



KI TAVO

NEGATIVE NEWSFEEDS: NOT THE NEW NORMAL

A Handy Hack to Living a More Positive Reality

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Ki Tavo

Moses instructs the people of Israel: when you enter the Land that G-d is giving to you as your eternal heritage, and you settle it and cultivate it, bring the first-ripened fruits (*bikurim*) of your orchard to the Holy Temple, and declare your gratitude for all that G-d has done for you.

Our *parshah* also includes the laws of the tithes given to the Levites and to the poor, and detailed instructions on how to proclaim the blessings and the curses on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal—as

discussed in the beginning of the *parshah* of *Re'eh*. Moses reminds the people that they are G-d's chosen people, and that they, in turn, have chosen G-d.

The latter part of *Ki Tavo* consists of the *tochachah* (“rebuke”). After listing the blessings with which G-d will reward the people when they follow the laws of the Torah, Moses gives a long, harsh account of the bad things—illness, famine, poverty, and exile—that shall befall them if they abandon G-d's commandments.

Moses concludes by telling the people that only today, forty years after their birth as a people, have they attained “a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear.”

How can we cope
with the world's
negativity?



TEXT 1

Deuteronomy 28:64–67

סד. וְהִפִּיצָהּ ה' בְּכָל הָעַמִּים, מִקְצֵה
הָאָרֶץ וְעַד קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ . . .

סה. וּבְגוֹיִם הָהֵם לֹא תִרְגִּיעַ וְלֹא
יִהְיֶה מְנוּחַ לְכַף רַגְלְךָ, וְנָתַן ה' לְךָ
שָׁם לֵב רָגֹז וְכִלְיוֹן עֵינַיִם וְדָאָבוֹן
נַפְשׁ.

סו. וְהָיוּ חַיֶּיךָ תְּלֵאִים לְךָ מִנְּגֹד,
וּפְחָדְךָ לַיְלָה וַיּוֹמָם וְלֹא תֵאֱמִין
בְּחַיֶּיךָ.

סז. בַּבֹּקֶר תֹּאמַר מִי יִתֵּן עָרֹב וּבָעָרֶב
תֹּאמַר מִי יִתֵּן בֹּקֶר, מִפְּחָד לְבָבְךָ
אֲשֶׁר תִּפְחָד וּמִמְרָאָה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר
תִּרְאֶה.

64. And G-d will scatter you among all the nations,
from one end of the earth to the other. . . .

65. And among those nations, you will not be calm,
nor will your foot find rest. There, G-d will give you
a trembling heart, dashed hopes, and a depressed
soul.

66. And your life will hang in suspense before you.
You will be in fear night and day, and you will not
believe in your life.

67. In the morning, you will say, “If only it were
evening,” and in the evening, you will say, “If only it
were morning!” because of the fear in your heart
that you will experience and because of the sights
that you will behold.

TEXT 2

*Rabbi Don Yitzchak
Abarbanel,
Deuteronomy 28:15*

ראוי שנדע שהקללות שנזכרו בפרשה הזאת לא באו על
דרך איום וגזום להפחיד לבב האנשים, אבל באו ברוח
אלקין קדישין להגיד מה שיהיה באחריתם.

It is important to know that the curses mentioned in this Torah portion are not meant as exaggerated threats to intimidate Jews into obedience. Rather, they were in the spirit of a sacred Divine prophecy, foretelling the future.

TEXT 3

*Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak
Schneersohn, Sefer
Hamaamarim 5709, p. 108*

זמן הגלות הוא זמן ההעלם וההסתר, ואינו דומה לזמן הבית שהיה זמן הגילוי
והאור. דאור אין סוף האיר בגילוי . . .

מה שאין כן בגלות הוא בחינת הסתר פנים, דכתיב: "ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני
ביום ההוא".

The time of Exile is a time of concealment. It is entirely different from the era of the Temple, which was filled with revelation and light. G-d's infinite light was bright and revealed. . . .

The Exile is different. G-d conceals His face, as the passage states, "And hide, I will hide my face on that day" (Deuteronomy 31:18).

TEXT 4

*Rashi,
Deuteronomy 29:12*

כיום הזה שֶׁהוּא קִים וְהוּא מְאֹפִיל וּמְאִיר, כִּךְ הֵאִיר לָכֶם וְכִךְ עָתִיד
לְהֵאִיר לָכֶם. וְהִקְלָלוֹת וְהִסּוּרֵי מְקִימֵי אֶתְכֶם וּמְצִיבֵי אֶתְכֶם לְפָנָיו.

As the day grows dark at night and then shines again, so did G-d make it bright for you before and will make it bright for you again. The curses and sufferings preserve you and enable you to stand before Him [by cleansing you of your sins].

