



## **Ki Tavo – Going and Coming**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

*“And it will be if you obey the Lord, your God, to observe and fulfill all His commandments which I command you this day, the Lord, your God, will place you supreme above all the nations of the earth...You shall be blessed when you come, and you shall be blessed when you depart.” (Devorim 28:1,6)*

Moshe conveys a seemingly simple idea: do what God asks and in turn, God will take care of you. Heed the commandments, follow the rules, and God will bless you with financial prosperity and regional security. But what is the meaning of the last verse? What was Moshe referring to when he said that we will be blessed “when you come” and “when you depart?”

It is here that I would like to share with you three different approaches, which coalesce into a meaningful and important three-pronged lesson:

Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508-1593) explains:

*“You came into this world with nothing - yet, you felt blessed and happy. Your departure from this world should be the same.”*

We often attribute our lack of happiness to something material which is missing. If I only I had this or that - I would be so much happier. Possessions are certainly wonderful and can make life more enjoyable, but they can't create happiness. True happiness comes from within. True happiness is the state of being which occurs when you know you are living a meaningful life, making a difference and accomplishing what God put you on this world to do. We come into this world with nothing, yet, we manage to find happiness. The things we own don't generate happiness, it is the intangibles within which create true *simcha* (joy).

Yonosson ben Uziel explains this phrase in a different way:

*“You shall be blessed when you enter the Beis Midrash (study hall) and blessed when you go out to conduct business.”*

We must take our spiritual ideals with us wherever we go. Whether you are in the *Beis Midrash* or in the Board Room, the same set of values must inform the way we live and the decisions we make. Torah and *mitzvos* don't only provide guidance in the framework of our religious lives during moments of religious study and worship. God's word affords us clarity and direction when going out into the world as well.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) adds an additional dimension of understanding:

*“May you be blessed in your home life and may you find blessing in your communal life.”*

We must take the personal blessings that God gives us and use them to enrich the lives of those around us. We can't just live for ourselves. We must avoid the trap of egocentricity and self-centeredness. We must avoid the temptation to keep and use our blessings for ourselves and no one else. Whatever you have been given in life, find a way to share and give to those around you. Don't wait to be asked to help - be proactive. If you see there is someone in need or something that needs to get done, roll up your sleeves and do it.

Our great prophet and teacher Moshe taught many life lessons, but it is in this week's Parsha he shares with us perhaps, three of the most important ideas for successful living:

**Lesson #1:** Happiness doesn't come from anything you can acquire - it only comes from a feeling of personal accomplishment and fulfillment.

**Lesson #2:** Take your spiritual values with you wherever you go in life and allow them to shape and inform your personal behavior wherever you may be.

**Lesson #3:** Use your blessings for the benefit of your community and your people. Don't live in a bubble, be ever cognizant and aware of how you can help the other.

These are the lessons our ancestors learned so many years ago and they are the lessons we must internalize today.