

# ENJOY THE RIDE

*by Rabbi Naftali Reich*

Gazing at the extreme polarities that characterize our world, questions spring to mind. What does it all mean? Why the vast range between the two ends of the spectrum-between the mighty and the weak, the rich and the poor, the fortunate and unfortunate?

Observing the planet, we see the same wild disparities. Why do some trees stand so tall and majestic and others look so lowly and forlorn? How is it that some mighty predators capture dominion of all the animals of the jungle, and others are so weak and helpless? How is it that in some places, the climate is so temperate and inviting, and in others harsh and inhospitable?

It is all clearly above our finite capacity to comprehend. Yet, we follow the behest of the prophet Isaiah who declares, "Lift up your eyes heavenwards and see who created all these!" The Navi urges us to take note of the fascinating interaction of the myriad components of the Divine ecosystem that sustain all forms of life, and keeps the earth spinning on its axis. These wonders inspire overwhelming awe and a love of the Creator, who nurtures the microscopic ameba to the same degree He cares for the most sophisticated life forms.

When seeing the entire cosmos in such perfect synchronization, our response is to feel humbled before the majesty of the Divine and to bless Him for orchestrating these unfathomable wonders.

It's natural to wonder why some people are born to luxury and privilege and others seem destined for a life of deprivation. Why are some born with such keen intellect and others so limited? Why, we may ask, are some graced with life's blessings while others seem prone to hardships and failure? On a personal level, we may question why our happiness is constantly being thwarted by difficult challenges, by unexpected curve balls that may knock us off balance. Why can't we be left alone to cruise along in tranquility?

Yet when we open up our eyes and witness the Divine hand that writes the amazing scripts of our lives, we are forced to acknowledge His omniscience and unfathomable wisdom, and to bend our will to His.

This theme of surrendering to and embracing the Divine will is echoed in Moshe's opening words, in this week's Torah portion: "Take note, I have placed before you a life of blessing or a life of curse." When you follow the Torah's precepts and submit to the Divine Will, you will become a source of Divine blessing. Yet be warned that if you are led astray after the temptations that surround you, you will be cursed!

How are we to conform to such a dictate? We all want to exercise our freedom of choice. It encroaches on our spontaneous self-expression when we are handed such non-negotiable absolutes. Why must we surrender our own desires that feel so urgent and authentic? Is it fair that what feels so satisfying will cause us to be rejected, cursed and disconnected from the Divine? Can't we yield to the voice inside us urging us to experiment with life's forbidden fruits? How are we expected to forever close to the door to these experiences?

My saintly rebbe, the Nesivas Shalom of blessed memory, once told me that he grew up in Baranovitch, Poland, and recalled one of the first automotive coaches that rolled down the town's main street. People were agog with wonder and awe. A simple man was ready to board the bus for a ride across the town, but insisted in interrogating the driver. He needed to understand how the contraption actually worked. The driver understood that it would be impossible to explain to the simpleton the concepts of combustion and thrust, how the engine and pistons worked in sync to generate the necessary horsepower to turn the wheels. He shouted at the man impatiently, "Come on board, don't you see it works? That is all you need to know for now. Enjoy the ride!"

We need to absorb this lesson with regard to the Torah's blueprint for a good life, one filled with meaning, purpose and constant growth. Once we are willing to accept that our souls, as an essential part of the Jewish nation, stood around Mt. Sinai and heard His voice, we will come to appreciate that a life lived in accordance with the Torah's precepts is the only way to imbue our existence with meaning. With Torah we can become joyously connected and intimate with our Divine source. Without it we are simply disconnected.

Shabbos and festivals, prayer and study will not be burdensome, but opportunities to be uplifted and to bond with the Divine. They will fill our calendars with days of blissful celebration. Prayer and study will be infused with fervor, providing the constant medium to connect with the Divine. Family life will inject meaning and responsibility into the cornerstone of our homes, and will lay the foundation for us to contribute, through our children and succeeding generations, our own lasting legacy to the world.

Yes, the desire to challenge and test the boundaries of our relationship with the Divine is enticing. But those diversions end up leading us far astray. Disconnecting from our Divine mission and source only leaves us feeling rejected and cursed. Far better that we not merely surrender to our Almighty's dictates but rather embrace his Divine will. Only then do we open ourselves up to the fullness and richness of the bountiful flow of His Divine blessing. Text Copyright © 2012 by Rabbi Naftali Reich and **Torah.org**.

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