

Dear Chavraya,

Every day Creation is renewed. Every day a choice is set before us, whether and how to do good in the world. The choices we make are the human dimension of Creation's renewal, having an ever-greater impact on the continued unfolding of the miracle. This week's Torah portion, *Parashat Re'eh*, presents the choice in its first words: *See! I am setting before you today: Blessing and curse*. The choice is about how we live in the day to day, every day, *today*. This is the only realm over which we have control. Would that we could always choose the blessings of health and wellbeing. Alas, that is not in our hands. The intricate web of life is fragile, and in our being at all is the miracle and the ultimate blessing. These are not the simplistic dynamics of reward and punishment. As God knows..., bad things do happen to good people. The choice that is before us and which is in our hands is the choice to follow the *way* of blessing or the *way* of curse. It is about how we choose to live.

When confidence is expressed in our ability to do and to accomplish, then our steps are stronger and lighter. The language of the Torah is positive and encouraging in its presentation of the choice. Much is made of the difference in language in regard to the blessing and the curse. Of the blessing it is written: *The blessing: That you will heed....* In using the word *that*, complete confidence is expressed that we will choose the way of blessing. Of the curse it is written: *And the curse if you will not heed....* It is only *if* you will not heed, not the certainty of *that you will*. In doing good, we live the blessing, our deeds uplifting Creation, bringing repair to that which has been cursed by evil in the world. In the choices that each one of us makes, we bring our own unique blessing and way of repair to the world. In a beautiful teaching of the Slonimer Rebbe, this is the greatest blessing:

There is no person who is just like another person, from the creation of the first human onward. There is not a single person who is able to repair that which another is meant to repair. Thus, each person has a mission from above that is her or his own, to repair something specific. It is for this reason that a person has been brought down from the upper world to this world below and no other person since the creation of the world is able to repair that which devolves upon him or her to repair. The words "See! I am setting before you today blessing and curse" are not meant to emphasize fulfillment of the mitzvot or matters of reward and punishment, but rather the special mission and task of each person in her or his world. The greatest blessing is when a person fulfills his or her mission from above, and brings repair to that matter for which she or he was brought down to the world. It is the curse if one does not bring the intended repair through their appointed mission, though having worked and labored through all seventy of life's allotted years.

Living the way of our choices, may we each be a blessing in the world.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor