

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Re'eh	11 Aug. 2018	30 Av 5778	Deut. 11:26-16:17	Isa. 66:1-24	John 6:35-51

Moshe's speech, up to now consist of fundamental commandments as love and fear of Elohim, and general exhortations against idolatry, and the people's duty toward Elohim and their obligation to live up to the holiness of the Land. Now, he puts Hashem's commandments into perspective, saying that the choice of whether or not to accept the Torah in its totality is nothing less than the choice between blessing and curse.

<p><b>כז</b> אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה--אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ, אֶל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם</p>	<p><b>27</b> the blessing, <b>if</b> you shall hearken unto the commandments of YHWH your Elohekha, which I command you this day;</p>
<p><b>כח</b> וְהַקְלָלָה, אִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ</p>	<p><b>28</b> and the curse, <b>if</b> you shall not hearken unto the commandments of YHWH your Elohekha</p>

It is interesting to note that the word 'if' in English translation is different in Hebrew language, 'asher' and 'im'. The literal translation of 'asher' is 'when', whereas 'im' is 'if.' Let's replace 'if' in verse 27 to 'when' and read the verse again. "The blessing, 'when' you shall hearken unto the commandments of YHWH Elohekha, which I command you this day." Moshe is implying that the Israelites "will listen and earn the blessing"<sup>1</sup> whereas "if" implies the Israelites were less likely to keep the commandments.

Therefore, Moshe says, "See, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse." (v. 26) When Hashem sends His light from Above, it descends as a whole. It is up to the individual to form a vessel to receive that blessing by means of keeping the commandments. However, if the vessel is not ready to receive the Light, Hashem forbid, he has no means to receive the blessing.

So, Moshe says, "when you listen to the commandments of YHWH", you shall receive His light / blessing. If not, the blessing will turn into a curse, rather it becomes a yoke since you are not ready to receive it. The blessing is given to the individual as well as to the community.

"A man who exacts tribute (*terumot*, תְּרִימוֹת) demolishes it." (Prov. 29:4, BSB) "*Terumot*" is a plural form of "*terumah*" which means "gift" or "heave offering". What does it mean? The sages explain by means of an example. A man sets apart by himself to the corner of his house and says, "My own well-being is my one and only concern. What concern have I with the community? What concern have I with their suffering? Why should I listen to them?" Such man shall "demolish" the community.

There is a story of R' Ammi who was close to death, weeping because he could have dealt with Israel's lawsuits but he chose not to. We learn from this that we are to labor for the community and endeavor to benefit the community. When we do so, the community prospers as well as the individual who labored to bring peace for the community. The sages conclude for the people who abandoned the community will descend to Genhenna and be punished for generations upon generation. Even Genhenna will be consumed, but for those who destroyed the community the punishment will be unending.

<sup>1</sup> Chumash, The Schottenstein Edition, Re'eh, p. 79

“See, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse.” (v. 26) The Midrash cites a verse from Jeremiah 13:15, “Listen and give heed. Do not be arrogant, for YHWH has spoken.” R’ Tanchuma explains, “Listen [to the words of Torah] and do not speak haughtily [by elevating yourself], for YHWH has spoken” in Proverbs 16:5, “Everyone who is proud in heart is detestable to YHWH; be assured that he will not go unpunished.” If you are learning the Torah for your own sake, then you are not listening to the words of Hashem, and the Torah will become a yoke in your life. If that happens, Hashem forbid, He says, “Whoever turns his ear away from hearing the law, even his prayer is detestable.” (Prov. 28:9)

It is interesting that ‘from this day’, the reward and punishment is set based on our behavior. Before Sinai, the entire generation including the righteous was punished for the actions of the wicked. We see examples of that when Israel sinned with the Golden Calf. Hashem wanted to destroy all the Israelites and start over again with Moshe alone. Sodom also was destroyed by their wickedness. But we know that there was at least one righteous person in Sodom but less than ten.

As a result, “from this day forward”, the keys to reward and punishment will be in your hands, for good or evil will now come as a natural and automatic consequence of every good and evil deed.<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 2:19 says, “Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you.” And in Job 8:4, “Your children have sinned against [YHWH], and He has cast them away for their transgression.”

