

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Ki Savo

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Parshas Ki Savo 5770

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שב"ת הוי"ה Twenty-seven Times in the Tochacha Equals who Spare us from all the Curses of the Tochachos

During this week's Torah reading of parshas Ki Savo, we need to have a specific intent and focus. Doing so will have the unique ability to spare us from the harsh decrees of Rosh HaShanah. The Gemorah (Megillah 31:) teaches that Ezra instituted that Yisroel read the curses contained in parshas Bechukosai before Shavuos and the curses contained in parshas Ki Savo before Rosh HaShanah:

"תניא רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר, עזרא תיקן להן לישראל, שיהו קורין קללות שבתורת כהנים קודם עצרת, ושבמשנה תורה קודם ראש השנה, מאי טעמא, אמר אביי ואיתימא ריש לקיש, כדי שתכלה השנה וקללותיה".

The Tiferet Shlomo explains that even if a harsh judgment had been rendered against us, chas v'shalom, the recitation of this week's portion is considered as if we had actually received the punishment. Consequently, we will have fulfilled the dictum of **"שתכלה שנה וקללותיה"**—"let the year and its curses be done with." Here are his telling words:

"יש לתת טעם בענין התוכחה, מה שאנו קוראים בעת הזאת שתכלה שנה וקללותיה, והוא כמו שאומרים (הרשע יד ג) ונשלמה פרים שפתינו, שאם חס ושלום נגזר אשר לא טוב, הנה יצאנו ידי חובתינו בקריאת הדברים האלה, וממילא יתהפכו לנו כולם לברכה".

Thus, we have learned a very important principle. During the Torah reading this Shabbos kodesh, it is essential that each and every one of us assume an appropriate attitude of fear and awe of Hashem; we must have the intent during the reading of the Tochachah, the Admonition, that it should be considered as if we had received our due punishment in reality. In this manner, we can put this year's curses behind us and prepare to begin a new year with a clean slate. Therefore, it is only fitting that we examine the Tochachah through the eyes of some of our holy commentaries; may Hashem guide us along this path.

The First Admonition and the Second Admonition

In parshas Ki Savo, we find ninety-eight curses compared to forty-nine curses in parshas Bechukosai. Our blessed sages teach us (Megillah 31:) that there is a distinct difference between the two Tochachos. The Tochachah in parshas Bechukosai: **"מפי הגבורה אמרם"**—Moshe pronounced them in the name of the Almighty; whereas, the Tochachah in parshas Ki Savo: **"מפי עצמו אמרם"**—Moshe uttered them on his own.

Tosafos comment: **"משה מעצמו אמרם, וברוח הקודש"**—Moshe uttered them on his own, with Divine inspiration. We find a similar explanation from Rabeinu Bachayei with added detail:

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“ודע כי התוכחות שבפרשה זו נאמרו בלשון משה, לא שאמר משה מפי עצמו, שהרי קבלה בידינו שכל התורה כולה, מבראשית עד לעיני כל ישראל, הכל כתב משה מפי הגבורה, ומה שדרשו חכמינו ז”ל, קללות שבתורת כהנים הקב”ה אמרן, ושבמשנה תורה מפי עצמו אמרן, הכוונה לומר באלו מפי עצמו, שהסכימה דעתו לדעתו של הקב”ה”

He emphasizes that the entire Torah from the first word, בראשית, to the final words, לעיני כל ישראל, are the words of the Almighty transcribed by Moshe. When our sages taught that Moshe uttered the Admonition in parshas Ki Savo on his own, they meant that he was reaffirming and agreeing with the Almighty’s words.

Moshe Rabeinu Mentions the Name הוי”ה in His Admonition

Nevertheless, the statement that the curses in parshas Ki Savo were uttered by Moshe on his own, deserves further attention. It seems inconceivable that Moshe Rabeinu, our trusty shepherd--who stood up for Yisroel after the sin of the egel in the face of Hashem’s wrath, willing to sacrifice his own life--would pile curses on Yisroel on his own. Whether we interpret the matter according to the Tosafos—that he uttered the curses with Divine inspiration—or whether we follow the view of Rabeinu Bachayei—that he simply concurred with the Almighty’s words—it is perplexing. Why would Moshe Rabeinu—with his tremendous love for Yisroel--concur to curse Yisroel rather than stand up on their behalf as he had done previously concerning the sin of the egel?

