



Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Re'eh | Sichah 1

The Verse:

“See, I present before you today a blessing and a *klala* {a curse}.” (*Devarim* 11:26)

The Translations:

Targum Onkelos translates the word *klala* literally as “a curse.” *Targum Yonasan* translates the phrase as “a blessing and its substitute.”

The Question:

A substitute is somewhat different than that which it replaces, yet is similar enough that it can effectively take its place. Since a curse is the opposite of a blessing, how can *Targum Yonasan* call a curse a “substitute” of a blessing?

The Preliminary Explanation:

Targum Yonasan is not a literal translation, but rather, a commentary written for Jews living in exile who do not “speak” Hebrew, the language of redemption. It seeks to interpret the Torah for a Jew experiencing exile based on midrashic teachings.

The question the *Targum* addresses is this: If “no evil descends from G-d” (*Iggeres Hakodesh*, ch. 11), how can the verse say that “I present before you... a curse”? Therefore, the *Targum* explains that what we perceive as a “curse” is really just a “substitution” of a blessing. G-d only sends blessings, but our actions can transform, “substitute,” these blessings for what seems to us like “curses.”

The Rebuttal:

On this basis, the “curse” is not given by G-d; rather, it is created by us. The verse states clearly, however, “I present before you,” meaning, G-d Himself gives the curse.

The Preface to the Explanation:

How could two divergent realities, blessings and curses, emerge from one unified G-d?

G-d’s true unity is expressed in His ability to contain opposites. The scope of G-d’s abilities shows that He is not confined to one form of expression; He is able to act in myriad, even contradictory ways.

The “curses” that we experience in this world are the deepest expressions of G-d’s unity, because it is where we see His limitlessness — His ability to be expressed even in what seems like darkness.

The Explanation:

Thus, a curse is called a “substitute” for a blessing because it is from the same good G-d; in fact, it is deeper than a blessing because it is rooted in G-d’s Essence. Yet, because its source is so deep, its form of expression has to be “substituted” for what to us seems as “curses.”

In order to reveal the true nature of these shrouded blessings, we need to accept them as blessings by “rejoicing in suffering.” Then, the inner good of these blessings will come to the surface.

The Haftorahs:

According to this, we can understand the sequence of the seven “Haftorahs of Consolation” that are read following the Three Weeks. In the first reading, G-d instructs the prophets to comfort the people. In the second and third, the people protest that G-d has abandoned them; they do not want the prophet’s consolation; they want G-d Himself to console them. In the fourth, G-d agrees and says, “I will surely console them.” (*Abudraham, Order of Parshiyos and Haftorahs*)

Meaning, the Jewish people sensed that their suffering came from deep within G-d's Essence. Therefore, they rejected the prophet's consolation, because they knew there was more to their experience of suffering than was evident on the surface. Their demand that G-d Himself console them induced G-d to reveal to them the true origin of their suffering — "I will indeed console them."