



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Re'eh

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A Taste of Torah Head in a New Direction

by Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

What were the times in your life that proved most pivotal? Many would point to their youth as a time when their sense of self first emerged. Others might highlight a job change or a move to a new city. Still others will talk about having lived through a time of extreme personal challenge or a national crisis such as the terror attack of 9-11 or the Covid19 pandemic. This week's parsha however, teaches us a vastly different perspective on life-defining moments.

"See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse." (Re'eh 11:26) After this verse begins the parsha, Moshe continues to explain that if the Jewish People heed Hashem's commandments, they will merit the blessing; if they fail to do so, they will suffer the curse. In this opening verse, the Torah lays down the very fundamental principle of free will. While that seems straightforward enough, there is an obvious difficulty with the wording of the verse - why the emphasis on "today"? It would have been sufficient to say, "See, I present before you a blessing and a curse."

A reexamination of the notion of free will, based upon the words of the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905), will provide an answer to this question. We typically think of free will in the context of a choice: Should I do this action or not? There is, however, a step before the choice arises. The path a person is following will determine what choice presents itself.

If a person is heading west to Los

Angeles, he can choose which route he will take to arrive there. But the fact that one is heading toward L.A. in the first place is the first step before one decides which road to travel. The deeper, more fundamental choice which precedes the choice between blessing and curse is the choice of direction. Is one heading toward Hashem, His will, and the ultimate blessing? Or, G-d forbid, is one heading the other way?

In the opening verse of the parsha, the word *today* highlights that each day provides a new opportunity for direction-setting. *Today* I place before you a choice. Forget, for a moment, where you were heading yesterday; where would you like to go *today*? We can now appreciate the word *today* as indicating that every day, a person must decide what direction he is headed; that choice will create the options he will choose moving forward.

Still in need of explanation, though, is the basis for this daily chance to make a direction change. Why, indeed, does each day present the opportunity to chart a new course?

The answer is that Hashem renews Creation daily, thereby introducing into the world newness and freshness. Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Chaver (1789-1852) adds that not only is there a general renewal of Creation daily, but every person receives a new spark of soul every morning. As the sun rises, a bright light begins to shine within our souls, as well.

The Torah is challenging us to tap into that power of newness. Each

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Stories for the Soul

Sigh – of Relief

Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rov (1887-1979), distributed large amounts of charity, much of it from money given to him by others to give as he saw fit. Many needy people found their way to him, and he would listen to their woes and help them in whatever way he could.

It happened once that a man approached the Satmar Rov and told him that his wife had become seriously ill and, in addition, he had children who were handicapped. The man continued that he had huge medical expenses that he was unable to meet. Rabbi Teitelbaum was greatly saddened upon hearing the man's problems, and he gave him whatever money he had available. He also asked others who were with him at the time to lend him money, which he then gave to alleviate the poor man's plight.

A short while later, the Satmar Rov's *shamash* (attendant), Reb Yossel Ashkenazi, arrived at the Rebbe's house and heard what had occurred. He told the Satmar Rov, "This man is a well-known trickster! His wife and children are perfectly healthy and they lack nothing..."

As the Satmar Rov listened to the words of his *shamash*, his pained expression gave way to one of great joy. "Oh, thank you so much for telling me that!" he exclaimed. "How happy I am that his wife and children are healthy. You have no idea how upset I was when I heard him tell me how sick they were."

In this week's parsha, the Torah exhorts us to bring joy to the widow, the orphan, and others in need during our own joyous holidays. Giving charity is not just about a monetary contribution; it is also about feeling the pain of others and seeking to lift the heavy burden from upon their shoulders.

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) All in one | 4) No open and shut case |
| 2) Worse than idolaters | 5) Work night and day |
| 3) Double spine | 6) Four for four |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part XVII

Rabbi Menashe's *Mikveh Yisrael*, focusing on the Lost Tribes and their alleged discovery in South America, set the stage for what is arguably the most famous endeavor Rabbi Menashe embarked upon in his lifetime: the readmission of the Jews to England.

Jews had been expelled from England in 1290, and while there were a few surreptitiously living in England during the mid-1500s, I was not a place where Jews could settle. Rabbi Menashe, always on the lookout for places his brethren, still unsettled following the 1492 Spanish Expulsion, could live, saw an opportunity to convince the English government

to grant Jews permission to settle in England.

England at this had recently overthrown its monarch, King Charles I, following a civil war. A commonwealth was set up, with Oliver Cromwell serving as the head of the government, known as the Lord Protector, from 1653 until his death in 1658.

England during this period featured many Christian people with Millenarian beliefs. Millenarianism is a belief in a fundamental transformation of society and the world at large. The belief is expressed in many different ways throughout history.

A Taste of Torah

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morning, we can turn our direction toward Hashem, even if yesterday we were headed in the other direction. This will be the launch of a journey that reaches the ultimate blessing.

In homiletical fashion, the Sfas Emes explains the closing of the verse beautifully. The verse concludes that both the blessing and the curse are placed before the Jewish People. When we tap into the power of daily renewal, we are not only presented with the blessing, we also are presented with the opportunity to utilize the

curse. If a person has headed away from Hashem, has encountered the spiritual negativity and the curse that comes as a result of his choice, and decides to turn around, he may find himself feeling distant from Hashem. However, yearning to connect from a distance is much more powerful than yearning from close by. This yearning will propel a person to an incredibly lofty level, from where he will be positioned to receive infinite blessings. The curse of one's detachment can thus be converted into a blessing!

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|---|--------------------------|
| 1) All in one 12:14 s.v. bi'achad | 1) All in one |
| 2) Worse than idolaters 13:7 s.v. asher | 2) Worse than idolaters |
| 3) Double spine 14:7 s.v. hashisu'a | 3) Double spine |
| 4) No open and shut case 15:7 s.v. lo si'ameitz | 4) No open and shut case |
| 5) Work night and day 15:18 s.v. ki mishneh | 5) Work night and day |
| 6) Four for four 16:11 s.v. v'hal'evu | 6) Four for four |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers