

## ❖ PARSHAT RE'EH

This week's Torah portion, Re'ei, opens with one of the most fundamental tenets of Judaism: the principle of free choice: "Behold, I give you today a blessing and a curse." Why did G-d create the world in such a way as to accommodate both blessings and curses? Why did G-d create something which stands in the way of good, something which makes it difficult for us to do what is good and right? "And you shall choose life." The reason evil alternatives exist is to allow for free choice. G-d endowed evil with the power to oppose holiness so that the Jew, by making the right choice, can defeat it and obliterate it entirely.

The ability to choose between good and bad is to our advantage. No spiritual level is too high for the Jew to attain through his Divine service. Yet for there to be free choice, every level of holiness has its corresponding challenge. G-d gave us free will because He is the essence of good. G-d prefers to reward us for our good deeds, rather than give us "the bread of charity." This is alluded to in our verse: "Behold, I give you today a blessing and a curse." Our Sages declared, "All who give, give willingly." Even evil is given willingly by G-d, for its intention is to allow for free will, thus enabling the Jew to reach the highest levels of holiness.

Significantly, the Torah uses the word "behold" and not "listen." It's not enough to understand that we possess free will; "behold" implies a deeper consideration and contemplation of the facts. For when a Jew reflects on the existence of good and evil, he will come to the realization that evil exists for his own benefit! In truth, evil is nothing but a means of improving our Divine service. In this light we can better understand how a "curse" can emanate from G-d, the essence of good. Indeed, seen from this perspective, evil is not a curse at all, but a very great merit that enables us to succeed and prevail.

Re'ei is always read on the Shabbat when the month of Elul is blessed, or on the first day of Elul. In Elul, G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are particularly manifest. At such a time, a person might think that his own efforts are superfluous, or that his own initiative is unnecessary. Thus, the Torah reminds us, "Behold, I give you today a blessing and a curse." No matter what the spiritual level, "blessing" is always offset by "curse." Thus it is precisely in Elul, when G-d's mercy is manifest, that a Jew must intensify his efforts to vanquish evil. Elul is the month before Rosh Hashana, and is dedicated to teshuva, returning to our Source. Through teshuva, a Jew can transform even deliberate sins into merits, and attain an even higher spiritual level than a person who has never sinned. Re'ei thus illustrates the great power of teshuva, and the unlimited potential of every Jew. (From: L'Chaim 5758, #532, Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 4)

**"If there shall be a destitute person among you . . . you shall not harden your heart or close your hand to your destitute brother. Rather, you shall surely open your hand . . ." (15:7-8)** R' Yitzchak Karo z"l (died 1535; uncle of R' Yosef Karo z"l) derives several lessons from these verses regarding how to give charity. First, why does the verse mention the heart? Doesn't the poor person need your hand, rather than your heart? He explains: When one is unable to give, he is often tempted to shut the door in the beggar's face. This is not proper. Even if your wallet is empty, open your heart and speak comforting words to the pauper. This, too, is charity. More generally, these words teach us to dispense charity with a smile. Why does the Torah use the seemingly redundant language: "You shall not close your hand to your destitute brother. Rather, you shall surely open your hand"? R' Karo explains: Sometimes you may reach into your pocket and remove a larger coin (or bill) than you intended. Even in such a case, the Torah emphasizes through its double language, do

not close your hand. If the pauper has seen the large coin that was in your hand, give it to him. (Toldot Yitzchak, [www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org), Hama'ayan)

**"You shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother." (15:7)**QUESTION: The Gemara (Sanhedrin 29b) equates a miser to a mouse lying on a pile of coins. What is the meaning of this comparison? ANSWER: When a mouse lies upon flour it feels comfortable and has food to nibble on. When it lies on loaves of bread or stalks of wheat, though it is not comfortable, at least it enjoys eating. A mouse lying upon coins is both uncomfortable and hungry. Thus, our sages are telling us that a miser, like a mouse lying on a pile of coins, renders his wealth useless since it benefits neither himself nor anyone else. (From: VeDibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

**When you go over the Jordan and dwell in the land...He will give you rest from all your enemies round about, and you will dwell in safety (Deut. 12:10)** If G-d gives the Jews "rest from all their enemies," isn't it obvious that they will "dwell in safety"? The seeming repetition, however, contains valuable advice: If you truly wish to "rest from all your enemies," G-d counsels, you must "dwell in safety" within your own camp - in peace and brotherhood, without inner squabbling and political strife. Declared our Sages: "Were Israel united into one group, no nation or tongue could rule over them." (G'lilei Zahav, From: L'Chaim 5758)

