



From the Rabbi's Study

ALL A MATTER OF CHOICE

Classical linguists amongst you will know that the word "intelligence" is derived from two Latin words – "inter" and "legere". "Inter" means between and "legere" means to choose. Intelligence is the capacity to choose between alternative courses of actions; to make moral choices.

In our own society, there are many voices which strenuously deny that we are indeed free to make significant choices, that we possess freedom of will.

Of course, such evasion of responsibility for one's own life would find no support in Judaism which reminds us constantly that we do indeed have choices and that we create our own world by the choices **we** make.

Interestingly enough, the newest teachings of psychiatry endorse the Jewish view. They do not deny the enormous influence of many factors we cannot control, but they also remind us that there is a decisive area where our own free will can enable us to take charge of our lives.

The Talmud teaches "Ein hadavar talu elah bi – it all depends on me." **We** decide.

We are constantly making choices and we pay for those choices.

Economic factors will determine what language we speak, but **we** decide what words we are going to say.

Psychological factors may determine whether we are happy or sad, but **we** decide whether that's going to lead us to creative or destructive behaviour.

Our genetic makeup will determine the colour of our eyes, but **we** choose what or who we want to look at and the perspective through which we look. And sometimes that choice comes down to being honest or wealthy being loyal to those we love or destroying family life being successful or being likeable.

A new year beckons. We must remember that great moral teaching; Ein hadavar talu elah bi – it all depends on me. Let us pray with the coming new year that we will come to accept this all-important truth, doing our part to make the world a better place.

Ruthie and I, together with the children, send you our warmest wishes for a K'tivah V'Chatimah Tovah. May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for good health, happiness and prosperity. May the year 5765 be Sh'nat chayim v'shalom – a year of life and of peace for you and your families, for our community, for Erets Yisrael and the entire Jewish people.

JOEL PORTNOY