



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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Fear: The Test And Worst Driving Force

How many of us would drive at the speed limit if we didn't have the fear of paying a hefty fine? Who can honestly say that they would never cheat on tests were it guaranteed that they wouldn't get caught and there would be no consequences? Fear is a big motivator in our life. So much so, that at times it takes away our free will. Because of this, I am always left perplexed when reading Parashat Ki Tavo. The many curses recounted with their gruesome punishments seem to be the exposition of a fear-based methodology of education. Is this really the motivation Hashem wants us to have while adhering to His Torah?

Rav David Stav points out that there is a reason why this Parasha comes before

Rosh Hashana and not after. Had Hashem wanted us to keep this admonition in mind when deciding how to act, the beginning of the year might have been a much more appropriate time to remind us of said consequences. Rather, we are told what Hashem has in store for those who don't heed His word right at the end of Ellul. By this point, surely, what is done, is done.

What then is the meaning of these Psukim? Why now? Does Judaism believe in instilling a sentiment of regret post-factum, close to the Yamim Noraim (a sort of buyer's remorse – a valid feeling that comes too late to act upon)?

Fear is not the educational tool being implemented here. Although it is important to know that our actions have consequences and what those consequences are, the fear of the outcome is not the right reason why to act properly. In order to have a clear head and decide how to act based on our own volition we need to believe

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in ourselves and in our values, irrelevant of what they will bring. Rav Stav explains that it is paramount to keep these curses in mind, however, they 'belong' to the previous year. Fear can be paralyzing and therefore, in order to move on to a new year of holy acts of faith we need to close the chapter of fear behind us.

Next time you don't speed or don't cheat on a test, challenge yourself to think of the true reasons why you are doing that. Yes, it is important to know that you could cause a terrible accident or flunk the class, but it is all the more powerful to believe that you are choosing to live according to your values of mutual respect and honesty. ■

NCSY Israel is the premier organization in Israel, dedicated to connect, inspire, empower, and help teen olim with "Klita" to the Land of Israel by encouraging passionate Judaism through Torah and Tradition. Find out more at israel.ncsy.org

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