

## Parsha Behar Bechukotai

In this week's Torah reading, Behar and Bechukotai, there is a seemingly random sequence of verses that begins with observance of the Shemitah year and concludes with rules for laborers and slaves going free. Rashi suggests that this grouping is not random at all; a person who allows greed to overcome his willingness to observe Shemitah will go on a downward spiral of losing his money and possessions until he ultimately must sell himself to idol-worshippers, unless he repents somewhere along the way.

This strikes me as quite a progression. In fact it reminds me of my lecture to students who walk into the classroom seconds late. I explain to them the slippery slope of soon arriving minutes late, then skipping class entirely, then skipping school, then becoming friends with the wrong crowd, never finding a job or a family, and ending up destitute on the side of the road. Students are often left with the question "all of this from being 2 seconds late for class?!"

Perhaps the thread that can be derived is the importance placed on the very first item in the list. In my case, I absolutely do believe that being prepared and on time is important. Do I believe that students will end up job-less because they are two seconds late to my class one time? No, of course not. But if a student doesn't take steps to change this behavior, or doesn't care to take steps to rectify this behavior, then there is also no reason to look for improvement. And as we have learned, remaining at the status quo is rarely an option. So the logical conclusion is for things to get worse in that case.

Similarly in our parsha, If someone's greed is so powerful that he cannot trust in Hashem's word during the Shemitah year that He will watch out for us financially, then we have no reason to believe that this greed will become less powerful, or that this person's faith in Hashem will become more powerful. So instead we will likely witness a decrease in faith and observance of His laws.

When we view things as a chain or progression, it emphasizes even more how important each of our choices is. May we all have the strength to make the right choices from the beginning, so that we are not faced with the crisis of the slippery slope.

