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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

JUST ONE MORE! EVEN A SMALL ONE!

PARSHAS RE'EH

We can learn two beautiful ideas from the very first pasuk of the parsha. "See, I place before you this day blessing and curse." The **Chasam Sofer** and the **Kli Yakar** are troubled by the wording of the pasuk. The pasuk starts in singular, רָא , "see" and then changes to plural, לְפָנֶיכֶם , "before you". Why? They both answer that this alludes to the words from the **Talmud** (Kiddushin 40B). The **Talmud** teaches that every person should envision that the Heavenly scale weighing his deeds is evenly balanced between merits and transgressions. He should also envision this equal balance regarding the Heavenly scale of the Jewish nation as well as the Heavenly scale of the entire world. If he were to perform just one mitzvah, even an easy one, then he would tip the scales for himself, for the Jewish nation, and for the entire world to the side of merit. That would bring blessings to him, the Jewish nation, and to the entire world. This is the lesson that the Torah is teaching us. Hashem is telling each individual, "see". See in your mind and understand, that all your actions will affect the plural, the entire World!

This presents each of us with tremendous responsibility as well as tremendous opportunity. Our actions, be they good or bad, carry tremendous weight! It is important that we stop and think very carefully before committing a sin. We must grab every opportunity to do a mitzvah. This applies to all of us. It applies to the biggest tzaddik as well as to the Jew who has been failing many of his challenges. It even applies to a young child. Each action any of us does can affect what will happen to us and what will happen to the Jewish People! Each action can also affect what occurs throughout the world!

I heard a shiur. I don't recall the speaker or the source but perhaps it was based on this very same lesson mentioned in the above **Talmud** (Kedushin 40 B). The rav said that Hashem stores all of our spiritual achievements in some type of container. When the container is full then Moshiach will come. That means that **every single Jew has the power to bring Moshiach!**

You can be the one who brings bracha to the world!! You can be the one who brings Moshiach!! How would you feel if Moshiach told

"See, I am placing before you today a blessing and a curse." (Devarim 11:26)

you that it was YOUR mitzvah, your act of kindness, that brought him? Imagine how great you would feel! Think about this every time that you are faced with the opportunity to commit a transgression or do a mitzvah. Try to make the correct

choice!

The pasuk also says, "*I am placing before you today...*". **Ohr HaChaim** asks why the Torah added the word "*today*"? Furthermore, why did Moshe speak of "*blessing and curse*" in this pasuk if the following p'sukim specify the blessing and the curse? Why mention this twice?

The **Ohr HaChaim** quotes the **Sifri** who describes Moshe's words about "*blessing and curse*" as referring to the wicked people who are apparently successful. Moshe was teaching the Jewish People that the apparent "success" of the wicked is only temporary. It would only last during their life on this earth. In the end, they will receive their due punishment in the eternal world, the World to Come. Based on this **Sifri**, the **Ohr HaChaim** says to read the words together, הַיּוֹם בְּרַכָּה וּקְלָלָה , "*blessing and curse today*". The word הַיּוֹם next to the word בְּרַכָּה , hints that the "blessing", the pleasures and successes that the wicked receive

will only last היום, in this world. Their lives will turn into a “curse” in the World to Come when they have to suffer the painful consequences of their actions.

Moshe was telling the Jewish people that they could follow one of two paths in life. One path appears to be well paved initially but turns progressively rougher. That is the path of following one’s desires instead of following the Torah. That is the path that the wicked chooses. It begins with blessings, meaning that the wicked person seems to be successful. However, it ends in curses. The wicked person will be punished for eternity. The other path, following the laws of the Torah, appears difficult in the beginning. It is like a path that is initially unpaved and is full of holes and thorns. That path eventually becomes easy to follow. That path ends with blessings, an eternity of reward. Moshe was encouraging the Jewish people to listen to his advice despite the initial difficulties they may experience on that path. They should not be misled by the difficult beginning of the second path.

Rav Yisroel Apfelbaum is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Tiferes Chaim in Jerusalem and a student of Rav Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg zt”l. He explains that when the Torah says, “*I place before you today, a blessing and a curse*”, it is not a onetime decision of how you want to lead your life. The pasuk says, *hayom-today*”. It refers to every single day of your life. Even if you are already older and you did not acquire as much Torah and

mitzvos as you should have, then *hayom*, today, you can still change! Once, **Rav Yisroel Salanter** zt”l went to a shoemaker, very late in the day. Rav Yisroel asked him if he could still fix his shoes even though it was getting dark. The shoemaker replied that as long as his candle was still burning, he could fix the shoes. Rav Yisroel learned an important lesson from the words of the shoemaker. As long as a person has a breath of life, he can still turn his whole life around. One can acquire a portion in *Olam Haba*, the World to Come, in one moment. One must stop to think about what he needs to correct or improve in. The yetzer hara will tell him to wait until tomorrow because he still has so much more time to live. One must negate his yetzer hara and start *hayom*, today! (from Torah Anytime.com)

Rabbi Avrohom Stulberger is Dean of Valley Torah High School in Valley Village, California. He says that you don’t have to wait for *Olam Haba* to enjoy your positive choices in this world. You can also benefit in this world. One who is seeking temptations will never find satisfaction and will never be happy. He will experience inner frustrations at not being able to totally fulfill his temptations. He will want more and more. He will never be satisfied. So, he will not be happy. It is true that following the Torah and its mitzvos initially can have challenges. However, in addition to acquiring eternal bliss in *Olam Haba*, following the Torah will bring one more happiness in this world. One who lives a life with closeness to Hashem and to the Torah will have more joy and inner peace. (from Torah Anytime.com)

With one additional mitzvah, each of us can bring blessings to ourselves and to the entire world!

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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