



**Partners In Torah**  
**San Diego-Los Angeles**  
**Study Guide**

***Bahar - Bechukotai***  
***תשפג***

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***Partners Detroit***

*5/9/2023*

## *Partners In Torah*

### *Mission Statement:*

**Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant.**

**Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.**

*Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.*

**Welcome.**

**Thank you for coming.**

**Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we can grow together as a community.**

This Shabbat, we will read two portions, *Behar and Bechukotai*. In Parshat Bechukotai (Leviticus 26:3-13), Hashem promises the Jewish people that if they keep His commandments, they will receive many blessings and experience no hardships.

1. The rains will fall in their proper times
2. The land will yield its produce and the trees will produce their fruits
3. The threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last until the sowing
4. You will eat your bread until you are satisfied
5. You will have peace and security in your land
6. No one will frighten you, and no wild beasts will enter the land
7. No sword will pass through your land
8. You will pursue your enemies and they will fall by your swords
9. You will be fruitful and multiply
10. You will eat seasoned grain, and remove the old to make place for the new crops
11. Hashem will walk among you and will be Hashem unto you and you will be His people – everybody will see you as a Godly nation.

Considering these desirable blessings, the Sages pose an important question: Why does Hashem promise reward in *this* world for performing the mitzvot? Doesn't the Torah teach us that the purpose of this world is to earn reward in **עולם הבא - Olam Haba – The World to Come?** Why, then, does Hashem promise us reward *in this world*?

Maimonides explains that these promises are not a “reward” at all. He writes (Laws of Teshuva 9:1):

הקב"ה נתן לנו תורה זו "עץ חיים היא" וכל העושה כל הכתוב בה ויודעו דעה גמורה נכונה זוכה בה לחיי העולם הבא; ולפי גודל מעשיו ורוב חכמתו הוא זוכה והבטיחנו בתורה שאם נעשה אותה בשמחה ובטובת נפש ונהגה בחכמתה תמיד שיסיר ממנו כל הדברים המונעים אותנו מלעשותה, כגון חולי ומלחמה ורעב וכיוצא בהן וישפיע לנו כל הטובות המחזיקות את ידינו לעשות התורה, כגון שובע ושלוש ורבי כסף וזהב כדי שלא נעסוק כל ימינו בדברים שהגוף צריך להן, אלא נשב פנויים ללמוד בחכמה ולעשות המצוה כדי שנזכה לחיי העולם הבא

*Hashem gave us the Torah, the Tree of Life. Everyone who does what it says, and knows it clearly, will merit life in Olam Haba commensurate with his actions and wisdom. Hashem has promised us in His Torah that if we do them with happiness and a willing heart and if we will delve into Hashem's wisdom (Torah) constantly, **He will remove from us any obstacles that would prevent us from fulfilling the Torah's commandments.** For example, sickness, war, or famine, and the like. **He will also bestow upon us all the goodness to support us so that we may be able to study His Torah.** For example, abundant food, peace, and much gold and silver, so that we don't need to spend our lives pursuing our physical needs, and may remain free to study Torah and perform mitzvot, so as to earn a place in Olam Haba.*

The blessings written in the Torah are thus *not reward* for doing the mitzvot; they are Hashem's promise to support us so that we may do the mitzvot unhindered.

In his commentary to the Mishna (Peah 1:1), Maimonides adds an additional element.

והכל כשיעשה האדם המצות המיוחדות לנפשו, מה שיש בינו  
ובין בוראו, תחשב לו לצדקה ויגמלהו הקב"ה עליה לעוה"ב,  
כמו שנבאר בפרק חלק, וכשיעשה האדם המצות התלויות  
בתועלת בני אדם זה עם זה, כמו כן תחשב לו לצדקה לעוה"ב,  
לפי שעשה המצות, וימצא טובה בעוה"ז בעבור שנהג מנהג  
הטוב בין בני אדם, כי כשינהג מנהג הזה וינהגו אחרים כמנהגו,  
יקבל כמו כן שכר מהענין ההוא

*When a person performs a mitzvah between man and his Creator (e.g., tzitzit, tefillin) Hashem rewards him for that in Olam Haba..., and when a person does a mitzvah that brings benefit to a fellow human being, it is also a mitzvah for which he will be rewarded in **Olam Haba**, but he will also find benefit from his mitzvah in this world, because when he acts kindly to others, they will learn from him and, in return, act kindly to him.*

Maimonides teaches us that the mitzvah of helping others has an added benefit. Not only will he be paid for his mitzvah in Olam Haba, but he will benefit from his mitzvah in this world also. His acts of kindness will benefit him because as others learn from him and perform acts of kindness to others, he may be the recipient of that kindness.

