



Parashat "Re'eh"

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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Making Choices

Parshas [Reeh](#)

Rabbi Berel Wein

Stripping away all the details that oftentimes clutter our lives, we can agree that the type of life that we live is pretty much dependent upon the choices that we make throughout our lifetimes. Often, these choices were made when we were yet young and immature. Nevertheless, we are forced to live by those

choices and decisions that we may now, with greater life experience under our belts, regret.

Personal choices, professional and career choices, lifestyle choices all combine to make up our individual life stories. This week's Torah reading highlights the importance and consequences of choices that we make. Many times, we make serious choices when we are not in a serious mood. Many important choices are made flippantly, on the spur of the moment, or under the influence of others. Peer pressure is a fact of life, especially for the young, and often, when we allow others to make choices for us, at the end they are very detrimental to our well-being.

It is simply peer pressure that causes young people to take on unhealthy life habits – smoking is a prime example of this – and once the habit is ingrained within us, it is very difficult to break and escape from its consequences. Life inflicts upon us, on a daily basis, the necessity of making decisions. What choices we do make become the expression of the gift of free will that the Lord has endowed us with. Choices are, therefore, the highest form of human opportunity, as well as being the most dangerous and perilous of all the human traits.

The Torah, in this week's reading, presents us with the most basic choice that we can make – the stark choice between eternal life and death itself. At first glance, this choice is a relatively simple one to make. The life instinct within us, as human beings, is always present. However, we are witness to the fact that many times human beings make choices that are anti-life. Many distractions exist in this world, many illusory ideas and false prophets that somehow combine to dissuade us from choosing life. The Torah, therefore, encourages us and even warns us to choose life.

We acknowledge in our daily prayers that the Lord implanted within us an eternal soul which can sustain eternal life within us.

We should not fritter away this most precious of gifts. Therefore, when we consider choices that exist before us regarding our behavior and attitudes, we should always judge the matter through the prism of a life and death choice. This makes even the most simple and apparent decisions that we make in life of great consequence and lasting importance.

In effect, there are no small choices, for they all have consequences and later effects that are unknown to us when we make the choice. Seeing these decisions that way may grant us life. It will enable us to choose wisely and carefully, and to allow our good instincts and fundamental human intelligence to control our emotions and desires and help us make correct life choices. Shabbat shalom

Improve Your Eyesight

Parshas [Reeh](#)

Rabbi Berel Wein

To Moshe, life choices are clear and self-evident. He tells the Jewish people to look merely, and they will see the difference between life and death, good and evil, eternity and time-burdened irrelevance. He implores the Jewish people to use their common sense, to pay attention to the experiences over the past 40 years in the desert, and their story. Then, they will be able to clearly see their choices in life, and what basic decisions they must make regarding what should be visible to them.

Yet, we know that even when people are aware of the consequences of their behavior, when, so to speak, they actually do see the differences and choices that lie before them, they will often choose to sin and take the wrong turn in life. People know that all addictive drugs and immoral behavior inevitably lead to

personal disaster. The evidence for this is so abundant that all of us know cases and people that somehow willingly and even voluntarily choose this path of self-destruction. None of this holds people back from themselves.

The story is told about a man who was becoming an alcoholic, who was taken by his children to visit skid row, where the victims of alcoholism reside on the street in their drunken stupor. One of the drunks was wallowing in the gutter amidst the filth that permeated the area. His children – those of the potential alcoholic – said to him: “Father, don’t you see where excessive drinking will lead you?” However, the man went over to the drunk in the gutter and whispered to him: “Where did you get such good and powerful whiskey?” We always see what we want to see. What is perfectly obvious to the sane and rational mind is not seen by one captured by the evil instinct, affected by social pressure, and suffering from a lack of self-discipline

All parents and educators know you may lead someone to a fountain of fresh water, but you cannot make that person drink from it, unless the person wishes to do so. It is hard to convince people to see what they do not want to see, and to believe what they do not wish to believe. All the exhortations of the prophets of Israel were of little avail in the times of the first Temple, simply because the people refused to see the obvious consequences of idol worship, and the abandonment of Torah and its teachings.

The only hope for parents and educators is to improve the eyesight, so to speak, of their children and students, so that those individuals themselves will be able to perceive the clear difference between life and death, right and wrong. This is a slow and painful process, but with persistence it can be successful and lifesaving. Good eyesight requires tenacity of focus as well as excellent peripheral vision. Jewish tradition and Torah values within both the

family and society help provide the good vision which enables productive choices, that will lead to eternal life and goodness. Shabbat shalom

Bodyguard

Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman

We have been commanded to “guard your soul” [1]. This is the positive commandment to look after our bodies.