Exile and suffering atone
for our sins, cleanse our
spiritual blockages, and
enable us to receive an
even greater reward.



TEXT 5

*Talmud,
Sukkah 52b*

אָמַר רַב חַנָּא בֶּר אַחָא, אָמַרִי בֵּי רַב: אַרְבָּעָה מִתְתַרַט עָלֵיהֶן הַקָּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׁבָרָאם, וְאֵלֹהֵי הֵן: גְּלוּת, כְּשָׂדִים, וְיִשְׁמְעֵאלִים, וְיִצְרַר הָרָע.

Rabbi Chana, son of Acha, said in the name of the sages of the school of Rav, “G-d regrets creating four things: the Exile, the Chaldeans, the Ishmaelites, and the evil inclination.”

QUESTION

Why does G-d regret the Exile? Moreover, how can an infallible G-d make a regrettable choice?

ANSWER

When we say that G-d regrets, we don't mean He has second thoughts. We mean that He created something that is regrettable—something that is or has evil.

TEXT 6A

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 24, p. 171*

מובן ופשוט אז חרטה למעלה איז ניט כפשוטה, חס ושלום, אז
ער איז משנה דעתו ומתחרט חס ושלום אויף א זאך וואס ער
האט געטאן.

נאר מיט דעם ווערט ארויסגעבראכט אז עס איז דא אן ענין
שלילי בזה.

It goes without saying that G-d does not regret in the literal sense, G-d forbid. He does not change His mind and rue something He did, G-d forbid.

Rather, Divine regret highlights the negativity in something He created.

TEXT 6B

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, ibid.*

”מתחרט עליהן” . . . ברענגט ארויס אז די . . . זיינען ניט קיין
אמת'ע מציאות, אז זיי וועלן סוף סוף בטל ווערן. ווייל
”מתחרט”, אין זיי איז ניט דער רצון פנימי פון דעם אויבערשטן.

That G-d deems these things regrettable implies that their existence is not absolute. They will eventually become null and extinct. This is because G-d regrets them. [He desires them only for what they can accomplish, but] He has no inherent interest in them.



Something that is evil will eventually cease to exist.

If something is a mix of good and evil, the evil will be eradicated, and it will then be everlasting.

TEXT 7A

Talmud, Sukkah 52a

לְעֵתִיד לָבֵא, מְבִיאֵהוּ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְיַצֵּר
הָרָע, וְשׁוֹחֵטוֹ בְּפָנָי הַצְּדִיקִים וּבְפָנָי הָרָשָׁעִים.

In the future era, G-d will bring the evil inclination and slaughter it before the righteous and the wicked.

TEXT 7B

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Torat
Menachem 5713:2
(8), p. 230*

שפעולת השחיטה אינה מבטלת את גוף הדבר הגשמי. שנשאר בשלימותו . . .

שאמרו חכמינו זכרונם לברכה: "אין ושחט אלא ומשך" (חולין ל, ב). שעל ידי משיכה לא נעשה שינוי בחפץ הנקנה, אלא שלוקח החפץ כמו שהוא ומושכו לרשותו. והיינו שמעבירים את הדבר . . . כמו שהוא . . . לרשות . . . דיחידו של עולם.

Slaughtering does not make the physical animal extinct. The animal, in its entirety, remains in existence. . . .

Our sages taught, "To slaughter is to draw [to elevate]" (Talmud, Chulin 30b). Drawing a purchased item into our domain doesn't change the item. We bring it into the new domain as is. Similarly, G-d will draw the [evil inclination] as is into His private domain, where only He exists.

TEXT 7C

*Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Tanya, Likutei
Amarim, Ch. 9*

שְׁהָרַע נְהַפֵּךְ לְהֵיּוֹת טוֹב גְּמוּר כְּמוֹ יֵצֶר טוֹב מִמֶּשׁ,
בְּהִסִּיר "הַבְּגָדִים הַצּוֹאִים" מִמֶּנּוּ, שְׁהֵם תֵּעָנּוּגֵי עוֹלָם
הַזֶּה שֶׁהוּא מְלוּבָּשׁ בָּהֶם.

When we remove the “soiled garments”—the physical pleasures of the temporal world in which it is dressed—its evil is transformed into absolute good. It becomes just like the inclination for good.

TEXT 7D

Zechariah 13:2

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נְאֻם ה' צְבָאוֹת . . . וְאֶת רוּחַ
הַטְּמְאָה אֶעְבִּיר מִן הָאָרֶץ.

And it will come to pass on that day, says the G-d of Hosts, . . . and I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth.

