

## פרשות בהר-בחוקותי

Let us learn a part of our Parshas HaShavua that we do not read this year.

As always, when there are multiple Torah readings, double Parshos like this week, or when we read from two or three Sifrei Torah as we have on many occasions, the Haftarah that is read comes from the final reading.

For example, on an occasion of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, the first reading is Parshas HaShavua and the second reading is from the second Sefer Torah about Rosh Chodesh, so the Haftara is the that of Rosh Chodesh.

When there are three Sifrei Torah, such as Shabbos Chanukah which is Rosh Chodesh, the first Sefer Torah's reading is Parshas HaShavua, the second is that of Rosh Chodesh and the third reading is related to Chanukah and thus the Haftara is that of Chanukah.

And, so, this week when we read the two Parshos of Behar and Bechukosai, the Haftarah is the one associated with the Bechukosai<sup>1</sup> and that of Parshas Behar remains unread.

And that Haftarah which will be dormant this week has much to teach us regarding the opposite poles of history that our two Parshos represent.

Let us first take a look at our Parshos and see some of their content and what we may refer to as the theme or themes of their content and then we will visit the Haftarah of Parshas Behar and the message that Yirmiyahu HaNovi has for us.

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<sup>1</sup> Some may be aware that when Parshos Acharei Mos and Kedoshim are combined, we read the Haftarah that is found in many Chumashim after Acharei Mos and that seems to contradict the rule that we have presented above.

The explanation for that seeming reversal is that according to many Poskim that Haftarah, taken from the end of Sefer Amos, which is written after Parshas Acharei Mos is really the Haftarah of Parshas Kedoshim. Thus, when the Parshos are divided, as occurs in Leap Years, that selection from Sefer Amos is still read after Parshas Kedoshim -because that is its proper Haftarah.

That is, in many Chumashim the Haftoros of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim were interchanged improperly, according to the prevailing minhag.

The opening verse of Parshas Behar provides us with one of the themes that we will discuss. The Posuk reads (Vayikro Perek 25/Posuk 1):

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר:

Hashem spoke to Moshe at Mt. Sinai saying.

This verse *almost* appears to be a standard means of telling us of the Divine message that Moshe Rabbenu received. However, the verse's final words בְּהַר סִינַי, at Mt. Sinai, belie such an interpretation. Nowhere else in the Torah do we have such a geographical positioning with regards to a particular Mitzvah. Only when we are learning about *Mattan Torah* does the Torah discuss Har Sinai. All the rest of the time the Torah is satisfied with writing וַיְדַבֵּר ה' Hashem spoke or וַיֹּאמֶר ה' Hashem said. The location is mentioned because of its significance if it is not at Sinai. Thus, in B'midbar and D'vorim other locations are noted. Otherwise, throughout the Torah we understand that G-d's Word is given at Sinai. Therefore, the mentioning of Sinai here raises a question as to its necessity.

However, Parshas Behar, the first section of this week's reading, reminds us of the intimate connection Am Yisroel had with the Ribbono Shel Olom at Sinai. Furthermore, when we encountered Sinai for the first time, we were told not to think of that meeting between Israel and G-d as a one-time historical event that belongs to the past. Rather, as Rashi writes there:

שיהיו דברי תורה חדשים עליך כאלו היום נתנו:

The words of Torah should be new to you as if they were given today.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The entire verse reads:

בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְּבַר סִינַי:  
In the third month of the Exodus of B'nei Yisroel from the Land of Egypt, on this day they came to the Sinai wilderness.

Rashi's full commentary reads:

ביום הזה - לא היה צריך לכתוב אלא ביום ההוא, מהו ביום הזה, שיהיו דברי תורה חדשים עליך כאלו היום נתנו:

Certainly, the reason why Har Sinai is mentioned in our Parsha with regards to the Halachos of *Shemitta* and *Yovel* which are the opening segments of Parshas Behar deserves investigation and we have attempted to do so at other times.

However, here, we want to think about the implication as we come to the end of Sefer Vayikro and the Torah tying us again to *Mattan Torah*.

Parshas Behar, uttered at Sinai, reminds us of the unique closeness of Israel to G-d when we hear His Voice say all of the Mitzvos in one utterance and the first two of the Ten Commandments, word by word.

We heard Hashem say, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ... – I am Hashem your G-d.

We heard Hashem say, לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים - I forbid any worship that is not directed to Me.