So, the *mitzvah* itself becomes a protector in his time of needs as the *mitzvah* is a force of well-being.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the transgressors gain himself an accuser who will exact retribution for the evil he has committed. Other commentators have narrower views. For example, the material wealth can be a great boon, but it can also astray a person. We have seen such evidence when the Israelites used ‘wealth’ to make the Golden Calf.

What is Hashem telling us? The material wealth will remain a blessing if we make prudent use of them in accordance with the commandments. To conclude, the blessing and the curse will no longer come from Hashem. Since you (Israel) is now warned, Hashem is not responsible for the evil consequences of the good that Hashem bestowed. You who do evil will fall by themselves. And it is only to the righteous that the good will remain good, in its true and original form.<sup>4</sup>

Deuteronomy 30:19 says, “You shall choose life.” Hashem is telling us how we should behave. He gave us the will to fight against *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) for He placed His holiness into our souls. As this verse is also a *mitzvah* to exercise our free will to follow the path of life, the power to make the right choices any time a *mitzvah* comes our way, as said in Psalms 16:5, “Hashem is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You preserve my lot.”

Now, we will discuss chapter 14 which summarized the dietary laws. Foods that we may eat are called *kasher*, meaning “fit”, in the sense of “fit to eat.” “You shall not eat any abomination.” (14:3) This verse preamble to the animal we can eat and not eat. (vs. 4-22). We can conclude from these verses and similar one, animals that do not both chew the cud and have split hooves may not be eaten. Both conditions must be met. For example, the camel, the hyrax, and the hare, which chew the cud but do not have split hooves, are forbidden. The swine, which has split hooves but does not chew the cud, is also forbidden. The Torah goes one step further by saying not “to touch their [swine] dead body.” (v. 8) Also, the products of forbidden animals, such as milk or eggs, are also forbidden.

<sup>2</sup> Midrash, The Kleinman Edition, Re’eh, 4.3

<sup>3</sup> Pirkei Avos, 4:13

<sup>4</sup> Midrash, The Kleinman Edition, Re’eh, 4.3

Also, animals must be properly slaughtered to be fit to eat. Proper slaughtering is called *shechitah*. The Talmud elaborates: Land animals, which were created from the soil, are rendered fit to eat by severing both vital passages, that is, the windpipe and the gullet. Fish, which were created from the water; do not require any special slaughtering. Birds, which were created from a mixture of soil and water, are rendered to eat with the severing of either one of the two vital passages. [Chullin 27b]. Thus, carrion (*nevelah*) is forbidden. Animals with significant defects or injuries may not be eaten.

Insects may not be eaten, except for some locusts. This is why all vegetables must be checked for infestation before they can be eaten. Blood may not be eaten, and is removed through salting [Lev. 3:7, 17:11]. Some fats, called *cheilev*, may not be eaten [Lev. 7:23-25]. The sciatic nerve of a permitted animal may not be eaten, because Jacob's sciatic nerve was damaged when he fought the angel [Gen. 32:33].

We are not to eat the limb torn off of a living animal. [Gen. 9:4]. Other categories of prohibited foods are untithed food (*tevel*) [Lev. 22:15]; fruit grown during the first three years of the life of a tree [*orlah*] [Lev. 19:23]; fresh grain until a certain time [Lev. 23:14], wine that may have been used for idolatrous purposes (*yayin nesech*); and finally, leavened items, called *chametz*, during the week of Passover.

Why are these injunctions in the Torah? What are possible reasons for *kashrut*? The reasons are:

1. Because Hashem said so. *Kashrut* is an example of a *chuk*, that is, a commandment beyond our understanding. The tradition allows us to speculate on possible reasons for commandments, as long as we continue to observe them no matter what conclusions we reach.
2. The *kashrut* severely limits the killing of animals for food. It directs us to slaughter animals in a humane fashion, to minimize pain.
3. A third reason is that *kashrut* teaches self-discipline.
4. The *kashrut* encourages cohesion of the like-minded people.
5. You are what you eat. Nachmanides writes, in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Spain: The birds and many of the mammals forbidden by the Torah are predators, while the permitted animals are not. We are commanded not to eat those animals that have a cruel nature, so that we should not absorb these qualities into ourselves.

