

The Torah gives twenty-seven pesukim of dire forewarning against forsaking the Torah's Rules, Laws, and Commandments. Then it gives hope.

וְאִף־גַּם־זֹאת בְּהִיּוֹתָם בְּאֶרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם לֹא־מֵאַסְתִּים וְלֹא־גַעַלְתִּים לְכַלְתֶּם לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

“And even during this also, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them to destroy them, and to annul My bris with them. Because I am Hashem, their Lord.” (Vaykra 26:44).

The Torah is clearly qualifying its foreboding. How can we properly understand these warnings? On one hand the Torah is saying to reject the Torah means starvation (Vaykra 26:21), war (ibid 18), hardship (ibid 25), fear (ibid 36), death (ibid 30), and exile (ibid 32). The same time, Hashem will never completely forsake and abandon Bnei Yisroel and will protect them in exile. On one hand, the Land will be destroyed (ibid 16) – the soil will be like copper (ibid 19) and there will be no produce (ibid 21). The same time, Hashem will then eject Bnei Yisroel from the Land and allow it to rest for all the Shviis years it did not rest (ibid 25). How is this parsha to be understood? Also, why so many synonyms: spurn, reject, destroy, forsake? Finally, which “bris” does this pasuk refer to?

Gemara Yerushalmi Taanis 2:14 *refers to this parsha as blessings and curses.*

Gemara Megillah 11a explains our parsha. *And Shmuel explains the pasuk (Vayikra 26:44): “I will not reject them”; this was in the days of the Greeks. “Nor will I spurn them” this was in the days of Vespasian. “To destroy them utterly” this was in the days of Haman. “To break My bris with them”; this was in the days of the Persians. “For I am Hashem, their Lord” this is in the days of Gog and Magog.*

Midrash says “this” refers to “this is the Torah.” *It is the Torah that will not depart from the nation, even in exile. (Sifra Devorim 4:44).*

This is how many interpret *Vehi Sheamda* “And this has stood” in the Haggadah.

Rashi says, *even though they are in the land of their enemies I will not utterly destroy them because I have a bris with them. The bris is “I am Hashem your Lord.”*

Ibin Ezra says, one term "gam" or "af" would suffice. Both are used for elegant language. Even though Hashem will not forsake them, they will be punished. "Spurn" means He will not turn away from them. "To break my bris." They broke the bris. I am still going to keep it.

Tur HaAroch says, I did not spurn means that I do not wipe them out completely. I chastise them sufficiently to humble their hearts. "Bris." Even though they broke their end Hashem does not break His bris.

Chizkuni points out, what is left for Yisroel that they are ejected from their Land? It is the Torah that is still theirs. They are not deprived of the Torah. As we say in Neila prayer, toward the end of Yom Kippur "There is nothing left but the Torah."

Rabbanu Bachya says, the Torah is still with Yisroel in exile. If they did not still have the Torah then they can claim Hashem completely spurned them. Counting the words in these pesukim from 26:14 until 26:43 (the curses) it is 390. This teaches that these are the years that Bnei Yisroel sinned in the Land. Also, a promise was made to Yitzchok that if they sin for less than 390 years there would be no exile. See there for the full discussion. Also, in the words "and even during this also" it kabbalistically means that a part of the Shechina stays with Bnei Yisroel in galus.

Ohr Chaim points out that this pasuk is part of the dire forebodings. The nation can perhaps accuse Hashem, obviously wrongfully, that Hashem withdrew first. Hashem does not withdraw His supervision and does not spurn them. Further, Midrash Tehillim 69 says, that Hashem took His vengeance on bricks and wood (Beis HaMikdash) instead of the people. He also sent them into exile among pagan kings and that harsh treatment fulfills justice. Therefore, exile saved the Bnei Yisroel from actual annihilation. "Bris." This refers to when Hashem said that Bnei Yisroel are my עם סגולה וממלכת כהנים (He refers to "be to me a treasure" Shemos 19:5, and "a kingdom of priests" ibid 19:6).

