

Blessings and Curses

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

This week's reading from Torah starts with an amazing statement, that the Torah can be both a source of blessing and a curse. Surely that can't be correct. If one keeps the Torah there cannot be any way in which it can be bad. And yet the fact is that Torah can be misused and abused. The Torah is great. The trouble is we humans have the capacity to ruin almost any system from politics to sport and to abuse the most perfect of moralities.

What the Torah refers to is that when the Children of Israel crossed the River Jordan to enter the Promised land, two mountains, Eyval and Grizzim would be used as a national symbol of the Good and the Bad. And there, there should be regular gatherings of the Nation to remind everyone of the options.

The Torah refers indirectly to another mountain, what later came to be called Mount Zion where the Temple stood. But here it is not given a name. Sadly, we have seen how religion has been used to set people against each other, to give people an unwarranted sense of superiority, to encourage hypocrisy and animosity, even to cover abuse and violence.

Throughout history some of the worst enemies of the Jews have come from amongst our own people. And too often we are embarrassed by people who masquerade as religious. Religion can indeed be a beautiful way of life but it can also be misused even by people who are outwardly religious. Nothing is entirely black or white and we need to be reminded of the abuses of religion as well as its benefits.