



The word *boruch* is an interesting word. If you take out the *Vav* you're left with *Bais-Raish-Chof*, which also means bless,¹ and whose numbers are two, two hundred, and twenty respectively, all multiples of *two*. In *gematria*, multiplications of a number refers to the concept on a higher level of *sefiros*.

The same three letters also spell *bechor*—firstborn—when the *Cholem* vowel is only a dot over the *Raish*. The *bechor* usually receives double the inheritance of the rest of the sons from the same father. Thus, like the letter *Bais*, the *Raish* is bound up with the concept of *more*.

Perhaps this is also why it is the first letter of *rasha*, an evil person. One of the main driving forces of a *rasha* to

¹ As in the *brochab* in the *Shemonah Esrai*, *Bareich Aleynu*.

perpetrate evil is an unquenchable desire to have more, the easier the better, especially in the case of *Eisav HaRasha*:

“Now take my gift, which has been brought to you, for God has favored me [with it], and [because] I have everything.” He prevailed upon him, and he took [it]. (Bereishis 3:19)

I have everything. All my necessities. Eisav, however, spoke haughtily, “I have plenty,” [meaning] much more than I need. (*Rashi*)

But did that stop Eisav from taking more? Did it stop Rome from expanding its empire? Did it stop Hitler, ysv”z, from stretching his army and resources and risking eventual military loss? The evil can be mighty and powerful for a time, and even do a lot of damage in the meantime but, in the end, the very greed that made them so successful will also ultimately be the source of their own downfall.

And the very spiritual and material contentment that Ya’akov *Avinu* showed and which drives the *tzaddikim* of history becomes the basis of their eternal survival. Being happy with one’s portion doesn’t only save a person from sin for the sake of the World to Come, it brings an inner contentment in this world as well, preventing a person from being caught up in the “world of more” that most of mankind lives in and stresses about.

The letter *Raish* is also the first letter of the word

rosh, which means *head* or *leader*. The Gemora says:§

Onkelos *bar* Kalonikos, the son of Titus's sister, wanted to convert to Judaism. He went and raised Titus from the grave through necromancy, and said to him: "Who is most important in that world where you are now?" Titus answered him: "The Jewish people." Onkelos asked him: "Should I join them here in this world?" Titus told him: "Their commandments are numerous, and you will not be able to fulfill them. It is better to go and battle against them in that world, and you will become the head, as it says: '*Her adversaries have become the head*' (*Eichab* 1:5), which means that anyone who troubles the Jewish people will become the head." (*Gittin* 56b)

What's *that* supposed to mean? That's like inviting the enemies of the Jewish people to attack them with God's blessing and promise of success. In fact, there is an earlier story that seems to say exactly this:

[The Romans then sent] Nero Caesar against the Jews. When he came [to Jerusalem, he wanted to see his chances of success, so] he shot an arrow to the east and it fell in Jerusalem. [He shot another arrow] to the west [and it also] fell in Jerusalem. [He shot an arrow] in all four directions, [and each time the arrow] fell in Jerusalem. [He then did another test and]

he asked a child: “Tell me a verse [that you learned today].” He answered him: “*And I will lay My vengeance upon Edom by the hand of My people Israel*” (*Yéchezkel 25:14*). [Nero] said: “[Clearly] The Holy One, Blessed is He, plans to destroy His Temple and wants to wipe his hands with that man [who destroys it]!” (*Gittin 56a*)

If you were a Roman and you were told this, what would you do next? Attack, *right*? The Romans always looked for signs of success before going into battle, and what better sign was there than God Himself foretelling of victory? Certainly the last thing a Roman should have done at that point was *join* the Jews, as the *Gemora* says Nero Caesar did, and the question is, *why*?

Because both Onkeles and Nero were smart enough to realize that if God was prepared to allow His people to become so downtrodden in this limited, temporal world, it must be because they will be so elevated in the next, eternal world. And they were right, as the *Gemora* says:

Rebi Yehoshua’s son became weak and his soul left him. When he recovered, his father asked him, “What did you see?”

He answered him, “An upside-down world! [There], whoever is esteemed here, was down, and those who are down [here] were esteemed.”

He told him, “My son, you saw a clear world!” (*Pe-*

sachim 50a)

This is what the *Raish* instructs: It is not about being a head in *this* world, but in the *next* one. If you have to lead, do it because Divine Providence has sent you, and not so you can have *more* of something in this world.