

Parasha Meditation Bechukotai

Vayikra 26:3-27:34

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Walking Upright with Hashem in the Land

Introduction:

This week's *parasha* opens with Hashem's redemptive blessings, when we walk in His statutes and keep Hashem's mitzvot (laws).¹ The first letter of the *parasha* is an א – *alef* – from the word אם – *im* – “if” – “If you walk in my statutes.”² The last letter of the blessings is a ת – *taf* – the last letter of the word קוממיות – *komemiyot* – “upright”³ – concluding all of the blessings in the *parasha*. This teaches us that the blessings of the Torah can only be fulfilled completely when all the people of Israel keep the entire Torah from *alef* to *taf* (from A-Z).⁴

Walking Upright with Hashem in Our Land

When we reach this level of keeping the entire Torah from *alef* to *taf*, we will be worthy of the final blessing: that Hashem will break all the burdens that are weighing us down, and align our posture to make us walk upright:

“אני השם אלהיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים מהית להם עבדים ואשבר מטת עלכם ואולף אתכם קוממיות:”
(ויקרא כו:יג)

“I am Hashem your G*d who took you out of the land of Egypt from being their slaves, and I will break the bars of their yoke, and I will make you walk upright (*komemiyot*).”⁵

What does it mean to walk upright (*komemiyot*), and why is this so important that the Torah placed this blessing as the final all-inclusive blessing in the Book of *Vayikra*?

Targum Yonatan translates the word *Komemiyot*: – “והלכית יתכון בקומא זקופא” – “I will make you walk with erect stature.”⁶ Whereas Targum Onkelos translates: – “ודברית יתכון להירות” – “I will bring you to freedom.”⁷

In order to be able to walk upright with erect stature, we need to free ourselves from all fears and worries, as we build our self-confidence. This blessing can only take place fully, when the

¹ *Vayikra* 26:3.

² Ibid.

³ *Vayikra* 26:13.

⁴ Rabbeinu Bachaya, *Vayikra* 26:13.

⁵ *Vayikra* 26:13.

⁶ Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, Ibid.

⁷ Targum Onkelos, ibid.



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Jewish people live as a free people in the Land of Israel. Then, Hashem's light shining through the Temple will melt away both our outer and inner enemies. We pray for this blessing daily in our morning prayer, in the entreaties leading up to the *Shema Yisrael* prayer, and whenever we recite Grace after Meals at the conclusion of every meal with bread when we request: "May the Compassionate One break our yoke from off our neck and lead us upright (*komemiyot*) into our land."⁸

Walking Erect – Returning to Face Hashem

Rav Ginsburgh⁹ notices a seeming contradiction between the blessing to walk erect and the Talmudic statement that a person should not walk with erect stature:

“...ואל יהלך בקומה זקופה דאמר מר המהלך בקומה זקופה אפילו ארבע אמות כאילו דוחק רגלי שכינה דכתיב מלא כל הארץ כבודו.” (תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף מג/ב)

“...Nor should one walk with erect stature; since Mar said: If one walks with erect stature even for four cubits, it is as if he pushed against the heels of the Divine Presence, since it is written, ‘The whole earth is full of His glory.’”¹⁰

According to the Talmud, walking with erect stature is a sign of arrogance, pushing ourselves forward, as if our head pushes away Hashem's feet above us. Rav Ginsburgh solves the seeming contradiction, by explaining that there are two different kinds of relationships with Hashem. The Babylonian Talmud depicts the relationship during exile, when we experience G*d's presence primarily above our head. However, during the Messianic era, we will once again experience Hashem's presence face-to-face – in front of us, as King David described, “I have set Hashem always before me.”¹¹ We will then return to the relationship with Hashem that the first man and woman experienced in the Garden of Eden.

The Spiritual Height of the First Human Beings

A different Talmudic interpretation of the word קוֹמְיָוִיּוֹת – (*komemiyot*) coincides with this concept. “Rabbi Meir says: *Komemiyot* refers to the two *komot* (statures) of the first human being.”¹² Adam and Eve were originally created much “taller” than people are today. Their spiritual height enabled them to be, so to speak, “eye to eye” with Hashem. Our relationship with G*d is evolving towards this level of spiritual height, where Hashem's presence is before us rather than above us. Therefore, the blessing that G*d will lead us upright refers to the Messianic era, when walking upright no longer will be “pushing against the heels of the Divine Presence,” since rather than being above our head, Hashem's presence will primarily be experienced before us, at eye level.

