

Parashat Behar/Behukotai: A Land of Hidden Miracles

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Vayikra 26:11	
וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכְּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא־תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם:	I will establish My abode in your midst, and I will not spurn you.

Vayikra 18:25	
וּשְׁמִרְתֶּם אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרְתִּי לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת מִחֻקֹּת הַתּוֹעֵבֹת אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשׂוּ לִפְנֵיכֶם וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: {פ}	You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices that were carried on before you, and you shall not defile yourselves through them: I, the ETERNAL am your God.

1. Defiling the Land

Ramban on Vayikra 26:11	
וְהִטַּעַם בָּזָה כִּי הַבְּרָכוֹת הֵם אֶ"פ שֶׁהֵם נֹסִים הֵם מִן הַנֹּסִים הַנִּסְתָּרִים שֶׁכָּל הַתּוֹרָה מְלֵאָה מֵהֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר פָּרַשְׁתִּי (בְּרַאשִׁית י"ז א), וְהֵם אֶפְלוּ לִיחִיד הָעוֹבֵד, כִּי כְּאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָאִישׁ הַחֲסִיד שׁוֹמֵר כָּל מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹהָיו, יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ הָאֵל מִן הַחֲלִי וְהַעֲקָרוֹת וְהַשְׁכּוֹל וְיִמְלֵא יָמָיו בְּטוֹבָה. אֲבָל אֵלּוּ הַבְּרָכוֹת שֶׁבִּפְרָשָׁה הַזֹּאת הֵן כָּלְלִיּוֹת בָּעַם, וְהֵן בִּהְיוֹת כָּל עַמּוּנוֹ כְּלָם צְדִיקִים. וְלִכְךָ יִזְכֹּר תָּמִיד בְּכָאן "הָאָרֶץ", "וְנָתַתִּי הָאָרֶץ פְּרִיָּה" וְיִשְׁבַּתֶּם לְבַטַּח בְּאֶרְצְכֶם" וְנָתַתִּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ" מִן הָאָרֶץ" וְחֹרֵב לֹא תֵעָבֵר בְּאֶרְצְכֶם."	The reason for this [division of the blessings into two sections] is that [all] the blessings [mentioned in the Torah], although they are miraculous, are hidden miracles of which the whole Torah is full, as I have explained. They apply even to an individual who serves [Him], for when there is a pious man who keeps all the commandments of his God, the Eternal God will guard him from sickness, barrenness, and bereavement, and he will live out his days in goodness. But these blessings which are stated in this section are general ones applying to the people [as a whole], and they [take effect] when the whole of our people <i>shall all be righteous</i> . Therefore, He mentions here always <i>the Land: and the Land shall yield; in your Land safely; peace in the Land; out of the Land; it shall not go through your Land</i> .

Ramban on Vayikra 18:25	
וּתְטַמְא הָאָרֶץ וְאֶפְקַד עוֹנָה עָלֶיהָ וְתִקָּא הָאָרֶץ הַחֲמִיר הַכְּתוּב בְּעֲרִיּוֹת, בְּעַבּוּר הָאָרֶץ שֶׁתְּטַמְא בָּהֶן וְתִקָּא הַנִּפְשׁוֹת הַעוֹשׂוֹת. וְהִנֵּה הָעֲרִיּוֹת חוֹבֵת הַגּוֹף וְאֵינָן תְּלִיּוֹת בְּאָרֶץ, אֲבָל סוּד הַדֶּבֶר בְּכְתוּב שְׁאָמַר (דְּבָרִים ל"ב ח ט) "בְּהִנָּחֵל עָלֶיּוֹן גּוֹיִם בְּהִפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם יִצְבּ גְּבֻלַּת עַמִּים וְגו' כִּי חֵלֶק ה'	And the land was defiled, therefore did I visit the inquiry upon it, and the land vomited out her inhabitants. Scripture was very strict in forbidding these sexual relationships on account of the Land which becomes defiled by them, and which in turn will vomit out the people that do [these abominations]. Now forbidden sexual relationships are matters affecting personal conduct, and do not depend on the Land, [so

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.,.