Chazal talk about the greatness of the visions that Israel perceived when they crossed the Red Sea. We read in the Mechilta (Masseches Shira/3):

ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראו ישעיה ויחזקאל:

Even a lowly maidservant's vision at the Red Sea was greater than that of Yeshaya and Yechezkel.

The vision for all of Israel at Sinai was quantitatively and qualitatively greater and yet we are not told such explicitly. The reason is because the vision that we had at Sinai was indescribable beyond that which the Torah itself writes in Parshas Yisro.

And that is why Mt. Sinai has to be recalled in the present, not just the past. It has to always be with us because that event will never be and can never be repeated. Its uniqueness was one-of-a-kind.

Thus, one of the six זכירות שש, Six Commandments about which we are always required to have in mind, is remembering Mt. Sinai. That זכירה is found in Parshas Voeschanan connected to the subject of the Second Luchos which is taught there and reads (D'vorim Perek 4/P'sukim 9-10):

רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך: יום אשר עמדת לפני

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*On this day* – The Torah should have written on *that* day. What does it mean 'on *this* day'? it teaches that the words of Torah should be new to you as if they were given today.

ה' א...ל"קיה בְּחַרְבַּב בְּאָמַר ה' אֵלַי הִקְהֵל לִי אֶת הָעָם וְאִשְׁמַעְמָם אֶת דְּבָרַי  
אֲשֶׁר יִלְמְדוּן לִירְאָה אֶתִּי כָּל הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם חַיִּים עַל הָאָדָמָה וְאֶת בְּנֵיהֶם  
יִלְמְדוּן:

Only, guard yourself and greatly guard your soul lest you forget the things that your eyes saw and lest you remove from your heart all the days of your life; and you shall make them known to your sons and to your son's sons – the day that you stood before Hashem your G-d at *Chorev*; when Hashem said to me, Moshe, "gather the people for Me and I will let them hear My words that they should learn to fear Me all the days that they are living on the land and they should teach their sons.

We remember *Maamad Har Sinai* vividly and freshly because we were there!

And that is the message with which we begin this week's reading.

And when we come to the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai we have an additional message of hope and encouragement. Among the initial verses that we read there, verses of promise, we find these words (Vayikro Perek 26/Posuk 11):

וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם:

I will place My Mishkan in your midst and My Soul will not reject you.

This Posuk is certainly a difficult verse to fathom. The Mishkan was already built in the Midbar, only a few months after Moshe Rabbenu received the Torah at Sinai. It was not a promise for a long-awaited and distant future. At the very same time when Moshe came down from Mt. Sinai, he gave the Mitzvah of building the Mishkan and then, already, told Israel (Sh'mos Perek 25/Posuk 8):

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

They will make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.

What, then, does this seemingly repetitive and perhaps even 'unnecessary' verse come to teach? The Mishkan was already given.

Seforno tells us that this Posuk has much to teach us and, as we will see, it becomes a wonderful complement to the opening verse of Parshas Behar.

He writes on the verse in Bechukosai:

ונתתי משכני בתוכם. תשרה שכינתי בתוכם בכל מקום שתהיו כמו שיעד  
קודם העגל באמרו בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבא אליך (שמות  
כ/כא<sup>3</sup>):

*I will place My Mishkan in their midst – My Shechinah will dwell among you, wherever you will be as was destined prior to the sin of the Eigel when the Posuk says, “Wherever I will mention My Name, I will come to you.*

You might say in response to the opening verse of Parshas Behar and its interpretation, ‘It is good to be told to feel that Sinai is with me, but it was a long time ago and, in all honesty, I don’t feel it.’

If that is what you say and feel, Parshas Bechukosai provides a comforting answer. Hashem will place His presence among us *now*. It will not only be a memory. It not only will be in some type of ephemeral sense. It can be reality in your very life.

How wonderful are these messages, and many more in this week’s double reading! Parshas Behar deals with the Halachos of Shemitta and Yovel and laws associated with them. All of those laws envision all of Israel living in Eretz Yisroel with *Toras Yisroel* being the sole authority and *Gedolei Yisroel* being its faithful interpreters<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The entire Posuk reads:

מזבח אדמה תעשה לי וזבחת עליו את עלתיך ואת שלמיך ואת צאנך ואת בקרך בכל  
המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיה:

You shall make for Me an earthen altar and you shall offer upon it your burnt-offerings and your *shlomim*-offerings and your sheep and your cattle; wherever that I will mention My Name I will come to you and bless you.

