately after Havdalah, he packed up his belongings and left for galus.

In the Heavenly Yeshivah the 42 Interpretations of the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh Were Said on Shabbas

On one Friday, while in galus, he passed through a field. He sat down to rest beneath the shade of a tree. He was engrossed in thoughts related to the parsha of the week, parshas Bechukosai. On that occasion, he came up with 42 ways to interpret the passuk “אם בחוקתי תלכו”. Afterwards, prior to sunset, he entered the city and went to the Beis Midrash. After the tefilah, a respectable fellow approached and invited him to spend Shabbas with him. The Rav agreed and went with him to partake of the Shabbas-night meal. After the meal, before reciting Birkas HaMazon, the “ba’al habayis” (the master of the house, the host) informed his guest that they would recite Birkas HaMazon by the Rav of the city, because he was a holy man and hears Torah from the heavenly yeshivah.

The “ba’al habayis” and the guest arrived at the home of the Rav of the city. The “ba’al habayis,” who was an influential person in the community, sat down on the right side of the Rav. The author of the Ohr HaChaim, who was dressed very plainly, sat down at the end of the table. At the conclusion of the meal, prior to Birkas HaMazon, the Rav of the city became very excited; it was time to abandon material concerns and his neshamah ascended (in a sort of trance).

When his spirit returned to him, he began repeating the words of Torah he had heard in the heavenly yeshivah above—fourteen ways to interpret the passuk “אם בחוקתי”. He

concluded with the words, "This is what the holy Rav, Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, said." The author of the Ohr HaChaim, who was extremely humble, and did not believe that he deserved this title of honor, could not refrain and said, "This is what Chaim ben Atar said."

The Rav of the city was enraged by the chutzpah of the guest. How dare he call what he had heard in the heavenly yeshivah in the name of the holy Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, and he referred to him merely as Chaim, without any title?! The "ba'al habayis" begged the Rav of the city to forgive his guest, since he was apparently a simple man. The Rav of the city calmed down, they recited Birkas HaMazon, and they went back to their home.

At the second meal, on Shabbas morning, it happened again. The "ba'al habayis" and the guest went at the conclusion of the meal to the home of the Rav of the city. Once again, the Rav's neshamah ascended in a trance. When he returned to himself, he said that he heard in the heavenly yeshivah fourteen novel interpretations of the passuk "אם בחוקותי". He concluded as he had on Shabbas night, "This is what the holy Rav, Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, said"; whereas the Ohr HaChaim concluded after him once again, "This is what Chaim ben Atar said." Once again, the Rav of the city became enraged at the guest's chutzpah, the "ba'al habayis" implored the Rav to forgive him, and they returned to their home.

At Seudah Shelishit, they went once again to the home of the Rav of the city. What happened at the first two meals repeated itself. The Rav's neshamah ascended. When he woke up, he repeated fourteen new interpretations he had heard in the heavenly yeshivah. He concluded by saying, "This is what the holy Rav, Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, said." Once

again, the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh could not refrain, and he said, "This is what Chaim ben Atar said."

At this point, none of the efforts of the "ba'al habayis" succeeded in calming down the Rav. He interpreted this as a simple man disparaging the kavod of the Torah of a holy man, whose words of Torah are being said in the heavens in his name. Hence, he ordered the official of the "beit-din" to place the guest in the community jail, and after Shabbas, he would consider what his sentence should be.

On Motza'ei Shabbas, a strong wind picked up threatening to destroy all the houses of the city. Seeing that their lives were in peril, the inhabitants of the city fled to the Rav's house. Recognizing him as a holy person, they would inquire of him to explain the reason HKB"H brought this harsh punishment on them so suddenly.

The Rav of the city made his neshamah ascend to inquire why this was happening. They answered him from heaven, "This is the punishment for having a holy man like Rabbi Chaim ben Atar imprisoned in your jail, and the Gehinnom cannot open up to rectify and purify the neshamos of the evildoers so long as he is imprisoned. When you release him, the ruckus will quiet down.

At that time, they requested from above of the Rav of the city to inform the holy Rav, Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, that because he had been imprisoned there for several hours, he had already received his punishment equivalent to one year of galus. As such, he can already return to his home. The Rav released the Ohr HaChaim hakadosh with great kavod and informed him that his galus had been completed. He returned to his city to study Torah and serve Hashem with kedushah and taharah.

Our thanks and blessings are given to those who donated for the publication of our weekly dvar Torah for the merit of **אחינו בני ישראל**

Family Madeb - לעילוי נשמת -
their dear mother
Lea bat Virgini ע"ה

Arthur & Randi Luxenberg לזכות
of their wonderfull parents, children and grandchildren
לעילוי נשמת His Father ר' יצחק יהודה בן ר' אברהם ע"ה

To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com