

Parshat Re'eh
The Choice to Choose Wisely
Nomi Kaltmann - Class of 2022

See, this day I set before you blessing and curse:

רָאָה אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרִכָּה וּקְלָלָה:

blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I enjoin upon you this day;

אֶת־הַבְּרִכָּה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוָּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם:

*and curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn away from the path that I enjoin upon you this day and follow other gods, whom you have not experienced.
(Deuteronomy 26-28)*

וְהַקְלָלָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
וְסָרְתֶם מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוָּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם לֵלֶכֶת
אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר

In this week's Parsha, Parashat Re'eh, God has given us a unique option, the power to choose, our own agency. With this choice comes the responsibility which may result in our choices being mistaken or reflect a missed opportunity to elevate the mundane tasks in our lives and elevate them to acts of pure holiness. Mitzvot apply to normal everyday things like eating, getting dressed, and sleeping. However, while they may seem mundane, each of these acts reflect a sacred choice, one in which we commit ourselves to working towards options that will improve our self and our beings.

The Malbim notes that blessings and curses are not floating ideas that are a concept in some far off time. Rather, the blessings that are bestowed upon those who immerse themselves in Torah and Judaism convey a sense of achievement, satisfaction and sacred growth that is evident to everyone around them. The blessings they receive, the Malbim says, are so obvious, that all can see them. This encourages other people to strive for a commitment to Torah and Mitzvot and to actively choose a life that will endow them with blessings.

The blessings or curses that people may experience are not subject to randomness. Judaism believes in *Hashgacha Pratit*, Divine Providence, a world in which everything that happens is intended and occurs due to Divine will. The fact that something may seem to have occurred randomly does not detract from this principle. In fact, the reverse is true. Everything that we choose to do in our lives reflects a reality in which we have the power to choose our fate. Taking an attitude that everything is deliberate and reflects the will of God determines whether we are blessed or cursed. The choice is ours through our actions and decisions.

There is also a deeper message of this week's Parsha. Because God has given the Jewish people a choice, we are able to affirm ourselves to a commitment to a world of goodness, one in which we reflect the will of God through our actions.

This results in people treating each other with respect and fairness. These actions reverberate so that the world we live in then echoes this kindness and the society we live in

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is filled with fairness. In contrast, if we forsake the Divine word of God we then curse our future by choosing to reject a life of blessing. Instead a world is created in which people suffer needlessly and do not have revealed blessings in their life.

As we read the Parsha this week we recall that the choice is ours. We have free will. We have the option to choose. God has given us this opportunity and now it is our decision to make the right choice to ensure that our lives reflect our sacred calling and mission. The choice is simply ours.



Nomi Kaltmann lives in Melbourne, Australia and comes to Maharat after earning her Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Politics and Jewish Civilizations from Monash University. In 2019, Nomi became the first Australian woman to enroll in the Yeshivat Maharat four-year Semikha program. She also holds a Masters degree in Legal Practice from the Australian National University. Nomi has worked for the Shadow Attorney General of Australia and as an advisor to the former Minister for Small Business in the Victorian Legislative Assembly. Specialising in charities and not-for-profit law, Nomi has worked for the Australian Charities Commission. In 2020 Nomi was selected to intern at Tablet Magazine and for a fellowship at Hillel International's Centre for Rabbinic Innovation. Nomi is one of the founding members of the Women's Orthodox Tefillah Group in Victoria. She is also the inaugural president of

the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance in Australia.

