

Re'eh @ the DC Beit Midrash

Tuesday, August 19, 2003; 21 Av 5763

כּוֹ רָאָה, אֲנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְפָנֶיכֶם--הַיּוֹם: בְּרָכָה, זְקֵלָה. כּוֹ אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה--אֲשֶׁר
תִּשְׁמְעוּ, אֶל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם, הַיּוֹם. כֹּחַ
וְהַקְלָלָה, אִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, וְסָרְתֶם מִן-הַדֶּרֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר
אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם: לָלֶכֶת, אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים--אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִדְעֶתֶם. {ס}

Chapter 11

26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day; 28 and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known

<http://www.mechon-mamre.org>

Ramban

“That ‘I place before you all’ means the Derekh Berakhah, the Path of the Blessing, and Derekh Kelalah, the path of the Curse. The meaning of ‘before you all’ is that you should choose for yourselves what you desire. And I [G-d] tell you that you shall have the blessing when you shall do the mitzvot and the curse if you shall not fulfill them...”

Midrash Tanchuma

“A parable of an old man seated on the highway from which there branched two roads, one full of thorns at the beginning but level at the end, and the other level at the beginning but full of thorns at the end. So he sat at the fork in the road and cautioned passers-by, saying, ‘Even though the beginning of this road is full of thorns, follow it, for it will turn level in the end.’ Whoever sensibly heeded the old man and followed that road did get a bit weary at first, to be sure, but went in peace and arrived in peace. Those who did not heed the old man set out easily on the other road but stumbled in the end. So it was with Moshe, who explicitly said to Israel, ‘Behold the way of life and the way of death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life that you may live, you and your seed.’”

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler

paraphrased by Rabbi Daniel Landes and Sheryl Robbin (from www.wexnerheritage.org)

Nekudat HaBekhirah – The Point of Choice. ... we are all called upon to fight our ethical battles, and we must do so on the real ground, the POINT upon which we must stand and choose. A soldier who fights behind his own lines, is only playing, and is not serious. On the other hand, a soldier who goes too far into enemy territory risks being cut off from logistical and strategic support. One must fight where the battle. For a Jew who never enters a synagogue, the choice is to go to shul on the Holidays. For one who goes on the Holidays, the point of choice is Shabbat; for who one goes on the Shabbat, it is to pray daily; for one who prays daily, the question is one of kavanah (devotion); and so on.