

Parshat Bechukotai – Traveling with the Torah

By Rabbi Mayer Freedman

In this week's parshah, we discover what we will receive if we fulfill the mitzvot properly and the consequences if we do not. The Torah delineates all of the blessings that will be showered down upon us for following the directions of God and all of the terrible curses that await us if we don't fulfill our responsibilities.

The Torah uses an interesting terminology when it introduces the potential blessings. It states, "*Im bechukotai teleichu*" – if you travel with my laws, then you will receive these blessings. Why does the Torah use such an unusual phrase to express the idea of fulfilling the laws of God? Why doesn't it simply say, "if you follow my laws?" What message is the Torah trying to convey?



There are two important lessons that we can learn from this unique expression.

Human beings are generally creatures of habit.

Once one gets into a routine, it is relatively easy to successfully follow the same pattern day in day out. When our plans are working out, when no quirks are thrown into our daily schedule, it is easier to stay on track. This extends, as well, to following the Torah. When things are going smoothly and there are no bumps in the road, it is much easier to fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah properly. But how do we act when we do hit a snag in the road? That is when we have the real test, where we can discern if we have truly absorbed the lessons of the Torah and are truly committed to the commandments of God, or if we do them merely since it's convenient and easy.



This is the first lesson that the Torah is teaching us by using this term of 'traveling with the laws.' When we are forced to travel outside our familiar boundaries, when we find ourselves having to leave the comfort of our familiar environment, how successfully do we follow the Torah? That is the situation which will determine how ingrained the Torah is within in us and whether we merit the blessings, or, God-forbid, have to suffer the curses.

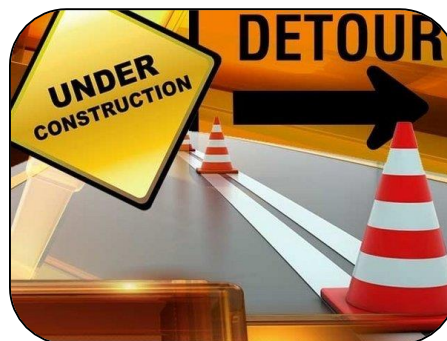
The second lesson is similar.

When we are in our own homes and involved with our own communities, surrounded by people who are following the Torah, it is much easier for us, ourselves, to do so.

But how do we act out in the street? How do we act when we leave our homes and 'travel' to our jobs? Are we as religiously disciplined out in the world, surrounded by others who don't share our beliefs? Or do we find ourselves not being as careful in following the mitzvot of the Torah. This is where the challenge is and this is where we can measure our dedication to our heritage.



Let's make sure that we stay true to the lessons of the Torah, the values of the Torah, and the laws of the Torah, whether our day is proceeding as planned or even if unexpected scenarios developed, whether we are at home or outside our community. If we are successful at that, we can be sure that we will be on the receiving end of countless blessings.



Shabbat shalom.