In the *Mesilat Yesharim* (Pathways of the Just), Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato takes this concept to a higher level. In chapter 19, quoting Talmud (Shabbat page 151), he writes:

וְאָמְרוּ עוֹד (שבת קנא), "וְנִתֵּן לָךְ רַחֲמִים וְרַחֲמֶיךָ" (דברים יז) - "כָּל הַמְרַחֵם  
עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת מְרַחֲמִין עָלָיו מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם". וְזֶה פְּשׁוּט, כִּי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מוֹדֵד  
מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה (סנהדרין ד), וּמִי שֶׁמְרַחֵם וְעוֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד עִם הַבְּרִיּוֹת גַּם הוּא  
בְּדִינוֹ יְרַחֲמוּהוּ וְיִמְחְלוּ לוֹ עוֹנוֹתָיו בְּחֶסֶד

*Our Sages have said: Hashem says (Deuteronomy 13:18), "And I will have mercy on you, and give you mercy." **This teaches us that whoever has mercy on Hashem's creatures, Hashem will have mercy on him.** There is an inherent logic to this. Hashem deals with us מדה כנגד מדה- measure for measure. The system that we use to measure others is the one Hashem uses to measure us. Therefore, because we have made this world more comfortable for someone else, Hashem makes this world a more pleasant for us.*

Nachmanides adds an important element of understanding to Maimonides' idea.

Because this world is where we prepare for Olam Haba, an eternal world, it would be acceptable that this life be challenging and difficult. This is a reality of life - achievement in any venue requires effort and work, and could become challenging and difficult.

A typical medical student, for example, will have to undergo between eleven and sixteen years of schooling. He will live in cramped quarters, eat fast food (if he eats at all!), and will stay up countless nights studying under pressure for the numerous exams he will have to pass. After finishing four years of medical school, he will begin his ninth year of schooling as a general intern for one year, followed by another two residency years, which are followed by a fellowship, which can last from one to six years depending on the chosen specialty. During the internship and residency, he will again miss many nights of sleep and work long and difficult hours in a hospital taking care of patients. To pay for all of this schooling, he will accumulate about \$250,000 of debt, which he will pay back over time, from his earnings as a doctor.

What a difficult and grueling program! Yet when a doctor heard the term “grueling” applied to his 13 years of medical training, he said, “I don’t like that term ‘grueling’ because since I had a passion to become a doctor, I enjoyed every minute of it!”

In spite of all the difficulties, his passion to become a doctor gave him the ability to see them as enjoyable since he appreciated that they were bringing him closer to his goal of becoming a doctor. The years that he invested would enable him to heal many people, provide financial support for his family, and bring him stature and respect in the eyes of his community.

Because of the extensive process required to become a doctor, it is not until the candidate is around 30 years old that he actually begins practicing medicine. Hoping he will be able to practice until he is, say, age 80, he has made a minimum of an 11-year investment, under most challenging and difficult conditions, to reap 50 years of benefit-- about a one to five ratio.

Because Olam Haba is the *eternal* world, where we will enjoy the reward of the good deeds that we have done in this world for an eternity, it would be worth suffering through the seventy or eighty years of this life to enjoy the eternal reward of Olam Haba. After all, what percentage of an eternity is seventy? It doesn’t even register!

Indeed, our Sages teach us an astounding lesson, *viz*, that the reward in Olam Haba is so great that it would be worth it for a person to come to this world, *endure the suffering of Job for seventy years*, say “*amen*” just one time, and die.

Nachmanides explains that this is why the Torah tells us that we will receive great blessing *in this world* for keeping its commandments. Because the reward is so great, one might think that it is necessary to suffer through a very difficult life to earn it. To dispel this idea, Hashem told us, “Just the opposite! When you keep the commandments and the Torah, I will make life pleasant and enjoyable for you in this world also.” It is one of the perquisites of being Hashem’s servant.

It is also completely counter-intuitive! That our spiritual soul will receive spiritual reward in Olam Haba for the spiritual deeds that it did in this world makes perfect sense; but by what logic would one receive *physical* benefit from doing *spiritual* deeds?

One may question the notion that all who keep the Torah and commandments have an enjoyable and pleasurable life. Aren’t there many holy and righteous people who live very difficult lives and seem to be suffering through life? How does one reconcile that with the Torah’s promises?

We would have said the same about the medical student studying to be a doctor. But in reality, in his passion to become a doctor, he enjoys every new bit of knowledge that he learns, knowing that it is going to make him a better doctor and that it is bringing him one step closer to his goal. Similarly, the holy and righteous people are enjoying every moment of their lives. Their passion to do Hashem’s will, and to serve Him faithfully, makes every moment precious despite its difficulty.

