

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai – Yeshaya Nosson Hepner

כ"ז אייר תשע"ה – 15 May 2015 – שבת פ' בהר-בחוקות

“אם בחקתי תלכו”

“If you will walk in My statutes” (Vayikro 26:3)

This Possuk introduces the wonderful blessings which Hashem will shower upon the Jewish nation when they keep the Mitzvos. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 5a) translates the word “אם” / “If” of this Possuk as an expression of request. Hashem *asks* of us to keep the Mitzvos. Thus, the Possuk is rendered: “If [only] you will walk in My statutes.”

The Gemara proves this by citing another Possuk on a similar theme:

“לו עמי שמע לי ... כמעט אויביהם אכניע”

“If only My nation would heed Me... in an instant I would subdue their foes” (Tehillim 81:14-15)

Just as in this Possuk, the expression used is one that denotes a request; so too “אם בחקתי תלכו” is an expression of request.

In his commentary on the Ein Ya'akov, R' Yoshiyohu Pinto explains why the Gemara feels compelled to understand the Possuk in this way. The word “if” ordinarily refers to an uncertainty. The implication of the Possuk, then, would be: “If you will [choose] to walk in My statutes”. But the Mitzvos of the Torah are not optional – we are *obligated* to keep them! To avoid this skewed interpretation, the Gemara translates the “if” of this Possuk as an expression of request – “if only”.

The Ben Yehoyodo uses this Gemara to suggest a beautiful idea. The Possuk in Yeshaya (40:27-28) tells us:

“למה תאמר יעקב... נסתרה דרכי מה'... הלוא ידעת אם לא שמעת”

“Why do you say, O Ya'akov... 'My way is hidden from Hashem'? ... Did you not know? Did you not hear?”

In this passage, Yeshaya questions those who feel that Hashem has forsaken them; and reassures them that Hashem gives strength to those who are weary. The Ben Yehoyodo isolates the words “אם לא שמעת”, and interprets them homiletically – “You have not heard (understood) [the word] אם”. This is a reference to the “אם” of our Possuk, “אם בחקתי תלכו”.

Yeshaya exhorts the people: You feel that Hashem has forsaken you. However, this is not so – indeed, the opposite is true. Hashem is anxiously waiting to send us great blessing, but we must first be deserving of it. Therefore, Hashem *requests* of us to keep the Mitzvos, so that He, in turn, can reward us. Any difficulties that we may endure do not indicate that Hashem is no longer “watching out” for us. Rather, Hashem is waiting for us to be worthy of reward... which He truly wants to give!