

## **A Torah Thought**

**by Rabbi Yaakov Klass**

**Chaveirim:** This is the first of my drashot that I will be doing from time to time. As you might be aware I was recently elected Rav of Kahal Bnei Matisyahu in Flatbush. I usually write out my derashot in Hebrew. my son has asked me to do some of them in English for him to use in our new local Jewish Press Shopper publication. I was thinking that it would be nice to have a group of us take turns writing this weekly feature. I hope you will consent to join. Yaakov

“Re’eh anochi notein lifneichem hayom beracha u’kelala. - Behold, I am giving you, today, a blessing and a curse.” (Devarim 11:26)

The difficulty with this, the opening verse to our parsha, is what new thing is Moses bringing to the table. Indeed if his intent was to adjure them to adhere to Hashem’s mitzvot and by so doing there will be a blessing - and if forbid - they do not they will bring about the opposite - a curse, we were taught that previously in Parashat Be’chukotai (Vayikra 26:3-46). Indeed we admit that we have no objection to an additional blessing at this time, or any time, however, when included along with the blessing are curses that presents us both with what is objectionable and difficult to understand.

The Apter Rav (Ohev Yisrael, ParashatRe’eh) cites the conversation of Bnei Yisrael and Moshe (Devarim 5:20-24) where they requested of him that he act as their intermediary at the giving of the Torah, as they trembled in fear at the sound of the Divine voice. Most of the commentaries understand if not for this request and would they have heard all the Torah from the Divine mouth they would have been like Moses, who ascended to the Heavens and yet continued to live. They argued that hearing the voice of would be too much for them to bear thus causing their death. Hashem in the end agreed with them.

The Apter Rav explains, nevertheless by so doing they descended from the level of gevura - great spiritual strength and thus only received the Torah from a messenger (Moses). The result of this is that good and bad remain co-mingled (i.e. all good - contains some elements bad) and a person must labor with great intensity to destroy the bad and cleave to all that is good..

Thus this is what Moses is saying I am giving to you today, the Torah. Since I am giving it to you there is yet extant the possibility of both good and bad - i.e. Beracha - a blessing and Kelalah - a curse. But would you have heard directly from the Gevura - Hashem's own voice you would forever be free men - free from any further enslavement of the yetzer horah - the evil inclination. Just imagine how different the human condition might have been.

Rabbi Nissan Alpert (Limudei Nissan, parashat Re'eh), explains differently, as he asks; Why the additional word in the verse "hayom - today." The inference would seem to be that only today - at that specific time- are blessings and curses given to Bnei Yisrael and not before. Indeed why were they not given any blessing in the course of the forty years of their sojourn in the desert.

Rabbi Alpert explains, that Moses did not mean that he was giving them a blessing or that others would bless them. Rather he now told them that the time has come that they become the very source of all blessing and Heaven forbid the opposite as well. For until now [in their wanderings in the desert] they were totally dependent on the munificence of Hashem for their every human need. Everything from their food to clothing during their long arduous journey was provided them by Hashem. And their Torah learning was proved them by Moses. There was nothing left for them to do.

Rabbi Alpert continues, Now that Moses soon departs and they are to enter land promised to their fathers they will have to build the land, a nation and completely provide for themselves. Thus they will now have the possibility of being the source of blessing for all that they wish to accomplish. Indeed if we only expend but a little effort we too can be the source of great blessings from Hashem.

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