

Congregation Beth Israel  
Torah Study  
פרשת בהר/בחקתי  
Leviticus 25:1-27:34  
Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14  
"When Bad Things Happen"  
May 16, 2020 • 22 Iyar 5780  
Day 37 of the Counting of the Omer

Rabbi Shelton Donnell

---

**A Prayer For Comfort To Help Us Through  
This Dangerous And Challenging Time**

אנא בעל הרחמים — O merciful God, we seek Your comfort and protection as this disease of Coronavirus rips through our world and our individual lives. Bring רפואה שלמה, complete healing to those stricken, and give strength and courage to those who care for them. Help us so to live our lives that we are a source of healing and hope for ourselves and for others. Grant wisdom to those in authority that they may fulfill their obligations to provide for the common welfare with responsibility and compassion. Grant us strength of body, mind and spirit so that we may overcome this challenge that touches us all in so many ways.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְקוֹר הַחַיִּים.  
Blessed are You, O Source of Life.

**BLESSING FOR THE STUDY OF TORAH**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוֵּנוּ לְעִסּוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Barukh atah, ADONAI, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu la-asok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, ADONAI our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who makes us holy through the Mitzvot, and commands us to occupy ourselves with the words of Torah.

**Text #1** Leviticus 26:3-13

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעִשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם: וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם וְנָתַתִּי הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִיֹ: וְהִשִּׁיג לָכֶם דִּישׁ אֶת־בְּצִיר וּבְצִיר יִשָּׁיג אֶת־זֶרַע וְאִכְלִיתֶם לֶחֶמְכֶם לְשִׁבְעָה וַיִּשְׂבַּח לְבַטַח בְּאַרְצְכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאָרֶץ וּשְׂכַבְתֶּם וְאִין מִחֲרִיד וְהִשְׁפַּתִּי חַיָּה רְעָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ וְחָרָב לֹא־תֵעָבֵר בְּאַרְצְכֶם:

<sup>3</sup>If you follow My laws and faithfully obey My commands, <sup>4</sup>I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its bounty and the trees their fruit. <sup>5</sup>Your threshing will continue until the grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until the planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. <sup>6</sup>I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country.

**Text #2** Leviticus 26:11-13

וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי לְעָם: וְאֲנִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִחַיַּת הַיָּד וְעַבְדִּים וְאֲשַׁבֵּר מַטְּת עַלְכֶם וְאוֹלָךְ אֶתְכֶם קוֹמְמֵיֹת:

<sup>12</sup>And I will always be present in your midst: I will be your God and you will be My people. <sup>13</sup>I am ADONAI your God who brought you out of the land of the Egyptians for whom you were slaves, I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk upright.

**Text #3** Leviticus 26:14-17

וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה: וְאִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּמְאָסוּ וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי: וְאִם־אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה־זֹאת לָכֶם וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֶת־הַשְׁחָפֹת וְאֶת־הַקְדָּחַת מְכַלֹּת עֵינַיִם וּמְדִיבַת נֶפֶשׁ וּזְרַעְתֶּם לְרִיק וְזָרַעְכֶם וְאִכְלָהוּ אִיְבֵיכֶם: וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בָּכֶם וְגִגַּפְתֶּם לְפָנַי אִיְבֵיכֶם וְרָדוּ בָכֶם שְׂנְאֵיכֶם וְנִסְתֶּם וְאִין־רָדַף אֶתְכֶם:

<sup>14</sup>But if you will not obey Me and carry out all these commands, <sup>15</sup>and if you reject My laws and spurn My ordinances and fail to carry out all My commands and thereby violate My covenant, <sup>16</sup>then I will do this to you: I will bring misery upon you — wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. <sup>17</sup>I will set My face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

**Text #4** Leviticus 26:18

וְאִם־עַד־אֵלֶּה לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְיִסְפַּתִּי לְיִסְרָה אֶתְכֶם שִׁבְעַ עַל־חַטָּאתֵיכֶם:

<sup>18</sup>And if — for all that — you still do not obey Me, I will continue to discipline you sevenfold for your sins...

