

## **"Life and death I have set before you, the blessing and the curse, therefore choose life so that you may live, you and your children." (30:19)**

The word used by the *Torah* h,,bu - "I have set before you" to describe the two divergent paths which stand before every Jew seems puzzling. This word appears to be appropriate only to the context of blessing, as it shares a root with the word vb,n (present). Why, then, does the *Torah* use the same verb to apply to a curse, as well? The *Shelah Hakadosh* extends this question to include the idea of freedom of decision. When one is confronted with two roads, one leading to success, riches, and fame, and the other leading to trials, pain, and anguish, does the individual truly have a choice? Indeed, *Horav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch Z"l*. interprets this pasuk's message as a mandate to make a choice. "Life" is achieved only by forethought and determination, never by random chance. One must make a conscious decision to "choose" life if he desires to "live".

*Horav Dov Beirsih Widenfeld Z"l* suggests that the idea of vb,n of gift applies similarly to the "other" path which presents itself before an individual. The image of the day of reckoning which everyone must ultimately face can serve as a source of inspiration to motivate an individual to change his way of life. He continues with the notion that there are two types of people. The first type is represented by the individual who loves *Torah*, whose dedication is exemplary. He devotes every minute to *Torah* values. *Torah's* study is the only source of life for such a person. He imbues this feeling in the hearts and minds of his children, transmitting the spirit of this unique love for *Torah* to them. His only desire is to instill in his children the idea that a life devoid of *Torah* is equivalent to no life at all. The second type stands in contrast to the first. It is symbolized by the individual who is observant, but lacks special affection towards *Torah*. He will invariably seek other bases for "living" and earning a livelihood. His excuses may be that "times have changed," and that he is not able to "live" from *Torah* alone. such a person obviously is not cognizant that 'people' adapt, but the *Torah* never changes.

This is *pasuk's* message. I have placed before you two paths: The path of life, whereby you will cling to the "living" *Torah*, and the path of death, whereby, you will wait until the last moment to change your attitude. Choose life! Do not wait until the last moment, when you no longer have the opportunity to educate your children in the appropriate attitude towards *Torah* living. Choose life so that you and your children shall live!