The Talmud notes that all fish that have scales also have fins, so the Torah would have written only "scales", without mentioning "fins". Both conditions must be met to be considered as a food for consumption. Sea creatures, such as eels have fins but do not have scales. Thus, eels are forbidden.

A contemporary rabbi explains that our soul is influenced by what we eat. Kosher birds are not aggressive. Kosher animals must have split hooves, which are used for fleeing, as opposed to claws, which are used for attacking. Kosher animals must chew the cud, so they can flee when attacked and still retain enough food to survive. Kosher fish have fins to help them flee and scales to protect them. Therefore, fins and scales make them the hunted and not the hunters.

Finally, there are mystical reasons. Isaac Luria taught that everything possesses a "divine spark". When something is used for a worthy cause, this divine spark achieves the purpose for which it was created. Thus, eating kosher meat, and using its energy to perform a *mitzvah*, elevates the divine spark in it. But when

eating non-kosher meat, no such “elevation” takes place, even if the energy is used for a worthy cause, because Hashem disapproves.

There are also two kinds of mixtures prohibited by the Torah: “You shall not cook a kid in its mother’s milk. (Ex. 23:19, 34:26; Deut. 14:21). The Torah is clear with regard to clean and unclean meats, but does this verse actually say that meat and milk should not be eaten together? No, it does not. Then what does it say? It says that “you should not seethe a kid in its mother's milk. (14:21, KJV) The Hebrew word is *te.va.shel* (תִּבְשֹׁל) which was translated as “seethe” in KJV. “Seethe” is an old English word for “boil” or “stew.”

Why would anyone ever consider cooking a young goat in its mother's milk? Why did the Torah bring this to the Israelites' attention? Why would they even think of doing such a thing? Even if they did, what would be wrong with it?

The commentators said that the pagans of that era and of that area had a fertility rite, which involved boiling a kid in its mother's milk and sprinkling the broth as a magic charm on their gardens and fields. They did this in the hope of increasing the yield of their crops.

It was a custom with the ancient heathens, when they had gathered in all their fruits, to take a kid, and boil it in the mother's milk; and then in a magical way, to go about and sprinkle all their trees, and fields, and gardens, and orchards with it, thinking by these means, that they should make them fruitful, and bring forth more abundantly in the following year.

Thus, Hashem forbade the Israelites, at the time of their in-gathering, to use any such superstitious or idolatrous rite. Hashem was warning His people against following this heathen custom.

If we were so inclined, would it be permissible for us to boil a kid in its mother's milk? It is not likely that we would want to, but if we did, we would be “tempting” Hashem (Deut. 6:16; Mal. 3:15) and breaking one of His laws, one that is just as binding today.

Is it permissible to eat meat and milk products together? To find the answer, we need to review Genesis 18. Avraham greeted three men (angels disguised as man), and the meal set for them on the table were “butter, and milk, and the calf... and he [Avraham] stood by them under the tree as they ate.” (Gen. 18:8) So, we can eat cheese and meat together.

Now, let’s discuss about blood. (Deut. 12:16, 23) The Torah says that we are not to eat blood. The translation of Deuteronomy 12:23 in English generally said, “Only be sure that you eat not the blood.” In Hebrew, “*Rak cha.zak le.vil.ti achol ha.dahm* (רַק חָזַק לִבְלִתִּי אֲכֹל הַדָּם). The Hebrew word *cha.zak* (highlighted in yellow) means “strong.” So, the proper literal translation is, “Only be strong, you do not eat blood.”

The Torah repeats five times in prohibition of eating blood. We just learned the slaughtering of an animal is the most effective and painless method. According to the commentators, the Israelites only had one type of bird and manna while they were wandering in the desert for forty years. As the Israelites enter the Promised Land, they were given a free rein to eat “after all the desire of your soul.” (Deut. 12:21) As long as “the desire” to eat meat is within the permitted animals except the fats and blood of sacrificial animals.

