

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

## Journey Of Torah


THE SECRET TO A MATERIALLY SUCCESSFUL JEWISH people is shared at the beginning of this week's parasha. It's a recipe of two things, as the *pasuk* says, "Im *b'chukosai teileichu v'es mitzvosai tishmoru*," if you will follow My statutes and keep My *mitzvos*—then, the Torah continues, you will be blessed with everything good.

Rashi brings in his commentary the words of the *midrash*. "[What are the words 'if you will follow my statutes' referring to?] If it is referring to the keeping of *mitzvos*, don't the next words of the *passuk* already say 'keep my *mitzvos*?' Rather the words mean that the Jew-

ish people need to be '*ameilim baTorah*,' that we need to labor in the learning of Torah."

S'fas Emes comments on the Torah's choice of words to contain this message. The word *b'chukosai* generally refers to *mitzvos* of the Torah that are not understandable to the human intellect, such as not cooking milk and meat together, or not sewing wool and linen into the same garment. Says S'fas Emes, the Torah is teaching us something about this "laboring in Torah." The learning has an element of *chok*, of being above the intellect. That is be-

cause it is to be undertaken with the understanding that we may not come to a complete understanding of what we learn. In this way Torah is different from any other discipline. If a person sets out to learn algebra, the process of learning the rules and formulas is itself meaningless unless at the end the person achieves an understanding of the material. If you attempt to learn algebra and stop in the middle, you have not accomplished. Not

so with the learning of Torah. We learn Torah to attempt to understand Torah. But that is not the measure of success. Understanding at the end is sweet, but real success is the fact that one has made a valiant attempt to understand. The next word after *b'chukosai* is *teileichu*, to travel. It is the journey that is asked of us, not arriving at the destination. 

RABBI  
MOSHE TZVI  
CRYSTAL

## A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN


Parshas *B'chukosai* contains the *tochachah* (the admonition), which is a harsh "rebuke" warning of exile, persecution, and other calamities that will befall the Jewish people if they don't observe the *mitzvos* and if they abandon their covenant with Hashem.

Deciding whom to call to the Torah for the reading of the *tochachah* has been a serious point of contention. Many people felt that being called to the Torah for this portion was a bad omen that would result in tragedy and misfortune (see *Magen Avraham* 428:8 quoting *Maharil* and *Sefer Chasidim* who expresses this fear). The situation deteriorated to the extent that a congregant would have to be paid to accept the *aliyah* (*Chelkas Yaakov* 3:174 reports that this was the custom in Belz in Europe), and if no one would agree to be "hired," the Torah reading of the week was omitted (*Biur Halachah*, O.C. 428:6). In other communities, *shul* decorum was shattered while congregants bickered over who, in their opinion, should be "punished" by being called up for this portion. In some communities, the *gabbai* publicly announced from the *bimah* that whoever wished to do so should volunteer for the *aliyah* (*Rama*, O.C. 428:6, according to the understanding of the *Machatzis Hashekel* and the *minhag* in Hungary), while in other communities this part of the reading was read by the Torah reader without anybody being called up (*Sho'el U'meishiv* 5:9). Most *poskim* were

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## A RIDDLE FOR YOU

There are two *passukim* in the Torah in which all the words end with the letter *mem*. Where are they? (See the *Ba'al Ha-turim* who explains the connection.) 

See reverse side for the answer

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## A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

critical of and dissatisfied with all of these options (*Igros Moshe*, O.C. 2:35).

Consequently, it has become customary for the Torah reader himself to be called upon to read the *tochachah*. The rationale is that, generally, when the reader receives an *aliyah*, there is no need to call him by name, since he is already standing at the *bimah* (see *Rama*, O.C. 139:3 and MB 8). If the reader is a *kohen*, the *aliyos* must be rearranged so that the *tochachah* is included in the *aliyah* of the *kohen* or part of the last *aliyah* (*acharon*), so that the Torah reader who is a *kohen* will be called for the *aliyah* of the *tochachah*.

If, mistakenly, the *gabbai* called a person other than the reader to the *aliyah* of the *tochachah*, that person may not refuse the *aliyah*. Even if he knows that the *gabbai* had malicious intentions when calling him up, he still may not refuse the *aliyah* once he has been called up. If, however, he knows in advance that he will be called, he may walk out of the *shul* before being called up (MB 53:58 & 428:17).

The custom is to read the *tochachah* in a lowered tone of voice (*Magen Avraham* 428:8), but not so quietly that it cannot be heard by the congregation. 🕒

## RIDDLE ANSWER

Be'reizhis 35:12; B'svimb'el 29:33 🕒

## GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL MOMENTUM MEN'S TRIP TO ISRAEL

Rabbi Michael Soroka led a group of local dads on a MoMEntum Israel trip. The group is maintaining its inspiration with follow-up learning and social get-togethers.

We're accepting applications for our upcoming trips: Women (few spots left) - end of July; Men - November.



## GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

MRS. BERNSTEIN LIVED IN AN APARTMENT THAT looked out over the hills of Jerusalem, and she particularly enjoyed her view. In many Jerusalem neighborhoods, the only place to build is up, and in fact a building across the street from her posted its rooftop for sale. The roof was sold to a yeshiva that planned to construct a new building. As the building went up, Mrs. Bernstein saw with chagrin that her view was going to disappear forever. At first, she viewed the obstruction with annoyance, but then she was struck by a different thought. "Do I want

to spend my whole life feeling annoyed at a yeshiva, a place that is made to learn Hashem's Torah?" She came up with an idea. When she saw the head of the yeshiva visiting the building, she went over and handed him a donation towards the cost of construction and then told him why she gave the donation. "I want to be invested in the construction of your building, so that way I will feel a sense of satisfaction as I see the yeshiva building take shape instead of annoyance at losing my view." 🕒

## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

An issue that that became increasingly prevalent in America was that couples would have a civil marriage without having a *halachically* acceptable one. A question would then arise as to whether these unions required a *get* (*halachic* document of divorce). If a civil marriage had no status of marriage in Torah law, then seemingly it would not require a *get*. This question was discussed by a host of *halachic* authorities, among them Rav Moshe Shick, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, Rabbi Avraham Dov-Ber Kahana Shapiro, Rav Hertzog, Rav Eliyahu Henkin, and Rav Yaakov Dovid Wilovsky. One side felt that a man and woman who lived together as husband and wife were to be considered as married, since it is possible under certain circumstances their living together as husband and wife could technically be considered a *halachic* marriage. The other opinion held that couples in these instances had no intention to be married in a *halachically* acceptable way, and therefore their living together as husband and wife was meaningless. Therefore, these couples were in no way married and did not need a *get*. 🕒

SOURCE: Schwartz, Rabbi Gedalia Dov. "Shaarei Gedulah." PP 214-215. Chicago Rabbinical Council. 2007.

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