Ohr Chaim is difficult to understand because first he asks how this pasuk is part of the dire premonitions and then he explains how the verse is not part of them but merely qualifies those dire premonitions. Therefore, they are, certainly, not part of the dire premonitions. The Torah now has turned and even though it gave the curses, it is qualifying them and giving hope.

“And even also this” This means *even during this also*, while Hashem is punishing up to seven times (Vaykra 26:44), the punishments are done because Hashem is there. He does not forsake or despise Bnei Yisroel. The poverty, hardship, war, and *galus* is not done because Hashem spurned the nation, and left them to their own devices and the mercy of their enemies. It is not akin to a king putting a subject in a lions’ cage and seeing what will happen. It is done because Hashem *did not* spurn the nation and still watches over them. If Hashem were to consider the bris broken and the Bnei Yisroel left on their own, then perchance hardship would follow. However, the main point would be the people would be lost. Just as Hashem rewards, Hashem punishes. Yisroel can *feel* Hashem’s hand during these hardships. This is the double wording. *And even this also is Hashem doing it.*

During the episode of Purim, Chazal say that Hashem hid His face. The people did not experience hardship, poverty, or trouble. They lived, seemingly peacefully, for fourteen years. Then a decree came out against them that seemed mind boggling. A king will kill a percentage of his subjects for no other reason than Haman asked? It was Hashem, clearly, now running the show. Hashem created the tragedy and created the miracle that saved.

When Hashem turns His face, it does not necessarily mean destruction. It means there is no special relationship, connection, or protection. This pasuk is teaching that the hardships are specific *because* “I am Hashem Your Lord.”

“When you will be in the land of your enemies.” The pasuk does not say, “when I put you in the land of your enemies.” It is more passive. Being in the land of enemies is a result of nature and Yisroel’s own choices. Hashem may spit them from the land, but that does not mean they must reside with their enemies. We see this in history as eastern Jews lived relatively in peace in Arab lands. Jews under the Christian monarchs suffered greatly.

*I will not reject them or spurn them to be destroyed.* There might be a choice of where to live. Eretz Yisroel or in diaspora. Even when choosing, and also when it just happens, to live in the land of their enemies Hashem does not reject them. Holocausts, Inquisitions,

pogroms, expulsions, war, terrorism, and bigotry are not from Hashem. That is man having free choice and acting evil. This pasuk tells us that even during all of these times Hashem does not reject Yisroel and will not allow them to come to annihilation. Hashem will still watch over and protect Yisroel and Am Yisroel *chai*.

The Torah follows the Jews into exile. It follows those that want to follow it. Everyone has this choice. It is not merely a Constitution for Eretz Yisroel (like the Tzedukim believed). It is a way of life for all times and places. Those who seek it can keep it. It is through the following of the Torah that the path back to *geula* will be revealed.

*To forsake my bris.* This bris is “I am Hashem, your Lord.” It says וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם : אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁכְנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם : “And they shall know that I am Hashem, their Lord, who brought them out of the Land of Egypt that I shall dwell among them (lit. have my Shechina – Divine Presence – among them), I am Hashem, their Lord.” (Shemos 29:46). This was told to Moshe when he went up onto Har Sinai the first time to learn the Torah. Hashem made a promise that He took them out of the Land of Mitzrayim specifically to be their Lord and so that He can rest among them. The bris from Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov, about bringing them to the Land was fulfilled (or would be fulfilled before these curses come to fruition). The bris between Bnei Yisroel and Hashem at Har Sinai when giving the Aseres Hadibros, is the bris that Bnei Yisroel are breaking and getting punished for. Hashem need not keep His end. It is the Bris of “I am Hashem, your Lord” that He will fulfill. This bris unilateral, told to Moshe without the Bnei Yisroel being present. It did not require the Bnei Yisroel to agree as it is a one-sided bris. This bris is not based on the initial going into the Land. The bris is eternal and follows Bnei Yisroel for all times in all places.

Looking at the scope of Jewish history, what about the ten shevatim? Is Hashem still with them? We can look at this pasuk and be hopeful that Hashem is watching over them and there will be *kibutz galiyus* for those exiled after the second Beis HaMikdash and even for the ten lost shevatim who were exiled and lost earlier.