

# Behar Bechukosai

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Sometimes you can be somewhere noisy, but one particular noise stands out and makes you focus on it. For example, I was once at an airport in a busy, very noisy boarding area, when some man lost his temper with the flight attendant and let her know in no uncertain terms. Within a moment, hundreds of people went quiet, shocked by the man's screaming.

It's kind of like that with this week's double *parsha*. They contain several topics, but once you hear "*Bechukosai*," you think, "curses," forty-nine of them to be exact. You think destruction, crusades, and countless pogroms. You think Holocaust. We can easily forget good times, but trauma sticks with us forever, and a *parsha* of curses can overshadow everything else.

The amazing thing is, they have all come true. Everything the Torah threatened us with to keep us from straying has happened because we have strayed anyhow. Generations of Jews have thrown caution to the wind and sinned terribly despite the warnings, even when prophets still walked the earth to remind the errant about the impending danger of Divine retribution. They sinned *anyhow*.

Some might ask, is it any different today? Which Jew doesn't know about the Holocaust, or couldn't research it more if they wanted to? And yet, though anti-Semitism has risen so much in such a short period of time, this doesn't concern many that, theoretically, they could be in harm's way. Even if they acknowledge the situation, they often defend their lack of leaving with statements like, "You don't see any of it where I live."

And they did in Amsterdam when it started in Czechoslovakia?

Of course, there is a big difference between our time and *Tanachi* times. We have a much harder time believing in our hearts that God is behind what happens to us, to the world. One of the proofs that Moshiach is Moshiach is that he predicts something to come true, and it does, just as he says it will. That mystical element of his

existence tells us, “Even though God has yet to completely override nature and make His Presence known to everyone, He has started. Moshiach is proof of that, and it is proof of Moshiach.”

Some would like to say that the lack of logic behind today’s anti-Semitism is a little like that. In other words, if people were to take the time to check the facts on the ground, they would support Israel, not oppose them. They would see that Hamas, though an Israeli creation in the beginning, is a completely Palestinian-fueled hate machine that preys on the vulnerabilities of their own people just as they do the Israelis. They would see that starving Palestinians and their children feed off a culture of Jew-hatred and have no intention of ever making peace.

They would also see that this is despite countless Israeli concessions to make peace, despite countless billions of Israeli shekels funneled to them at great cost to Israelis, and despite the success of Arabs who work with the Israeli system, often leaving Jews at risk in one way or another. Many terrorists attacks have involved Arabs who, for years, were trusted in public positions.

Others argue that there is nothing mystical about this at all. The world has changed dramatically over the last couple of decades. We’re at that post-war part of history when peace and success lead to more liberal and leftist values. When life-and-death is in our faces, we always tend towards conservatism. When it stops becoming an issue, we tend to become more spoiled, more demanding, and less discriminating where we should be, and more discriminating where we shouldn’t be. It’s just the nature of man and a reality of history.

But that’s like saying that we have nothing to worry about until you see troops in brown shirts goose-stepping down Main Street to the delight of a Nazi dictator. They didn’t do that in Roman times, the Crusaders didn’t dress or act that way either, nor did Chmielnicki carry out his savage acts of anti-Semitism in such a way. Anti-Semitism is a chameleon, a shapeshifter, capable of adapting itself to the times to ambush unsuspecting (either because of naiveté or intentionally) Jews.

Let’s get one thing straight. God doesn’t need to sign His work. He doesn’t need publicity for what He does. As Zechariah told us, and we repeat every day, one way or another we will get to the time when the whole world will acknowledge His dominion. Until then, He is perfectly willing to remain anonymous by letting “forces of nature” do His work.

When we read the *parsha* and the curses, it is clear to us that God is behind them all because we read that He will be. But if you had lived through much of it, you would have had more difficulty believing that it was God responding to Jewish disobe-

ence, and not just some natural tendency or greedy empirical nation. How much more so today when prophets are spelled p-r-o-f-i-t-s, and our hope to stay in exile is stronger than our gut feeling that it is time to go home. . . TO ISRAEL.

It is at this point that many people decide to hang up the phone. They might have listened this long out of curiosity or politeness. But the moment the conversation hits them in the wallet, either the real one or the emotional one, they decide they have had enough. And then you can understand how, despite the many warnings and signs, we slide right back into the kind of disastrous scenario we know we should have avoided.

Rava said, “[A small number of Jews actually left Egypt with Moshe *Rabbeinu*, and even fewer survived the desert to make it to *Eretz Yisroel*.] It will be likewise in the Messianic Era as well.” (*Sanbedrin* 111a)

Though no one argues or disputes Rava, who could be wrong? It’s just that he hasn’t been so far. If we’re going to err, shouldn’t it be to the side of caution? ***Chazak!***

Good Shabbos,  
Pinchas Winston  
[thirtysix.org](http://thirtysix.org) / [shaarnunproductions.org](http://shaarnunproductions.org)