

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

B'chukotai

If you go with My statutes, and observe My commandments and perform them... (26:3).

Rashi's interpretation focuses on Torah engagement, deep involvement in Torah. The more effort one puts into it, the more it belongs to you, the more you are part of it. "Following My statutes", according to Rashi, means putting dedicated and persistent effort into studying Torah. The purpose of constant commitment to learning is not for intellectual exercise, but to make "observing My commands and performing them" possible. Such genuinely motivated regular engagement in Torah learning leads to the observance and the fulfillment of the mitzvot, for which G-d promises the prosperity needed for success and accomplishment in Eretz Yisrael. Plenty to eat, and safety from the enemy.

The Ohr HaChayim takes this further. He puts the emphasis on the word TEILIECHU literally to mean to go; you move forward: you move forward to increased spiritual growth. It is the word TEILIECHU that distinguishes the individual person from an animal on one hand, and from an angel on the other hand. An animal exists as an animal for his entire life: born with the limitations of an animal and dies with the limitation

of the same animal. In contrast, the angel is created as an angel; complete, perfect. The angel does not grow into an angel or into a more developed angel. But the human being, unique among all creations, has the privilege of being able to grow into a greater individual. That is what is emphasized by TEILEICHU: you persistently and increasingly progress with Torah study and mitzva observance, enabling you to come closer to G-d through involvement in Torah and observance of mitzvot. In short, your journey through Torah brings growth through Torah.

This insight of the Ohr HaChayim fits in nicely with the Ramchal's presentation of G-d and humanity. G-d Himself is the very pinnacle of good, which He wants to give to people. It is our task to work towards reaching such levels (Da'at Tevunot 18) so that we can receive G-d's blessings in the spirit that they are given in this parasha and elsewhere, so that G-d Himself feels comfortable as it were in the company of His People: "I will walk among you. I will be G-d to you and you will be a people to me" (26:12). In short, not taking G-d's blessings as free handouts, but recognizing them in harmony with growth in Torah and HAKARAT HATOV, appreciating G-d's benevolence... sincere HAKARAT HATOV being an expression of spiritual growth...