<sup>4</sup> The Halachos associated with the *Yovel* year have no application nowadays, even by Rabbinic ordinance.

Many other Halachos of מצוות התלויות בארץ are applicable today -but only by Rabbinic ordinance. Some such as *Orlah* and *Kilayim* are still Torah laws nowadays.

Parshas Bechukosai provides us with wonderful blessings at its beginning as well as many Halachos connected to Eretz Yisroel and to the Beis HaMikdosh.

Parshas Bechukosai, too, inspires as it places us in Eretz Yisroel with all of those Mitzvos that we barely know and tells us that they will be fulfilled.

All of this is wonderful until I come to the center of Parshas Bechukosai and read the terrible section that is called the *Tochecha*, the section of rebuking.

But that section, I think, could be actually be called the section of the curse. Truly the *tochecha* is replete with curses and tales of destruction that will occur to Israel if they fail to follow G-d's directions that He gives in His Torah, i.e. His Mitzvos.

Perhaps we will see further on why *tochecha* – rebuke is in fact a far better description than *Klalah* – curse.

In the *Tochecha* we are told of many terrible things that will occur to Israel from external sources as well as the inner deterioration of the nation.

Although we cannot give 'grades' to say what is worse among those curses, if not the worst curse, but certainly the most horrifying is this verse (Vayikro Perek 26/Posuk 29) that reads:

וְאָכַלְתֶּם בָּשָׂר בְּנֵיכֶם וּבָשָׂר בְּנֹתֵיכֶם תֹּאכְלוּ:

You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you will eat.

The Meforshim question us the repetition of 'eating' in the Posuk. What does it come to teach us? This is what Or HaChaim HaKodosh writes:

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See Mishneh Torah LaRambam Hilchos Terumos Perek 1 and see in particular Halacha 26:

התרומה בזמן הזה ואפילו במקום שהחזיקו עולי בבל ואפילו בימי עזרא אינה מן התורה אלא מדבריהן שאין לך תרומה של תורה אלא בארץ ישראל בלבד, ובזמן שכל ישראל שם...

Teruma at this time, even in places occupied by those who came from Bavel at the time of *Bayis Sheini*, and even in the days of Ezra, is not a Torah obligation but one from the words of the Rabbis.

Teruma which is a Torah ordinance is only from crops that grow in Eretz Yisroel and when all of Israel are in Eretz Yisroel.

ואכלתם בשר בניכם וגו' תאכלו. טעם שכפל לומר תאכלו פעם שנייה לומר שאפילו אחר שכבר אכלו לא יכמרו רחמיהם כדרך הרגיל להנחם אחר מעשה ויכמרו רחמיהם ויבכו הוי בני הוי בתי אלא עוד יסכימו לאכול אם ימצאום מחדש:

*You shall eat the flesh of your sons...you shall eat* – The reason why the Torah repeats 'you shall eat' a second time is to say that even after eating their children their mercies will not arise as to be expected from a person who does something terribly wrong and then regrets his behavior and his mercies heat up and he cries and says, 'Oy my son, oy my daughter'. But here, they would eat their children again if they could find them anew.

Yirmiyahu HaNovi tells us about this harrowing event in Sefer Eicha (Perek 4/Posuk 10) but it seems that he wishes to temper the incredible harshness of the words of the Posuk in Parshas Bechukosai. This is how he says it:

יְדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנִיּוֹת בָּשְׁלוּ יְלֵדֵיהֶן הָיוּ לְבָרוֹת לְמוֹ בְּשָׂבָר בֵּת עַמִּי:

The hands of the merciful mothers cooked their children for a meal for them as My People was broken.

They were merciful mothers, Yirmiyahu teaches. The tragedy certainly broke them and that is the message of the verse's end.

However, if we can say so, the events told to us in Sefer Melachim (Beis Perek 6/P'sukim 25-30) seem harsher than what Yirmiyahu wrote in Eicha.

We read there regarding *Malchus Yisroel* and its ruler at that time, the evil King Yehoram ben Achav.