**Text #5 Ecclesiastes 7:13-15**

רָאָה אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי מִי יוּכַל לְתַקֵּן אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָוְתוּ: <sup>13</sup>בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה הִיָּה בְטוֹב וּבְיוֹם רָעָה רָאָה גַם אֶת־זֶה לְעַמְתּוֹ עֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־דְּבַרְתָּ שְׁלֵא יִמָּצֵא הָאָדָם אַחֲרָיו מְאוּמָה: <sup>14</sup>אֶת־הַכֹּל רָאִיתִי בְיַמֵּי הַבְּלִי יֵשׁ צַדִּיק אֲבָד בְּצַדִּיקוֹ וַיֵּשׁ רָשָׁע מֵאֲרִיךְ בְּרַעְתּוֹ:

<sup>13</sup>Consider God's doing! Who can straighten what He has twisted? <sup>14</sup>So in a time of good fortune enjoy the good fortune; and in a time of misfortune, reflect: The one no less than the other was God's doing; consequently, man may find no fault with Him. <sup>15</sup>In my own brief span of life, I have seen both these things: sometimes a good man perishes in spite of his goodness, and sometimes a wicked one prospers in spite of his wickedness.

**Text #6 Ecclesiastes 7:16-18**

אֶל־תִּהְיֶי צַדִּיק הַרְבֵּה וְאֶל־תִּתְחַכֵּם יוֹתֵר לְמַה תִּשׁוּמִם: <sup>16</sup>אֶל־תִּרְשָׁע הַרְבֵּה וְאֶל־תִּהְיֶי סָכָל לְמַה תָּמוּת בְּלֹא עֵתָּךְ: <sup>17</sup>טוֹב אֲשֶׁר תֵּאָחֵז בְּזֶה וּגַם־מִזֶּה אֶל־תִּנְחַ אֶת־יָדְךָ כִּי־יָרָא אֱלֹהִים יִצֵּא אֶת־כָּל־אֵם:

<sup>16</sup>So, don't be too righteous and don't try to be too wise or else you will just make yourself confused. <sup>17</sup>But, don't be too wicked or a fool, or you may die before your time. <sup>18</sup>It is best that you grasp the one without letting go of the other, for one who reveres God will do his duty by both.

**Text #7 Job 38:2-7**

מִי זֶה מַחְשִׁיף עֵצָה בְּמַלְיָן בְּלִי־דַעַת: <sup>2</sup>אֲזַר־נָא כְּגִבֹר חֲלָצִיף וְאֲשַׁאֲלֶיךָ וְהוֹדִיעַנִי: <sup>3</sup>אֵיפֹה הָיִיתָ בְּיַסְדֵי־אָרֶץ הַגֹּד אִם־יָדַעְתָּ בִּינָה: <sup>4</sup>מִי־שָׁם מִמְדִּיָּהּ כִּי תִדַע אוֹ מִי־נִטְשָׁה עָלֶיהָ קוֹ: וְעַל־מָה אֲדַנְיָהּ הִטְבַּעוּ אוֹ מִי־יָרָה אֶבֶן פְּנִתָּהּ: <sup>5</sup>בְּרֶן־יַחַד כּוֹכְבֵי בָקָר וַיְרִיעוּ כָּל־בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים:

<sup>2</sup>Who is this that obscures My counsel with words without knowledge?

<sup>3</sup>Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.

<sup>4</sup>Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell Me, if you understand.

<sup>5</sup>Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

<sup>6</sup>On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—

<sup>7</sup>while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

**Text #8** Job 42:2-6

יָדַעְתָּ [יָדַעְתִּי] כִּי־כָל תּוּכֵל וְלֹא־יִבָּצֵר מִמֶּךָ מְזֻמָּה: <sup>1</sup>מִי זֶה מַעֲלִים עֲצָה בְּלִי דַעַת לְכֵן הִגִּדְתִּי וְלֹא אֲבִין נִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא אֲדַע: <sup>2</sup>שָׁמַע־נָא וְאֲנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר אֲשַׁאֲלֶךָ וְהוֹדִיעֵנִי: <sup>3</sup>לְשִׁמְע־אָזְנְךָ שָׁמַעְתָּךְ וְעַתָּה עֵינַי רְאִיתֶךָ: <sup>4</sup>עַל־כֵּן אֶמְאָס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עַפְרָא וְאַפָּר:

