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*Shabbat Re'eh*  
*August 15, 2009*  
*25 Ab 5769*

## News

### NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION JEWISH ADVISORY

Last week I have announced the meeting of the NAD Jewish Advisory and I said that some pictures were taken.



### ASI NATIONAL CONVENTION

The ASI convention in Phoenix was a real blessing, here is a picture, more can be seen in our picassa website.



### ROSH HASHANA IS COMING SOON

We know that the main festive season for the Jewish people is on one hand the months of September and October with the feasts of *Rosh Hashana* (Jewish New Year) in the Bible Feast of the Trumpets, day of Judgment. Then ten days after *Yom Kippur* (the day of Atonement) end of the Judgment. And on the fifteenth day of the

month start the Tabernacles' feast *Succoth*. And on the other hand the month of March-April with Pesach. This year the feasts start with Rosh Hashana on the 19th of September and erev Chag on the 18th evening. This celebration has not to be compared with the pagan celebration of the new year (1st January). The Jewish celebration has nothing in common with the world celebration of the New year even if it is considered as the new year in the civil calendar (the new year of the religious calendar is still on the first of Nissan, the month of Passover). What Rosh Hashana means to Jews today? The essence of Rosh Hashana is to recognize that G-d is King, Creator, Sustainer and Supervisor of the World. The Jewish goal for the new year celebration is to renew their relationship with the Almighty. Each of them must make their own accounting with themselves as well as with the Almighty. It is important on Rosh Hashana to ask questions as: What are we living for? Are our actions leading us towards our goals or away from our goals? What can we do better? What goal would be more worthy to live for? If we have trouble identifying what is important to live for, then we can ask ourselves a second question: "What would I die for?" Then, instead of dying for it, live for it!

Rosh Hashana is called the Day of Judgment. It is the day when we are judged, and this judgment is sealed on Yom Kippur. That is why the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (September 19-28) are called the Ten Days of *T'shuva* or Repentance.

How to deal with your Jewish friends? The last month of the year will start this year on August 21. The month of Elul is a month of preparation for the feasts of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and the Jews start to recite the prayers called "The Slichot" which are prayers of forgiveness. The best words you can offer to your Jewish friends are "Shana Tova" which means "Happy New Year", and Chag Sameach which means "Happy Feast".

# OVERVIEW

## RE'EH

### DEUTERONOMY 11:26-16:27

**M**oshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem.

When the nation enters Eretz Yisrael they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar.

Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be shechted anywhere.

Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem.

He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations.

Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it.

If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death.

One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed.

It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot.

Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk.

Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor.

Bnei Yisrael are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted—Hashem will bless the person in all ways.

A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl

at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year.

The Parasha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

## FREEDOM OF CHOICE

**T**his week's Parasha, Re'eh, begins, “See, (Re'eh) I set before you this day a blessing and a curse . . . . The blessing, if you will listen to the commandments of the L-rd your G-d, which I command you this day and the curse if you shall not hearken to the commandments...” (Deut. 11:26-28)

G-d gave us “freedom of choice.” He gave us the ability to choose the path which leads to blessings or, G-d forbid, the opposite. Our faith is not like some others who have a great fatality and believe that everything is written before it happens. We have the choice to make good or bad, it is our privilege to choose the good path, which lead to heaven.

However, In Pirkei Avot we learn that one should not serve G-d for the sake of reward. We perform the mitzvot and do good because of we love G-d and want to please him.

## POWER TO GIVE BLESSING

**A**nother way to see the starting of this parasha Re'eh, “See (Re'eh), I set before you this day a blessing and a curse . . . . The blessing, if you will listen to the commandments of the L-rd your G-d, which I command you this day and the curse if you shall not hearken to the commandments...” (Deut. 11:26-28)

“See, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse”. Torah commentaries explain this to mean that G-d gave the power of blessing to every individual. This applies not only on a personal level but also on a universal level. For every good and positive action we do, or G-d forbid every sin we perform, affects the entire universe.

## EVERY ACT OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS IMPORTANT

**T**his week's Parasha, Re'eh, begins, “See, I set before you this day a blessing...”

Our sages ask, “Why does Moshe begin with “Re'eh,” in the singular, as if speaking to each individual, while the rest of the verse is plural (“all of you”)? The great Torah commentator, Iben Ezra, explains that Moshe wants to emphasize the importance and effect

which each individual has not only upon oneself, but upon the entire nation.