וַיְהִי רָעַב גָּדוֹל בְּשֹׁמְרוֹן וְהָיָה צָרִים עָלֶיהָ עַד הָיְתָה רֹאשׁ חֲמֹר בְּשִׁמְנִים כֶּסֶף וְרַבַּע הַקֶּבֶץ חֲרִיּוּנִים דְּבִיּוּנִים בְּחֲמֹשֶׁה כֶּסֶף: וַיְהִי מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹבֵר עַל הַחֲמָה וְאִשָּׁה צַעֲקָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר הוֹשִׁיעָה אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל יוֹשֻׁעַ ה' מֵאִין אוֹשִׁיעַ הַמֵּן הַגֶּרֶן אוֹ מִן הַיָּקֵב: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה לָּךְ וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת אָמְרָה אֵלַי תְּנֵי אֶת בְּנֶךָ וְנֹאכְלֶנּוּ הַיּוֹם וְאֶת בְּנֵי נְאֻכְלֶנּוּ: וְנֹבֵשֵׁל אֶת בְּנֵי וְנֹאכְלֶהּ: וְאֹמֶר אֵלַי בַּיּוֹם הָאֶחָד תְּנֵי אֶת בְּנֶךָ וְנֹאכְלֶנּוּ וַתַּחֲבֵא אֶת בְּנֶהּ: וַיְהִי כִשְׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת דְּבָרֵי הָאִשָּׁה וַיִּקְרַע אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְהוּא עֹבֵר עַל הַחֲמָה וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וְהָיָה הַשֶּׁקַּע עַל בְּשָׂרוֹ מִבֵּית:

There was a famine in Shomron and the enemy laid siege to Shomron until the price [of food] of a donkey's head was 80 silver

pieces and a small amount of dove dung was sold for 5 pieces of silver. The King was passing on the wall of Shomron and a woman cried out to him saying, 'Save me, my master, the King'. He said to her, 'If G-d has not saved you, how can I save you – is there anything to give you from the silo or the winery?' The king said to her saying, 'What is your issue?'. She said, 'This woman said to me, "give me your son and we will eat him today and as for my son, we will eat tomorrow'. She cooked my son and we ate him and I said to her on the following day, 'give me *your* son and we will eat him" and she hid her son.'

When the king heard the words of the woman, he rent his garments and he continued passing on the wall and the people saw that the sackcloth on his skin under his garments.

If this isn't sufficiently horrific, Rashi adds to our indescribable horror. He writes:

ותחבא את בנה - מת ורוצה לאוכלו לבדה:

*She hid her son* – Her dead son. She hid the body because she wanted have it for herself only to eat it and not share it.

Truly, there is nothing to add here. I think just reading these verses millennia later can cause us to sink into a grave depression.

The curses of the *Tochecha* were not empty threats. They came true, both in the time of the First Churban and in the Second Churban. Not only that our study of Jewish History has taught us about the Crusades and the Inquisition, Chilminitzky, the pogroms and, of course *Churban Eiropa*, the *Shoah*.

Can we understand what gave us strength to persevere? Are we able to fathom the suffering and destruction? The answer is clearly 'no'. Even survivors of concentration camps tell us, even with the vivid memories and nightmares that are an integral part of their lives and ongoing victimization – they cannot really imagine that the horrors that they experienced could really have occurred.

Hashem should continue to spare us from all horrors and suffering – can we begin to think about what occurred. Can we imagine living a day in such situations, not to mention years as many did?



It is true that we call this most difficult section *Tochecha* – it is a rebuke because it seeks to turn us from the path that would lead to such destruction with the combination of warnings, curses, and promise.

We read the promise there (P'sukim 42, 44-45):

וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֲזָכֹר  
וְהָאָרֶץ אֲזָכֹר:

וְאִם גַּם זֹאת בְּהִיוֹתְכֶם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲיִבֵיהֶם לֹא מֵאַסְתִּים וְלֹא גְעַלְתִּים לְכַלְתֶּם  
לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֵל... לְקִיָּהֶם: וְזָכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית רִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר  
הוֹצֵאתִי אִתְּכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם לְהִיּוֹת לָהֶם לֹא... לְקִיָּם אֲנִי ה':

I Hashem will remember My covenant with Yaakov and also My covenant with Yitzchak and also My covenant with Avraham, I will remember; I will remember the Land.

And also, this, when they will be in the land of their enemies, I have not been disgusted with them and I have not rejected them to decimate them, to break My covenant with them because I am Hashem their G-d. I will remember for them the covenant with the first generations that I took them out from the Land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations to be their G-d; I am Hashem.

