



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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The After Life

וְדָא' - בָּנִים אַתֶּם לִי-ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגַּדְּדוּ
וְלֹא-תִשְׁיִמוּ קֶרֶחַ בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמֵת

14:1 - You are children of the Lord, your God. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

This week's Parsha, Re'eh has some of the most inspiring and beautiful statements for the Jewish people. Annually when we are on our way out of the challenging month of Av and into the awe-bearing yet closeness of Elul, it is always nice to encounter the pasuk of 14,1, "You are children of the Lord, your God." Yet, the continuation of the pasuk immediately and awkwardly ruins the vibe; "You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead."

Rashi tells us that the forbidden act of 'lo titgodedu'- 'not to cut ourselves' is related to a form of connection and communication with the dead done by the Amorites thereby making it forbidden. But what is the connection with us being the children of Hashem?!

The Rabbeinu Behaye gives a beautiful explanation of the juxtaposition of these two ideas. He explains that this act of the

Ammorites was core to their mission since the Ammorites considered this world to be the essence of existence. Therefore, when one of the Ammorites died, it's as if the essence of all their existence was lost. We, though, "are children of the Lord, your God". A God whose existence supersedes the confines of life and death and physicality of this earth.

This is the reason why according to the Rabbeinu Behaye that this forbidden act is written with the statement of communicating with the dead. If we are children to Hashem (which we are!) then our death does not change our connection and relationship with those who are his children. Our legacy overrides this world and stays forever.

May we all be able to tap into the Godliness within ourselves and recognize ourselves as God's children.



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Life's Choose-Your-Own- Adventure

This week's Torah portion opens with Moshe saying to Am Yisrael, "See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse." This verse serves as a reminder that in our lives we are constantly faced with choices and the decisions we make have consequences.

The parsha emphasizes the importance

of choosing righteousness and being cautious of false prophets and idolatrous influences, it teaches us how to tell from what is true and what is misleading, reminding us to follow the right path.

Today the message of Parshat Re'eh stays relevant. Every day we are faced with many choices that shape who we are. As the youth of our generation, this is especially relevant as we navigate through these years. The choices we make tremendously impact our future. The parsha encourages us to choose the path of righteousness and follow Hashem's commandments. This doesn't just mean blindly following the rules, but rather understanding the moral meaning behind them, embracing kindness, compassion, honesty, and empathy as values in our lives.

The parsha also highlights the concept of teshuvah. Sometimes, our surroundings

may lead us astray, and we might encounter moments where we become weak and make mistakes or choose the wrong path. The Parsha teaches us that it is never too late to turn back and make amends. It is essential to use these opportunities to improve ourselves.

Just like Am Yisrael was promised blessings for following Hashem's ways, if we make the right choices, we will experience benefits such as personal growth, strengthened relationships, and a sense of purpose.

As we read Parshat Re'eh, let's embrace the power of choice. Let us choose to see beauty and opportunity in life, even when it's difficult. May we have the courage to stand by our values and make decisions that help improve ourselves and the world. By doing so, we can become a source of blessing and positivity.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

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