

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 30 Av 5778, the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul. Being Rosh Chodesh we chant Hallel and read from two Sifrei Torah. We say the special version of Mussaf, Atta Yatzarta, for Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. Tonight we start saying L'Dovid Ori; tomorrow morning we start blowing Shofar, leading up to Rosh HaShanah.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 799 Hz) (p. 1055 S) (p. 706 Hi) (p. 998 AS)

RE'EH ראה Deuteronomy 11:26

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus, Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. The opening line of this Sidrah is "See, this day I set before you blessing and curse" (11:26). But there are no blessings or curses in the entire Sidrah! The simplest answer is that the Torah is referring to the blessings and curses that are itemized in Parshat Ki Tavo (27:12) and will be proclaimed atop Mts. Gerizim and Eival. A more complicated answer is that every Mitzvah carries a blessing and a curse: Obedience to a Mitzvah results in a blessing, and disobedience results in a curse. Considering that Moshe is reviewing the totality of the Mitzvot being presented to Bnei Yisrael in these Sidrot, this is an acceptable answer. This encompasses the fundamental principle of Free Will that is divinely granted to each individual in the world: Jew and non-Jew. We all have commandments to obey, and the Torah sums up the ultimate mandate "Choose Life and you and your offspring will live" (30:19). (RED)

2. "See, (singular) this day I set before you (plural) blessing and curse" (11:26). The change in grammatical number is perplexing to many commentators. I believe in a simplistic approach. The observance of the Torah is incumbent on each individual as it is a responsibility of the nation as a whole. I observe the Shabbat with all its details. And yet I live amongst a Jewish population that is diverse. I am used to it, and therefore it does not bother me to see my Jewish neighbor not observing Shabbat. This might be due to the fact that I have been raised in America. It might also be the result of coming from a non-observant family. My father was not Shabbat observant. I lived in a kosher home and ate only kosher food even though my parents ate out non-kosher. I was raised to be tolerant of the non-observant members of my family – and of my nation. But I can understand an observant Jew who was raised in an observant Jewish society feeling sensitive to the transgressions of the non-observant. I can rationalize an observant Jew wishing to maintain a Torah standard for his community – and his nation. We are all Jews, but I will be judged by Hashem as an individual and as a community! (RED)

3. Jerusalem as the site of the Holy Temple was chosen by Hashem, but not explicitly revealed to the Jewish people. Clues were given and the guessing game began in the days of King David. King David, with the help of the prophets of his day, was able to figure it out. It was on a hill that was on the border of two tribes. The two tribes were Binyamin and

Yehudah. (Midrashically, this was explained and linked to the story when Binyamin was accused of theft by the viceroy of Egypt. Yehudah rose up and came to Binyamin's rescue. This earned them the right to share the Holy Temple.) Although the Holy Temple was really in the territory of the tribe of Binyamin, all the tribes were considered owners, since King David collected money from all the tribes to purchase the land from the Yevusites. This is similar to the choice of Washington, D.C. to be the capital of America. This was decided by the national leaders in the Colonial period. The capital was supposed to be on the border of Virginia and Maryland with the Potomac River running in the middle. Virginia later reneged on the deal. The city was not supposed to be a residential area; residents were deprived the vote to choose a president and did not have representatives in Congress – until the middle of the 20th century. In Jerusalem, pilgrims attending the Festival in Temple times were entitled to free room in the capital. (Don't tell modern hotel owners in Jerusalem today!) (RED)

4. In our destiny is to embrace the Torah mandate to eat only kosher food. We must decline eating non-kosher foods, and adhere meticulously to the rules of preparation of kosher foods (e.g. ritual slaughter and forbidden mixture of milk and meat; and rabbinically fish and meat mixture). The Torah gives us signs of kashrut and a detailed list of kosher animals and non-kosher birds. But in both lists, there is a problem of correctly defining the Hebrew words. Since we are not clear on these definitions, we rely on the principle that the animal or bird is on a traditional list, a Mesorah. One bird in question is the American turkey. Most rabbis and kashrut agencies have accepted the turkey as a kosher bird. Yet there have been exceptions. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l never accepted the turkey as kosher. Similarly there is a rabbinical debate over the types of chicken that are available for consumption. [When we visited Chile, we saw an ugly fish that resembled an eel. The Santiago rabbis sent the fish to the Israeli rabbis and to Rabbi Heinemann in Baltimore for a ruling. They both said "kosher." I wouldn't eat it; it was too ugly!] (RED)