And this brings us to the Haftarah that is not read this Shabbos.

Let us place it historically before reviewing its content and before discussing its message.

The Haftara is from Sefer Yirmiyahu. Yirmiyahu HaNovi lived through *Churban Bayis Rishon* and the subsequent exile. He wrote Sefer Melachim and thus, in his Sefarim he chronicled the events of that time of great destruction<sup>5</sup>.

His constant warnings against the current events and the sinful behavior in Judea earned Yirmiyahu HaNovi the wrath of the political leadership and they threw him into jail where he thought that his life would end.

It is within this dismal setting that the events of the Haftarah took place.

This is the Haftara for Parsha Behar because in the Parsha we learn about the laws of Yovel in which land received as permanent inheritance in Eretz

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<sup>5</sup> Divrei HaYomim II adds to that description.

Yisroel and was sold are returned to their original owners at the time of Yovel.

The Torah also teaches of the Mitzvah of relatives to repurchase that sold land and return it to the original owner ahead of the Yovel. The practical need is evident. It is not simple to envision lands being returned after one-half century – even in the best of times.

In these days prior to Shavuo, we recall what we learned in the last Perek of Sefer Rus (Perek 4/P'sukim 3-4). Boaz was dealing with the redemption of Elimelech's lands that were sold.

וַיֹּאמֶר לְגֹאֵל חֲלֻקַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר לְאַחֵינוּ לְאַלְיִמְלֵךְ מִכֶּרֶה נְעָמִי הַשִּׁבָּה  
מִשָּׂדֶה מוֹאָב: וְאֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי אֲגַלֶּה אֲזַנְךָ לְאִמֹּר קְנֵה נֶגְדְּ הַיֹּשְׁבִים וְנֶגְדְּ זַקְנֵי  
עַמִּי אִם תִּגְאֹל גְּאֹל וְאִם לֹא יִגְאֹל הַגִּידָה לִּי וְאִדְעָה כִּי אֵין זולָתְךָ לְגֹאֹל וְאֲנִי  
אֲחַרְיֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֲגַאֵל:

Boaz said to the redeemer, 'The field that is that of our brother Elimelech that Naomi, who has returned from the fields of Moav, sold. I said that I will reveal your ear saying, 'Buy back the field -in the presence of those sitting here at the gate and in the presence of the elders of my people; if you will redeem it, redeem it; and if you do not redeem it, tell me and I will know that there is no relative besides you to redeem it – I am the next one in line;' he said, 'I will redeem it'.

Yirmiyahu's uncle had sold his field because of the great poverty and suffering that overtook Judea as the countdown to the Churban and the exile progressed.

Yirmiyahu was the closest relative. In normal times, we can presume that if he was capable, he would have either lent money to his uncle to help him avoid the sale or would have redeemed it immediately.

But those were not normal times. Who knew better than Yirmiyahu that very soon there would be nothing to redeem because Israel would be removed from its land.

And even if Yirmiyahu would have redeemed it in normal times, he wasn't, seemingly, in any position to do so because of his incarceration.

And it is within that framework that we learn from Sefer Yirmiyahu (Perek 32/P'sukim 6-14).