<sup>2</sup>I know that you can do everything, That nothing you propose is impossible for You.  
<sup>3</sup>Who is it that obscures counsel without knowledge? Yes, I spoke without understanding of things that are beyond me, which I did not know. <sup>4</sup>Please listen and I will speak—I will ask, and then you can inform me. <sup>5</sup>I heard You with my own ears; but now I see you with my own eyes; <sup>6</sup>and so I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes.

**Text #9** Mishnah, *Pirkei Avot* 4:15

רַבִּי יַנַּי אָמַר, אֵין בְּיַדְנוּ לֹא מִשְׁלוֹת הַרְשָׁעִים וְאֵף לֹא מִיִּסּוּרֵי הַצַּדִּיקִים.  
רַבִּי מַתִּיא בֶּן חֲרָשׁ אָמַר, הָיוּ מִקְדָּיִם בְּשָׁלוֹם כָּל אָדָם. וְהָיוּ זָנֵב לְאַרְיֹת,  
וְאֵל תְּהִי רֹאשׁ לְשׁוּעָלִים:

Rabbi Yannai said: it is not in our hands [to explain the reason] either of the security of the wicked, or even of the afflictions of the righteous. Rabbi Matia ben Harash said: Upon meeting people, be the first to extend greetings; And be a tail unto lions, and not a head unto foxes.

**Text #10** Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 7a

בְּקִשׁ לְהוֹדִיעוּ דְרָבּוּי שְׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, וְנָתַן לוֹ, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "הוֹדִיעֵנִי נָא אֵת דְרָבּוּיךָ" אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שְׁל עוֹלָם! מִפְּנֵי מָה יֵשׁ צַדִּיק וְטוֹב לוֹ, וְיֵשׁ צַדִּיק וְרַע לוֹ, וְיֵשׁ רָשָׁע וְטוֹב לוֹ, וְיֵשׁ רָשָׁע וְרַע לוֹ? אָמַר לוֹ: מִשָּׁה, צַדִּיק וְטוֹב לוֹ הֵּ צַדִּיק בֶּן צַדִּיק. צַדִּיק וְרַע לוֹ הֵּ צַדִּיק בֶּן רָשָׁע. רָשָׁע וְטוֹב לוֹ הֵּ רָשָׁע בֶּן צַדִּיק. רָשָׁע וְרַע לוֹ הֵּ רָשָׁע בֶּן רָשָׁע.

Moses requested that the ways in which God conducts the world be revealed to him, and God granted it to him, as it is stated: "Show me Your ways and I will know You" (Exodus 33:13). Moses said before God: Master of the Universe. Why is it that the righteous prosper, the righteous suffer, the wicked prosper, the wicked suffer? God said to him: Moses, the righteous person who prospers is a righteous person, the son of a righteous person, who is rewarded for the actions of his ancestors. The righteous person who suffers is a righteous person, the son of a wicked person, who is punished for the transgressions of his ancestors. The wicked person who prospers is a wicked person, the son of a righteous person, who is rewarded for the actions of his ancestors. The wicked person who suffers is a wicked person, the son of a wicked person, who is punished for the transgressions of his ancestors.

**Text #11** Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 5a

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן לֵקִישׁ: כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה הֵּ יִסּוּרִין בְּדִילִין הֵימָנוּ, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וּבְנֵי רָשָׁף יִגְבִּיהוּ עוֹף". וְאֵין "עוֹף" אֵלָא תּוֹרָה, שְׁנַאֲמַר "הִתְעַיַף עֵינֶיךָ בּוֹ וְאֵינְנוּ", וְאֵין "רָשָׁף" אֵלָא יִסּוּרִין, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "מִזֵּי רָעַב וּלְחָמִי רָשָׁף".