**And if...you are unable to carry it, because the place is too far from you (14:24)** If a Jew perceives his Jewishness as a burden, as a heavy yoke he is forced to bear, it is a sure sign that he has strayed "too far" from G-d. A believing Jew who fears G-d does not consider his Judaism an encumbrance. (Alshich, ibid)

## ❖ LAWS OF SHABBAT - 39 Melachot: Tochain (Grinding) - Refuah

Although the Sages prohibited medications or therapies on Shabbos, the ordinance does not necessarily exclude all forms of treatment. Only a treatment that is **medicinal in nature, or leads to the appearance of therapeutic treatment.**

**Removing a splinter:** Removing a splinter embedded in one's skin is not a form of Refuah because it is not a cure, but merely the removal of an outside affliction. One may therefore remove a splinter on Shabbos (even if bleeding may occur). If the splinter is very painful, it may be removed even if doing so will definitely cause bleeding.

**Puncturing an abscess boil or pus pimple:** The Talmud states clearly that, in circumstances where one is suffering substantial pain, it is permitted to puncture an abscess to drain the pus or fluids to relieve the pressure. This is permitted even if the individual is not ill as a result and would not be permitted to take any medications for the same condition. Puncturing the abscess is not a form of Refuah because it merely eradicates the painful pressure but does not involve any medical change to the body.

**Stanching bleeding:** Halting bleeding is not a form of Refuah and is permitted for any wound even if the person with the wound is neither in danger, nor suffering great pain. Accordingly, one may apply a styptic powder to a bleeding wound to stop the bleeding.

**Drinking hot tea or milk with honey:** One who is suffering from the discomforts of a common cold may not take aspirin or other medications for relief, but is permitted to obtain relief by eating foods such as honey, or hot drinks such as hot tea with lemon, milk, etc. (From: The 39 Melochos by Dovid Ribiat)

MY FATHER WRITES IN A LETTER: "I HEARD IN THE NAME OF OUR HOLY FATHERS THE REBBE'IM, THAT ALSO WHEN A DAUGHTER IS BORN WE ARE TO SAY THE WORDS "TO TORAH," (MAY HER PARENTS BRING HER UP TO TORAH, TO MARRIAGE AND TO GOOD DEEDS.) THIS IS BASED ON THE STATEMENT BY OUR SAGES (BERACHOT 17A), "HOW DO WOMEN EARN MERIT? BY SEEING TO IT THAT THEIR CHILDREN GO TO STUDY TORAH, THAT THEIR HUSBANDS GO TO THE STUDY HALL AND BY AWAITING (THEIR HUSBANDS' RETURN, ETC.')." (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM AV 25)

*The essential teaching of the Baal Shem Tov:  
Be Simple, be earnest, and spread that simplicity throughout everything you do.  
Simplicity is a receptacle for G-d's simple oneness.*

-Bringing Heaven Down to Earth

**PARTICIPATE IN WEEKLY CLASSES**

<b><u>Sunday</u></b>	<b>8:00 AM</b>	<b>Gemara-Tractate Berachot (men)</b>
<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b>8:00 PM</b>	<b>Chumash (men and women)</b>
<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>	<b>8:00 PM</b>	<b>Gemara-Tractate Sukkha (men)</b>
<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>	<b>8:30 PM</b>	<b>Halacha and Tanya (women)</b>
<b><u>Thursday</u></b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Chassidus (women)</b>
	<b>8:00 PM</b>	<b>Class for Beverly Hills Highschool Students</b>
<b><u>Daily</u></b>	<b>6:45 to 7:15 AM</b>	<b>Chasidus</b>

**SHABBAT PARSHAT RE'EH**

*Shabbos Mevorchim Elul*

*August 25, 2000*

**Candlelighting: 7:09 PM**  
**Friday Mincha: 7:25 PM**  
**Early Minyan 6:00 PM**

**LATEST TIME FOR SHEMA: 9:38 AM**

**SHABBAT MORNING**

- Tehillim 8:00 AM
- Shacharit 9:30 AM followed by Kiddush, Cholent & Farbrengen
- Pirkei Avos 6:10 PM
- Mincha 6:55 PM followed by Seuda Shlishit
- Shabbat ends 8:09 PM

*Kiddush* this week is being sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Dovid Fishman in memory of his father's yartzheit.

*Yartzheits:* Evelyn Sternlight - Av 27.

*Happy Birthday* to Chana Mintz, Raymonde Pazuelo, Miriam Meisel.

**DAILY MINYONIM:**

**Shacharit: Mon-Fri: 6:00 AM & 7:30 AM**  
**Sunday: 9:00 AM**  
**Mincha/Maariv: 7:25 PM**

**GOOD SHABBOS!**



