

פרשת כי תבוא

ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך ולביתך אתה והלוי והגר אשר בקרבך

And you shall rejoice in all the good that Hashem, your G-d, has given to you and to your household, you and the Levi and the convert who dwells among you (26:11)

R' Moshe Wolfson writes that the word "simcha" is related to the word "somech," "to lean" or "to rely." If a person has bitachon in Hashem and understands that he has someone to rely on, he does not feel that he is missing anything in his life. He knows that Hashem is watching over him and taking care of him. That is what brings simcha to a person. Joy comes when a person is reliant on Hashem and recognizes that whatever Hashem does is for the best. When a person fails to recognize that everything comes from Hashem, he becomes unhappy because everything in life becomes so uncertain. The key to a happy life is to trust in Hashem that everything always happens for the best.

ברוך טנאך ומשארתיך

Blessed will be your basket and your kneading trough (28:5)

In the list of blessings, the blessings of the basket and kneading trough - the material blessings - are mentioned before the blessings of the children. Yet in the list of the curses, these two items are reversed. What is the reason for this switch?

Rabbi Friedman suggests that Hashem first punishes a person's money before punishing the person himself. Rather than hurt a person, Hashem strikes his material possessions as a warning in order to give the person a chance to recognize his mistakes and to change his ways. However, when it comes to blessings, Hashem blesses the most important things, his children, immediately.

R' Moshe Sterbach answers that Jewish continuity and passing on the tradition to the next generation is most important to those who follow in the way of Hashem. Material blessings are only secondary to them. Therefore, the greatest blessing Hashem could give to the righteous is to bless their children. But when a person sins and acts wickedly, he values his money much more and, as such, the worst punishment that he could possibly receive is a blow to his finances. That is why Hashem punishes these people in their material possessions first.

והיה אם לא תשמע בקול ה' אלקיך לשמר לעשות את כל מצותיו וחקתיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום ובאו עליך כל הקללות האלה והשיגוך

And it will be if you do not listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to observe to do all his commandments and his laws that I am commanding you today, and all these curses will come upon you and overtake you (28:15)

R' Yechezkel Levenstein asks: Why is it that when a person has a physical ailment, he does whatever he can to diagnose it and fix it, but on Rosh Hashana, it is decreed whether any of this will happen at all and yet he does not seek to prevent it? Growing spiritually does not come naturally, only through hard work. Chazal tell us that if a person says that I did not work and yet I was successful in my spiritual growth, he is not to be believed. The job of a person is to remind himself that the Yom HaDin is coming and the happenings of the coming year will be determined. He must remember that all the difficulties of the past year were decreed last year on Rosh HaShana and that, with effort through teshuva, tefilla and tzedaka, he can head off these problems before they ever materialize.

Instilling this fear of the Divine judgment in oneself is hindered in a number of ways. One distraction is the thought that Hashem lets things go easily and that we do not have to worry. To overcome this distraction, we read the tochacha before Rosh Hashana which reminds us of Hashem's strict justice and how he can and does punish those who do not act in the right way. Hearing this helps us focus as we get closer to Rosh Hashana.

ולא נתן ה' לכם לב לדעת ועינים לראות ואזנים לשמע עד היום הזה

Hashem has not given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear until this day (29:3)

Why does Moshe say that they did not have a heart to know until that day? Rashi says that this was the day on which Moshe wrote his Sefer Torah and gave it to the tribe of Levi. The other tribes complained that they should also have a share in the Torah. Why should Moshe's tribe get to hold it? When Moshe is gone, perhaps they will deprive the rest of them the right to share in the Torah. Moshe heard this and was happy. He said, "Today I understand that you have a desire to become close to Hashem."

Later on (Posuk 6), Moshe tells the people, "You have come to this place." Rashi explains that this was a warning not to be haughty because of their greatness. What does this mean and what is the connection to the previous pesukim?

R' Moshe Feinstein explains Moshe's words in the following manner. Now that the Torah is given over to all of you, do not lift up your heart to think that you do not need teachers because perhaps you do not understand it properly. You need teachers and leaders to help you understand. You need Levi as your teachers and leaders to guide you along the way of the Torah. A talmid chacham is a student of a chacham.