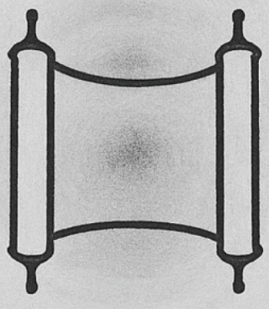
בס"ד

Reb Pinchas of Koretz

Imrie Pinchas

Parshas Ki Savo



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Ki Savo

Introduction

These teachings from Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz reveal the hidden depth and divine compassion embedded within the words of *tochachah*—rebuke—in the Torah. What may appear as curses are in truth sources of life and mercy. The rebuke is likened to the gallbladder, a bitter organ that preserves vitality. Even angels tremble before it. The absence of a pursuer is shown to be a greater curse, for it signals the loss of divine compassion. And the death of a tzaddik is described as a blow not written in the Torah, for his light and Torah become concealed. Through these teachings, we learn that what appears harsh may in truth be the very breath of spiritual life.

Siman #433

And you shall walk in His ways (Deuteronomy 28:9). It is a mitzvah to resemble the Creator.	**.וְהָלַכְתָּ בִּדְרָכָיו (כ״ח, ט). מִצְוָה לְהִדָּמוֹת לַבּוֹרֵא**
For it is stated in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 65b): "If they wish, the righteous could create worlds." And the reason is that the Thirteen Attributes are the Ten Sefiros of mercy, and Hashem created the world with Ten Sefiros.	דְּאִיתָא בְּגְמָרָא (סַנְהֶדְרִין סה, ב): אִי בָּעֵי צַדִּיקֵי הֲוֵי בָּרָאוּ עָלְמֵי. וְהַטַּעַם דִּי"ג מִדּוֹת הֵן עֶשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת רַחֲמִים, וְהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בָּרָא הָעוֹלָם בְּעֶשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת.
And one who is attached to His attributes is attached to the Ten Sefiros, and he too is able to create worlds. And this is the mitzvah: to resemble the Creator.	וּמִי שֶׁהוּא דָּבוּק בְּמִדּוֹתָיו הוּא דָּבוּק בַּעֶשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת, וְגַם הוּא יָכוֹל לִבְרוֹא עוֹלָמוֹת. וְזֶהוּ הַמִּצְוָה לְהִדָּמוֹת לַבּוֹרֵא.
And it is taught (Megillah 16b) that the Holy One, blessed be He, called Yaakov 'El'.	וְאִיתָא (מְגִילָה טז, ב) שֶׁהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא קְרָאוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב אֵל.

[NOTE Summary:
This passage explains the mitzvah of *"וְהָלַכְתָּ בִּדְרָכָיו"*—to walk in Hashem's ways—as a directive to *resemble the Creator*. The author teaches that Hashem created the world through the ten Sefiros, which themselves express His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. A person who cleaves to these divine attributes aligns himself with the Ten Sefiros, thereby becoming spiritually empowered—even to the extent that, like the tzaddikim mentioned in Sanhedrin, he too can "create worlds" through his deep spiritual connection. The mitzvah to imitate Hashem thus carries the transformative potential to elevate one into active partnership with Divine creation. The proof of this lofty status is brought from the Midrash that Hashem Himself called Yaakov "El," indicating that a human who walks in His ways is granted a title of godliness.

Practical Takeaway:
Spiritual growth is not about passive belief, but about active emulation. By imitating Hashem's mercy, patience, humility, and kindness, we align ourselves with His creative power and bring holiness into the world. Every time we choose compassion over anger, generosity over selfishness, we participate in building the world anew, just like Hashem. **END NOTE]**