TEXT 8

Zephaniah 3:9

כִּי אֶז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל עַמִּים שְׂפָה בְּרוּרָה, לְקִרְאֵ כָל־
בְּשֵׁם ה' לְעַבְדּוֹ שְׂכֵם אֶחָד.

For then, I will convert the nations to a clear language; they will all call in the name of G-d to worship Him of one accord.

TEXT 9

*Midrash, Mechilta,
Beshalach 15a*

הַתְּשׁוּעָה הַעֲתִידָה לָבֹא אֵין אַחֲרֶיהָ שְׁעָבוּד, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "יִשְׂרָאֵל
נֹשֵׁעַ בֵּה' תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים, לֹא תִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא תִכְלְמוּ עַד עוֹלָמֵי עַד"
(יִשְׁעֶיהָ מֵהַ, יִז).

The salvation that awaits us in the future will not be followed by subjugation. The passage states, “Israel will be saved by G-d [with an] everlasting salvation. You will never again be ashamed or disgraced for all eternity” (Isaiah 45:17).

Of the four regrettable items listed by the Talmud, only the Exile is intrinsically evil.

When Mashiach comes, the Exile will be extinct, and our ultimate Redemption will be final.





G-d informs us of His regrets to remind us not to be complacent in the face of evil.

TEXT 10A

Isaiah 5:20

הוֹי הַאֹמְרִים לְרַע טוֹב וְלִטּוֹב רָע, שְׁמַיִם
חֹשֶׁךְ לְאֹר וְאֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ, שְׁמַיִם מַר לְמֶתוּק
וּמֶתוּק לְמָר.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who present darkness as light and light as darkness, bitterness as sweet and sweetness as bitter.

TEXT 10B

*Rabbi Lord Jonathan
Sacks, "From Despair
to Hope,"
www.RabbiSacks.org*

Judaism is a protest against the world that is in the name of the world that ought to be. To be a Jew is to seek to make a difference, to change lives for the better, to heal some of the scars of our fractured world.

TEXT 11

Psalms 126:1

בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים.

When G-d brings back the returnees of Zion, we will [say] “We were like dreamers.”

The Exile is not real
nor permanent.

It is a dream we will
soon wake from.



TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 24, p. 175*

טאר דאס נײַט זײַן אײַן אַן אױפֿן אַז
מ'זאַל אַרײַנפֿאַלן אײַן אַ מַרְהַ שְׁחױרָה
חַס וְשְׁלוֹם, און מען דאַרף נײַט
נַתְּפַעַל ווערן פֿאַרן גּלוּת. ווײַסנדיק
אַז דאָס אײַז נײַט קײַן אַמַת'ע מַצִּיאוֹת,
אַז ער וועט סוף סוף, בַּקְרוֹב מַמַּשׁ,
בַּטֵּל ווערן.

וּבְפֶרֶט אַז מען האַלט שױן בַּעֲיַקְבִּתָּא
דְּמַשִּׁיחָא און עס פֿאַדערט זײַך אַז
מ'זאַל מער מַזְרֵז זײַן — אַחִישְׁנָה
— פֿון דעם קֶץ הַגְּלוּת דורך מוֹסִיף
זײַן אײַן נַר מַצוּה וְתוֹרָה אור, און
דערמײַט פֿאַרטרייבן נאָך שְׁנַעֲלַעַר דִּי
פִּינְסַטְעֶרְקײַט פֿון גּלוּת.

We must not despair, G-d forbid, nor have we reason to fear our exilic circumstances. We know that this is not our true reality and that it will finally—in fact, imminently—become null and void.

This is especially true in our era when we can already hear the footsteps of Mashiach. Our task is to hasten the end of the Exile with enthusiasm by increasing the light of the world through Torah and *mitzvot*. This will speed up the expulsion of the exilic darkness.

Increasing acts of goodness and kindness mitigates the insidious evil of the Exile and hastens our Redemption.



KEY POINTS

1. Good things are everlasting. Bad things have no inherent reason to exist. They exist only to serve a purpose. Once that purpose is served, they will cease to exist.
2. Most things are a mix of good and bad. In the era of Mashiach, G-d will remove the bad, rendering them good and everlasting.
3. The Exile is entirely bad. There is nothing good in it. Its purpose is to cleanse our spiritual blockages and atone for our sins. Once this is achieved, the Exile will disappear forever.
4. Though bad news is constant and ubiquitous, we don't accept it as normal. It is a symptom of the Exile and will cease along with it.

KEY POINTS

5. Knowing this empowers us to resist it and to fight to make life better. Darkness is fought by increasing light—by spreading the light of the Torah, its values, and its way of life.

