

Torah Portion Preview for B'har - B'chukotai

Sabbath beginning May 12, 2023

We read B'har (at the Mountain) and B'chukotai (My Laws) together this year. They reveal God's instructions for every seventh year to let the land rest and every 50th year to free slaves and redeem land to its original owner. Blessings for observing and curses for ignoring commandments follow. Curses include desolation of land and such timidity as being put to flight by "the sound of a driven leaf."

Rabbi Dvora Weisberg (our Reform seminary's Rabbinical School Director) asks "What Political System Does the Torah Favor?" She answered that it advances no modern political system or stance but does provide a vision of society. In it, God owns the land and "only when individuals see themselves as part of the community, responsible for their own behavior and for the welfare of those around them, can they be *am kadosh*, a holy people." This gives a Torah context to how her seminary colleagues described the development of service to Reform Judaism. We begin as hesitant members, identify ourselves as members, learn to articulate its commitments, and ultimately become constructive by "committing to its ideals, community, and family needs, aspirations, and challenges, while personally connecting with *klal Yisrael* (all Jewish people)."

We invite all to come to synagogue in person or on Zoom on Friday night to hear a more in-depth interpretation from Rabbi Meeka (or this Sabbath's lay speaker). We also invite other views, interpretations, reflections, and even poems on each Torah portion. If you have something to contribute, please email it to RPC@templeadasshalom.org. This and prior previews can be found at Dr. David Dirlam's website by clicking on [Changing Wisdoms Projects](#).