We can explain the matter based on a question asked in the responsa of the Radbaz (part 2,769). Why are words of consolation found among the curses in parshas Bechukosai, whereas no such words of consolation are present in the curses found in parshas Ki Savo? Here is the Radbaz’s response:

“שאלת ממני למה לא נכתבת נחמה, בקללות של והיה כי תבא אל הארץ, כמו בקללות של אם בחוקותי. תשובה: שאלה זו נשאלה בספר הזוהר... ומה שנראה לי לתרץ, כי אין צריך נחמה בפרשת כי תבא, לפי שנחמתם בצדק, שאין פסוק ופסוק שלא הוזכר בו שם ההוי”ה המורה על הרחמים, להודיע שהמדה היא ברחמים, על דרך (איוב ה יח) ימחץ וידיו תרפנה, ואין לך נחמה גדולה מזו.”

He points out that this question is already addressed in the Zohar. Furthermore, he notes that many of the verses in the Tochachah in parshas Ki Savo contain the name of divine mercy, הוי”ה. This constitutes the ultimate sign and expression of consolation.

In fact, let us examine exactly how many times Moshe mentions the name הוי”ה in the Admonition in this week’s parsha. Although, it would seem to be a simple matter to open up a chumash and obtain an exact count, we will show that it really isn’t that simple a matter.

The Debate Whether the Name הוי”ה Is Mentioned 26 Times or 27 Times

In this week’s parsha, the Baal HaTurim writes (28,68): כ”ו שמות בתוכחה כנגד כ”ו שמות שבתפלת: “י”ח חוץ מברכת המינין”—the holy name appears twenty-six times in the Tochachah corresponding to the twenty-six times this name appears in the Shemoneh Esreh, excluding its mention in the blessing against the heretics. In the sefer Yosef Tehillos on Tehillim (mizmor 60) written by the

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Chida, he presents an incredible fact in the name of the sefer Lev Aryeh (Vayelech, 1). In the Admonition recorded in parshas Ki Savo, the name הוי"ה—which has a numerical equivalent of twenty-six—appears twenty-six times. Twenty-six times twenty-six equals six hundred and seventy-six—the numerical value of the word רעו"ת, meaning misfortune. In other words, the twenty-six mentions of the name הוי"ה are intended to counteract the misfortunes and the curses mentioned in the Admonition.

The Lev Aryeh adds the following allusion from the possuk (Tehillim 34,20): "רבות רעות צדיק" "ומכולם יצילנו ה'"—"many are the misfortunes of the righteous, but Hashem will rescue him from all of them." The possuk's homiletic interpretation is as follows: "רבות רעות צדיק"—the curses attributed to the tzaddik, Moshe Rabeinu, are many and are termed רעו"ת; nevertheless, "ומכולם יצילנו ה'"—the name of Hashem, הוי"ה, specifically, which appears twenty-six times in the Tochachah, will spare us from all of the curses and misfortunes, the רעו"ת—which has a numerical equivalent of twenty-six times twenty-six.

Along these lines, we provided a praiseworthy reason, in last year's essay, behind the Jewish custom to recite (Tehillim 27): "לדוד ה' אורי וישעי" twice daily from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Shemini Atzeret. We found in the siddur of the Arizal:

"כל האומר מזמור כ"ז, לדוד ה' אורי וישעי וכו', מראש חודש אלול עד אחר שמחת תורה ערב ובוקר דבר יום ביומו, אזי הוא מובטח שמוציא שנותיו בטוב ויערב לו... ומבטל מעליו כל גזירות קשות ורעות... כי מראש חודש נפתח י"ג מקורות מי"ג מכילין דרחמי והם מתגלין ומאירין למטה... ולכך יש בו במזמור זה י"ג שמות הוי"ה".