MAFTIR

(p. 695 Hz) (p. 944 S) (p. 622 Hi) (p. 890 AS)

PINCHAS פִּינְחָס Numbers 28:9

HAFTORAH

(p. 818 Hz) (p. 1076 S) (p. 930 Hi) (p. 1208 AS)

ISAIAH יְשַׁעְיָהוּ 66:1

In the midst of speaking about Jerusalem that will be rebuilt in the future, Isaiah looks to his own generation who erroneously believe that the Holy Temple brings atonement for their sins. They fervently believed that a sacrifice could erase a sin entirely. Such was not the case. The purpose of the sacrifices was to allow Hashem to see a man approach Him with a humble and contrite spirit. If the person showed that he cares for the word of God and trembles in performance of the mitzvot (the true meaning of the word חָרַד is someone who trembles at the word of Hashem) then God would embrace that person and know that the Temple is being used properly. (Malbim)

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT RE'EH 5778
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

- I. From the Text
 1. From which mountain in Eretz Yisrael will the Berachot emanate? And from which mountain will the curses come? (11:29)
 2. If you slaughter a deer, what do you do with the blood? (12:16)
 3. What punishment is done to a false prophet? (13:6)
 4. What are the only four animals that have one kosher sign (and not two)? (14:7,8)
 5. What is the law of Ma'aser Sheini (the second tithe)? (14:22-27)
 - II. From Rashi
 6. When was Bnei Yisrael permitted to sacrifice on a private altar? (12:6)
 7. The Torah said that there will be a time when Bnei Yisrael will be settled in the Promised Land at peace with their enemies? (It already happened !) (12:10)
 8. If there is a Levi in your midst, and you don't have have Ma'aser Rishon (first tithe), give him Ma'aser Oni (tithe for the poor). What should you do if you have no tithe to give him? (12:18)
 9. The first tithe (Ma'aser Rishon) is given to a Levi. Where is it eaten? (14:23)
 10. From where in today's reading does Rashi find a reference to S'chach? (16:13)
 - III. From the Rabbis
 11. For how many years was the Mishkan at Shiloh? And who destroyed Shiloh?
 12. Why does the Torah never mention Yerushalayim by name? It is always "the place that Hashem will choose." (Rambam and others)
 13. Why would Hashem grant prophecy to a false prophet? (Sanhedrin 90a)
 - IV. From the Haftorah : Rosh Chodesh : Isaiah
 14. Who will rejoice with Yerushalayim? (66:10)
 - V. Relationships
 - a) Noach – Canaan
 - b) Yaakov – Elifaz
 - c) Lot – Sarah (two answers)
 - d) Betuel – Lavan
 - e) Moshe – Merari
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ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT RE'EH 5778

1. The Berachot will be from Mt. Gerizim; the curses from Mt. Eival.
2. Spill it on the ground.
3. Execute him.
4. The camel, the hare, the hyrax, and the pig.
5. This tithe is taken to Yerushalayim and eaten there.
6. Once entering Eretz Yisrael, Bnei Yisrael worked 14 years to conquer and divide the country. During those years they were allowed to offer sacrifices on a private altar.
7. In the days of King David.
8. Invite him over for dinner. (To eat from your Shelamim sacrifice)
9. Anywhere he wants.
10. During the summer, the grain would be left in the field to dry until Sukkot, when the waste could be used as S'chach.
11. The Philistines destroyed Shiloh after the Mishkan was there for 369 years.
12. Two of the Rambam's answers: one is that the non-Jews will go and claim the city as their own. Another reason is that the tribes of Israel would argue over in whose domain the city will be.
13. The prophet had established himself as a true prophet and later used his reputation to claim that the people should worship an idol.
14. All who mourned for Yerushalayim will rejoice with her.

Relationships:

- a) Grandfather Noach
- b) Uncle Yaakov
- c) Aunt Sarah; (Midrashically) Brother – Sister
- d) Father Betuel
- e) Uncle Merari