A “fat” in Hebrew is “*chei.lev*, חֵילֵב” (forbidden fat) which refers only to certain specific ‘fats’ of the animal mentioned in Leviticus 7:23), and it is the offered to Hashem. Thus we are forbidden to eat it as it is used

as an offering to Hashem. These types of fats are found surrounding kidneys, stomach, and livers which generally are easily removed. Another type of fats is between the fleshy part which is called “שומן” (*shu.man*) which we are permitted to consume by the Torah. This type of fats is integrated into the meat and are considered as part of the meat.

Now, the prohibition of *chei.lev* applies only to the three species: oxen, sheep, and goats. We are not to eat *chei.lev* from these animals as we are held liable whether the meat is kosher or not due to *tereifah* or *neveilah*. *Tereifah* refers to an animal that had a fatal defect before being slaughtered. *Neveilah* is an animal that had not been slaughtered according to the halacha.

The blood is called in Hebrew as *dam* (דָּם) also listed as not permitted, **but** it is also permitted to eat. The primary reason for not eating blood is because the blood is the source of life as said in Pesachim 22b, “And you shall not eat the soul with the meat” which means you shall not eat the meat while the soul is still in it (the animal is still alive). This violation would cause *kares* (כָּרֵת) (premature death and childlessness). (Lev. 17:14) In another words, we are prohibited from eating the blood when it is gushing out from the living or dying animal.

The blood in the meat<sup>5</sup> known as “blood of the squeezing” is blood that does not gush or flow from the meat pieces. Rather it drips from the animal parts, or must be squeezed from it are not considered as blood as it no longer has *nefesh ruach* (living soul), and it is not a sin subject to *kares*.

Now, last week we studied from Sefer HaAggadah about Traits and Attitudes we all need to take while we are here on this world. The sages teach in the school of R’ Ishmael: we are to use refined speech (Job 15:5), and “That which my lips know they shall speak in purity.” (Job 33:3) That we are only to issue words that are seemly from our mouth. (Refined Speech).

The sages teach we are not to use obscene language as it will take away 70 years of rewards, and Gehenna is made deeper for him, as is said, “A deep pit is for the mouth that speak obscenity.” (Prov. 22:14) Also we are not to allow our ears to listen to chitchat, because our ears are delicate and the first to “catch fire.” We are not to speak bad tidings as said, “he that utters evil tidings is a fool.” (Prov. 10:18) (Lascivious Talk).

“Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise.” (Prov. 17:28) R. Simeon ben Gamaliel<sup>6</sup> (10 BCE – 70 CE) said to his slave, Tabi to buy a good piece of meat. He went and bought a tongue. He then sent him again to buy a bad piece of meat. He went and bought a tongue again. So, he asked, “why did you buy tongue again?” He replied, “because from the tongues comes good, and from it comes also evil. When it is good, nothing is better than it; and when it is bad, nothing is more evil than it.”<sup>7</sup> After all, isn’t “death and life are in the power of the tongue?” (Prov. 18:21) (Silence and Speech)

There are four types of anger:

1. Easy to provoke and easy to reconcile – his loss is compensated by his gain.
2. Hard to provoke and hard to reconcile – his gain is offset by his loss.
3. Hard to provoke and easy to reconcile – saintly.
4. Easy to provoke and hard to reconcile – wicked.

<sup>5</sup> BT, Kereisos 4b

<sup>6</sup> A direct descendant of King David and the great-grandson of Hillel the Elder.