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Regarding the matter of rebuke, he said that all of it is blessing.	בְּעִנְיַן הַתּוֹכֵחָה, אָמַר דְּכוּלָּה בְּרָכוֹת נֵינוּ.
And in the name of the Rav, author of the *Akeidah* (so it seems to me, in Siman 257), that the verse—when read in reverse—is a blessing: "To you and not to your enemies they shall be given," etc. (our parsha, Deuteronomy 28:30).	וּבְשֵׁם הָרַב בַּעַל עֲקֵידָה (כָּךְ דּוֹמֶה לִי רנז) שֶׁהַפָּסוּק כְּשֶׁקּוֹרִין בְּהֵיפֶךְ הוּא בְּרָכָה, לְךָ וְאֵין לְאוֹיְבֶיךָ נְתוּנִים (פָּרָשָׁתֵנוּ כ״ח, ל׳) וְגוֹ'.
And this is the meaning of "Hashem turned for you the curse into a blessing" (Deuteronomy 23:6)—that when the verse is read in reverse, it is a blessing.	וְזֶהוּ וַיַּהֲפֹךְ ה' לְךָ אֶת הַקְּלָלָה לִבְרָכָה (דְּבָרִים כ״ג, ו׳), כְּשֶׁקּוֹרִין הַפָּסוּק בְּהֵיפֶךְ הוּא בְּרָכָה.
And in the name of the Rav, of blessed memory: just as there are 248 limbs in a person, so too in the Torah.	וּבְשֵׁם הָרַב זִכְרוֹנוֹ לִבְרָכָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּאָדָם רְמַ״ח אֵיבָרִים כֵּן יֵשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה.
And the rebuke is like the gallbladder in the Torah. And just as in a person the vitality depends on the gallbladder—for if it is missing or punctured, the person is a *tereifah* and cannot live (Chullin 42b)—so too the rebuke is the vitality, etc.	וְהַתּוֹכֵחָה הִיא הַמָּרָה שֶׁבַּתּוֹרָה, וּכְמוֹ בָּאָדָם תְּלוּיָה הַחַיּוּת בַּמָּרָה, שֶׁאִם נֶחְסְרָה אוֹ נִקְּבָה – טְרֵפָה וְאֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לִחְיוֹת (חוּלִּין מ״ב, ב׳), כָּךְ הַתּוֹכֵחָה הִיא הַחַיּוּת וְגוֹ'.
And as Rashi writes at the beginning of Nitzavim (Deuteronomy 29:17), that the curses establish and sustain you in the world.	וּכְמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּרָשִׁ"י רֵישׁ פָּרָשַׁת נִצָּבִים (כ״ט, י״ז) שֶׁהַקְּלָלוֹת מְצִיבִין וּמְקַיְּימִין אֶתְכֶם בָּעוֹלָם.

[NOTE Summary:
This powerful teaching from Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz explores the hidden vitality within the Torah's rebuke (*tochachah*). At first glance, the verses of rebuke in Parshas Ki Savo appear to be curses, but Rabbi Pinchas—citing the Akeidas Yitzchak (likely Siman 257)—reveals that when read in reverse, these curses reveal blessings. For example, the verse "your enemies will take them" can be inverted to say "to you and not to your enemies they will be given." This insight is supported by the verse "Hashem turned the curse into a blessing" (Devarim 23:6), meaning the very phrasing of the verses conceals blessings within.

Furthermore, Rabbi Pinchas teaches—quoting a previous Rav—that just as the human body has 248 limbs, so too does the Torah. And just as the *gallbladder* is critical for life—its absence or rupture renders one a *tereifah*—so too is the *tochachah* essential to the life of the Torah. It is not an extraneous punishment but a source of spiritual vitality. As Rashi writes on Parshas Nitzavim, the curses "establish and sustain you in the world." The deepest blessings often hide in painful garb, but they are lifelines of divine connection.

Practical Takeaway:
Don't recoil from challenge or rebuke—it may be the deepest form of Hashem's love. When faced with adversity, try reading the experience "in reverse." What appears as hardship may actually be a blessing in

disguise, a vital message nurturing your spiritual life. Just as the gallbladder is essential to physical survival, so too is divine rebuke essential for spiritual health.

Chassidic Story:
Once, Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was walking with his students through the forest near Koretz when they encountered a poor woodcutter, barely clothed and worn by hardship. The man greeted them cheerfully, and Rabbi Pinchas asked him how he remained so joyful. The woodcutter replied, "Rebbe, do not the curses of the Torah themselves sustain us? If Hashem speaks harshly to me, it is only because He wants to keep me close. I know I am alive because I feel His weight upon me."

Rabbi Pinchas turned to his students and said, "This man understands the truth better than most scholars. The *tochachah* is not a curse—it is the gall that preserves the body, the pain that keeps the soul awake."
END NOTE]

Siman #435

Regarding the matter of rebuke:	בְּעִנְיַן הַתּוֹכֵחָה,
In the Torah there is a "lung," which is the arrangement of brick atop brick in the Song (Megillah 16b)—like air in the lung (that flies through the air)—which brings wind.	בַּתּוֹרָה יֵשׁ רֵיאָה, שֶׁהִיא אֲרִיחַ עַל גַּבֵּי לְבֵינָה בַּשִּׁירָה (מְגִילָּה ט״ז, ב׳) כַּאֲוִיר בָּרֵיאָה (פּוֹרְחִים בָּאֲוִיר) שֶׁמְּבִיאָה רוּחַ.
The rebuke is the "gallbladder," and it is the vitality of the whole world, for one must fear Hashem due to outer fear.	הַתּוֹכֵחָה הִיא הַמָּרָה, וְהִיא חַיּוּת כָּל הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְיִרָא מֵה׳ מִחֲמַת מוֹרָא חִיצוֹנִיּוּת.
Even the angels fear the rebuke, etc.	אֲפִלּוּ מַלְאָכִים יְרֵאִים מִן הַתּוֹכֵחָה וְגוֹ'.