ויאמר ירמיהו הִזָּה דְבַר ה' אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: הִנֵּה חֲנַמְאֵל בֶּן שַׁלֹּם דֹּדְךָ בָא אֵלַיךָ לֵאמֹר קְנֵה לְךָ אֶת שְׂדֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵנְתוֹת כִּי לְךָ מִשְׁפָּט הַגְּאֹלָה לְקִנּוֹת: וַיָּבֹא אֵלַי חֲנַמְאֵל בֶּן דָּדִי כְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלַי חֲצַר הַמְטָרָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי קְנֵה נָא אֶת שְׂדֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵנְתוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ בְּנֵימִין כִּי לְךָ מִשְׁפָּט הַיְרֵשָׁה וְלְךָ הַגְּאֹלָה קְנֵה לְךָ וְאִדַּע כִּי דְבַר ה' הוּא: וְאֶקְנֶה אֶת הַשְּׂדֵה מֵאֵת חֲנַמְאֵל בֶּן דָּדִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵנְתוֹת וְאֲשַׁקְּלֶה לוֹ אֶת הַכֶּסֶף שִׁבְעָה שֶׁקֶלִים וְעֶשְׂרֵה הַכֶּסֶף: וְאֶכְתֹּב בַּסֵּפֶר וְאֶחְתֹּם וְאֶעֱד עֵדִים וְאֲשַׁקֵּל הַכֶּסֶף בְּמֵאזְנַיִם: וְאֶקַּח אֶת סֵפֶר הַמִּקְנָה אֶת הַחֲתוּם הַמְצוּה וְהַחֲקִים וְאֶת הַגְּלוּי: וְאֶתְּן אֶת הַסֵּפֶר הַמִּקְנָה אֶל בְּרוּךְ בֶּן נְרִיָּה בֶּן מַחְסִיָּה לְעֵינַי חֲנַמְאֵל דָּדִי וְלְעֵינַי הָעֵדִים הַפְּתוּבִים בַּסֵּפֶר הַמִּקְנָה לְעֵינַי כָּל הַיְהוּדִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּחֲצַר הַמְטָרָה: וְאֶצְוָה אֶת בְּרוּךְ לְעֵינַיהֶם לֵאמֹר: כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְקוֹחַ אֶת הַסְּפָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶת סֵפֶר הַמִּקְנָה הַזֶּה וְאֶת הַחֲתוּם וְאֶת סֵפֶר הַגְּלוּי הַזֶּה וְנִתְּנָם בְּכֹלֵי חֶרֶשׁ לְמַעַן יַעֲמְדוּ יָמִים רַבִּים:

Yirmiyahu said, 'The Word of G-d came to me saying: "Behold Chanamel ben Shalum, your uncle, is coming to you saying 'purchase for yourself my field that is in Anasos because you are obligated by the law of redemption to purchase it.'"

'Chanamel the son of my uncle came to me according to the Word of G-d to the courtyard of the guardhouse and he said to me, "Please purchase my field that is in Anasos that is in the Land of Binyamin because you have the law of inheritance and the redemption is for you to do; purchase the field for yourself". I knew, said Yirmiyahu, that this was the Word of G-d. I purchased the field from Chanamel the son of my uncle who was in Anasos and I weighed out the silver, seven Shekalim and 10 silver. I wrote the transaction down in a book and I sealed it and I had witnesses for the transaction and weighed the silver in a balance-scale. And I took the purchase book/contract and the Mitzvah and the statutes and that which was revealed I gave the contract of purchase to Boruch ben Neriah ben Mach'sei'ya in front of Chanamel, my uncle, and before the eyes of the witnesses who wrote in the purchase contract before all the Jews who were sitting in the courtyard of the guardhouse. I commanded Boruch before their eyes saying, "Thus said Hashem of Hosts the G-d of Israel, 'take these documents, this contract of purchase, and that which was sealed and the open

document and place them in an earthenware vessel so that they will last for many days<sup>6</sup>.”

What was the purpose of having this mundane transaction being carried so ceremoniously and with such publicity? Why, in those hopeless days, did HaKodosh Boruch Hu command Yirmiyahu to even bother with an expenditure for which he will certainly lose the funds that he will expend. His monies will not be recouped.

We do not have to speculate on the response to that question because the Ribbono Shel Olom makes the purpose of this even quite clear.

We continue reading (Posuk 16):

כִּי כֹה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד יִקְנוּ בְּתֵימִים וְשָׂדוֹת וְכַרְמִים בְּאֶרֶץ  
הַזֹּאת:

Because so says Hashem the G-d of Israel, “Once more there will be houses and fields and vineyards that will be purchased in this Land.’

In the following P’sukim, Yirmiyahu asks the questions we raised. The utter destruction will occur in the near future. Havoc will reign in Eretz Yisroel; the Jewish world is crumbling before Yirmiyahu’s holy eyes. What is the point he asks?

And Hashem replies as we read the Haftarah’s conclusion (P’sukim 26-27):

The Haftarah continues and concludes:

וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֶל יִרְמְיָהוּ לֵאמֹר: הֲנֵה אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי כָל בָּשָׂר הֲמִמְנִי יִפְלֵא  
כָּל דְבָר:

The Word of G-d came to Yirmiyahu saying: ‘Behold I am Hashem, the G-d of all flesh; is anything impossible for Me?’

Now, we may ask, why isn’t this statement sufficient to make the point that there will be an eventual redemption, that Israel is not lost? Why was it necessary to have an elaborate event, public and ceremonial to make the point? The bottom line is the Word of G-d from Whom nothing is impossible.

