



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Obviously Sadly Necessary

MASHAL: A Dad tells his son to come with him to visit Uncle Joe & Aunt Sue.

Ideally, that request should be enough to get compliance - even joyous compliance - from the son.

But the father senses that the son needs a little incentive.

And after the visit, he says to the son, we'll go out for ice cream.

That certainly should result in the son's happy agreement to the visit.

Sadly, that sometimes isn't enough.

But this visit is important and the father says: If you don't come, you'll lose your screen privileges for a whole day.

HKBH, AVINU SHEBASHAMAYIM, asked us - commanded us - on the laws of Sh'mita, in the beginning of Parshat B'har. (And also back in Mishpatim.) That should be enough to receive out compliance with that mitzva and its prohibitions.

The beginning of this week's sedra of B'chukotai indicates that it wasn't enough just to command us; HaShem needed to tell us about going out for ice cream - the first 11 p'sukim of the sedra contain a wide range of promises that

will be ours IM B'CHUKOTAI TISHMORU...

Mitzvot - and the promise of reward for our keeping them. Wouldn't you think that was more than enough for our living a Torah Life with reverence and love of HaShem?

Comes the following 32 p'sukim or so and tells us that we need the threats of punishment as well as the promises of reward.

Is the TOCHACHA focused on Sh'mita and Yovel, as some commentaries say? Or are Sh'mita and Yovel representative of all mitzvot of the Torah, as other commentaries say? Or is it somewhere in between, as other commentaries say?

Yes, yes, and yes - because the point is that the Torah's telling us what G-d wants of us, isn't enough. B'chukotai shows us that. And promises of a beautiful life of peace and prosperity are obviously sadly not enough. The TOCHACHA (here and in Ki Tavo, and in the V'HAYA IM SHAMO'A passage of the Sh'ma, and other places in the Torah) certainly indicates that we - B'nei Yisrael as a whole, and we as individual Jews - need the reminders of reward & punishment.

That there is Reward & Punishment is a major principle of our Belief. But, ideally, we should serve G-d out of Love and Reverence without focusing on Reward & Punishment.

Let's make the TOCHACHA unnecessary.

PTDT