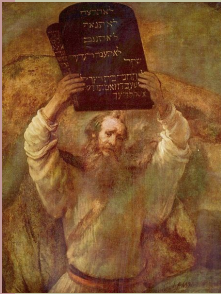


READ IT
UP 



THE LEARN IT UP NEWSLETTER

Read it Up

The Torah's Guide to Money

By Elie Bassalian

Money. Money is what drives us all. It's our biggest ambition, our highest aspiration, our loftiest accomplishment. It's what buys our homes, cars, and food. It's the means by which we acquire all our necessities for living. It's what we work for, what we live for, and what we die for. Correct? In that regard, I think it's safe to say: The world revolves around money!

With that being said, we must all ask ourselves the question: "But what is money?" and, "What does the Torah have to say about it?" If you have asked yourself this question before, well I applaud you. And if not, well I still applaud you...because you're curious enough to still be reading this. So go ahead and give yourself a pat on the back. (No seriously, I mean it).

In any case, this week's *parasha*, *parashat ekev*, actually deals with money! And very blatantly so! We're up to the point in the Torah when the *bnei yisrael* endured 40 years in the desert and are about to enter the Land of Israel. Moshe Rabbeinu gets up and delivers a massive speech called *Sefer Devarim*. In this speech, Moshe repeats to the *bnei yisrael* the Ten Commandments, as we saw in last week's *parasha*. He also tells them the *Shema*, which we are commanded to read twice a day! But, most importantly, Moshe Rabbeinu gives the nation rebuke. And this rebuke is the focal point of this week's *parasha*.

In *aliyat sheni*, the second Torah portion, Moshe Rabbeinu starts to warn the people about money. He says to them: "Take care lest you forget Hashem... Lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses...

And you increase your silver and gold...and your heart will become haughty" (8:14). And here's the punch line, wait for it.... "And you may say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of *my* hand made me all this wealth... Then you shall remember Hashem, your Lord, that it was He who gives you strength to make wealth'" (8:17).

The Torah here explicitly warns us in regards to money. But it doesn't say it's bad. In fact, it could be very good. We can give *zedakah* and do *mitzvot*, which most of us do very nicely, with money. We can lend to a friend in need or help Kanissa fundraise money for, let's say, an ambulance (...do it). But even then one must always remember, as the Torah warns, it's not you who acquired all your wealth. It's not your "might" and your "strength" as the Torah put it. It's Hashem. He's the one giving you the might and the strength to go acquire money and to live. He's the one who gave you all your luxuries and your flourishing businesses.

I hope and pray that once we take this approach, Hashem should continue to give us success in all our undertakings and business ventures, and we should see the fruits of our labor. May we also merit to see the *refuah shelema* of the sick people in our community and communities abroad, and to see the coming of *mashiach* speedily in our days.

Amen!

Shabbat Shalom!



Mashal of the Week

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts...
-William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's words have inspired countless men throughout the ages. Here he speaks of the inevitability of life's many aspects. We each seem to live out the same roles as our predecessors have. As King Solomon famously put it in the first lines of Kohelet: "Vanity of vanities...all is vanity (hevel havalim...hakol hevel)...**A generation goes, another generation comes**, and the earth stands forever" (1:2, 4). To Solomon, everything in life seems futile in the end.

But, perhaps it goes even deeper than that. Perhaps, we are really just actors playing out a script, as Shakespeare seems to say. Do we mechanically go

through the motions of life, in completely predictable and expected ways? Or do we each have an innate, unique quality to each of us, allowing us to make independent decisions and live life freely?

The Torah's answer is clear: man was made in the image of God. Within us, we each have a spark of the Most High which allows us to create and destroy, build and uproot. Unlike animals, we can intelligently consider our surroundings and respond to them; we are not restricted to the genes programmed into us.

Then, although Shakespeare, and perhaps even King Solomon, seem to despair at the fate of man, the Torah categorically rejects this notion. We are all unique, all capable of great things if we will it. The trick is realizing it and thinking of ourselves in such a way.



Meet the Rabbi...

R. Sholomo b. Aderet

Rabbi Shlomo Bar Aderet, better known as the 'Rashba', was a Spanish rabbi, was a rabbinical authority. His fame was such that he was designated as El Rab de España ("The Rabbi of Spain"). The Rashba was very active as a rabbi and as an author.

Brief Bio & Accomplishments:

- Born in 1235 in Barcelona; died in 1310.
- The Ramban (Nahmanides) and Yonah of Gerona were his teachers. He was a master in the study of the Talmud.
- His Talmudic lectures were attended by throngs of disciples, many of whom came from distant places. Among his pupils were Yom Tob bar Abraham Ishbili (better known has the 'Ritva') and Bachya bar Asher Ibn Halava.
- Questions in great number, dealing with ritual, with the most varied topics of the *halakhah*, and with religious philosophy, were addressed to him from Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, and even from Asia Minor.

Famous Works:

- His responsa (letters of halachic correspondence) show evidence of a wide-reading, keen intelligence, and systematic thought. They also afford a clear insight into the communal life of the time, portraying his contemporaries, and are of value for the study not only of rabbinical procedure but also of the intellectual development of the age in which he lived.

Interesting Tidbits:

- Had to contend with the enemies of Judaism as well as with religion-twisting ones. Many sages at the time twisted the Midrashim to conform to Christianity, so Rashba saw it most befitting to write a commentary on the *haggadot*, or Talmudic stories, of which only a fragment is now extant.
- He also refuted the attacks of a Mohammedan who asserted that the priests had falsified the Bible.

May we continue to strive and live up to the lessons of life portrayed by this special Jewish sage, Shabbat Shalom!

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Email us at MYCRiU@gmail.com



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