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<sup>6</sup> It should be pointed out that from the description of this event we learn a number of Halachos involved in financial transactions

The answer is very clear. The intellectual knowledge of G-d's immeasurable greatness is most clear. Perhaps we didn't even need Yirmiyahu to bring G-d's Word that He Yisborach is all-capable. We term the Ribbono Shel Olom as being the One Who is Omnipotent, He is all-powerful.

However, for many individuals, intellectual awareness is often compartmentalized. And in its compartmentalization, intellectual messages do not always extend to our emotions and our feelings. I can be completely in agreement philosophically with G-d's uniqueness but, at the same time, be incapable of escaping from my worries and concerns that exist as if there is no one who is capable of saving me, extricating me.

And thus, we need a Divine messenger, one whom Hashem has sent us. A *shliach Hashem* whose holiness is unquestioned and unassailable<sup>7</sup>.

Parshos Behar-Bechukosai are a slice of real life. They provide us with a view of the vicissitudes of history with which Israel has encountered for over 300 centuries.

More pointedly and far more personally, many of us have encountered similar vicissitudes. Now, we hope that it is true that that the challenges that we encounter objectively pale in comparison to the grave events that have occurred in the past.

At the same time, when we are confronted by difficult and trying events, it is not our intellect that is tested as much as it is our feelings and our emotions.

It would be nice if we could empower our intellect with its awareness of G-d's omnipotence to overcome our emotions and our fears. And that is a task from which we can never be freed. We need to proclaim inwardly

אין עוד מלבדו!

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<sup>7</sup> We read in Yirmiyahu (Perek 1/P'sukim 4-5):

וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: בְּטֶרֶם אֶצְרְךָ בְּבֶטֶן יְדִעְתִּיךָ וּבְטֶרֶם תֵּצֵא מִרֶחֶם הַקֶּדֶשׁ תִּתִּיךָ נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם נִתְתִּיךָ:

The Word of Hashem came to me saying. "You had not yet been formed in the stomach and I knew you; and you had not yet gone out of the womb and I sanctified you; I Hashem placed you to be a prophet to the nations

There is no one besides Him<sup>8</sup>.

And, at the same time, we need to look for heroes who inspire us emotionally. It is fair to say that Yirmiyahu was not seeking to be a hero. Yirmiyahu was not seeking to serve as a beacon of hope from his imprisonment. Yirmiyahu HaNovi was not looking for the spotlight but it shone upon him anyway and he lived up to his abilities and to his calling.

There are famous heroes and heroes who are unknown until someone reveals their story. They may be Jewish and they may not be.

But they have in common an inner will that propels them to transcend their present situation which appears to be absolutely futile and they do not raise their hands in defeat.

Of course, we have our own heroes. We can read about the Chassidische *Admorim* who came to the United States and Israel after the Shoah and ignored their own decimation and with indescribable determination built a world of Torah and Chessed.

We can have heroes who selflessly care for others and we can have heroes whose integrity in the face of economic threats or worse remain true to their values.

What unites them all for us? They remind us of what we can be. They remind us that we can rise above the very real troubles that we may have and help them find their proper place in our lives. We won't forget those troubles but we can know that we are bigger than them and we won't let them define our lives.

We will not only *know* what is expected of us, but we will *feel* and *sense* it as well.

Sefer Vayikro, the Book of Holiness, concludes with the stark contrast between the rewards, in this world and the one to come, of a life of sanctity and the suffering and anguish, in this world and the one to come, that become part and parcel of their existence and, in the worse case, they only recognize their situation when it is too late to do anything about it.

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<sup>8</sup> The entire Posuk (D'vorim Perek 4/Posuk 35) reads

אַתָּה הָרָאֵת לְדַעַת כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֵל... לִקִּים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבָּדוֹ:

Hashem, You have shown yourself for us to know that Hashem is the G-d; there is none besides Him.

Perhaps it is appropriate that the message of this Shabbos comes from Yirmiyahu's event that remains unread<sup>9</sup>. Yirmiyahu is the silent hero this week. But his actions speak louder than words if we will only be wise enough to attend to them.

Shabbat Shalom

Yom Yerushalayim Sameach

Rabbi Pollock

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<sup>9</sup> Yirmiyahu isn't ignored altogether at all this week. The Haftarah that we will read, Haftaras Bechukosai, is also taken from his Sefer.