Our body, of course, houses our soul, and a healthy soul might even depend upon a healthy body, but nevertheless, being that the commandment is to practically look after our physical health, why are we not explicitly commanded to look after our ‘body’ rather than our “soul”?

In 1926, the revered Chafetz Chaim was asked to speak at a meeting regarding the building of a certain hospital. Several wealthy men were present who gave honorable donations, and the Chafetz Chaim praised them accordingly.

During the meeting, some yeshiva students appeared wishing to see the Chafetz Chaim. He welcomed them in and seated them at the head table. This caused some raised eyebrows, and one of the wealthy men became irritated and asked outright, “And how many beds in the hospital are these students donating?”

Without hesitating the Chafetz Chaim responded “they are each donating fifty beds!”

“Fifty beds?” the wealthy man gaped incredulously. “How is that possible? We are all wealthy men and none of us are donating more than ten. And you mean to tell me that these students are each donating fifty beds?”

“Yes,” replied the Chafetz Chaim. “Each is giving the hospital fifty beds that do not exist: It is their Torah study that protects the townspeople from illness, and these young men are studying Torah, thus ensuring that there will be

fewer sick people in town. They are reducing the number of hospital beds needed by fifty a piece!”

Of course we must also make our physical efforts, but a person who “guards his soul” is indeed guarding his body in the best possible manner.

Additional sources:

Story: Glimpses of Greatness, p. 140

[1] Devarim 4:9, 15

Seeing is (self) believing

Written by d fine

The opening pasuk of the sedra of Re'eh reads ‘see I am placing before you blessing and curse,’ and goes on to explain that the blessings will vest themselves upon us should we follow HaShem’s path, whilst the curses will find shelter amongst us if we veer off this path. But what exactly is the opening word ‘see’ doing here – what are we supposed to look at here? The Sforno explains that this is a command that we are to look deep within ourselves and realize that we are not an ordinary people, and that each one of us is not to be merely average. HaShem gives us two extremes – blessing or curse – but being average is not an option.

the Kotzker on re'eh

Written by D Fine

The opening of the sedra is the word ‘re'eh’ (see). It is in the singular form, whilst the pasuk continues ‘giving before YOU today blessing and curses’ – this second you is the ‘lachem’ form, ie the plural ‘you.’ Why the change? The Kotzker Rebbe remarked that this is because everyone sees what they want to see in life; since they see a reflection of what they are and interpret events the way they see fit in accordance with their outlook on the world. This is why the word re'eh (‘see’) is in the singular – since everyone has

different eyesight as we just said. But when it comes to giving blessings that is in the plural, for giving is done without distinction; everyone gets similarly. (read in the ‘maayno shel torah)

Humor

If I Were a Rich Man

There once was a rich man who was near death. He was very grieved because he had worked so hard for his money and wanted to be able to take it with him to heaven. So, he began to pray that he might be able to take some of his wealth with him.

An angel heard his plea and appeared to him. "Sorry, but you can't take your wealth with you."

The man begged the angel to speak to God to see if He might bend the rules. The man continued to pray that his wealth could follow him.

The angel reappeared and informed the man that God had decided to allow him to take one suitcase with him. Overjoyed, the man gathered his largest suitcase and filled it with pure gold bars and placed it beside his bed.

Soon afterward, he died and showed up at the gates of heaven.

An angel greeted him. Seeing the suitcase, the angel said, "Hold on, you can't bring that in here!"

The man explained to the angel that he had permission and asked him to verify his story with God.

Sure enough, the angel checked it out, came back and said, "You're right. You are allowed one carry-on bag, but I'm supposed to check its contents before letting it through."

The angel opened the suitcase to inspect the worldly items that the man found too precious to leave behind and exclaimed, "You brought pavement?"

In the Eye of the Beholder

Moishe was just waking up from anesthesia after surgery and his wife Miriam was sitting by his side.

Moishe's eyes fluttered open, he said, "You're beautiful!" and then he fell asleep again.

Miriam had never heard him say that so she stayed by his side. A couple minutes later Moishe's eyes fluttered open again and he said, "You're cute!"

Miriam was disappointed because instead of "beautiful" it was "cute."

She said, "What happened to 'beautiful'?"

Moishe replied, "The drugs are wearing off!"

Is it Kosher?

The Shapiros were sitting at the Shabbos table for Friday night dinner.

"Are worms kosher?" little Moishie asked his mother.

"No, they aren't," answered his mother. "Why do you ask?"

"Well," said Moishie, "there was a big one in your salad, but it's gone now."

It's a Setup

A priest, a minister and a rabbi walk into a bar. The bartender takes one look at the trio and asks, "What is this, a joke?"