Points to Ponder

Eikev 5781

**וְהָיָ֣ה | עֵ֣קֶב תִּשְׁמְע֗וּן אֵ֤ת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים֙ הָאֵ֔לֶּה If you listen to the Mishpatim (7:12)** – Why Mishpatim as opposed to the Eidos and Chukim? **Rabbi Dr. Reuven Bulka ztl**. suggested that unlike Eidos and Chukim, one could observe Mishpatim because they are logical or he could observe them because they are logical AND spiritual. When using the latter reasoning, one becomes concerned not only with the legalities but also the realities too. The ultimate test of authentic religious commitment is in the ability to transcend societal norms and observe life on a spiritual plane as well.

**מַמְרִ֥ים הֱיִיתֶ֖ם עִם־ה You were rebellious with Hashem (9:7)** – Why did the Possuk need to highlight that we were rebellious WITH HASHEM? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explained that even on the day of Cheit HaEigel we know that the Jews received Manna. In other words, even when we were beneficiaries of Chessed and miracles from Hashem we were so bold so as to rebel against Hashem.

**וָֽאֵשֵׁ֣ב בָּהָ֗ר אַרְבָּעִ֥ים יוֹם֙ וְאַרְבָּעִ֣ים לַ֔יְלָה I sat on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights (9:9)** – Rashi cites the Talmud (Megillah 21a) that sitting denotes staying. Why was it necessary to highlight the staying? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** noted that often one who is briefly in a certain place has a hard time learning there since it is devalued by its briefness. Thus, the Torah tells us that Moshe learned in the 40 days with the same concentration that he would have used had he had all of the time in the world. That should be our goal as well.

**וּמַלְתֶּ֕ם אֵ֖ת עָרְלַ֣ת לְבַבְכֶ֑ם And you will circumcise your hearts (10:16) – Rashi** notes that the inability to listen is the Orlah of the heart. **Rav Nosson Wachtfogel ztl.** explained that a person’s heart is pure and senses that which the pure Neshama is supposed to sense too. The only thing is that it has a tough membrane that makes it hard for the purity to flow through. The Possuk is showing us how to get rid of the cover on the heart – through Yiras Shomayim – a solid sense of heavenly reverence which helps us understand the world clearly.

**The land has mountains and valleys for the rains of Shomayim to irrigate (11:11) – Rashi** explains that the yield of crops on the mountains is 5x the yield of that which is planted in the plains. **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** explained that this is the intention of the Gemara (Taanis 3b) that the snow is 5 times more valuable to the mountain than the rain is to the plain. Why? Rav Nebenzahl explained that mountains need 5 times the amount of water since they produce 5x the crop. He added that perhaps this is why snow is found more often on the mountains – as a Chessed of Hashem, since the mountains need 5x the rain and snow produces 5x the moisture than rain alone.

**בְּכָל־לְבַבְכֶ֖ם וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁכֶֽם With all your hearts and all of your souls (11:13)** – Notice that this section of Shema does not mention all of your “Meod” often referencing wealth. Why? The **Kotzker Rebbe ztl.** explained that in regard to most people, their search for wealth is their soul. Hence no need to add words to the Torah. **Rav Schachter Shlita** suggested that this section of the Torah is in the plural and although there are those individuals who might value their property over themselves, a Tzibbur does not since it is not that crazy. He added another level of interpretation from **Rav Yosef Engel ztl.** who explained that in regard to the Tzibbur a financial threat is also a threat to the soul and the community can be Michallel Shabbos for a communal threat (hence the Rav of the police force allows police to investigate financial crimes on Shabbos according to this).

**Haftara:**

**וַתֹּ֥אמֶר צִיּ֖וֹן עֲזָבַ֣נִי ה וַֽאדֹנָ֖י שְׁכֵחָֽנִי Zion said “Hashem has left me” (Yeshayahu 49:14) – Sfas Emes** (on the Possuk Mah Hashem Sho’el) explains that you cannot command love where it does not exist so there must be a Nekudah or a spark of love in every Jew that can sometimes be covered. **Rav Dr. Norman Lamm ztl** added that the intention here is clear. Tzion never despairs of loving Hashem. We only worry that He is done loving us. But here is where we can take solace. As long as we have not lost that Nekudah we can aspire and rely on the promise of reciprocity.