

Behar-Bechukotai

- Mordecai Zeitz. Counting up to Shavuot

Shabbat Shalom: Behar-Bechukotai 2006

I am pleased to share these thoughts with you as they will appear nationally in the Canadian Jewish News.

RABBINIC REFLECTIONS----(May 18, 2006)

As a child, I still remember at times pleading with my friends or even with my parents-'let me do it again!' The third strike in a baseball game or a missed basket in the dying moments of a crucial game; the test I forgot to study for or that investment that might have changed my life; all elicited from me-with full sincerity- the plaintive plea--'that one doesn't count! Let's do it again!

This is not mere child's play but as adults we often have the same wish.

If I could only do it over again I know the results would be so much better. I'm sure that each of us has had that urge to 'do it over again'.

Just suppose you could start everything all over again. If you could wipe out the past and start fresh, could or would things be different?

It's a dream and a luxury we contemplate but one which we know in our gut is a reality which we will never enjoy.

There is such a reality projected in this week's Torah reading with the concept of YOVEL or the Jubilee Year. Everything in Jewish society was based on a fifty year cycle. Nothing was forever. The sale of property, houses, loans, debts and even slavery where and when it existed, were all valid for a fifty year period. Everything was negotiated in accordance with how many years remained in the YOVEL cycle. In the fiftieth year everything returned to ground zero-the way it started at the beginning of the cycle. Property was returned to the original owner, private debts were canceled-everything was rewound back to zero-to the original starting point. You literally get to start life all over again.

I can appreciate the second chance given to a new generation, not being burdened by the past for which they had no responsibility. It's an ideal the Torah sets out as to how things ought to be but facts on the ground in the world that is, tell us that the same person confronted with the same situation with the same mind set would repeat the original action.

In other words, for the most part, if we do not learn from our previous mistakes, we tend to repeat the same poor judgment that got us into the jackpot to begin with. Whether it is in dealing with the recurring challenges of history, in business decisions, with marriages or personal relationships or in the rehabilitation of many forms of addiction, there is a tendency to just repeat our previous actions. There appears to be no sense in winding back the clock. We would end up in the same situation. It would only be yesterday repeated again today.

And so while the dream of 'Oh! If I could just do it again' appears to be a pipe dream, we should

not despair. There is a unique application of the YOVEL experience available to make a difference. The true YOVEL spirit today can truly spell the difference for tomorrow.

We declare daily: Hamchadaish Betuvo BeChol Yom Tamid-G-d affords us the opportunity to change directions through our actions every day. The more realistic plan is to modify what happened yesterday by starting fresh the next day with a renewed fresh look. Every day is a new day and not a repeat of the past. YOVEL is not so much wiping out the past as it is providing the beginning a new chapter. Planning and truly believing in a better today without being overwhelmed by yesterday will set the stage for a more successful tomorrow. YOVEL tells us we are not shackled by the missteps of the past but we have a fresh start every day.

What power! What privilege! What opportunity! The potential of starting fresh every day; realizing the vast potential of every new day is a great gift given to us by the Almighty. It's not a dream and it need not wait for 50 years. The gift of YOVEL is here and now-starting every day as if it was the first day of our renewed life. Meet the challenge of daily life by improving today for an even better tomorrow.

SHABBAT SHALOM and may we be privileged to jumpstart every day with a fresh beginning and renewed enthusiasm.

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