Moshe begins by addressing the individual! Observe G-d's commandments even though you are only one person. Do not think of yourself as insignificant, for each and every individual can influence and bring blessings to the entire nation and indeed the entire world!"

One may ask, "How can my actions have such a great impact?" Our sages in the Talmud (Kedushin 40b) give us the following guideline. A person must at all times feel that he or she, as well as the entire universe, is precisely balanced on a scale. One side of the scale holds the good deeds (mitzvot) while the other side contains the negative actions.

Since the scale is exactly balanced, each action that the person does will tip the scale in one direction or the other! This way, we can see how important every act of every individual is to our welfare and that of the entire world.

## SEE IT BY FAITH

**A**s mentioned the name of the Parasha, "Re'eh," means "see." The Torah implies that our conviction and faith bring blessings should be so strong as if we see it. Our sages explain this with the following parable:

A poor man bought a lottery ticket and won a huge sum of money. When he realized that he won, he ran home to tell his family. Their excitement and rejoicing was heard in the street for a distance away.

When people came and inquired about the celebration, the poor man told them of his good fortune. "Now I am the wealthiest person in town!" he said.

"But you haven't collected the money yet! You have to travel to the big city to get it. In the meantime, you are still poor and do not have a penny more now than you had yesterday, so why are you joyous now?"

"You speak like fools," responded the poor man. "True, I do not have the money yet, but the very fact that I won the lottery and the money is waiting for me, makes me feel as if I already have it in my pocket!"

The same is true with the reward for mitzvot. Our belief that G-d will reward us for mitzvot must be so strong that the blessings which G-d has promised us in the Torah should be fixed in our minds as if we "see" them. We must know by faith that G-d will ultimately grant us our reward.

Rabbi Shaul knew this principle when he said what is faith: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1.)

And Rabbi Shaul continues his demonstration through Abraham's experience of faith: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." (Heb. 11:8-10.)

## GIVING TITHES

**O**ur sages tell us that the mitzvah of giving tithes is expressed in this Parasha with the words, "Aser TeAser" which can also be read as "Aser TeAsher" which means "give tithes and you shall be wealthy." The Torah tells us that through giving tithes one will gain wealth.

The Talmud makes the following analogy concerning tithes. Two sheep were crossing the river. One was sheared and the other not. The one full of wool mocked the sheared one for letting herself be sheared. But as they went deeper into the water, its wool absorbed the water and it sank. The one who was sheared made it across safely.

"So too," says the Talmud, "Whoever 'shears' his possessions and gives tithes will make it across safely and be saved in this world and in the World-to-Come."

## KOSHER FOOD

**T**he two signs of a kosher animals is that they chew their cud ("maalei geira") and have split hooves ("mafris parsu"). Kosher fish must have fins and scales. The Torah doesn't give any signs for birds, but mentions which ones are the non-kosher ones.

However, today animals are so sick that we should be very careful before eating them. Maybe it is time for us to come back to the ideal food, which were given by God to Adam and Eve in Eden: "God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.'" (Gen. 1:29) and after the sin G-d added all kind of herbs which are good for curing sickness "and you shall eat the plants of the field." (Gen 3:18).

## THE GREATEST IS NOT THE ONE WHO GIVES

A rabbi came to a wealthy businessman and asked him to contribute a large sum for a Yeshiva. The rich man replied, "I need to think about this. Come back tomorrow."

When the rabbi came the next day the check was already prepared. "I have decided to contribute the amount you asked. However, I want you to explain the words of the Talmud, 'Greater is the one who influences others to give than the one who gives.' How is it possible that here I'm contributing such a large sum, yet, according to the Talmud, your deed can be greater than mine?"

The rabbi replied: "There is no question that your mitzvah and its reward is great. However, the courage and, at times, the embarrassment one experiences when collecting for charity can make it more difficult than giving."

## REWARD OR NOT REWARD

The following story is found in the Jerusalem Talmud: Rabbi Eliezer was very charitable. Once when Rabbi Eliezer was not home some poor people came and were fed and left.

