

# Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

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## Chapter XXXIII: Bechukotai (Lev. 26:3–27:34)

### Essay 3. Loving the commandments and hating transgressions

**פסוק** "אם-בְּחַקְמֵי תִלְכוּ", "וְאם-בְּחַקְמֵי תִמְאָסוּ". יש לנדקדק מהו הפסל של שלשה לשונות בברכות, "בְּחַקְמֵי תִלְכוּ" "וְאֵת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ" ואחר כך "וְעִשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם" אם הכל ענין אחד. ובתוכחות לא אמר להפך "אם-בְּחַקְמֵי לֹא תִלְכוּ" וכו', ומהו "תִּמְאָסוּ" דנקט? ומאי שְׂנֵא שֶׁהִתְחִיל "וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי" וְאִם שֶׁם יֵשׁ [כְּפֹל] לְשׁוֹן.

There are verse[s]: **“If you will follow My laws and you will guard My commandments and you will fulfill them”** (Lev. 26:3), **“and if you will reject My laws and spurn My rules, so that you do not observe all My commandments and you break My covenant”** (Lev. 26:15). **We need to examine the duplication of the three terms of blessing, “If you will follow My laws,” “and you will guard My commandments,”<sup>1</sup> and afterward it says “and you will fulfill them,” if it is all one matter. And in the first group of *tochachot* [“rebukes”], i.e., the 49 curses threatened in Lev. 26:14–46 if Israel were not to follow G-d’s commandments,<sup>2</sup> it does **not** say the opposite, viz, “if you will **not** follow My laws,” but rather “if you will reject My laws,” and what is the precise implication of this word “if you will reject” that is used? Also, what is the distinction that begins, “But if you will not listen to Me and will not fulfill all these commandments” (Lev. 26:14), and even there is [duplicative] language, i.e., “if you will not listen to Me” and “[if you] will not fulfill.”**

וְיֵשׁ לומר שֶׁהַחֻבָּה הַמוּטְלָת עַל הָאָדָם לְאֹהֲבֵי הַמִּצְוֹת וְלִשְׂנוֹא אֶת הָעֲבִירוֹת, שְׁמִי שְׂאִין לוֹ אֶהְבֶּה קְשׁוּרָה בְּלִבּוֹ עִם הַמִּצְוֹת, אִם לֹא חֶטְא, עִם כָּל זֶה לֹא יִהְיֶה לוֹ זְרִיזוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת בְּקִיּוּם הַמִּצְוֹת, וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיִבֵּא לִידֵי נְקִיּוֹת. וְלִהְפֹךְ, מִי שְׂאִין שְׂנֵאָה תְּקוּעָה בְּלִבּוֹ עִם הָעֲבִירוֹת אֶפְשָׁר שְׂאִינָהּ פֶּעַם יְפֹל בְּחֶטְא.

**It can be said that the duty is imposed on man to love the commandments and to hate the transgressions, for he who has no love bound in his heart for the commandments, even if he does not sin, nevertheless, he won’t have the alacrity needed to fulfil the commandments, and it’s impossible for him to achieve cleanliness of the soul. And conversely, he who does not have hatred stuck in his heart toward the transgressions may sometime fall into sin.**

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition and the Rabbi Wagschal edition incorrectly reads “וְמִשְׁפְּטֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ” [“and you will guard My laws”], which appears only in Ezek. 36:27. The translator has corrected the Hebrew and English text to follow Lev. 26:15, “וְאֵת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ” [“and you will guard My commandments”].

<sup>2</sup> The second and longer group of *tochachot*, which appear in Deut. 28:15–68, will be discussed later in this essay.

ולכן בקיום המצוות אמר הכתוב "אם-בחקתי תלכו", דהיינו שיהיה לכם שגאגה גמורה עם העבירות, ועוד שתקשרו אהבה גמורה עם המצוות "ואת-מצותי תשמרו" מלשון "ואבינו שמר את-הדבר". שמרוב אהבתכם תנדרו ללכת לקראת המצוות ולרדוף אחריהם, אז בודאי "ונעשיתם אתם" שזריות מביאה לידי נקיות. ולהפך בקלות אמר "ואם-לא תשמעו לי" לאהוב המצוות ולשנוא העבירות שנה גרם לכם ש"ולא תעשו את פל-המצוות האלה". ואדרבא "אם-בחקתי תמאסו" שמאסתם הדרך הטובה והמצוות ואף "את-משפטי תגעל נפשכם", שהמשפטים הם דברים שאפילו לא נכתבו, ראויים הם להתקיים מדרך הטבע וישוב העולם, כמו שפרש רש"י בפרשת אחרי מות על פסוק "את-משפטי תעשו ואת-חקתי תשמרו" וכו', "אף-אני אעשה-זאת לכם" אשנא אתכם כדי שלא להיטיב לכם כלל וכלל.