Reciting this mizmor twice daily, morning and night, during this period, nullifies all of the harsh and evil decrees and insures that one will live out his years in a pleasing fashion. The reason being that this mizmor contains thirteen mentions of the name הוי"ה, corresponding to the "thirteen attributes of mercy," which are revealed from the beginning of the month of Elul.

So, reciting this prayer—in which the name הוי"ה is mentioned thirteen times—twice daily, gives us a total of twenty-six mentions of the name הוי"ה. Once again, this is the same number of times the name הוי"ה appears in the Tochachah, which has the numerical equivalent of the word רעו"ת. Therefore, reciting this mizmor twice a day also has the power to cancel out the evil decrees, the רעו"ת, depicted in the Tochachah.

It is worth noting, however, that when the Baal HaTurim states that the name הוי"ה appears twenty-six times in this week's Tochachah, he is not taking into account the last possuk in which this name is mentioned (Devarim 28,69): "אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה ה' את משה לברות את בני ישראל בארץ מואב מלבד הברית אשר כרת אתם בחורב".

Addressing this fact, the author of the Rokeach on the Torah (Ki Sisa), one of the masters of the Tosafos, writes that the Admonition in parshas Ki Savo contains seven hundred and seventy-five words. It is clear, therefore, that this last possuk just cited is counted as part of the Admonition. According to the Rokeach, it turns out that there is an additional mention of the name הוי"ה in this week's Tochachah—resulting in a total of twenty-seven.

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שב"ת הוי"ה Equals Twenty-seven Times the Name

Let us continue along this path to explain why Moshe Rabeinu chose to mention the name הוי"ה precisely twenty-seven times in the Tochachah that he uttered on his own. The Arizal writes in the Pri Etz Chaim: "שב"ת גימטריא ז"ך הויות כשוטות"—twenty-seven times הוי"ה (26) equals שב"ת (702).

This appears to be the reason that Moshe Rabeinu added this Admonition on his own—to teach us that the kedushah of Shabbos has the power to save us from all of these curses. After all, it is written (Bereishis 2,3): "ויברך אלקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו"—"And the Almighty blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." Shabbos is the source of all blessings, as the Zohar hakadosh states (Yisro 88.): "כל ברכאן דלעילא ותתא ביומא שביעאה תליון". Naturally, Shabbos, the source of all of this world's blessings has the power to nullify all of its curses.

I would like to add my own tidbit and Shabbos spice. For, we find an explicit reason mentioned in the middle of the Tochachah as the cause for all of these misfortunes (Devarim 28,47): "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרוב כל"—"as a result of not serving Hashem, your G-d, with joy and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant." Concerning this possuk, an astonishing Midrash is brought: "תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה, זה עונג שבת"—not serving Hashem with joy is a reference to the delight of Shabbos.

The Gr"a of Vilna, zy"a, explains that this refers to the joy of delighting in the Shabbos, as it is written (Yeshayah 58,13): "וקראת לשבת עונג"—"and you call Shabbos a delight." Also, our blessed sages instituted the formula in the Shabbos prayers: "ישמחו במלכותך שומרי שבת וקוראי עונג"—"They shall rejoice in Your kingship, those who observe Shabbos and call it a delight." Furthermore, the letters in the Hebrew alphabet that follow the letters of the word אש"ר spell שב"ת—i.e. after 'א' comes 'ב', after 'ש' comes 'ת', and after 'ר' comes 'ש', giving us the letters of שב"ת. This is the allusion found in the possuk: "תחת אשר"—the letters that follow the letters of the word אש"ר spell out שב"ת; "לא עבדת את ה' בשמחה"—these misfortunes befell you for not serving Hashem with the joy of Shabbos kodesh.