When Rabbi Eliezer returned he was told that the poor people ate and, before leaving, they blessed him. Rabbi Eliezer said, "In this case, there is not much reward for this mitzvah."

On another occasion, Rabbi Eliezer was told that some poor people said derogatory things about him after they ate. "In this case," said Rabbi Eliezer, "the reward for the mitzvah is great!" This confirm the word of Yeshua who said, **"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matt. 6:1-4).**

## RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

The Talmud relates that when giving charity, the sages would make great effort that the poor should not know who their benefactor is in order that they should not be embarrassed.

Similarly, the story is told of a blind person who had a small stand near the rabbi's home where he would sell baked goods.

Once, as the rabbi walked past the stand, he heard the blind man bemoan his difficult situation. From then on the rabbi would each day buy all his merchandise.

"If you're going to buy all his baked goods anyway, would not it be better to just give him the amount each week as charity?" Someone asked the rabbi.

"Then he would not have to come out to his stand and you would not have to pretend that you are buying his goods!"

The rabbi replied, "Now the blind person feels that he is running a successful business. As a result, he feels good about himself. Is it not enough that he has lost his eye sight, do you want him to feel badly that he is taking charity, too?"

## A LIGHT IN OUR PATH

The books of Proverbs and Psalms compared the mitzvot to a lamp and a light in our path (Proverbs 6:23 and Psalm 119:105). Our sages explain the comparison as follows: "Just as from one candle a person can light many candles without diminishing any of the light from the original candle, so too, through the performance of the mitzvah of giving charity, one's wealth is not diminished."

## EDITOR

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## HAFTARA

### Isaiah 54:11-55:5

This Shabbat is the third Shabbat after Tisha B'Av. We are in a period called *Shiva D'nechemta*—"Seven weeks of comfort." The seven Haftarat of the weeks between Tish'a B'av and Rosh Hashana are prophecies of comfort and hope for Israel and God's people at large.

**HAFTARA:** The text of Isaiah continues to comfort Israel. It is not the time to make Israel feel guilty, but to build her up with the most precious stones. "O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones" (Is. 54:11-12). A wonderful promise is made when G-d says that he will teach the children of Israel himself. "All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children" (13). This text reminds me of the promise made in Zechariah. "And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn" (Zech 12:10). G-d will pour out his Spirit on Israel and will teach them about the Messiah who has been pierced.

Israel has suffered. She has been persecuted by those who should be the first to show them love. In order not to feel guilty, they say that all these sufferings came from G-d because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah. But the Lord said "If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you" (15). It is not from the Lord. That is a great comfort for Israel. It is better to be on the side of God. That is why it is better not to curse Israel, and not to build any weapon against her. "No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, says the LORD" (17).

The next chapter is a new call from the Lord to Israel. "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David" (Is. 53:3). Paul confirms this with "as regards election they are beloved" (Rom 11:28).

## BESORAT YESHUA

### Mark 6:53-7:8

**A**s I wrote in the Haftara text, we are in a special period called "Seven weeks of comfort."

**BESORAH:** In our text of the Besorah, Yeshua continues to comfort those who need to be comforted. After comforting Israel and his disciples he crossed over to the other side of the sea of Galilee. The text states, "They came to land at Gennesaret" (Mark 6:53). They arrived in a non-Jewish land. Yeshua wants to give the disciples the opportunity of seeing the big harvest among pagans. "When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was" (Mark 6:54-55). Yeshua concentrated his ministry among Jews and would give the ministry to non-Jews to the disciples after this ascension. Yeshua wanted to comfort these people. "And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed" (Mark 6:54-55). There are still people who are not happy to see the Jewish G-d shared with non-Jews. In the Bible it was already the experience of the prophet Jonas. The leaders of the time of Yeshua had not learned the lesson from Jonas. They came to meet Yeshua and to see what he was doing. "Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them" (Mark 7:1-2). They could not accuse Yeshua of being unfaithful to G-d through his teaching, so they tried to find failures in the lives of the disciples. But Yeshua understood their purpose and rebuked them strongly, saying "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me'" (Mark 7:6). Yeshua loved the leaders of Israel. That is why he was so strong in his words, to win them for heaven.

