



The TOCHACHA - A Perspective

Here's the short of it. G-d has repeatedly told us in the Torah what He wants of us. What He requires of us. And that should be - should be enough for us to comply.

But obviously, it isn't enough. So He tells us of the many good things that will happen to us if we follow His Torah and Mitzvot. And that should be enough.

But we have proven over and over again that it isn't enough. So He tells us in a number of places in the Torah, what bad things will happen if we don't follow Him. One of those places is in the second passage of the Sh'ma - something we say at least twice every single day. The first passage of the Sh'ma commands us to believe in G-d's Unity, to love Him, to say the Sh'ma twice a day, to study and teach Torah, to wear T'filin, to put Mezuzot on our doorposts. Then, in the second passage, He tells us what will happen WHEN we listen to Him. Then, the Torah warns us not to turn away from G-d... And the bad things that will happen if we betray G-d.

And you might think that would certainly be enough to have of stay in line.

But... in Parshat B'chukotai and again in this week's Ki Tavo we are hit over the head with a sledgehammer. That is the Tochacha. It is so painful to hear that the custom developed to read it in a low voice and quickly. It is so painful that we contain it within a single aliya (Shishi - the longest aliya of the whole Torah) with some good stuff before it and after.

Our challenge is to follow HaShem and do His bidding out of Ahavat HaShem, love of G-d, with a healthy measure of Yir'at HaShem. Then the promises and warnings will be unnecessary and the Tochacha, while remaining in the Torah, will not feel as painful as it does and we will wonder why G-d had to use a sledgehammer in the first place.

Take this challenge seriously, especially in Elul, especially with the Yamim Nora'im looming so close. **PTDT**