



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

# Torah Minute

In memory of *Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l*

## Parshas Re'ah 5773

We presently find ourselves in the seven-week period of consolation that follows Tisha B'Av, which marks the anniversary of the Temple's destruction. These weeks are called the "Shiva D'nechemta" - the seven weeks of consolation - because each weekly Haftarah during this period contains a portion of the Prophets in which G-d calls out to the Nation with words of comfort and hope. Indeed, this time is an opportunity to attempt to fathom the great national tragedies that we have suffered throughout the millennium.

How do we understand the national devastation that we have suffered for so long? How are we capable of enduring and persevering through such historic anguish?

Let's look at the first verses in our Parsha for a little insight. "See I have placed before you today - blessing and curse. The blessing if you listen to the commandments of Hashem your G-d that I command you today. And the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of Hashem your G-d and turn away from the path that I command you today, to follow foreign gods that you haven't known." The message of the Torah is simple and straightforward. Blessing will follow the observance of the commandments whereas curse will follow their abandonment and the pursuit of idol worship.

The Seforno in his penetrating commentary perceives an additional fundamental message in these verses. Noting the starkness and extremes of the two possibilities - blessing and curse - the Seforno tells us that G-d is conveying to us that we are not like the other nations of the world. Other nations are governed by Copy of Eikev 5773 "nature", and as such, their existence is modest and susceptible to mediocrity. Our lot, however, as G-d's chosen nation, will be determined by our relationship to Him, the Torah, and its commandments. Our adherence to the Mitzvos will ensure the greatest blessing and bounty, while our abandonment of them will be followed by lack and want. These two extremes of blessing and curse are rooted in Israel's special relationship to G-d and by extension our obligation to Torah and Mitzvos.

Certainly, we here on Earth cannot know the reason for the many national tragedies that have befallen us. Nevertheless, realizing that the vicissitudes of our experiences are rooted in the cherished and precious relationship we have with G-d will provide us with the necessary comfort to endure and persevere. It will also be reason to look hopefully and expectantly to the future, when our full glory will be restored and we will only know "blessing".

Have a great Shabbos!  
Rabbi Menachem Winter