

## Parashah Bechukotai

The one all about blessings and curses, and who gets them, depending on how well the Israelites stick to their promises and follow the rules.

**Parashah Bechukotai has a set of blessings and curses that are put upon the Israelites** based on their obedience to or disobedience of the commandments. The choices we make result in particular consequences. Thus, our fate is often in our own hands.

**The parashah begins with a list of blessings that the Israelites will receive if they follow the commandments and laws.** These blessings include abundant crops, peace and security in the land, and a divine presence among them.

**What follows is a series of curses that will come to the Israelites if they fail to obey the laws.** These curses are severe and include crop failures, disease outbreaks, losses in battles and being forced out of the Promised Land.

**The parashah stresses that even if the Israelites stray from the divine path, there is always the possibility of the consequences' being reversed.** If they confess their sins and acknowledge their wrongdoings, it will be remembered and eventually bring them back to the land. Second chances - getting the and giving them - are a great part of Jewish thinking.

**Parashah Bechukotai also discusses the importance of observing the Sabbatical year (Shemittah),** when the land is to lie fallow, or without plantings, every seventh year, and the Jubilee year (Yovel) that occurs every 50 years. These laws are designed to promote social justice, including the release of indentured servants and the return of ancestral lands to their original owners.

**Parashah Bechukotai contains a stark contrast between blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience,** with an underlying message of the possibility of repenting and having the blessings restored with good behavior. So much of life depends on what choices we make.

## Teen Takeaways from Parashah Bechukotai

1. **Actions have consequences:** The parashah shows that our choices come with results. Good choices often lead to good outcomes, and bad choices often lead to not-so-great outcomes. It's a reminder to think before we act.
2. **Keep promises and commitments:** The parashah talks about a special agreement between the Israelites and God. It teaches us to keep our promises and be loyal to our commitments, whether it's with friends, family, or even ourselves. If we believe that there is a spark of God in every human being, how does that reinforce that teaching?
3. **Freedom comes with responsibility:** We can make choices, but we must be responsible for them. Sometimes life seems easier if someone else makes those decisions (like parents). But b'nai mitzvah are the time when we start making some of those tough decisions.
4. **Mistakes can be fixed:** Even when we mess up, there's always a chance to make things right. We can learn from our mistakes and make amends. Every mistake is also an opportunity!
5. **Take care of the Earth:** The parashah talks about taking care of the land. It's a reminder that we should take care of our planet, too. Being environmentally friendly and responsible is crucial today. Climate change and environmental abuse make our attention even more urgent.
6. **Stay strong during tough times:** When things get tough, the parashah encourages us to stay strong in our faith and beliefs. It's a reminder that even when life is hard, our faith can give us strength. We need to see the big picture and the long term.
7. **Teamwork and unity matter:** The parashah shows that the actions of a whole community can affect everyone. It reminds us that working together and being united can lead to better outcomes for everyone.
8. **Your choices impact the future:** What you do today can affect your future and the world's future. The parashah talks about how our actions can have a lasting impact, so make your choices wisely. On the High Holidays, we learn that every act makes a difference. What seems minor might be major. Our good deeds and our "sins" are weighed in a balance. One good deed can tip it in the right direction.
9. **Strive for a meaningful life:** The parashah encourages us to live a life with meaning and purpose. It's a reminder that we should aim for something bigger than ourselves.
10. **Never lose hope:** Even when things seem bad, the parashah gives us hope. It's a reminder that there's always a chance for things to get better so long as you believe and keep trying.

## Summary

These lessons are a guide for living a **good, responsible, and meaningful life**. They're not just for adults; they can help everyone make better choices and be better people.