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: If one engages in Torah study, suffering stays away from him, as it is stated: "And the sparks fly upward." And fly means nothing other than Torah, as it is stated: "Will you set your eyes upon it? It is gone; and sparks means nothing other than suffering, as it is stated: "Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks," equating devouring sparks with wasting hunger, as both are types of suffering...

**Text #12** Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 5a

וְאִם תִּלְתֶּה וְלֹא מֵצָא הֵּ בְיָדוֹעַ שְׂיִסוּרֵין שֶׁל אֲהֶבָה הֵם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֵאָהֵב ה' יוֹכִיחַ".  
אָמַר רַבָּא, אָמַר רַב סְחוּרָה, אָמַר רַב הוֹנָא: כָּל שֶׁהִקְדִּישׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חֶפֶץ בּוֹ הֵ מְדַבְּאוּ בְּיִסוּרֵין,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְהָ חֶפֶץ דְּבָאוּ הִתְלִי". יְכוּל אֶפִּילוּ לֹא קִבְּלִים מֵאֲהֶבָה? הֵ תִלְמוּד לֹמַר: "אִם תִּשִּׁים  
אֲשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ", מָה אֲשָׁם לְדַעַת, אִף יִסוּרֵין הֵ לְדַעַת.

And what if he did suspect that his suffering was due to neglecting the study of Torah, but did not find this to be so? He may be assured that these are afflictions of love, as it is stated: "For whom ADONAI loves, He rebukes, as does a father the son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:12). So too, Rava said that Rav Sehora quoted Rav Huna who said: Anyone in whom the Holy One, Blessed be God, delights, He oppresses him with suffering, as it is stated: "Yet in whom ADONAI delights, He oppresses him with disease..."

**Text #13** Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Part 3, Chapter 12

The evils that befall man are of three kinds:

The first kind of evil is that which is caused to man by the circumstance of nature existence and destruction. That is to say he is corporeal or that he possesses a body, and because of this that some people have significant disabilities or paralysis of some of the organs.

The second class of evils comprises such evils as people cause to each other, when, for example, some of them use their strength against others.

The third class of evils comprises those which every one causes to himself by his own action.

**Text #14** From Rabbi Harold Kushner's *The Book of Job: When Bad Things Happened to a Good Person*

Like Job, I have met God. I have met [God] in the sunshine but more often in the shadows, not in the elegant perfection of the world but in the resilience of the human soul, the ability of people to find even a pain-filled life, even a grossly unfair life, worth living. I have met God in the readiness of people to reach out to the afflicted, to salve the wounds not with their doctrines but with their hugs and their tears. Like Job, like Abraham, I have seen the world in flames and I have been sustained by the message that God has not abandoned the world.

**Text #15** Harold M. Schulweiss, *From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology*, cited in *Contemporary Jewish Theology*, Elliott N. Dorff & Louis E. Newman, eds.

Sickness, suffering, death, according to the predicate view of divinity, are real, but their origin stems neither from a benevolent or a malevolent Subject. Good and evil are not personalized in the form of a God or a Satan. They are neither rewards or punishments visited upon us by a mysterious Subject. The painful reality of accident, negligence, greed are neither divinized nor demonized. Blame, responsibility, guilt are not foisted upon another realm wherein the Subject needs to be either exonerated or condemned.

**Text #16** Harold M. Schulweiss, Op cit.

Suffering and evil, fault and responsibility are taken seriously by predicate theology: but the latter invites different expectations and demands different human responses from those which are generated by Subject theology. The Job of predicate theology is sensitive to the evils which beset man, but his questions are not directed towards a plotting, purposing, supra-human Ego nor are his friends raised in a theological atmosphere which prompts them to decipher the hidden motives of a morally remote Subject. The Job of predicate theology and his friends look elsewhere for explanations and for response. They would examine the "how" and "where" and "what" which brought forth the pain of the situation, in order to call upon the powers of Elohim in and between them and the environment so as to bind the bruises and to act so as to avoid repetition of the tragedy.

**Text #17** Harold M. Schulweiss, Op cit.

Elohim, Godliness, the divine predicates do not exist for the sake of Elohim, God, Subject, but vice versa. It is not the attributes of a divine Ego, but the divinity of the attributes which demand our allegiance.