<p>עמו" וגו'. והענין כי השם הנכבד ברא הכל, ושם כח התחתונים בעליונים, ונתן על כל עם ועם בארצותם לגויהם כוכב ומזל ידוע, כאשר נודע באצטגנינות. וזהו שנאמר (דברים ד יט) "אשר חלק ה' אליהם אתם לכל העמים", כי חלק לכלם מזלות בשמים, וגבוהים עליהם מלאכי עליון נתנם להיותם שרים עליהם,</p>	<p>why should the Land be affected by these personal immoral acts]? But the secret of the matter is in the verse which states, <i>When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the borders of the people, etc. For the portion of the Eternal is His people</i> etc. The meaning thereof is as follows: <i>The Glorious Name</i> created everything and He placed the power of the lower creatures in the higher beings, giving over each and every nation <i>in their lands, after their nations</i> some known star or constellation, as is known by means of astrological speculation. It is with reference to this that it is said, <i>which the Eternal thy God hath allotted unto all the people</i>, for He allotted to all nations constellations in the heavens, and higher above them are the angels of the Supreme One whom He placed as lords over them...</p>
<p>והנה השם הנכבד הוא אלהי האלהים ואדני האדנים לכל העולם, אבל ארץ ישראל, אמצעות הישוב, היא נחלת ה' מיחדת לשמו, לא נתן עליה מן המלאכים קצין שוטר ומושל בהנחילו אותה לעמו המיוחד שמו זרע אוהביו...</p>	<p>Now <i>the Glorious Name</i> is <i>God of gods, and Lord of lords</i> over the whole world. But the Land of Israel, which is in the middle of the inhabited earth, is the inheritance of the Eternal designated to His Name. He has placed none of the angels as <i>chief, observer, or ruler</i> over it, since He gave it as a heritage to His people who declare the Unity of His Name, the seed of His beloved ones [i.e., the patriarchs]...</p>
<p>אבל אם תזכה להבין הארץ הראשונה הנזכרת בפסוק בראשית, והנזכרת בפירושם אם בחקותי, (ויקרא כ"ו:מ"ב) תדע עוד נשגב ונעלה, ותבין מה שאמרו רבותינו (תנחומא ויקהל ז), בית המקדש של מעלה מכון כנגד בית המקדש של מטה. וכבר רמזתי לך בפסוק "כי לי הארץ" (שמות יט ה)...</p>	<p>"But if you merit to understand the first 'earth' mentioned in the verse in the Book of Genesis, and the one mentioned in the section 'If you follow My statutes' (Book of Leviticus 26:42), you will know a profound and hidden secret. And you will understand what our Rabbis said (Midrash Tanchuma, Vayakhel 7): 'The Temple above is aligned corresponding to the Temple below.' And I have already alluded to this in the verse, 'For the earth is Mine' (Book of Exodus 19:5)"...</p>

2. A Land of Hidden Miracles

<p>Moshe Halbertal, <i>Nahmanides: Law & Mysticism</i>, 161-163</p>
<p>The providential governance of the hidden miracles does not grace only those mystics liberated from zodiacal domination, but also the entire geographical expanse of the land of Israel...Nahmanides claims that the land of Israel can exist in a perpetual state of hidden miracles...</p>
<p>Both the pious individual and the collective in the land of Israel are liberated from accidents by virtue of their connection to Shekhinah. The individual breaks free of the domain of blind, inert Nature by actively cleaving to Shekhinah. As for the collective in the land of Israel, the land itself, owing to the direct link to Shekhinah, is a geographic region whose borders mark the sovereignty of natural causality ends...</p>
<p>The direct connection to Shekhinah, and the indirect one to the higher sefirot through the Shekhinah, marks off the land of Israel as a literally supernatural space in which the zodiac holds no sway, where inert Nature ceases operating. Within the borders of the land of Israel Shekhinah acts through hidden miracles.</p>
<p>Wendell Berry, "2017, X," <i>Sabbath Poems</i></p>
<p>The world thrives as God's gift within gratitude.</p>