



Parsha Bechukosai

I Found a Solution for the Question

For 25 years my father, Rabbi Yisrael Grossman ZT"l, would spend the Passover holiday at Migdal Ha'Emek with us. This was the case during his last year, the Pesach of 2006.

It was hard to disconnect my father from his books. My father was an erudite scholar; a man of books, constantly reading, at all times and in all situations.

Even in his old age he studied relentlessly. During this last year I was aware that my father was weak, so I gathered a *Minyan*¹ in my house so that he would not have to venture out.

During one of the days of *Chol Hamoed*², as he was approaching the room we used for the *Shul*, he heard the voice of Torah study. It was the voice of my grandchildren, his great grandchildren, who awoke early and began to study Torah.



My father leaned over to see what they were studying. They were studying an issue in Tractate Bava Metziah from the Babylonian Talmud, and he posed to them a question which has been occupying him for the past 60 years.

My father continued his daily routine of study and prayer. In the evening he called me to his room. I hurried to him, for I knew that he did not call on me regularly for trifle reasons.

I entered his room and found him elated. He stated: "I have found a solution to my question". At first I did not understand what question he was relating to. Then my father told me of his encounter this morning with the children, and how the solution came to him. My father acted as if he had just won a prize of immense value, he was absolutely delighted.

When I reminisce about my father's holy ways, I find a comment of Rashi's on the first verse in our Parsha is very apropos: "If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them"³. Rashi explains that the "statutes" relate to the study of Torah, and the phrase "for the observation of commandments" relates to the observation of Mitzvos.

A question is then raised: the study of Torah is one of the Mitzvos, (the commandments,) why did our Sages stress that the study of Torah has special significance?

Righteous men explained that the issue is not the mere study, but the total immersion in the matter of Torah study, during all your days and in all situations. All your toil shall be saturated with Torah; all your actions shall be guided by the Torah.

The *Tanya*⁴ learned this issue from the words of verse. "My statutes – *Bechukosai*"⁵ – the Torah shall be etched into one's being, part and parcel of who he is. It should not be like parchment which can be erased, but rather like the etching in the stone which is indelible, so should the words of Torah be an irremovable part of one's personality.

Thinking of my father, I remember his words concerning the prophecy of Yirmiyahu. The prophet asks: "Why is the land ruined and withered like a wilderness, without anyone passing through?"⁶ Our Sages teach us in Tractate Bava Metziah:⁷ "This question was put to the Sages, but they could not answer it; to the prophets, but they could not answer it, until the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself resolved the quandary based on the verse, "And the Lord said, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them". R' Yehudah said in Rav's name: That means that they did not first utter a benediction over the Torah before studying it".

My father explained that it was not that they did not study Torah or fulfill the commandments, because that it is a blatant transgression, and the Sages and prophets would have known the answer. G-d knows the actions of men and their thoughts, and knew that they did not "utter a benediction over the Torah before studying it". What is a benediction? A person who enjoys something in this world must say a *Bracha*. That is what G-d Himself explained; if they did not recite a blessing before the study of Torah it testifies to the fact that they did not enjoy it.

The words of Torah were etched in my father's heart, they were a permanent part of his being, and he enjoyed them and thanked the Lord who gave us the Torah.

My father's contentment at that moment was boundless. "I found an answer to my question" he declared to all he met during the holiday.

My father had a habit of thanking my wife for her efforts at the end of the holiday. He did so at the end of this last holiday, and added: "This holiday was special to me. I found an answer to a question which has been burdening me for the past 60 years, and for that I thank you twofold".

We accompanied my father to his car, and watched together as he drove away, as always his visit left an indelible impression. I did not know that this was in fact his final visit to our home.

⁴ 9 A work of [Hasidic philosophy](#), by Rabbi [Shneur Zalman of Liadi](#), the founder of [Chabad Hasidism](#), first published in 1797. Its formal title is *Likkutei Amarim*. It comprises five sections that define Hasidic mystical psychology and theology as a handbook for daily spiritual life in Jewish observance.

⁵ A play of words in Hebrew. The word is commonly understood as "laws", or alternately can mean "etched".

⁶ Yirmiyahu 9.11.

⁷ Tractate Baba Metziah 85a.

¹ Refers to the [quorum](#) of ten male Jewish adults required for certain [religious obligations](#). The most common activity requiring a *minyan* is public [prayer](#).

² A phrase meaning "weekdays of the festival" refers to the intermediate days of [Passover](#) and [Sukkot](#).

³ Vayikrah, 26, 3.