The message is clear! The punishment described in the Admonitions comes as a result of not having served Hashem with joy on the holy Shabbos. After all, in the merit of serving Hashem with joy on Shabbos kodesh, we are able to extend its sanctity to the remaining six days of the week--enabling us to serve Hashem with joy while performing mitzvos and studying Torah. We now have a wonderful explanation for why Moshe Rabeinu added this Admonition of his own accord, albeit with divine inspiration, and specifically mentions the name הוי"ה twenty-seven times to achieve the numerical value of שב"ת—he wished to convey the important lesson that serving Hashem with joy on Shabbos annuls all of the curses.

Shabbos with Its Extension Is Twenty-seven Hours

As it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, we can suggest a novel reason for why Moshe Rabeinu mentions the name הוי"ה twenty-seven times, equaling שב"ת, in his Tochachah. We find a tremendous insight in Sidduro shel Shabbos addressing the words of the

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Arizal that **שב"ת** is equivalent to twenty-seven times the numerical value of the name **הוי"ה**. His insight is based on the words of the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 261,9), citing the Ba"ch, that it is fitting to extend Shabbos by bringing it in two hours early.

The precise amount of time to extend the conclusion of Shabbos, however, is not so clear cut. The Sidduro shel Shabbos states that it is customary to add one hour at the end of Shabbos. Similarly, the Arizal explains in Shaar HaKavanos (42:) that the kedushah of Shabbos extends one hour after Shabbos. According to these guidelines, Shabbos--with the two hour extension at its onset and the one hour extension at its conclusion added to its original twenty-four hours--now totals twenty-seven hours. This is alluded to in the name **שב"ת** itself which has a numerical value equivalent to twenty-seven times the name **הוי"ה** – which illuminate the twenty-seven hours of the Shabbos day. This is the gist of his holy words.

Next, let us introduce a teaching of the Bnei Yissoschar (Shabbos 1,10) explaining a quote from our blessed sages (Shabbos 118:): "**אלמלי שמרו ישראל שבת ראשונה לא שלטה בהן אומה ולשון**"—"If the people of Yisroel had only kept the first Shabbos, no nation or people would have ever ruled over them." He bases his teaching on the words of the Megaleh Amukos (Lech Lecha) pertaining to the "covenant of the parts" (Bereishis 15,10): "**ויקח לו את כל אלה ויבתר אותם בתוך**". "He took all of these to Him, and he split them in the center."

It is well-known that there are seventy guardian angels above, split into two groups—thirty-five on the left side of kedushah led by **סמאל**, the guardian angel of Eisav, and, opposite them, thirty-five on the right side of kedushah, led by **רה"ב**, the guardian angel of Yishmoel.

These seventy guardian angels can be represented as **אל"ה** opposite **אל"ה**, i.e. **ל"ה**, thirty-five nations on the right with their leader, their **א**, opposite **ל"ה**, thirty-five nations on the left with their leader, their **א**.

This is the allusion in the verse cited above: "**ויקח לו את כל אלה**" –he took the two sets of **אל"ה** comprising the seventy nations and their heads--"**ויבתר אותם בתוך**"—he split them into two halves and placed Yisroel between them. This is also alluded to in the verse (Tehillim 20,28): "**אלה ברכב**"—this refers to the two sets of **אל"ה**, representing the seventy nations, opposing each other--"**נזכיר**"—this refers to Yisroel.

The Megaleh Amukos adds an amazing insight. This division between the nations explains why the holy nation of Yisroel's day of rest is Shabbos kodesh. In clear contrast, the Moslems', the descendants of Yishmoel, celebrate their holy day on Friday, to the right of Shabbos kodesh; whereas, the holy day of the Christians, descendants of Eisav, is Sunday, to the left of Shabbos kodesh; Yisroel again occupy the central position, having been allotted Shabbos kodesh to sanctify and cherish.

Based on this concept, the Bnei Yissoschar points out that the sanctity of Shabbos, located centrally between these other nations' holy days, nullifies the negative forces of Yishmoel and Eisav (and the seventy nations beneath them) to its right and its left. This is how he explains the teaching: "If the people of Yisroel had only kept the first Shabbos, no nation or people would have ever ruled over

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them.” Had they kept the very first Shabbos, they would have nullified the negative forces of Eisav and Yishmoel to the left and right of Shabbos kodesh and the roots of the seventy ministering angels. As a result, no nation would have ever been able to rule over them.

