

ויקרא פרק כו:ח

I will give peace in the land	ונתתי שלום בארץ
You will lie down, with no one to terrorize you	ושכבתם ואין מהריד
I will cause evil beasts to cease from the land	והשבתי חיה רעה מן הארץ
no sword will pass through your land	: וחרב לא תעבר בארצכם
you will pursue your enemies	ורדפתם את איביכם
they will fall before you to the sword	: ונפלו לפניכם לחרב:
five of you will pursue a hundred	ורדפו מכם חמשה מאה
a hundred of you will pursue a myriad	ומאה מכם רבבה ירדפו
your enemies will fall before you to the sword	: ונפלו איביכם לפניכם לחרב:

Ramban famously approaches Torah with the fourfold methodology acronymized “PaRDeS”, for Pshat Remez Drash Sod, and equally famously his Sod, or mystical interpretation, are deliberately unintelligible to nonkabbalists. And I am a nonkabbalist. So this dvar Torah is necessarily an amateur attempt to describe an architecture rather than a building.

Parshat Bechukotai begins with a description of the rewards that can be expected for walking in G-d’s *chukim* and preserving and performing His *mitzvot*. Among these rewards is a promise of peace in the land, along with the ceasing-to-be of dangerous beasts.

Now a promise of a benevolent animal kingdom cannot help make us think of Prophetic verses describing amiable lions cavorting with lambs, grazing bears, and harmless poisonous snakes. In other words, it is a Messianic vision, and here interpretation immediately becomes a function of one’s broad Messianic sensibility; does one conceive of the Messianic Era as fundamentally continuous, or rather discontinuous, with the natural and psychological world we inhabit? Rambam opts for continuity, and thus sees these images as exaggerated or metaphorical; Ramban opts for discontinuity, and therefore sees them as literal.

But what would “literal” mean for Ramban – does it refer to “pshat” interpretation, and if so, what happens to that meaning in the universe of “sod”? Here we have a key methodological question. On the level of “sod”, the literal meaning is always understood as allegory or metaphor. The question is whether this means that the literal meaning is not literally true. For Rambam, this is often the case – lions simply will not eat grain like cattle in the Messianic Era. But for Ramban, it is less clear.

So Ramban tell us, for example, that in the manner of sod the land which will know peace is actually a referent to the mystical LAND/*eretz* which is related to ALL/*kol*. This is the entrance-key to a treasure hunt that can take us throughout his commentary – for example, *eretz* will refer back to the *aretz* whose creation is mentioned in Bereshit 1:1, and *kol* refers to Hashem blessing Avraham *bakol* – but the key for us is Shmot 19:5, in which the Jews become His *segulah* “*ki li kol haaretz*”.

In both Genesis 1:1 and Shmot 19:5 *eretz* cannot literally refer to *eretz Yisroel*, but here in Bechukotai the simple meaning is that it does so refer. The question I leave you with, then, is whether Ramban believes that these magical events will occur literally at all, and if yes, does he believe that they will occur exclusively within the geographic boundaries, however established, of *eretz Yisroel*.

Shabbat shalom!

RAMBAN

1. "I will give peace in the land" –
2. That there will be peace among you, and you will not battle with each other
3. Alternatively the peace referred to here is that He will cause evil beasts to cease from the land.
4. "No sword will pass through your land" at all, rather you will pursue your enemies, i.e. go out to war against them and they will flee.
5. BUT IN THE WAY OF TRUTH, it means that He will give the PEACE that is attached to the LAND, which is the PEACE OF the ALL that is equal to the ALL.
6. "I will cause evil beasts to cease from the land" –
7. In the opinion of R. Yehudah who says that He will remove them from the land, this should be understood literally, that no evil beasts will enter their land, because with plenty and much good and the cities full of people, beasts will not enter the settled area.
8. But in the opinion of R. Shimon, who says that He will make them cease means that they will no longer cause damage or injury, when it says ""I will cause evil beasts to cease from the land" – and this is correct – it means that the Land of Israel in the time when the commandments are fulfilled will be as the world was as its outset before the sin of the original Adam with no wild animal or creeping thing killing Adam,
 - a. as they say in Berakhot "The snake does not kill, rather the sin",
 - b. and what Scripture means when it says "a child will play over the hole of a snake"
 - c. and similarly "a cow and a bear will graze, and a lion like cattle will eat grain".
9. Because the desire-to-eat-prey only exists in evil beasts because of the sin of Adam, because it was decreed about him that he would be prey for their teeth, so the desire-to-eat-prey was made their nature with regard to each other as well, as is well know that if they prey on a human once they become much worse,
 - a. as Scripture writes "and they will learn to prey – they ate human prey",
10. and in the story of the Creation of the World it says regarding the beasts that He gave them the grasses to eat,
 - a. as Scripture writes "and to all the beasts of the land and all the birds of the heavens and all that creeps on the land containing a living spirit – all the green grass to eat",
 - b. and Scripture says "and it was so", because this the nature which was placed in them eternally, but afterward they learned to prey because of sin, which kills, as I explained.
11. And when slaughtering living things was permitted to the Children of Noah after the Flood, and humans were commanded "Certainly for your blood of your spirits I will seek . . . the blood of the human", but not one living nonhuman from its fellow living nonhuman, they remained in their habit of preying.
12. But when the Land of Israel is in its state of completeness, their evil practices will cease and they will stand on their initial nature, which was placed in them at the time of their Formation, and I have already mentioned this in discussing Parashat Noach.
13. Therefore Scripture says regarding the days of the redeemer who emerges from the stock of Yishai that peace will return to the world, and preying will stop, and the evil of animals and creeping things as they were by nature initially. The intended referent of that verse was Chizkiyahu, whom The Holy Blessed One sought to make the Moshiach, but it will refer in practice to the Moshiach in the coming future.

