



## **Re'eh: The Power of the Day**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

*“Re’eh anochi noseyn lifneychem ha’yom beracha u’klalah - Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse (Devorim 11:26).”*

Moshe informed the people of the incredible event that will soon unfold. The entire people will stand by the mountains of *Grizim* and *Eval* and affirm their commitment to God and the Torah through the acceptance of a series of blessings and curses. It is this covenantal event that will pave their way for entry into the Land of Israel.

But why did Moshe use the word, *ha’yom, today*? Moshe could have simply said, *“Behold, I set before you a blessing and a curse.”* Furthermore, the blessings and curses are not stated in this week’s Parsha. What lesson was Moshe trying to convey with the inclusion of the word *ha’yom*?

This week, we will celebrate *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, the arrival of the Hebrew month of *Elul*; a month designated for introspection, self-evaluation and contemplation. It is during the month of *Elul* that we begin to prepare ourselves for the upcoming *Yimei HaDin* (Days of Judgment) of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. It is during this month that we are reminded of the promises and commitments we made to ourselves and to God almost a year ago. Some of these promises have been fulfilled and others still remain outstanding. We each have so much to do, so much to accomplish before the year ends. But is there something specific we should work on? What should we focus on during this special month of preparation?

To gain some insight into this question we must look back at last week’s Parsha. In *Parshas Eiykev* Moshe said, *“And now, O Israel, what does the Lord, your God, demand of you? Only to fear the Lord, your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to worship the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command you this day, for your good (Devorim 10:12-13).”*

Essentially, Moshe says to the people – *you have the deal of the century! Look at all that God does for you - and all He asks in return is that you love, obey, follow and walk in His ways.* Moshe is describing the totality of our spiritual responsibilities and makes it sound like an easy task. The Talmud (Berachos 33b) explains, *“V’chi yirah milsa zutrassa hi? In l’gabey Moshe milsa zutrassa hi - Is reverence of God a small matter? Yes, for Moshe it was a small matter.”* How are we to understand this enigmatic statement? It is very nice that for Moshe love, reverence and obedience to God are “small matters” but for us they are not. Furthermore, Moshe is not talking to himself – he is talking to the people, the same people he has led for the last 40 years. Moshe knows and understands our struggles and difficulties; he knows that maintaining a relationship with God is an ongoing challenge for us – so why make it seem so simple, when it’s not?

To appreciate the words of Moshe, we must examine one additional verse. Moshe says to the Jewish people, *“V’atem ha’diveykim ba’Hashem Elokeychem chaim kulchem ha’yom - But you who cleave to the Lord your God are alive, all of you, this day (Devorim 4:4).”*

The Chasam Sofer (Rav Moshe Sofer, 1762-1839) comments that at first glance the last word in the verse, *ha’yom, today*, appears extraneous. Moshe could have conveyed the same message without this word – why was it included?

Rav Sofer explains that we each live with expectations. There are things that God expects of us, there are expectations that others have of us and there are the expectations we have of ourselves. Often, we feel overwhelmed by all the expectations placed on our shoulders. How will I ever become the kind of person whom God and others will be proud of? How do I become the kind of person whom I will be happy to see in the mirror? Will I ever measure up?



To these questions, the Chasam Sofer gives a simple answer - live life one day at a time.

This was the message Moshe was conveying to the children of Israel. *V'atem ha'diveykim ba'Hashem Elokeychem - you, the children of Israel, who are attempting to cling to God and live up to the expectations He has of you, how can you accomplish this? - Chaim kulchem – put the entirety of your life force, abilities and talents, ha'yom – into living today.*

The way to lead a successful and meaningful life is by maximizing each and every day. Put your entire *chaim*, your abilities and strengths into maximizing *ha'yom*.

Now we can understand the enigmatic passage of the Talmud mentioned above. **Moshe didn't wake up one morning and decide that he was going to be the greatest prophet the Jewish people would ever have. He didn't decide that he was going to be the transmitter of Torah and mouthpiece of God. Moshe lived with a simple directive – maximize the day. And when you maximize your days, they combine to form meaningful weeks, which combine to form holy months, which combine to form fulfilling years.**

Moshe was telling his flock, *"It is true, God asks a lot from us but He is not looking for long-term guarantees about what we will or won't do – He is looking for the milsa zutrassa, the small thing, the one day, He is looking for chaim kulchem ha'yom, for each of us to put our energies into maximizing the day."*

And it is this very lesson that Moshe reinforces in the beginning of this week's Parsha. *Re'eh anochi noseyn lifneychem ha'yom - see I have given before you; God has placed before you the blessing of ha'yom, today.* You have a choice to make - will it be *beracha*, blessing or *klalah*, curse? Will you use your *ha'yom*, to grow, to help others, to become a better person? Or will you use your day for negative purposes which will produce *klalah* for yourself and those around you. This is the decision we must make every single day.

This is one of the most important messages for the month of *Elul*. For many of us there were things we wanted to do and accomplish this past year but didn't. There were goals and milestones we wanted to reach but for some reason or another we just never managed to make it happen. **This is the month to maximize our days. This is the month to remind ourselves that if used correctly one day of life can be restorative, rejuvenating, cathartic and transformative. This is the month in which we prepare to ask God for another year of life and bolster that request by showing that we can make the most of every day.** This is the month in which we commit ourselves to maximizing each and every day. By creating *beracha* from each day we will quickly realize that we have the ability to meet our goals, cross our finish lines and become the kind of people we know we can be.

**This is the month in which we instill within ourselves the important message that true life-greatness lies not in how you live your years, but rather, in how you live your days.**