

RESPONDING TO AN URGENT PLEA

PARSHAS SHELACH

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Scripture selections, weekly Sidros, are often arranged in a way that keeps us in heightened spirits in connection with a concurrent holiday. Bechukosai – Bamidbar scheduled prior to Shavuos is a perfect example. (See Shulchan Aruch 428;4). It contains the capacity to keep us in reverential spirit during the holiday and beyond.

“Im Bechukosai Tailaichu”. “If” you will walk in my ways”, says Hashem, I will Bless.....All the good wishes are mentioned in abundance of blessings, (eleven sentences, over one hundred words). The Talmud points out (bovo basra 88b) that “Im Bechukosai begins with the letter Aleph, and concludes with a “Suf” the last letter of the Hebrew Alphabet, indicating completeness, wholesomeness. The sages’ observation that the Torah blessings are given in totality comprehensive from the Alef in the word ‘im’ to the letter suf in “KOMEMIYUS”, must assume that “Im” is not translated “If”, for there it is not part of the blessing. It is rather the condition by which the result is blessing. The Gemara, however, translates (avoda zara 5a) “Im” implores us urgently (Lashon Tachanunim), begging us to heed the mitzvos.

How punctilious, then, the observation that the blessings are comprehensive, from the Alef to the Suf, the Alef in “Im” is part of the blessing.

Who is this pleader, beseeching us to observe the Torah? It is the Almighty Himself! The Talmud brings proof that, indeed, the Almighty Himself entreats us. It is in Tehilim “Lu Ami”. I IMPLORE you My people to heed Me (81:14). Again, in Isaiah “Lu”..beseeching you to hearken to My mitzvos (48:18).

How precise, then, the arrangement in Shulchan Aruch for Scripture reading Bamidbar before Shavuos, which is preceded by Bechukosai. We have here an indispensable component before Shavuos, the Rebono Shel Olam

Himself pleading with us to accept the Torah. Can we say no?! Are we an irresponsible group coming from nowhere?! We are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Our lineage is clearly stated. Parshas Bamidbar states unequivocally who we are. As expected the response was a resounding “YES”! “Naaseh V’ Nishma”.

2) The above means we are ready for the Holy land. Indeed the eleven passages of blessings in Bechukosai, all apply to the dwelling in Eretz Yisroel. And so Shelach Lecha send the Meraglim.....

Parshas Shelach is usually regarded in the negative realm, since they caused the delay of 40 years to enter the holy land. Yet, the Parsha contains a preponderance of positive elements. The very Halacha requiring a quorum of ten to be allowed to say Kaddish and kedusha is derived from the Meraglim, consisting of ten men. This is based on the passage “I shall be sanctified TOCH (amid) the children of Israel,” (Vayikra 22:32). The word TOCH indictates ten men (see Brochos 21b), “TOCH and AIDA” (ibid14:27). Amazingly, TOCH and AIDA is mentioned in the negative realm, yet it is the source for Kedusha.

Reb Moshe Feinstein, z.t.l., in his Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim, responza 23) is lenient regarding reciting Kedusha or Kaddish, when the Shabbas observance of some of the ten, is questionable. (See also his response to Rav Mordechai Savitsky z.t.l. Orach Chayim 3 responza 19. His opinion is based on the above concept of the Meraglim maintaining a level of sanctity in spite of their flaw as Meraglim in Eretz Yisroel.

In this very context, about the Meraglim and their discouraging report, and the Heavenly forty year retribution, the basic preparation to enter the Holy Land is initiated by Moshe. “And Moshe called Hoshai bin Nun, Yehoshua” (13:16). Wherefrom did Moshe get that extra letter Yud? Says Reb Shimon ben Yochai: (Beraishis Raba: 47:1) he took the Yud from Sarai, and placed it as first letter in Yehoshua. The perspicacious student understands the level of Sarah in this connection: Sarah is the one who exclaimed emphatically with divine consent, the inheritance of the land of

Israel belonging to Isaac exclusively (Beraishis 21:10). It is this dynamic statement of Sarah which Joshua implied in conquering the land.

Sarah , princess of the world, refers to the intellect , morality , and belief in Hashem, obligating the whole world. Whereas Sarai, “my” princess, refers to the Holy Land, the exclusive inheritance of the Jewish people.

Hashem pleads with us “Im” Bechukosai Tailaichu” bevakasha” imploring (avodah zara 5a) to heed Torah and mitvos, in order to inherit the land and its blessings.