- (1) "ונתתי שלום בארץ" –
- (2) שיהיה שלום ביניכם ולא תלחמו איש באחיו.
- (3) או השלום הוא שישבית חיה רעה מן הארץ.
- (4) "וחרב לא תעבור בארצכם" כלל, אבל אתם תרדפו את אויביכם לצאת אליהם למלחמה וינוסו.
- (5) ועל דרך האמת, שיתן השלום מחובר בארץ, והוא שלום הכל השקול כנגד הכל:
- (6) "והשבתי חיה רעה מן הארץ" –
- (7) על דעת ר' יהודה שאמר מעבירן מן העולם (תו"כ פרק ב א), הוא כפשוטו שלא יבואו חיות רעות בארצם, כי בהיות השבע וברבות הטובה והיות הערים מלאות אדם לא תבאנה חיות בישוב.
- (8) ועל דעת רבי שמעון שאמר משביתן שלא יזיקו (שם) יאמר "והשבתי רעת החיות מן הארץ" - והוא הנכון - כי תהיה ארץ ישראל בעת קיום המצות כאשר היה העולם מתחילתו קודם חטאו של אדם הראשון אין חיה ורמש ממית אדם.
- a. וכמו שאמרו (ברכות לג א) אין ערוד ממית אלא חטא ממית.
- b. וזה שאמר הכתוב (ישעיה יא ח) ושעשע יונק על חור פתן,
- c. וכן ופרה ודוב תרענה ואריה כבקר יאכל תבן (שם פסוק ז),
- (9) כי לא היה הטרף בחיות הרעות רק מפני חטאו של אדם, כי נגזר עליו להיות טרף לשניהם והושם הטרף טבע להם גם לטרוף זו את זו, כידוע כי בטרפם האדם פעם אחת יוסיפו להיות רעים יותר,
- a. וכן אמר הכתוב (יחזקאל יט ג) וילמד לטרוף טרף אדם אכל:
- (10) והנה בבריאתו של עולם נאמר בחיות שנתן להם העשב לאכלה
- a. דכתיב (בראשית א ל) ולכל חית הארץ ולכל עוף השמים ולכל רומש על הארץ אשר בו נפש חיה את כל ירק עשב לאכלה,
- b. ואמר הכתוב "ויהי כן", כי הוא הטבע אשר הושם בהם לעד, ואחר כך למדו הטרף מפני החטא הממית כאשר פירשתי.
- (11) וכשהותר שחיטת בעלי החיים לבני נח אחרי המבול והזהיר על האדם (שם ט ה) ואך את דמכם לנפשותיכם אדרוש וגו' את נפש האדם, ולא נפש חיה מיד חיה בחברתה, נשאו על מנהגם לטרוף.
- (12) ובהיות ארץ ישראל על השלמות, תשבת רעת מנהגם ויעמדו על הטבע הראשון אשר הושם בהם בעת יצירתם, וכבר הזכרתי מזה בסדר תולדות נח (בראשית ט ו):
- (13) ועל כן אמר הכתוב על ימי הגואל היוצא מגזע ישי, שישוב השלום בעולם ויחדל הטרף ורעת הבהמה וכל הרמש כאשר היה בטבעם מתחילה. והכוונה היתה בו על חזקיהו שביקש הקדוש ברוך הוא לעשותו משיח (סנהדרין צד א), ולא עלתה זכותם לכך, ויהיה המעשה על המשיח העתיד לבא: