

Parshat Bechukotai

Rebuke of the Tzibbur and the Individual

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At the end of the rebuke in Parshat Bechukotai the pasuk says: "Even when they will be in their enemies' land, I have not despised them [Am Yisrael] nor rejected them to destroy them." (Vayikra 26:44)." The rebuke ends with G-d's promise that even during the worst times – He will not destroy us. On the other hand, in the end of the rebuke found in Parshat Ki Tavo, the Torah ends on a more negative note. The pasuk says: "You will be sold there to your enemies as slaves and maidservants, and there will be no buyers." (Devarim 28:68)

The question is raised regarding the different endings in the two parallel rebukes. The Ponovitcher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahanaman zt"l, explains that the rebuke in Parshat Bechukotai is directed at Klal Yisrael as a whole. G-d promises that Kal Yisrael, despite the struggles and difficult times that they go through, will never be destroyed as a nation. However, the rebuke in Devarim is referring to individuals, who are not given the promise of Parshat Bechukotai.

The Zohar on Parshat Ki Tavo explains that the last pasuk of the rebuke is, in fact, a blessing. Due to the fact that "there will be no buyers," that no one will want to buy the Jews as slaves, Klal Yisrael will be able to exist eternally. However, the Ponovitcher Rav comments, this "blessing" within the curse in the end of Ki Tavo, is also specifically directed only at the whole of Klal Yisrael. This is clear, as we have seen individuals being sold as slaves throughout the years.

The only way to attain the blessings given to the tzibbur of Klal Yisrael is to attach oneself to the tzibbur. Those who remain as individuals, separated from the tzibbur, will be subject to the curses that are given to the individuals.

The pasuk in the beginning of the parsha says, "Five of you will chase one-hundred, and one hundred of you will chase 10,000." The obvious question is that the numbers are not parallel. If five can chase 100, than 100 should chase 2000, not 10,000. Rashi comments that we cannot compare few who learn Torah to many who learn Torah. The Avnei Azel explains that when many people learn Torah together as one unit the power of each individual to chase away the bad and to be successful in achieving the good is multiplied. Even though five can only chase 100, when there is a unit of 100 their power is even stronger and they have the ability to chase 10,000.

The purpose of a Yeshiva is to enable the strengths of individuals to multiply by being in an atmosphere of many people learning Torah together as a single unit. Therefore, it is the job of B'nei Torah, not only to attach themselves to the general tzibbur of Klal Yisrael, but also to unify the Yeshiva to enable the individuals to grow to their greatest potential.