

May 19, 2012 **BEHAR** (On The Mountain) / **BECHUKOTAI** (My Statutes)

The first *parashah* for this week is *Behar* – on the mountain. It deals with real estate, indebtedness, the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee, but it also reminds us that everything belongs to *HaShem* and that we are only the custodians.

The second *parashah* is *Bechukotai* – my statutes. It expands on the blessings for the community for going by the Book, and also the curses for not obeying. Of course, there are more curses than blessings, but there may be a reason for this.

For Jewish parents, we were reminded that there are three career choices for your children; your child may become a doctor, a lawyer, or a failure. And, certainly, every parent wants his child to be successful in life. But what can you, as a parent, do to help your child succeed? Obviously, you would teach your child manners and the social graces when they are very young. As they grow up a little, you give them some responsibility; a little at first, and more later on. When they enter the school system, you know that they will never succeed if they don't learn their ABC's and their 1,2,3s. But, I am sure that every parent here has met some resistance at one time or another when it comes to homework.

You know it is in their best interest for the children to study and learn, but maybe they would rather shoot some hoops or hang out. As a parent, you can offer your child some choices. You can offer an incentive like, "Get straight A's and I'll give you an Ipod." They may study and learn, not for the sake of learning, but for the incentive that was offered. Nevertheless, they learn. Parents are so clever. On the other hand, you might threaten, "If you don't obey your curfew, you'll be grounded for a month." Do they obey the curfew because they have taken on responsibility or because of the threat?

We love our children and want only what is best for them. We want them to grow and mature and become successful. This is because we were made in the image of *HaShem*. *HaShem* wants only what is best for us. He would give us rain in due season, permit us to live in safety, walk among us, and give us an Ipod if we obey. He also promised plagues, wild beasts, and the sword. Do we obey for the sake of righteousness or for the rewards?

As always, the choice is ours. Which will it be – blessings or curses?