



## **Ki Tavo: Coming and Going**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

In his final days with his beloved nation, Moshe tries to give proper instruction to his beloved people.

*“Now if you give ear to the voice of the Lord your God, and keep with care all these orders which I have given you today, then the Lord your God will put you high over all the nations of the earth: And all these blessings will come on you and overtake you, if your ears are open to the voice of the Lord your God. A blessing will be on you in the town, and a blessing in the field. A blessing will be on the fruit of your body, and on the fruit of your land, on the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herd, and the young of your flock. A blessing will be on your basket and on your bread-basin. You shall be blessed when you come and blessed when you depart (Devarim 28:2-6).”*

What is the meaning of this last phrase, *“Baruch ata b’voecha, u’baruch ata b’tzeysecha, you shall be blessed when you come and blessed when you depart”*? Rashi explains, *“Your departure from the world should be like your arrival to the world. The same way that your arrival was without sin (cheyt), so your departure should be without sin (cheyt).”* But how are we to understand this statement? There is no person who is without sin. Even the most righteous and devout of people possess shortcomings, faults and *make* mistakes.

To fully appreciate this statement we need a new definition of the word *“cheyt.”* The Maharal (Rabbi Judah Lowe 1526-1609) explains that we often assume the word *“cheyt”* means sin – but in fact it means empty or void. Sin has repercussions. I have done something wrong and now there is a resulting negative impact that manifests itself in punishment. We believe that every action has a reaction. We believe that just as every mitzvah has rewards, every sin has repercussions as well. But we also believe in the mercy and love of God. We know that Hashem loves us in ways that we cannot comprehend. We know that with sincere *teshuvah* (repentance) we can negate the punishments and negative decrees. As such, the real collateral damage of sin is not punishment – it is the distance. You see, every time I sin, I create a distance, a chasm between myself and Hashem. Every time I sin, I push myself away from my Father and find it difficult to connect and feel His presence in my life. This is the tragic reality of our negative reactions – distance from Him who we need most. Sin represents a violation of the sacred trust between me and God. In relationships a breach of trust creates a distance between the parties – this is true with people and it is true with God. This is the sad reality created by sin. Yet, we have the incredible ability to bridge this distance through prayer, *chessed* (acts of kindness) and *teshuvah* (repentance).

*“Your departure from the world should be like your arrival to the world; the same way that your arrival was without cheyt, so your departure should be without cheyt – perhaps, in this context cheyt doesn’t mean sin – it means emptiness or a void. Moshe was trying to teach the Jewish people a magnificent lesson. When a baby comes into this world, it doesn’t take much to make the infant happy. If the baby has a mother to hold him, a warm blanket and his mother’s milk, he is content. He doesn’t feel like he is deficient or lacking anything. Now it is possible that another baby has a warmer blanket, a fancier bassinet or designer onesies – but our first little baby is completely unaware, he simply basks in the happiness of what he has without feeling deficient because someone else may have more. Moshe Rabbeinu blesses his beloved flock and tells them, *“the same way when you entered this world you didn’t feel deficient, you were happy with the blessings you had and content with the life you were given; I give you the beracha that you should leave this world in the same state; feeling content with your blessings and appreciating the beautiful gifts of life.”**

As we prepare to enter the sacred days of Rosh Hashanah, we begin to think about all of the things we need. We will ask God for health, livelihood, success and happiness. We will pray for the safety and success of our children and our people. But it is equally as important to stop and appreciate all we have been given. Too often we feel a void because we don’t have as much as the other. Too often we measure our blessings against the blessings of our neighbor. We must learn to find happiness in what we have, and we must learn to express gratitude for what we have been given.

May we be privileged to feel the contentment of our youth throughout our entire life.