[NOTE Summary:
This teaching from Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz draws a rich anatomical metaphor to explain the role of *tochachah* (rebuke) in Torah. He compares different parts of Torah to parts of the human body: the *r'eah* (lung) corresponds to the poetic structure of "brick atop brick" in the Song of the Torah (as per Megillah 16b), resembling air in a lung that brings breath or wind. But more essential still is the *marah* (gallbladder), which he identifies with *tochachah*. Just as the gallbladder plays a critical role in the body's vitality, rebuke sustains the life-force of the world. Rebuke instills **outer fear**—a necessary element for maintaining awe of Hashem, especially at the surface level. Even the angels, he says, fear rebuke, highlighting its spiritual potency and cosmic importance.

Practical Takeaway:
Don't dismiss feelings of discomfort when confronted with rebuke or moral challenge. They are not signs of weakness, but of spiritual breath—like the gallbladder to the body, *tochachah* keeps the soul awake and aligned. A bit of trembling before Heaven can be the most life-giving force of all.
END NOTE]

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Siman #436

Further regarding the matter of rebuke:	עוֹד בְּעִנְיַן הַתּוֹכֵחָה.
In the name of the Rav, of blessed memory, who said that a person who has no weakness at all is considered at risk—so say the doctors.	בְּשֵׁם הָרַב זִכְרוֹנוֹ לִבְרָכָה, שֶׁאָמַר שֶׁאָדָם שֶׁאֵין לוֹ שׁוּם חֻלְשָׁה הוּא מְסוּכָּן, כָּךְ אוֹמְרִים הָרוֹפְאִים.
And this is the meaning of "the curses establish you…" (Rashi on Devarim 29:12).	וְזֶה הַקְּלָלוֹת מְצִיבִין אֶתְכֶם וְגוֹ' (רַשִׁ"י לְדְבָרִים כ"ט, י"ב).

[NOTE Summary:
This brief yet profound teaching by Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz further deepens the understanding of divine rebuke (*tochachah*). Quoting a medical analogy, Rabbi Pinchas relays that doctors consider a person with no symptoms or weaknesses at all to be at greater risk—something is likely hidden beneath the surface. Similarly, he says, the "curses" of the Torah are not signs of abandonment, but indicators of spiritual life. Citing Rashi on Deuteronomy 29:12, he underscores that *"the curses establish you"*—meaning, these hardships are what anchor and preserve the Jewish people. The presence of rebuke is not a curse, but a necessary function of the body of Torah, like the body's own systems signaling life and response.

Practical Takeaway:
Don't be afraid of spiritual discomfort. A life completely devoid of challenge may actually be a sign of stagnation, not success. Just as illness can awaken healing, divine rebuke can awaken growth. If you feel the pressure of Hashem's hand, consider it a sign that you are still being shaped and refined—still fully alive.
END NOTE]

Siman #437

"And you will flee and no one will pursue you" (Leviticus 26:17).	**וְנַסְתֶּם וְאֵין רֹדֵף אֶתְכֶם כ"ו, י'**
He said: What is the curse—that there is no one pursuing?	אָמַר, מַהִי הַקְּלָלָה מַה שֶׁאֵין רוֹדֵף.
Rather, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Upon those who are pursued, there is mercy, as our Sages said (Koheles Rabbah 3:6), "Always be among the pursued."	אֶלָּא, שֶׁאָמַר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, לַנִּרְדָּפִין יֵשׁ עֲלֵיהֶם רַחֲמָנוּת, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲז"ל (קֹהֶלֶת רַבָּה ג, ו) לְעוֹלָם תְּהֵא מִן הַנִּרְדָּפִין.
And when there are no pursuers upon them, there is no mercy upon them—and this is a great curse, Heaven help us.	וּכְשֶׁאֵין עֲלֵיהֶם רוֹדְפִין אֵין עֲלֵיהֶם רַחֲמִים, וְזֹאת קְלָלָה גְּדוֹלָה רַ"ל.

