

*Welcome to Beyond Twelve Gates by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason*  
*Parshas Behar/Bechukosai      May 16, 2015*

*"NY Mets Pitcher Buddy Carlyle: A Truly Good Buddy!"*

About 90 minutes before most road games, New York Mets relief pitcher Buddy Carlyle can be found in the outfield, giving one early-arriving fan a memory for life. While his teammates take batting practice, Buddy stands on the edge of the warning track and scans the bleachers for a child who catches his eye. When he finds the right candidate, he lobs a baseball over the fence and into the kid's outstretched glove. It is not just a souvenir -- not yet, anyway. Buddy expects a return throw from the boy or girl. Then he tosses it back, again and again, until it becomes clear to everybody just what is happening.

Buddy Carlyle's intent is clear: To leave a lasting memory with an act of kindness. "If you can just give somebody one memory of a game it's kind of cool," Buddy said. "I don't think people ever really forget that. I know I wouldn't if I was a kid. Rather than just throw them a ball. They always get taken aback when I asked them to throw it back." As the game of catch proceeds, nearby fans often reach for their smartphones to start snapping pictures and recording videos. They're watching a major-league pitcher play a legitimate game of catch with a kid in the seats. See for yourself: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7sxKTc3hw0> ) "It's something that's easy for me to do," Buddy said with a shrug. "I figure it's something they'll always remember."

The Talmud says that *chesed* (kindness) is greater than *tzedaka* (charity), because unlike *tzedaka*, *chesed* can be done for both poor and rich, both the living and the dead, and can be done with money or with acts. Buddy Carlyle's kindness has amassed a legion of devoted fans, a group comprising kids he has played catch with through the years -- and their parents. Psalm 89:3 says, "*The universe is built on kindness ...*" Kudos to Buddy Carlyle -- a true universe builder.

*Parshas Behar /Bechukosai      Leviticus 25:1 -- 27:34*

*Behar* focuses primarily on mitzvos concerning the land of Israel, beginning with the command to observe a Sabbatical (*Shemitta*) year. During the Sabbatical year one's fields are to remain uncultivated every seventh year, refraining from the normal cycle of planting and harvesting. Similarly, the land in Israel is to remain unworked in the Jubilee (*Yovel*) or 50th year, at which time ownership of all land automatically returns to its ancestral heritage. A quote found on the Liberty Bell, "*And you should sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land ...*" is taken from the passage describing the Jubilee year. *Behar* also speaks about the poor and downtrodden. Not only are we commanded to give them *tzedaka* and do acts of loving kindness for them, but ideally provide them with the means to raise themselves out of their poverty-stricken state.

*Bechukosai*, the last Torah portion in the book of Leviticus, begins by briefly listing some of the blessings and rewards that the Jewish people will receive for diligently learning and following the Torah. The Portion then shifts to the subject matter which has made it famous -- G-d's admonitions and warnings of the consequences if the Jewish people abandon the Torah. Step by step, the Torah describes the tragedies which will befall the Jewish people if they abandon observance of the Torah, providing an eerie account of what has been part of our history to this day. There is good news, however; *teshuva* (return or repentance) is possible at any time to avert an otherwise harsh decree. The book of Leviticus concludes with a brief discussion of tithes.

*Rabbinic Ruminations*

Debra Meyerson was hiking near Lake Tahoe four years ago when a stroke destroyed part of the left side of her brain, leaving her literally speechless. It happens to more than 150,000 Americans a year. But now Meyerson is learning to talk again through *singing therapy* -- an approach that trains the undamaged right side of her brain to "speak." Specifically, it's a region that controls singing. Former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who has had a version of *singing therapy*, astounded everyone by her ability to speak again following the trauma of a would-be assassin's bullet that tore through the speech center in her left brain. For more than 100 years, it has been known that people who can't speak after injury to the speech center on the left side of the brain *can* sing.

In addition to helping stroke victims, there are at least seven other benefits of listening to music. 1. Music is Powerful: When we listen to our favorite songs dopamine is released by two distinct areas of the brain -- one involved with intense pleasure and the other involved with anticipation. 2. Music is Social: When people get together and hear the same music -- such as in a concert hall -- it tends to make their brains synch up in rhythmic ways, inducing a shared emotional experience. 3. Music Helps Prevent the Flu: Listening to soothing music has been shown to increase antibodies important for immunity. 4. Music is Physical: It enhances a workout and has been shown to increase physical performance. 5. Music Reduces Stress and Anxiety. 6. Music Enhances Memory. 7. Music Makes us Happy. Music improves mood. Even sad music has been shown to help people feel better. Who doesn't like to sing at least occasionally?

The Bible and Talmud are replete with sources in which music and song play a major role. After the splitting of the Red Sea, Moses led the Jewish men in song, and Miriam likewise led the women. Music has been used throughout history as an aid to Jewish prayer and study. The use of music was greatly emphasized by the Baal Shem Tov and is an important component in the teachings of the Chassidic movement. And in Jewish history, music and song have been employed as an instrument to bring people together in an effective and powerful expression of community. King David said, *"My heart is steadfast, O G-d, my heart is steadfast: I will sing and make melody."* (Psalm 57:7) Whatever the reason -- let your soul sing!

### *Quote of the Week*

Some years ago, the great boxer, Muhammad Ali, was asked by a ghetto youth how he could quit school and start a boxing career since he had bad grades. Ali smiled at the young man and said in his poetic fashion:

Stay in college and get the knowledge,  
And stay there till you're through,  
Cause if G-d can make penicillin out of moldy bread,  
He can sure make something out of you.

### **Joke of the Week**

Once there were two brothers, each with a farm on the opposite side of the same hill. The first had a family - wife, sons, and daughters. The second lived by himself. It came to be that, during the harvest, the first brother said to himself, "We have so many mouths to feed whereas my brother has only but himself." So late at night, he would sneak over the hill to his brother's farm and take bags of grain. Now, at about the same time, the second brother said to himself, "My brother has a wife, sons, and daughters to help during the harvest while I have no one to help." So late at night, he would sneak over the hill to his brother's farm and take bags of grain.

One night, they happened to run into each other and each saw what the other was doing. They instantly realized what was happening, and yelled at each other and beat each other up.

And it is on that hill that the Knesset was built.