**Therefore, in the fulfillment of the commandments, Scripture said “If you will follow My laws,” which is that you will have a complete hatred for transgressions, and further, that you will bind in your hearts a complete love for the commandments “and you will guard My commandments,” from the language of the verse following Joseph’s telling his father and brother of his dreams, “So his brothers were wrought up at him, and his father kept in mind the matter” (Gen. 37:11). I.e., both “guard My commandments” of Lev. 26:3 and “kept in mind” of Gen. 37:11 use the verb with the root שמר. For from your great love you will hurry towards the commandments and to chase after them, so certainly “you will fulfill them,” for “alacrity brings one to cleanliness of the soul.”<sup>3</sup> Conversely, in the curses of the *tochacha* it says, “But if you will not listen to Me” to love the commandments and to hate the transgressions, for this leads you so that “you will not fulfill all these commandments.” To the contrary, “if you will reject My laws,” [means] that you reject the good path and the commandments, and even “spurn my rules,” that the rules are things that are not even written, but were worthy of being established from the way of nature and the settlement of the world. This is as Rashi interpreted in the parsha Acharei Mot on the verse, “My rules you shall fulfill, and my laws you shall guard, to follow them: I the L-rd am your G-d” (Lev. 18:4), that if you reject the commandments and spurn my rules, “I in turn will do this to you” (Lev. 26:16), i.e., I will hate you in order not to do you any good at all.<sup>4</sup>**

והטעם שהקלות בתורת פהגים הם מ"ט ובפיתבוא הם צ"ח, לפי שבפיתבוא נכנסו בכלל הערבות, דהיינו להתחייב אהד על חבירו. דמטעם זה אמר משה התוכחות בלשון יחיד ולא בלשון רבים כאותם של תורת פהגים כמו שכתבו המפרשים לומר שיקבל על עצמו אף על חבירו.

**And the reason that the curses in the Torat Kohanim [“the teachings of the priests”], viz, the *tochachot* of the Book of Leviticus, are 49 and in parshat Ki Tavo in Deut. 28:15–68 they are exactly double, 98, is because in Ki Tavo they entered into the rule of the guarantorship,<sup>5</sup> that is, for one to be obligated on behalf of his fellow. For this reason, Moses pronounced the**

<sup>3</sup> Avodah Zarah 20b.

<sup>4</sup> The translator does not find any such Rashi.

<sup>5</sup> Lev. 19:16, “You shall not stand idly by the blood of another.” Sanhedrin 27b: “All [Jews are considered] guarantors [i.e., responsible] for one another.” Rosh Hashana 29a: “Ahava son of Rabbi Zeira taught: [Regarding] all of the blessings, even though a person has already discharged his [own] obligation, he can [still] discharge another’s obligation [by saying the blessing on behalf of the other].”

*tochachot* in Deut. 28:15–68 in the singular language and not in the plural language like those of *Torat Kohanim*, viz, Lev. 26:14–46, as the commentators wrote to say that he would accept upon himself even that [punishment] of his fellow.

ובדברך זו יובן הקשר של הפסוק "חקרני אל ודע לבבי" עם הפסוק הקודם "הלוא משנאיה ה' אשנא", שכתב הרבינו יונה בברכות על מתניתין בכל לבבך, בשני יצריה, בניצור הטוב ובניצור הרע, דלשנא את הרשעים היינו לעבוד הבורא בניצור הרע משום שהשנאה והתקריות נפעלות מניצור הרע והאהבה תלויה בניצור הטוב, ואף כאן אמר כשאני שונא את הרשעים ואת העבירות, אני עובדך אף בניצור הרע, אם כן אז דע לבבי בשני ביתי"ן דרומז לניצור הטוב ולניצור הרע.

**In this way will be understood the connection between the verse “Examine me, O G-d, and know my heart [לבבי] [*levavi*]; probe me and know my thoughts” (Ps. 139:23), and the earlier verse, “Those who hate You, O L-rd, I will hate, and your adversaries I will loathe” (Ps. 139:21). For we can consider what **Rabbeinu Yona**<sup>6</sup> wrote in tractate **Berachot** on our **mishnah** that says: “ ‘And you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart [לבבך] [*levav’cha*], with all your soul, and with all your might’ (Deut. 6:5). ‘**With all your heart**’ [means] **with your two inclinations, with your good inclination and your evil inclination** [both of which must be subjugated to the love of G-d].”<sup>7</sup> In other words, Deut. 6:5 could have said “with your heart,” instead of “with all your heart,” and the interpretation is that the extra word signifies something else, viz, with one’s good inclination and evil inclination.**

Rabbeinu Yona wrote that to hate the wicked was to serve the Creator with the evil inclination, because the hatred and the rivalry<sup>8</sup> falls from the evil inclination, while the love for one’s fellow Jew depends upon the good inclination. Even here he said, “When I hate the wicked and the transgressions, I serve you even with the evil inclination.”<sup>9</sup> If so, “know my heart” with the two appearances of the letter *bet* in the words לבבך of Deut. 7:6 and לבבי of Ps. 139:23, which hint at the good inclination and the evil inclination. In other words, the word “heart” is typically written with two letters, as לב [*lev*], but it is instead written with a doubled letter *bet* in Deut. 6:5 and in Ps. 139:23, as לבב [*levav*]. This is also taken to represent the good inclination and the evil inclination.

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<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Jonah ben Abraham Gerondi (d. 1264), Catalan rabbi and Talmudist, a cousin of the Ramban.

<sup>7</sup> Mishnah Berachot 9:5; Berachot 54a.

<sup>8</sup> The term “השנאה והתקריות” [“the hatred and the rivalry”] appears in Sefer haBahir 42, and in Radak on Gen. 15:10.

<sup>9</sup> Rabbeinu Yona: “The job of the good inclination is the fulfilment of the mitzvot, and the job of the evil inclination is to conquer the [evil] inclination, that he should overcome it, and this is its job. How can a man further serve the Creator with the evil inclination? We are able to say that the good inclination is the characteristic of mercy and the like, and the evil inclination was created for cruelty. When a man does not have mercy on the wicked and he is cruel to them, it’s found that he fulfils a great mitzvah and service of G-d with the evil inclination.”