

# Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

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ראש חודש אלול

פרשת ראה תשע"ח

## *Either a Mitzvah or an Aveira*

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה: (י"א כ"ו)

*Behold that I am presenting both a blessing and a curse before you today. (11:26)* The Seforno teaches, based on our posuk: The Torah admits no middle ground – everything is either a blessing or a curse. Either one climbs upwards spiritually, or he slides downwards. One cannot remain static. The Chovas Halevavos extends this to say that the concept of “Reshus”/ voluntary, optional action is alien to us: I may do something, but then again I might not. Everything one does is classed as either a Mitzvah or an Aveira. Therefore, according to this view, if one’s act cannot be classified as a Mitzvah, then it is perforce an Aveira. This can be the lesson in our posuk: *Behold that I am presenting both a blessing and a curse before you today.* And the pasuk continues directly *“The blessing, that you will heed the commandments of the Lord your G-d, which I command you today; and the curse, if you will not heed the commandments of the Lord your G-d,”* The blessing lies in heeding the Mitzvos and the curse in not heeding the Mitzvas. This is the only conceptual model for serving Hashem. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick according to the Chovas Halevavos and the Yesod Veshoshet HaAvodah) The same insight can be extracted from another Posuk in this Parsha (דברים י"ב) The verse states, *לא תוכל לאכול בשעריך* In your cities you may not eat.” (12:17) The Torah prohibits a Jew from eating various tithes and offerings outside of the place designated by Hashem. The words *לא תוכל* translate literally as “you cannot” rather than as “you may not.” The latter implies a lack of permission, while the former indicates a lack of ability. A Jew must always feel that actions prohibited by the Torah are not only impermissible, but are actually out of reach. We are simply unable to perform these acts, since they run contrary to Hashem’s Will. When a person is told to jump off a roof and replies, “I can’t do it,” it is a false statement. He certainly can do it, however, he does not want to do it, since doing so will endanger his life. One must view his allegiance to the Torah as something that cannot be compromised. Hence the same idea as above. Either an act is a Mitzvah or an Aveira, there is no in between.

## *Your ego is a blessing or...*

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה: (י"א כ"ו)

*See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. (11:26)* The word *אנכי* can mean “our ego,” *I am something!* The Torah is teaching us that an ego can either be a blessing or a curse. The ego that impels us to persevere in the face of adverse spiritual challenges, is the catalyst for the enormous spiritual growth. The ego thriving to reach higher levels in serving Hashem will persevere. However when ego is used for false pride or arrogance, it is a most destructive force. Thus, Hashem says to us: Your “I” - *אנכי* - is presented

before you today. It can become a blessing or a curse – depending on how you develop it. (Me’or V’Shemesh) This same insight is quoted by the Tzaddikim explaining another Posuk *אנכי עמד בין ה' וביניכם* (דברים ה ה) The Gemarra (Sota 5a) states *Concerning any person who has arrogance within him, אמר הקב"ה אין אני והוא יכולין* (תהלים קא, ה) *מלשני: שנא, as it is stated: He and I cannot dwell together in the world,* *בסתר רעהו אותו אצמית גבה עינים ורחב לבב אתו לא אוכל.* “*He who slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I destroy; he who is haughty of eye and proud of heart, him will I not suffer*” (Psalms 101:5-6). *אל תקרי אותו אלא אתו לא אוכל.* These verses should be understood as follows: Do not read the verse as: *אנכי* “our ego,” any person who has arrogance within him, any person who has arrogance within him, *עמד* will be a barrier, between Hashem and that person, as Hashem will not dwell on him. (Seforim)

## *The urge and opening to serve Hashem is from you*

לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה: (יב ה)

*You shall seek out His Presence and you shall come there. (12:5)* The posuk appears to be in reverse order. It would be more correct to say that *לשכנו* “you shall come there” *ובאת שמה* in order to search for the Divine Presence, rather than the other way around. The answer is that the search itself is the key to success. If one earnestly seeks to find Hashem, his efforts will be met with success and he will “come there.” The mere fact that one searches for truth allows him to achieve his goal. The Midrash (Shir Hashirim 5:2) states: *פתחו לי פתח אחד של תשובה כחדה של מהט, ואני פותח* Hashem requires you to open a hole the size of a needle and then Hashem will open an enormous door. The urge and beginning must come from the person. (Based on the Chasam Sofer)

## *Give charity for the sake of charity not pity*

נתן תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו: (טו י)

*You shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him. (15:10)* A poor person came to R’ Mendel of Riminov to pour out his heart about his difficult financial situation. The Rebbe gave the man a substantial sum of money. As the man turned to leave, the Rebbe presented him with yet another coin. R’ Mendel’s family later asked him why he had given the man tzedakah twice. He explained: The first time, I gave him out of sympathy for the severity of his predicament. The second time

לָּ The first time we should give so that “your heart not feel bad.” We must learn to feel compassion in our hearts; then Heaven will have compassion toward us. The second time we give, however, we should do so purely for the mitzvah of giving – “when you give him.”

\*\*\*\*\**Rav Meir from Premishlan helps a Yid do Teshuva*\*\*\*\*\*