

Behar-Bechukosai

“If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit.... you shall eat your fill of bread and dwell securely in your land. I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down untroubled by anyone; I will give the land respite from vicious beasts, and no sword shall cross your land.... I will look with favor upon you, and make you fertile and multiply you; and I will maintain My covenant with you.” (Leviticus 26:3-9)

In this week’s *parsha*, Israel is assured that if they follow Hashem’s laws and commandments, they will merit great blessing. Keeping the Torah and the *mitzvos* will allow them to reap the full bounty of the Land of Israel, amid peace and happiness.

Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Walkin (?-1979) was a Lithuanian-born rabbi in Queens, NY after the second World War. He merited to learn Torah under the sainted Chafetz Chaim (R. Yisroel Meir Kagan) in Radin, before the destruction of European Jewry. Among many other achievements, he was responsible for the transmission of many of his illustrious teacher’s gems of wisdom to an American audience. He recounts that the Chafetz Chaim used to gently reprove the people who came to his door seeking blessings. “Why do you come to me,” he would complain, “when the Torah assures you that if you fulfill the *mitzvos* and study the Torah, you will receive all the blessings in the world?”

Once, R. Walkin’s brother came to see the Chafetz Chaim. R. Chaim Walkin (1897-1941) was an eminent scholar in his own right, the head of the world-renowned Yeshiva of Volozhin. Nonetheless, he came to receive the blessing of the Chafetz Chaim, who was not only many decades older than he but one of the greatest teachers and *tzaddikim* (righteous men) of the century.

When R. Chaim Walkin expressed his request, the Chafetz Chaim reacted with unusual fervor. “A man such as yourself comes to a clod of dirt such as me to ask for favors, when you could do yourself all the good in the world by studying Torah and performing *mitzvos*? Then you would receive the blessing promised by Hashem: ‘Blessed is he who upholds the words of the Torah.’”

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The Chafetz Chaim was the leader of his generation. He was also a model of humility and self-abnegation. More than that, he realized that there was a failing inherent in the assumption that one should turn to *tzaddikim* for blessings. A Jew's first stop ought to be the Torah, and it promises all the world's blessing to one who devoutly follows it.

"A great man is always willing to be little."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Asher Coleman

