



דרכים בפרשה

ראה

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה

See! I present before you today a blessing and a curse (11:26)

As we once again arrive at *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, we all yearn to feel that special closeness to *Hashem* that is unique at this time of year. Now, it is quite possible that the yearning has not set in yet, because after all, it is still smack in the middle of the summer and it seems like out of nowhere, the month of Elul was just sprung upon us. For that, we must at least “want to want”. Having a true *ratzon* (desire) is the very first step of the journey to accomplish something. The *Sefer Aish Kodesh* (Parshas Eikev) tells us that the word רצון (*ratzon-desire*) is the same letters as צנור (*tzinor-pipeline*). This teaches us that by having a true desire to accomplish something; one can effectively create a pipeline with which to accommodate that desire. If our *ratzon* is truly there, then even in the middle of the summer one can begin to feel that closeness to HaShem. There is no reason to wait until Erev Rosh HaShana, we can already start now. In fact, the possuk uses the word היום *today*, which teaches us that the choices of our parsha are right here and right now, from wherever we may be at this present moment.

Ok, so we do in fact want that closeness to HaShem, but how do we get there? Well,

the first thing we have to ask ourselves is this: Do we truly understand what is important in life? If we want to make life meaningful, don't we first need to really know what life is all about?

Dovid Hamelech writes in Tehillim טעמו וראו כי טוב ה' אשרי הגבר יחסה בו *Taste and see how good HaShem is; happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!* Perhaps Dovid is teaching us that the way to truly see something is by developing a taste for it. Suddenly, what is right there before our eyes appears completely different now that a taste has been acquired. We are not just seeing it; we are having a *geshmak* in it! Now, when our possuk says ראה אנכי נתן היום לפניכם - *See! I present before you today*, we understand that the “seeing” of our possuk refers to approaching the Torah and mitzvos with that beautiful and most delicious, mouth-watering taste.

The *Torah* tells us, "כי לא על הלחם לבדו יחיה" "האדם כי על כל מוצא פי ה' יחיה האדם". Loosely translated, this means that, “*man does not live on bread alone*” – i.e. food and all materialistic pursuits - “*but by the word of Hashem does man live.*” Targum Onkelos on the word "יחיה" translates it as "מתקים", which means “sustained.” This



gives a new meaning to the *posuk*: “Not through bread alone will man be sustained, but through the word of Hashem (Torah) man will be sustained.” However, in some older versions of *Targum Onkelos*, we find even a different expression for the second "חיה" in the *posuk*, the one referring to *Torah*. He uses two words: "חיה אנשא" - Man will LIVE – Man will have חיות; he will be imbued with life, with action, with a sense of accomplishment.

According to this interpretation, man is not just sustaining and existing on a day-to-day level. The *Torah* gives a person life, purpose and meaning. So, the first thing we must do now, this week - *Parshas Re'eh* - which is the command to SEE - is to open our eyes and truly see not only what sustains life but what actually increases life. Elul is the time to really come alive. The *Torah* does not want us to simply go through the motions of life, but rather to truly *live life!*

The *posuk* says, **ושמרתם את חקתי ואת משפטי אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם** “You should keep My statutes and My laws, which if a man obeys, **וחי בהם**, he shall live through them, I am Hashem.” [Vayikra 18:5]. The meforshim over there explain a “chasidishe vort”, that the way to obtain life is by doing and keeping the mitzvos. If we do them, **וחי בהם** - we shall live through them.

Similarly, we find another *posuk* in Bereishis (45:3) **ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו אני יוסף** - *And Yosef said to his brothers, “I am Yosef; is my father still alive?”* Yosef had been discussing the fate of his father for the entire conversation. They had already told him that after all of these years his father was still alive, so what exactly was he asking? Here too the meforshim (the Tur and others) explain that he was asking if he is still vigorous. Does he still have that zest, that *bren*-fire when performing his mitzvos, or are they just done out of rote?

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה - The *Torah* advises us to look after this TODAY. From today on we must “see” to it that we are not just surviving when it comes to our performance of mitzvos. The *Torah* wants for us so much more than that. Instead of surviving we need to be thriving! Let us ask ourselves where we get our excitement from. The *Torah* and mitzvos have the true ingredients with which to truly liven us up. May we be zoche that when we say the words **אני לדודי ודודי לי** we really feel that connection to HaShem that we all yearn for. Relationships are a two way street. HaShem has already “told” us that He wants to be close with us, now all we must do is reciprocate.

מרדכי אפפעל Good Shabbos

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