The Maharsha (1555-1632) provides another answer to this question, explaining that the Torah’s promises of blessing are made to the Jewish people *as a whole*, not to individuals. When *we as a nation* would be worthy of Hashem’s abundant blessing



to the degree that there would be no sickness, famine, or wars, with everything working perfectly, this would show clearly that Hashem is real and controls nature for His nation. Everybody would have to admit that Hashem exists. This would not, however, necessarily be the case with each individual. There are individuals in every nation that are prosperous and others who are not.

The ספר הכוזרי *The Kuzari*, written circa 1140 by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, provides another reason why Hashem promised blessing in this world for doing the Torah and commandments.

The other major religions promise their adherents that if they keep that religion, they will enjoy the greatest pleasures and rewards in the world to come. Yet they conveniently cannot promise any reward in this world because they have no control over it. Hence, their predictions not happening would give people clear proof that their religion was false. Adherents of other religions must live their entire lives believing the promises of that religion (that they are going to receive abundant reward in the world to come) before they find out if the promises were true or not. It is inconceivable that the “martyrs” who blow themselves up, intending to kill and maim as many innocent men, women, and children as possible, will receive good reward for their heinous crime when they get to the world to come. When they committed their crime, they were dreaming of the reward that they were told that they would receive., The reality, though, is that they are in for a shock! But now they are dead, and it’s too late, having wasted their lives believing a lie.

Hashem the Master of the world and Controller of everything that goes on in it, promises reward in this world so that you can verify the veracity of the Torah right here and now. One needn't live his life wondering if the promises will ever come true. Try it, and find out for yourself that it is true! You will not be disappointed.

A sister question accompanies the question of why Hashem promises blessing in the Torah, namely, why does the Torah not say explicitly that there is עולם הבא - *Olam Haba*, a World to Come? In all of the written Torah, the words עולם הבא do not appear even once.

The reality is that the Torah contains several oblique references to *Olam Haba*, which come to light only through the Oral Torah. We find one example in this week's parsha.

The Torah tells us (Leviticus 26:12)

(יב) וְהֵתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם

12) *And I (Hashem) will walk among you.*

What does this mean? When will Hashem walk among us? Rashi explains.

ממני אטייל עמכם בגן עדן כאחד מכם ולא תהיו מזדעזעים

*I will walk with you in the Garden of Eden (Olam Haba) as one of you, and you will not be trembling from me.*

It is possible that Hashem walk among us only in *Olam Haba* where we will be in a completely spiritual state.

Nachmanides shows how Olam Haba is clearly written in the Torah from the concept of כרת, the punishment to a person's soul for various severe sins. The Torah states (Leviticus 22:3),

וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהוּא מִלִּפְנֵי אֲנִי יְיָ:

*And the soul will be cut off from before me, I am Hashem.*

*Karet*, where a person's soul is severed from Hashem, is the Torah's most severe punishment. Hashem wants nothing to do with him. He is completely on his own. The corollary of this is that if one does not commit one of these crimes, his soul will return to Hashem whence it came.

The Talmud (Kiddushin 39b) explains how even where the Torah seems to promise reward in this world, it is really referring to Olam Haba.

רבא אמר הא מני רבי יעקב היא דאמר שכר מצוה  
בהאי עלמא ליכא, דתניא: רבי יעקב אומר אין לך כל מצוה  
ומצוה שכתובה בתורה שמתן שכרה בצדה שאין תחיית  
המתים תלויה בה בכיבוד אב ואם כתיב למען יאריכון ימך  
ולמען ייטב לך בשילוח הקן כתיב למען ייטב לך והארכת  
ימים הרי שאמר לו אביו עלה לבירה והבא לי גוזלות ועלה  
לבירה ושלח את האם ונטל את הבנים ובחזירתו נפל ומת  
היכן טובת ימיו של זה והיכן אריכות ימיו של זה אלא למען  
ייטב לך לעולם שכולו טוב ולמען יאריכון ימך לעולם שכולו  
ארוך

Rabbi Yaakov said, "There can be no reward for a mitzvah in this world." There aren't enough material goods in the world to pay someone for even the smallest mitzvah.

*Rabbi Yaakov taught, Every mitzvah written in the Torah, even the ones that have a reward written next to them, will only be rewarded in Olam Haba. As far as honoring one's father and mother it says, "Honor your father and mother **in order that you will have long days and in order to bestow good upon you.**" About the mitzvah of sending the mother bird away before taking the eggs, it says, "Send away the mother and take the young for yourself, **in order that it will be good for you and prolong your days.**" Rabbi Yaakov saw a case where a father told his son to go up a tree, send the mother bird away, and bring him the eggs. After sending the mother bird away and taking the eggs, as the son was descending the ladder he fell and was killed. How could this be? He was performing the very two mitzvot for which the Torah promises long life. Where is his long life? There is only one answer. It is in Olam Haba.*

Rabbi Moshe Chiam Lozzato (*Ramchal*) in his book *The Path of the Just* adds another proof that there is a World to Come.