⁸ ברכת המזון – Grace After Meals.

⁹ In his video *shiur*: “Seeing Eye to Eye with G-d” <http://www.inner.org/parshah/leviticus/bechukotai/index.php>.

¹⁰ *Yesha'yahu* 6:3, *Babylonian Talmud, Berachot* 43b.

¹¹ *Tehillim* 16:8.

¹² *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 100b and *Baba Batra* 75a



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Hashem Walking Among Us as in the Garden of Eden

In this week's *parasha*, prior to the blessing that G*d will lead us upright, He first promised us that He will walk among us:

“וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי לְעָם.” (ויקרא כו:יב)

“I will walk among you and will be your G*d, and you shall be my people.”¹³

Rashi depicts the idyllic scene of the renewed relationship with G*d that this blessing implies: I WILL WALK AMONG YOU – I will, as it were, walk with you in the Garden of Eden as though I were one of yourselves and you will not be frightened of Me...”¹⁴ In order to be able to truly walk upright without fear, we need to first return to our original relationship with Hashem in the Garden of Eden.

Meditation:

Although the blessings in this week's *parasha* will only be totally fulfilled when Hashem's presence returns to reside in the Temple, we may take the blessings in our own hand, as we have already entered the redemption process. We can empower ourselves to work on and rehearse Hashem's promise “to make us walk upright.”

Therefore, this week's meditation is a walking meditation, which can be practiced whenever you are walking “on the way”, or even inside of your home from one room to the other.

1. Stand upright. Become aware of your posture. Are your shoulders slouching, or is your neck sloping forward?
2. Stand against a wall, and allow the back of your head, your shoulders, elbows and the back of your heels touch the wall. Push your pelvis slightly upwards so that your stomach flattens. Feel the four corners of each foot firmly pressing against the floor.
3. Take slow, deep breaths. Feel your lungs expanding, and your chest rising.
4. Focus on the parts of your body that are unable to become totally aligned. What kind of burden and weight are in these parts of yourself that resist your standing upright? Could it be a lack of self-confidence that makes your shoulder slouch? Perhaps there are fears preventing you from standing erect?
5. Look straight ahead and imagine Hashem's presence before you. You may want to close your eyes briefly and imagine Hashem's light in front of you at eye distance.

¹³ *Vayikra* 17:12.

¹⁴ Rashi, *Ibid.*



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6. Open your eyes, and mentally send Hashem's light into the parts of yourself that resist standing upright. As you inhale, feel your spine lengthening, as if a string from above were pulling you upwards to an erect posture.
7. Now begin to slowly walk as upright as you can. While you walk, keep imagining an invisible string pulling you upwards, seeing Hashem's perpetual presence before you.
8. Open your mouth and speak to Hashem as a person speaks to his friend. Tell Him about your challenges in aligning yourself and standing completely upright.
9. Ask Hashem to remove everything that is weighing you down.
10. When you have completed your walk, notice how you have come one step closer to "I will break the bars of their yoke, and I will make you walk upright."¹⁵

Notes:

Walking upright with Hashem can be expressed in the physical, spiritual and emotional realms. In recent times, as we have entered the redemption process, we have begun to align ourselves in all of these realms. The Alexander technique, which teaches ease of movement through lengthening the spine and becoming upright, was developed in our century.¹⁶ Moreover, our generation is working hard to align ourselves emotionally through various kinds of therapy and spiritual healing, and through the world-wide *Ahavas Yisroel Project*.¹⁷ In the spiritual realm, there is a shift from relating to Hashem as a punishing G*d above our head, to becoming more connected with *Ahavat Hashem* – (love of G*d), and relating to Hashem more like a friend. This is why Rabbi Nachman's teaching about "talking to Hashem like you'd talk to your best friend" has gained so much popularity in recent time. The empowering blessings in our Torah portion are on the verge of being fulfilled, as we approach the zenith of all time when G*d will tell us: "...call me *Ishi* (my husband), and do no longer call me *Ba'ali* (my master)!"¹⁸

¹⁵ *Vayikra* 26:13.

¹⁶ The Alexander technique was invented by F.M Alexander, lived Australia from 1869-1955.

¹⁷ For more info about the Women's *Ahavas Yisroel Project* see <<http://www.ayproject.com/>>

¹⁸ *Hoshea* 2:18.

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work. For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's

spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

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