



NHS Sedra Sheet

Behar – Bechukosai – Mike Aziz (*reprinted*)

כד אייר תשע"ז – 20th May 2017 – שבת פי' בהר-בחוקותי

The opening verse of this weeks second sedra reads "If you walk in My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them". Rashi quotes the Torat Kohanim, which explains that if the Torah had only spoken about Bechukotai (My statutes), we would have assumed this meant the mitzvot. Now that the verse continues with the words "and My commandments", the word "Bechukotai" cannot apply to the mitzvot, and in fact teaches us that one has to toil in order to acquire Torah knowledge.

The Ohr Hachayim (Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar) gives us 42 reasons for why the Torah uses the term "halichoh" (walking), when speaking about the statutes in the opening verse. Time and space won't allow us to explore all 42! However, we can glean a number of insights from all those reasons, and we will mention a few of them. The first reason he gives is to remind us that one needs to be occupied in Torah matters even when walking on one's way – as we say in the Shema, "when you walk on the way".

A second reason for the phrase "you shall walk" is based on the first Mishnah in Pe'ah, which lists all the things for which the Torah did not set a minimum quantity in order for a person to be able to claim that he had fulfilled a particular mitzvah. The main example there is Torah study. The word "walk" describes an activity without setting a specific objective to be reached. As long as one is on the way (ie. studying Torah), then they have complied with this mitzvah.

Another reason given is based on the Zohar, which mentions that the Torah can be studied on four different levels --- the "pschat", "remez", "drush" and "sod". These four methods account for what our Rabbi's term the 70 facets of Torah. Each of these is likened to a path --- "if you walk in My statutes". The approach to learning Torah should be along a number of different paths.

A further reason mentioned also refers to the wording of the whole verse. Our Rabbis in Menachot (110a), explain that if one studied the section of the Torah dealing with a burnt offering, it is as if he had personally offered up a burnt offering. This is based on the verse in Hosea (Chapter 14, Verse 3), which says "let us pray with our lips instead of with bulls" (ie: our prayers now are in place of the offerings). When a particular mitzvah cannot be fulfilled by someone, then by studying the relevant portion of the Torah, it is as if the person had fulfilled that mitzvah. We can therefore understand the verse as saying that "if you study the commandments which you can only study, then you will be considered as having fulfilled My commandments". The next words state "you will perform them" (ie: you will not only receive a reward for studying, but also for having 'physically' carried them out).

In connection with this opening verse, the Ohr Hachayim also mentions that the use of the word "statutes" (ie: in the plural), hints at the idea that there are two main components that need to be in place in order to observe Hashem's commandments --- to study Torah and to teach others. Both of these activities indeed form a part of walking with Hashem's statutes.