ספר מסילת ישרים - פרק א

וְתִרְאֶה בְּאֵמֶת שֶׁכָּבֵר לֹא יוֹכֵל שׁוּם בְּעַל שְׁכָל לְהֶאֱמִין  
שֶׁתְּכַלִּית בְּרִיאַת הָאָדָם הוּא לְמַצְבוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, כִּי מֵהֶם  
חַיֵּי הָאָדָם בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה? אוֹ מִי הוּא שֶׁשֶּׁמֶח וְשִׁלוֹ מִמַּשׁ בְּעוֹלָם  
הַזֶּה? "יְמֵי שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָּהֶם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, וְאִם בְּגִבּוֹרֵת שְׁמוֹנִים  
שָׁנָה, וְרַהֲבָם עָמַל וְאָוֶן" (תהלים צ, י). בְּכַמָּה מִיְּנֵי צֶעַר  
וְחִלָּאִים וּמְכַאוּבִים וּטְרִדוֹת, וְאַחַר כָּל זֹאת - הַמָּוֶת. אֶחָד מִנֵּי  
אֶלֶף לֹא יִמְצָא שִׁירְבָה הָעוֹלָם לוֹ הַנְּאוֹת וְשִׁלּוֹה אֲמִתִּית, וְגַם  
הוּא - אֵלּוּ יִגִּיעַ לְמַאֵה שָׁנָה כָּבֵד עֵבֶר וּבִטֵּל מִן הָעוֹלָם

*You will see that, in truth, no logical person can believe that man was created for his life in this world. Because what is life for man in this world anyway? Or, who is truly happy and content in this world? We come for seventy maybe eighty years, most of them filled with toil and difficulties, with many types of pain, sickness, and tribulations. And then after all of that, comes death. Not one in a thousand derives true pleasure and tranquility in this world, and even he, if he reaches a hundred years old, is over the hill.*

The *Ramchal* provides us with another reason why the Torah didn't expressly write about Olam Haba: It is obvious. Anybody who thinks logically will have to conclude that life on this earth cannot be the purpose for creation. There must be something greater and better for man. That is Olam Haba, where the reward will be out of this world.

It is clear through the Oral Torah that there is a World to Come, but why did Hashem not write it explicitly even once?

The Ibn Ezra (1069-1109) explains (Deuteronomy 32:39) :

ולפי דעתי שהתורה נתנה לכל, לא לאחד לבדו; ודבר  
העוה"ב לא יבינו א' מני אלף כי עמוק הוא

*My thinking is (why Olam Haba is not mentioned in the Torah) that the Torah was given to everyone, not to special individuals, and the matter of Olam Haba cannot be understood by even one in a thousand because it is very deep.*

The concept of עולם הבא (Olam Haba) is not something that the finite human mind can grasp. It is a completely spiritual world, which cannot be understood by a person's physical mind. It is like trying to describe color to a person who was blind from birth, or music to a deaf person who has no concept of about the notion that you are trying to convey. Therefore, it was placed the Oral Torah, where the Sages would be able to present the proper perspective of it and reveal what could be revealed.

What will the reward in Olam Haba be like? It will be an unsurpassed spiritual pleasure that we cannot imagine in our current material state. Here is what the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (Chapter 4:16) says.

וְיָפָה שְׂעָה אַחַת שֶׁל קוֹרַת רוּחַ בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, מִכָּל חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם  
הַזֶּה :

*A moment of pleasure in Olam Haba is greater than all the combined pleasures of this world.*

How should we define “all the pleasures of this world?” All the pleasure of the current world? Imagine that you could harvest just the intense feelings of pleasure felt by every living person in the world, compact those pleasures into one moment, and give them to someone. Can you imagine how intense that pleasure would be? But that is far from all of the pleasure of this world: That is only the pleasure of this world *now*. To gather all the pleasure of this world, we would have to add up all the pleasure ever experienced by every person, everywhere, who ever lived, from Adam until today. It is impossible to imagine how intense that pleasure would be, and yet, all of that pleasure wouldn't compare to even a moment's worth of pleasure in Olam Haba.

There is much to look forward to as we contemplate the reward in Olam Haba for our good deeds. Our share will be commensurate to the amount of Torah and mitzvot that we perform in this world, and although we think that we will be satisfied with whatever we get, our Sages teach us that when we arrive there, we will wish that we had done more. Now is the time to think about what we want our “eternity” to be like.