[NOTE Summary:
Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz offers a penetrating interpretation of the verse "וְנַסְתֶּם וְאֵין רֹדֵף אֶתְכֶם"—"You will flee, but no one will pursue you" (Vayikra 26:17). At first glance, this might not seem like a curse, but Rabbi Pinchas explains that it reveals something deeply troubling: the absence of pursuers signifies the removal of divine compassion. He cites *Koheles Rabbah* (3:6), which teaches *"Always be among the pursued, not the pursuers,"*

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for Hashem's mercy rests upon those who are oppressed. When one is pursued, Heaven looks upon them with pity and protection. But when no one chases them—when they are abandoned even by enemies—it means they are no longer worthy of divine attention or sympathy. That, he says, is a *far greater curse* than being chased.

Practical Takeaway:
Don't mistake quiet or ease for a blessing if it comes with spiritual detachment. Even in struggle, Hashem's compassion is present. It's better to be among the "pursued"—challenged, brokenhearted, or humbled—than to be spiritually abandoned. If life feels too "quiet," reflect: is it the peace of connection or the silence of distance?

Chassidic Story:
Once, during a period of terrible slander and humiliation, one of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz's disciples begged him to defend himself publicly. Rabbi Pinchas refused. He said, "Better to be among the pursued than the pursuers, for Hashem rests with the oppressed." He remained silent despite the shame—and in time, the truth came to light. Those who attacked him were disgraced, while Rabbi Pinchas's honor rose even higher.
END NOTE]

Siman #438

"Also every illness and every blow that is not written in this book of the Torah…" (Deuteronomy 28:61).	**גַּם כָּל חֳלִי וְכָל מַכָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא כָתוּב בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת כ"ח, ס"א**
And they expounded (Midrash Peliah): this refers to the death of tzaddikim.	וְדָרְשׁוּ (מִדְרָשׁ פְּלִיאָה): זוֹ מִיתַת צַדִּיקִים.
And he asked: are there not many afflictions that are not written?	וְהִקְשָׁה: הֲלֹא יֵשׁ כַּמָּה מַכּוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא כְתוּבוֹת?
And he answered: when a tzaddik says something, afterward one finds that thing in the Torah.	וְתֵירֵץ: כִּי כְּשֶׁהַצַּדִּיק אוֹמֵר דָּבָר, מוֹצְאִין אַחַר כָּךְ אֶת הַדָּבָר הַהוּא בַּתּוֹרָה.
And when the tzaddik dies, one no longer finds that thing in the Torah.	וּכְשֶׁהַצַּדִּיק מֵת, אֵין מוֹצְאִין אוֹתוֹ בַּתּוֹרָה.
Therefore, "a blow that is not written in the Torah"—this means something that is no longer found in the Torah—this is the death of tzaddikim.	וְלָכֵן "מַכָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא כְתוּבָה בַּתּוֹרָה", הַיְינוּ שֶׁאֵין מוֹצְאִין אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה בַּתּוֹרָה – זוֹ מִיתַת צַדִּיקִים.

[NOTE Summary:
Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz offers a profound and original interpretation of the verse *"Also every illness and every blow that is not written in this book of the Torah…"* (Deuteronomy 28:61). Citing the *Midrash Peliah*, he explains that this refers to the **death of tzaddikim**. He then poses a difficulty: aren't there many illnesses and blows not written explicitly in the Torah? Why, then, is this phrase singled out? The answer reveals a striking spiritual insight: when a tzaddik is alive and speaks truth, that truth can be found in the Torah—the Torah reflects his light. But when the tzaddik passes away, his specific light no longer shines into the Torah in the same revealed way. Therefore, a "blow not written in the Torah" refers to the silence that follows the loss of a

tzaddik, when his Torah is no longer found openly in the text. That is the ultimate *makkah*—the loss of the divine voice embodied by the tzaddik.

Practical Takeaway:
The passing of a tzaddik is not just a personal or communal loss—it is a cosmic silence. But the legacy of a tzaddik can still be revived when we study his words, live by his teachings, and seek his light within Torah. Their death may conceal their Torah, but our connection can reveal it again.

Chassidic Story:
When Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz passed away in 1791, one of his close students wept bitterly and said, "The holy letters have faded from the page." The student explained that when Rabbi Pinchas would teach, verses in Torah would suddenly become clear, as if illuminated from within. After his death, those same passages returned to their hidden state. But months later, during a study session of his teachings, the light returned. The student exclaimed, "He is still with us—in his Torah!"
END NOTE]