

This פרשה of בחוקותי is the first of the two תוכחות in the תורה, the second time being in כי תבוא. The way the חכמים structured the leining of the year, we lein this פרשה right before שבועות, because it functions like a contract. What does a contract mean? A contract means: "If you do this, I'll do that. If you don't do this, I won't do that." So Hashem presents us with ברכות and קללות. "If you keep the תורה," which we are about to reaccept on שבועות, "then I will give you the ברכות. And if not, חס ושלום, the opposite." Similarly, כי precedes ימים נוראים, where we have this same idea of a contract.

One of the wonderful ברכות written in פרשת בחוקותי is (26:4) וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם - I will give you the rains in the proper time, a tremendous ברכה. We city folks often take this for granted, in fact; we often look at rain as an inconvenience. But the truth is, without rain, we can't live. רש"י explains that בְּעֵתָם means the rain will fall at night, when people are not out traveling and will not be bothered by it. R' Chaim Kanievsky, in his sefer on חומש, brings down a גמרא in יומא about דוסא בן דוסא. He was traveling and it started to rain, so he davened: "ריבונו של עולם, should the entire world be happy while חנינא is getting wet?" Immediately the rain stopped. The מהרש"א asks: how could חנינא רבי put his own comfort ahead of everyone else's need for rain? R' Chaim answers that apparently חנינא רבי knew he could successfully daven again later for the rain to return, so stopping the rain temporarily wouldn't inconvenience anyone.

R' Chaim points out that from here we see something which is very relevant to us: a person should always daven for what he needs. If you need something, whatever it is, you should daven to Hashem and trust Him to make sure 1) that your request is fulfilled, and 2) that nobody else will be negatively affected by your תפילות. And this is proven by the famous situation of the חזקוני גדול on יום כיפור in the קודש הקדשים. One of the תפילות he would daven was that Hashem should not listen to the תפילות of travelers who were asking that it not rain because rain would upset their journey. Now, if such a תפילה was wrong or inappropriate, then the חזקוני גדול wouldn't need to daven that it not be accepted! The fact that he davened such a תפילה shows that this תפילה of the traveler was a legitimate תפילה, one that Hashem could choose to listen to. Therefore, we see that a person is supposed to daven for whatever he needs and trust Hashem to sort everything out so that no one is harmed in the process.

At the beginning of פרשת בחוקותי it says: אִם בָּחֲקָתִי תֵּלְכוּ. All the מפרשים explain that this refers to עמלות. If a person is עמל בתורה, then הקדוש ברוך הוא will shower him with ברכה and הצלחה. Here's a fascinating story: The Jewish community of Ostroh suffered heavily from its goyish population. These anti-Semites did whatever they could to make the lives of the Jewish citizens miserable. One particularly oppressive decree was that if, חס ושלום, a Jew died, his coffin had to be carried past the community church. As the procession passed, the priests and their sympathizers would come out of the church and curse the Jews and even would start beating them, resort to physical blows. These כפרים were proficient in the powers of טומאה and blackmail. They employed all of their impure skills to inject thoughts of עבודה זרה into the minds of the hapless Jews. Not only did they succeed in terrorizing the Jews, but it also caused a terrible dishonor to the מת, in addition to the השם חילול.

When the מהרש"א, who lived in this town, sensed his end approaching, he instructed the חברה קדישא to place the ספרים he had written, the חידושי הלכות and the חידושי אגדות, on the מיטה that would carry his body. When they reached the church, they were to stop the procession and place the מיטה on the ground. The funeral cortege, all the people, included just about every single person in the Jewish community. When they reached the church, they put the מיטה on the ground and moved aside. Suddenly, the מת sat up. The מהרש"א sat up and began to learn from his ספרים as if he were alive. The priests were in an utter state of shock, seeing a corpse arise and study תורה. They turned around and to their horror saw that the church was slowly sinking into the ground, deeper and deeper, until it was completely swallowed up. At that moment, they ran for their lives, perceiving they had just witnessed a miracle of epic proportions. This demonstrates the extraordinary powers of a Jew who learns and adheres to the תורה.



That's אִם בְּהַקְטִי תֵלְכוּ. We certainly could not possibly imagine that we were able to pull off such a feat, were not the מַהֲרַשׁ"א. But it's a tremendous story. One of the מתפללים in my shul that he said when Rabbi Oelbaum was in the Ukraine on one of his many tours of the מקומות הקדושים, he related over this story and spent a long time at this place in Ukraine talking about the מַהֲרַשׁ"א. So that's something we can learn from. The two takeaways from our lesson today: 1) If you need something, ask Hashem. And 2) Sit and learn, the more you learn, the greater level your קדושה. And בעזרת השם you'll be able to עלעס גיט in this עולם הזה.