Based on this introduction, we explained, in parshas Yisro, the concept of "תוספת שבת" –extending the sanctity of Shabbos at its onset and at its conclusion. By ushering Shabbos in early on Friday night, and extending Shabbos into the domain of the children of Yishmoel’s holy day, we subdue their negative forces to the right of the kedushah. By delaying the end of Shabbos, we draw kedushah into the domain of the children of Eisav’s holy day and, thus, subdue the negative forces to the left of the kedushah. These two supplements, "תוספת שבת", in effect subdue the roots of all the seventy nations.

Alas, we stand enlightened, with joy in our hearts, having gained some understanding of Moshe Rabeinu’s intent when he added this Tochacha of his own accord with divine inspiration. He wished to teach us the following lesson: By keeping Shabbos—whose twenty-seven hours correspond to the twenty-seven times the name הוי"ה is mentioned in the Tochachah—we negate the negative forces of Eisav and Yishmael--the leaders of the seventy nations of the world—and, in the process, nullify all of the misfortunes depicted in the Tochachah which were due to their negative influence.

Come and see, as well, how nicely this explains the enigmatic formula we recite in the "hoshannos"(in the paragraph למושעות): "הושענא שלש שעות"—"Please save us during the three hours." All of the commentators struggle to explain which three hours are being referred to here. Based on what we have just explained, however, we can suggest that this is a reference to the three hours of "תוספת שבת"—the two hours before and the one hour after by which we extend Shabbos. By completing the count of twenty-seven times the name הוי"ה—achieving the numerical value of שב"ה (27x26=702)—we pray that the Holy One Blessed is He will save us, in their merit, from all of the curses and misfortunes. After all, this is the reason that Moshe Rabeinu mentions the name הוי"ה twenty-seven times in the Tochachah.

One Hundred Forty-seven Years of Yaakov Ovinu’s Life Protect Us from One Hundred Forty-seven Curses

Finally, I would like to mention the tremendous insight provided us by the Chasam Sofer (beginning of Nitzavim). He notes that the Admonition in parshas Bechukosai contains forty-nine curses; whereas the Admonition in parshas Ki Savo contains ninety-eight curses; together they total one hundred and forty-seven curses. We can posit that Yaakov Ovinu, the elite of the Patriarchs, whose life of purity and kedushah spanned precisely one hundred and forty-seven years, protects Yisroel from the one hundred and forty-seven curses enumerated in the two Tochachos.

It is well-known that Shabbos is the rightful domain of Yaakov, as explained in the Gemorah (Shabbos 118.): "כל המענג את השבת נותנין לו נחלה בלי מצרים, שנאמר אז תתענג על ה' והרכבתוך" "על במתי ארץ והאכלתוך נחלת יעקב אביך"—Shabbos is referred to as Yaakov’s portion and all who delight in the Shabbos are promised a portion without boundaries as their reward. As discussed above, we are spared the misfortunes of the Tochachah in the merit of Shabbos.

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It turns out, therefore, that Moshe Rabeinu deliberately added these ninety-eight admonitions in sefer Devarim, his “Repetition of the Torah,” in order to complete a count of one hundred and forty-seven curses corresponding to the number of years of Yaakov Ovinu’s life. This was intended to afford Yisroel protection in the merit of our father Yaakov and his legacy, Shabbos. For this same reason he mentions the name הוי”ה twenty-seven times in the Tochachah—to achieve the numerical value of שב”ת. May it be G-d’s will that our sages words are fulfilled: תכלה שנה “תחל שנה וברכותיה” וקללותיה—may this year end along with its curses and may the new year begin along with its blessings. May we all merit a ksivah va’chasimah tovah, and a year of redemption and salvation, speedily in our days. Omein.