<sup>7</sup> Leviticus Rabbah 33:1

R' Huna said that Moshe became angry on three occasions, and each time he had forgotten the law of Hashem from his mind. In Exodus 16:20, Moshe became angry when some of the Israelites "left it [manna] until the morning... and Moshe was angry with them." And he could not remember the consequences of violating Shabbat, thus he said, "This is what Hashem has said: Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Shabbat to YHWH." In Numbers 31:14, "Moshe was angry with the officers of the army" for bringing captives and he forgot the laws governing [the purification of unclean] metal utensils. Since he did not speak of them, Eleazar the kohen said to the men of war... "This is the ordinance of the Torah that YHWH commanded Moshe", and explains the law of purification. And in Leviticus 10:16, Moshe was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar. He had forgotten the law that a mourner may not eat consecrated food before the burial of the dead, Nadab and Abihu. Thus Aharon said, "While in mourning, I have not eat of it [consecrated food] prior to the burial of my dead." (Deut. 26:14)

So how do we rid of anger? The answer is "If you remove anger from your heart, you put away evil from your flesh." (Eccles. 11:10) The opposite meaning of this verse is all sorts of Gehenna's evil will overpower him. Therefore, we are to be like Aharon, a peacemaker. (Anger)

Have you ever thought why Adam was created on the eve of Shabbat? He was the last one created of all creations. The answer, if he was created first, he would say, "I am greater because I was created first." For this reason, the sages teach it is to remind us that even an insect was created before man when we become proudful. Thus, we are to be wise, fear of Hashem, and humility. For the adornment of wisdom is humility; the adornment of humility is the fear of Hashem. (Humility and Pride)

As Israelites prepare to enter the Promised Land, and up until this point, the laws set before them was theoretical. So, this week's Torah portion, as well as following Torah portions is about an action we need to take in the Promised Land. We have studied [theoretical] the laws to enter the Promised Land. However, we cannot continue to study [R' Ammi] only, but put our foot forward [action] in front of us by keeping the Commandments to enter the Promised Land.



(신 11:26) 내가 오늘 복과 저주를 너희 앞에 두나니

(잠 29:4) 뇌물을 억지로 내게 하는 자는...멸망시키느니라

(렘 13:15) 너희는 들을지어다, 귀를 기울일지어다, 교만하지 말지어다, 여호와께서 말씀하셨음이라

(잠 16:5) 무릇 마음이 교만한 자를 여호와께서 미워하시나니 피차 손을 잡을지라도 벌을 면하지 못하리라

(잠 28:9) 사람이 귀를 돌려 율법을 듣지 아니하면 그의 기도도 가증하니라

(렘 2:19)네 악이 너를 징계하겠고 네 반역이 너를 책망할 것이라

(욥 8:4) 네 자녀들이 주께 죄를 지었으므로 주께서 그들을 그 죄에 버려두셨나니

(신 30:19) 너와 네 자손이 살기 위하여 생명을 택하고

(시 16:5) 여호와는 나의 산업과 나의 잔의 소득이시니 나의 분깃을 지키시나이다

(신 14:3) 너는 가증한 것은 무엇이든지 먹지 말라

(신 14:21) 너는 염소 새끼를 그 어미의 젖에 삶지 말지니라

(신 12:23) 다만 크게 삼가서 그 피는 먹지 말라

(신 12:21)네가 마음에 원하는 모든 것을 먹되

(욥 15:5) 네 죄악이 네 입을 가르치나니 네가 간사한 자의 혀를 좋아하는구나

(욥 33:3) 내 마음의 정직함이 곧 내 말이며 내 입술이 아는 바가 진실을 말하느니라

(잠 22:14) 음녀의 입은 깊은 함정이라 여호와의 노를 당한 자는 거기 빠지리라

(잠 10:18)미움을 감추는 자는 거짓된 입술을 가진 자요 중상하는 자는 미련한 자이니라

(잠 17:28) 미련한 자라도 잠잠하면 지혜로운 자로 여겨지고 그의 입술을 닫으면 슬기로운 자로 여겨지느니라

(출 16:20) 그들이 모세에게 순종하지 아니하고 ... 모세가 그들에게 노하니라

(민 31:14) 모세가 군대의 지휘관 곧 싸움에서 돌아온 천부장들과 백부장들에게 노하니라

(레 10:16) 모세가 ... 엘르아살과 이다말에게 노하여 이르되

(신 26:14) 내가 애곡하는 날에 이 성물을 먹지 아니하였고

(전 11:10) 그런즉 근심이 네 마음에서 떠나게 하며 악이 네 몸에서 물러가게 하라