

Behar- Bechukotai.

Jenna Frankel

Shabbat Shalom! My torah portion is Behar- Bechukotai. It takes place right before the Israelites are going to enter Canaan for the first time after leaving Egypt. G-d is speaking to Moses on top of Mount Sinai. G-d is telling Moses what the Israelites need to do once they enter Canaan, the rules. I focused on two of the main rules.

The first rule is that there must be a Sabbath of the Lord celebrated every seven years. The Israelites will farm for six years, then, during the seventh year, they will give the land a rest. They may eat what the land gives them, but not plant anything or farm it. This will continue for forty nine years. Then on the fiftieth year, even if the Israelites had sold their land for money, become poor, or sold themselves as slaves to survive, they will get back all the land that they had to begin with and lose all the land that they had gained in the last fifty years. This was supposed to go on forever. Some farmers still allow the land to rest today, but most ended it a long time ago. The point of this rule is to show that you don't really own the land that you are living and farming on, it's G-d's, and you are only using it. That is why all the land that was gained or lost is returned to its original owner after fifty years.

The second rule was that in your tribe, if an extended family member was so poor that they would be left with no choice but to sell themselves as a slave, then you must take them in and care for them instead, and give them the food of your fields. It

was your job by law to do that once you entered Canaan. The point of this rule is to teach people to be generous and caring toward each other.

My mitzvah project was inspired by this rule about helping the poor. I collected 125 pairs of glasses to donate to New Eyes for the Needy. The glasses will be fixed up with new prescription lenses by New Eyes for the Needy and then sent out to people who can't afford to get glasses and need them. New Eyes for the Needy ships over two hundred thousand pairs of recycled eyeglasses per year to medical missions and international charitable organizations in twenty four developing nations.

This cause is important to me because a lot of the people that I care about and love need glasses. I wear glasses, my little brother wears glasses, my dad wears glasses, and my Grandpa Steve, who died over the summer after fighting a courageous battle with prostate cancer for nine years, also wore glasses. I miss him so much and wish that he could be here today to celebrate this occasion with my family and me, but I know that he is somewhere watching with a big smile. I love him a lot and he meant so much to me. He was a very special and talented man. He owned his own dentist business for a really long time, and only retired a year ago. He loved to travel so much. He was always planning his next trip no-matter how he felt. It wasn't until he was in the hospital last summer that he finally agreed we should re-schedule our family trip to Yellowstone National Park. He had a very big heart. He had enough caring and love in there for everybody that needed it.

Another reason I chose an eyeglass collection for my project is that I know how uncomfortable I feel when I have no contacts or glasses on and other people shouldn't have to experience this simply because they cannot afford a pair of glasses. It is truly unfair and New Eyes for the Needy really helps.

Four months ago, I traveled with my Grandma all the way across the world to the holy land of Israel. I got to have my Grandpa Steve's ticket as my bat mitzvah present from my Grandma. My cousin Zack was the whole reason that we went. He had his bar mitzvah on top of Masada. We traveled all over the country for about ten days and I had the trip and experience of a lifetime. When I entered all the old synagogues and stood on top of Masada, I could feel G-d's presence. At the Western Wall on Erev Shabbat, it felt so good to see so many Jewish people like me. I was always one of a few Jewish kids in my grade, so I felt a sudden sense of belonging. The Western Wall was amazing. I saw things that I could never believe seeing. Thank you Grandma. I had the best time in Israel and know that you did too. I love you. It was so awesome to spend so much time alone with you on the trip and it was an experience that I will never forget. I hope that my parents, my siblings, and I can go to Israel someday as a family.

Grandma Shelly and Grandpa Arnie, I'm so happy you could both be here today. You always support me in whatever I do whether it is a school play, an athletic event, etc. You work so hard to make holidays like Passover and Thanksgiving, where you invite the whole family over, so memorable and fun. I love you both and today would not be the same without you.

I would also like to thank my Mom and Dad for being the best parents that I could ever have, always supporting me in whatever I do, and for encouraging and reminding me to practice my blessings. You are the best! I could never have gotten through my bat mitzvah without you. Sharon and Kyle, thank you for trying not to barge in while I'm practicing, sometimes, and also for just being the most awesome brother and sister anyone could ever have. I would also like to thank Cantor Cohn, for teaching me all the blessings and portions I need to know for this day and Judy Fox for helping me understand my torah portion so I could write this D-Var torah. I feel blessed to have so many friends and relatives here today and you all mean so much to me. Please turn to page seven hundred thirty eight in the big red book.