

Parsha Re'eh
Fabrangen
August 31, 2024
Bracha Laster

Re'Eh is the imperative: **See!**

- I. **Some definitions:** רָאָה (v) heb (adapted from Sefaria.org)
 1. to see, look at, inspect, perceive, consider
 2. to have vision
 3. to look at, see, regard, look after, see after, learn about, observe, watch, look upon, look out, find out
 4. to see, observe, consider, look at, give attention to, discern, distinguish

So that is what we are commanded to do.

What is the AWE that you have seen this week? It could be physically seeing or mentally seeing. Do you have, for example, any new insights?

Sometimes when there is a mass of things, we need to select out just ONE to really see it. I have lots of coreopsis, echineachia, even sweetheart roses, but I have one bush that produces only one rose at a time. I saw it this morning.

IF you write on Shabbat, insert into CHAT in a phrase what you have lately SEEN in a novel way of late.

II. Re'Eh--See!

Choose between Geruzim and Aval. These are actually separate mountains and, I think, can be seen as separate actions. In the parsha, they are compressed; it implies one action.

WE choose Blessing!

We do we NOT choose curse!

...Mainly by honoring our singular Divine, keeping kosher, observing Shabbat, and many other Mitzvot. By choosing to observe Shabbat, you are automatically not choosing to NOT desecrate Shabbat? Right? What are some examples of these distinctions in our lives?

But, consider whether the choosing of Blessing and of Curse are really two different actions or activities. I choose to observe some traditional aspects of Shabbat; I choose, though, to drive to services and turn off the lights that I am not using. I suggest that most of life is less simplistic, more nuanced.

III. My mind jumps to MACRO ISSUES

1. The history and the contemporary issues are not the simple choice of Blessing OR Curse. Some days I feel that Israel/Palestine is all or mostly Curse (Aval); and the journey to Blessing (Gerizim) is a long trek through a parched desert. The destinies of the two peoples are intertwined, so the thus far unprovable seemingly impossible Blessing would be for them to live respectfully in an in-between place. This week we mark the passing of Michael Lerner z'l. In his 2011 book *Israel/Palestine* he articulated a Zionist vision that was progressive in the early 2000s but is now centrist, that recognized with empathy the oppression of Palestinians. Maybe in this discussion you will choose to illuminate your perspective on how this parsha speaks to the complexities and in-betweenness of Israel/Palestine.
2. U.S. national election --executive branch, legislative--who wins the Senate race in Maryland might make the difference on the federal level related to many issues. Maybe the current US elections have more dramatic contrasts than the presidential or senatorial races, but in some cases maybe the Gerizim & Aval are less stark? You can choose to discuss this as it relates to our parsha.
3. Practical issues relate to saving the earth. Do I save more energy by putting solar panels on my roof...ah, but the solar panel company says that I have to cut down six large trees. How do I choose Blessing (Gerizim) in this scenario?
4. Theoretical differences and cultural differences seem to argue against the Geruzim-Aval dichotomy. Rather, many of us are working towards more multi-dimensional, multi-perspective, even multicultural understandings. For example, I get some health benefit from acupuncture sessions; the acupuncture system is a stark contrast to Western medicine. A better example: Look at the Hmong people's

understanding of health/wellness and the treatment of illness as epitomized in the book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman (well worth reading) VERSUS Western Medicine. They are two different systems--not distinct blessings and curses—rather, different worldviews. And, many of those of us who have had major illnesses choose to use all cures, all modalities; we choose inbetweenness. My thought is that, rather than conflict, confusion, and contrast, many times we need more dialogue between two polarities.

In history and in many contemporary issues we are dealing with not simply Blessing and Curse. Blessing and Curse are intertwined at many junctures. Maybe you will choose to illuminate your perspective on how this parsha speaks to other complex issues.

IV. MICRO LEVEL

Here's an Interpersonal example:

If you know me, you know that I'm more frontal, explicit, let's move this thing ahead verbal style.

My wonderful husband, John has a more gentle, tactful talking and writing style.

How is this choosing BLESSING or choosing CURSE? Maybe it is situational? Some circumstances require John's style. Some circumstances progress more with my style. Many times we engage with others together using both of our styles.

What do you think about the meaning of Blessing and Curse separately and as they are set up as contrasts or polar opposites either on a personal/interpersonal level or a macro level?

Is much more common than Blessing and Curse. The nuances of life. Maybe Geruzim and Aval are a false dichotomy And anyway aren't Blessing and Curse just two sides of the same mountain? John, my dear husband, always says that our flaws are usually just too much of our

strengths. I rush around, get quite a bit done (one side of my coin) and one of my greatest flaws/curses on the other side of the coin, if you will, is lack of patience. Do you have a flaw/strength two sides of the same coin example...maybe Geruzim and Aval are truly two-sides of the SAME mountain?

V. In Betweenness.

Being inbetween is mentioned above. It, in some ways, is the most challenging: Being between the two mountains, the two ethnicities, the two countries, the two statuses, etc.

VI. Questions for Discussion

1. What is the AWE that you have seen this week?
2. Are the choosing of Blessing and of Curse really two different actions? Or, by choosing one you are automatically not choosing the other? What are some examples of these distinctions in our lives?
3. What do you think about the meaning of Blessing and Curse separately and as they are set up as contrasts or polar opposites either on a personal/interpersonal level or a macro level? Environmental choices, Israel, U.S. elections, Health perspectives?
4. Are you willing to talk about a flaw/strength two sides of the same coin...or two-sides of the same mountain?
5. What is in-between the two mountains?