



Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

May 19, 2017

A Taste of Torah

Tough Love

by Rabbi Eli Mozes

One summer during my teenage years, my rebbi recommended to my parents that they send me to a mountaineering summer program as an outlet for my energies. Although it was a bit pricey, my parents were always ready to sacrifice for our education, and they put down a sizeable deposit. Yeshiva ended a week before this program began, so I went to join my parents in their bungalow in the Catskills. There weren't many boys my age there and it was rather boring. One night, two other boys my age decided to go hitchhiking around the Catskills. Although I knew this wasn't something my parents would approve of, like a good teenager, I went along anyway. After spending fifteen minutes waiting at the hitching post of the nearby town, I started thinking: My parents are bound to find out about this and, as strict disciplinarians, they will most likely pull me out of the upcoming mountaineering program, even if it means losing their deposit. It only took me a moment to calculate that one night of hitchhiking wasn't worth three weeks of mountaineering and so, difficult as it was, I turned around and headed back to the bungalow colony.

This week's parsha can seem quite shocking. A couple of verses explaining how nice and peachy everything will be if we listen to the Torah. Followed by a long string of - rated R for graphic horror - verses about how not-so-peachy it will be if we don't listen. Some would balk when reading this and wonder, "Is this really the type of contract I want to get myself into?" However, there are

some verses toward the end, which, if understood properly, are really quite comforting. After discussing how the Jews will be forcibly and frightfully evicted from their land and how Eretz Yisrael will lie desolate and in ruins, the verse (Bechukosai 26:34-35) states, "Then the land will be appeased for its *shemittah* (sabbatical) years during all the years of its desolation, while you are in the land of your foes; the land will rest and it will make appease its *shemittah* years. All the days of its being desolate, it will rest, whatever it did not rest during your *shemittah* years when you dwelled upon her."

Rashi (ibid.) explains that the seventy years of the Babylonian exile directly corresponded to the seventy years of *shemittah* and *yovel* (jubilee) which the Jews neglected to keep during the First Temple period. The Torah instructed that they not work the land but rather let it rest during those years. Hashem was forewarning the Jewish People that His will would come to fruition by hook or by crook. We can willfully and joyfully take a sabbatical to spend more time studying Hashem's Torah and let the land rest, or we can attempt to beat the system by working straight through our sabbatical, only to find we have gained nothing at all as our land lies at rest while we are in exile, penniless, homeless and murderously oppressed.

Looking at the tragic history of the Jewish People, one can easily become overcome with depression. However, when one reads through the stinging warning of what is to come if we neglect Hashem's will and then matches that up with a history book, it becomes terrifyingly clear how

Stories For The Soul

A Cut Above

based on story on revach.net

Dr. Nachum Kook, a well-known doctor in Jerusalem, told about an amazing encounter he had with Rabbi Aharon Cohen, the Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) of the Chevron Yeshiva. Rabbi Cohen once had a deep wound in his shoulder which was not healing on its own, and Dr. Kook decided he needed to operate. However, Rabbi Cohen was a very weak man, virtually skin and bones, and Dr. Kook was in a dilemma about how to operate on him. He was afraid to put him under anesthesia due to his frailty, but if he wouldn't put him to sleep Rabbi Cohen would suffer terrible pain during the operation. Dr. Kook discussed the dilemma with Rabbi Cohen, who replied, "There's no need to use anesthesia. Just tell me when you begin to operate, and everything will be fine."

Dr. Kook then recounted what occurred during the operation. "I informed Rabbi Cohen when I began the operation. After I had finished operating, he asked me if I had finished. Until today I can't believe how a person could be capable of withstanding such pain without reacting at all. I asked Rabbi Cohen how he did it, and he said that he thought about words of Torah. He was so immersed in his learning that he even had to ask if the operation was finished!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that immersion in the study of Torah is the key to spiritual growth and receiving Hashem's blessings.

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Kollel Happenings

LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON MAY 28TH

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of Tractate Kiddushin with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up and attend a special study session or learn a special curriculum with a chavrusah. Visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.

TOUGH LOVE: DEALING WITH A DIFFICULT PARENT AT THE JUNE T4T

Join Ari Hoffman, Counselor, MA, LPC, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore this emotionally-fraught and sensitive subject. Wednesday, June 7, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Why is the *bracha* recited only *after* kindling the Shabbos lights, an exception to the general rule to recite the *bracha* before performing the mitzvah?

A: When a woman recites a *bracha* on the Shabbos lights, according to many halachic authorities she is accepting Shabbos, and may no longer perform *melacha* (the forbidden labors of Shabbos), including kindling the lights! Therefore, she first kindles the lights, and only then recites the *bracha*. In order to conform with the halacha which requires that all blessings be recited prior to their

mitzvah, she covers her eyes or otherwise blocks the candles from her view, and does not derive benefit from the lights until after the *bracha*. This seems to have led to the custom of women waving the hands around before finally covering the eyes for the *bracha*.

This week's question: Are there any cases of exception to the general custom of reciting the *bracha* only after kindling the Shabbos lights (i.e., when would one recite the *bracha* before the kindling)?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

The Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles - Part VII

The original building of the Rema Shul burned down in 1557, but was rebuilt and still stands today. It was restored or renovated several times during the centuries. During the Holocaust, the Nazis did not destroy the building, but removed all the furniture, historical and religious artifacts and accoutrements. It was sequestered by the German Trust Office and used to house firefighting equipment. In 1957, a major restoration was undertaken to reestablish its pre-war appearance. The shul is used today, one of two active shuls in Krakow.

Next to the shul is the Old Jewish Cemetery of Krakow, also known as the Rema Cemetery, as the Rema is buried there. The Nazis destroyed much of the cemetery during their occupation in World War II. They destroyed the walls surrounding it and took many of the headstones and monuments for use as paving stones. The Rema's grave was left intact. In later years, the cemetery underwent a restoration, and some of the headstones were returned and put back up, though most are lost.

A Taste of Torah

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accurate these admonitions are. Hashem has a plan for this world, a plan which we chose (at the foot of Sinai) to be a part of. This world needs to be perfected, and we are the ones who are going to have to bring the world to perfection. The difficulties which the Jews have gone through in their exile is not Hashem turning his back on them but, rather, Hashem fulfilling that very same purpose in a different way. The tribulations experienced are not the angry outburst of our Father in Heaven but, rather, the

measured orchestration of a very patient father guiding his children along the only path forward to enable them to fulfill their destiny.

We must always keep in mind that Hashem's will will ultimately prevail. Our free will allows us to decide to be a proud partner with Hashem in making this world a better place, or to be the tool through which the world is fixed, but bear in mind that tools tend to get dented and bent in the process. Make smart choices.