



Parshas Re'eh

For the week ending 25 Av 5756
9 & 10 August 1996

Summary

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem.

When the nation enters *Eretz Yisrael* they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; *not* to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the *Mishkan*, but in *Eretz Yisrael* meat may be *shechted* anywhere. The categories of foods that may only be eaten in Jerusalem are listed by Moshe. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a false prophet tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot between the eyes. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. Bnei Yisrael are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted — Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post, and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuos and Succos.

Commentaries

LOOK AT ME!

“See! I am putting in front of you today a blessing and curse....” (11:26)

When one hears a Rabbi exhorting his flock to lead more spiritual lives and spurn the “flesh-pots,” the thought might cross one’s mind: “What does *he* know about flesh-pots that he can tell me how much better a spiritual life is? Maybe if he had a Rolls Royce, he wouldn’t be so quick to reject materialism!” That’s what Moshe is hinting at here: “See! Look at me! I was a prince in Egypt; I’m one of the richest men in the world; I *know* what material wealth is. On the other hand, I’ve ascended to spiritual realms that no other mortal has reached. I spent 120 days speaking to Hashem “face-to-face.” As a result, I now wear a veil over my face except when I teach Torah, because my face radiates a light that you can’t look at! Look at me — I know both worlds and I’m telling you — Choose the spiritual path!”

(Adapted from the Ohr HaChaim haKadosh)

KNIFE EDGE

“See! I am putting in front of you today a blessing and curse....” (11:26)

Our Sages teach us that a person should constantly imagine that the whole world is in a state of precise balance — half meritorious and half culpable. He should think that if he does just one *mitzvah*, he will tip the world’s scales of judgment to the side of credit, but if he does one *aveirah* (transgression) he will tip the scales to the negative side...(Kiddushin 40). Consequently, the Torah tells each individual here “See!” Every single action that you do “I am putting in front of you a blessing and a curse” that *you* have the power to tip the scales in either direction....

(Toras Moshe)

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel
©1996 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel ☎972-2-581-0315 fax: 972-2-581-2890 ✉ ohr@jer1.co.il
38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA ☎1-212-213-3100 fax: 1-212-213-8717 ✉ RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@Aol.com
613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada ☎1-905-886-5730 fax: 1-905-886-6065 ✉ Somayach@MSN.com

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Parshas Re'eh — 25 Av 5756, 9 & 10 August 1996

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

“See! I am putting in front of you today a blessing and curse....” (11:26)

Wealth and poverty do not always have the same effect on a person. There are those whose wealth influences them for the good, and through the blessing of their wealth they come to a greater appreciation of Hashem. However, had they been poor, they would have been so occupied trying to find food, that they would have forgotten their Creator. This was the case in Egypt, where the Bnei Yisrael were so exhausted by the hard labor that they didn't listen to Moshe. On the other hand, there are those whom wealth removes from the path of righteousness, as we see so often in our history, that the Jewish people become successful and self-satisfied and forget Who gave them what they have. However, when a person is poor and “broken,” Hashem never ignores his supplications. That's what the verse is saying here: “See — I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse” — and don't think that the blessing is wealth and the curse is poverty; rather everything depends on how a person deals with his riches or poverty. And whether he be rich or poor, if he turns his focus to the Torah and *mitzvos*, then whatever his status is in life he receives the blessing.

(L'Torah U'Moadim)

Haftorah: Isaiah 54:11-55:55

THINGS TO COME

In this, the third Haftorah of the “seven of consolation,” the prophet Isaiah depicts a time in the future when it will be recognized that Hashem has glorified Israel, and the people will hasten to the scion of David who will lead Israel. In this

“You shall tithe the entire crop of your planting....” (14:22)

In the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the seven-year *shemittah* cycle, Jews living in *Eretz Yisrael* were instructed to separate a tenth of their crops, and bring it to Jerusalem to eat. In the third and sixth years of the cycle, that tenth was given to the poor instead. One might ask: “Why weren't the landowners required to first share with the poor and only subsequently to enjoy their produce in Jerusalem?” The Rambam writes that one must give *tzedakah* with a joyous countenance and that giving with a disgruntled demeanor negates the *mitzvah*. It is not enough to do “*chesed*” (kindness), one must *love chesed*. More than any other positive *mitzvah*, writes the Rambam, *tzedakah* is a sign of the essence of a Jew. By commanding us to bring one tenth of our crops to Jerusalem to rejoice there, Hashem taught us two vital lessons: One — that our material possessions are a present from Hashem and He can dictate how we use that material bounty. Two — that using material wealth in the way prescribed by Hashem generates feelings of joy and sanctity. Once we have internalized these lessons in the first two years of the cycle, we can offer that bounty to the poor in the third year — not perfunctorily, but with a true love of *Chesed*.

(Adapted from Rabbi Zev Leff)

lyrical evocation of the Messianic Era, the prophet speaks of a world where protection will come openly from Hashem, and where those who hearken to Hashem will be satisfied in abundance, whereas material efforts alone will not suffice.



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIROS
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

KOL MEKADESH - *asen kf*
“WHOEVER KEEPS SHABBOS...”

All Yaakov's seed will honor it (Shabbos) **כל זרע יעקב יכבדוהו** *kol zerah Ya'akov y'chabduhu*

Our Sages (Talmud Yerushalmi Mesechta Demai 4:1) rule that even an ignoramus in Jewish Law, who ordinarily has no credibility when it comes to testifying whether something was tithed, is believed when he makes such a statement on Shabbos because “the awe of Shabbos envelopes him and he tells the truth.”

This is a powerful lesson in the universal appreciation of the sanctity of Shabbos. Even one who is ignorant of the sublime importance of Shabbos receives a “*neshama yeseira*” — an extra dimension of soul — to absorb the awe and sanctity of this day. His only requirement is that he is of the “Yaakov's seed” who were given this precious gift.

Parshas Re'eh

For the week ending 25 Av 5756, 9 & 10 August 1996

Torah Weekly is available from several sources: • World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.jer1.co.il/orgs/ohr> • Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America . Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details. • E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message `sub weekly {your full name}` to listproc@jer1.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.