Points to Ponder

Re’eh 5783

**רְאֵ֗ה Re’eh (11:26)** - The word “re’eh” is said in the singular but then the pasuk shifts to lifneichem in the plural. Why the grammatically inconsistent shift? **Kli Yakar** suggests that the answer can be found in the Gemara (Kiddushin 40b), where Chazal tell us that each person should see himself as 50/50 merits and demerits and his very next action will sway his destiny. Furthermore, he should look at the world as 50/50 and that his actions will impact the whole world. This is why Moshe Rabbeinu highlights the singular and the plural. We are responsible for our own actions, but we also have the ability to impact the whole world. **Rav Asher Weiss** notes that this idea is not just metaphysical. Every action we take, impacts others in the real world. They look at what we do, and we serve as either a positive or negative influence.

**אִ֖ישׁ כָּל־הַיָּשָׁ֥ר בְּעֵינָֽיו You shall not do…each person as s/he sees as upright in his/her own eyes (12:8) - Rav Belsky** noted that there are eras in history when Bamos were permitted and others when they were not. We also find times when all was ok in Jewish history except for the fact that the Bamos were not removed. How are we to understand the situation? Rav Belsky explained that the Bamos are symbolic of a general Jewish trend to “feel” Judaism instead of stopping to think about what Hashem wants. Bamos are about what we “feel” instead of what Hashem asks of us to do.

**לֹא־תַֽעֲשֶׂ֣ה כֵ֔ן לַֽה אֱלֹקיךָ Don’t do the same to Hashem (12:31)** - We are told to make sure we do not imitate Caananite Avoda Zara in our service of Hashem. **Rashi** assumes we are afraid that we might succumb to Avoda Zara itself. **Ramban** is more afraid that we will incorporate Avoda Zara practices in to our service of Hashem. Ibn Ezra, Sforno and Chizkuni all agree with him. **Rav Schachter** applied this idea, called *Avodas* ***Elokim*** *Zara* — the service of Hashem but in a foreign way, to include idolatrous practices and foreign ideologies utilized in the service of Hashem. Even these practices have a negative assimilating effect and have proven not to be useful in preserving the nation in the long run.

**כִּ֣י יְסִֽיתְךָ֡ אָחִ֣יךָ  The Meisit (13:7)** - Why is it that the Meisit, who through one on one conversation entices Jews to engage in Avoda Zara is treated with a harsher instruction than the Novi Sheker as far as that by the Meisit we are told in addition to the death penalty we are also to show him no mercy? The **Alter of Kelm** explains that the one on one interactions can have more impact than the person who addresses a large audience. It follows that the reward for those who try to influence Jews positively in a one on one dialogue is exponentially greater.

**וְנָֽתַן־לְךָ֤ רַֽחֲמִים֙ וְרִֽחַמְךָ֣ וְהִרְבֶּ֔ךָ Hashem will give us mercy (13:18)** - Mercy and the destruction of an entire Ir Hanidachas seem incongruous? How are we to reconcile these opposing positions? **Rav Sorotzkin** explained that the children are not killed out and the mercy is for the children that they should be adopted by other families. **Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Lubavitcher Rebbe** suggested that the Gemara notes that an Ir HaNichas cannot occur since if it would, everything would need to be burned in it including the Mezuzos and since one cannot burn the name of Hashem, the city would not be destroyed simply because of the Mezuzah. Therefore, if the Rebbe heard of an Ir HaNichas he would run there in the middle of the night to put a Mezuzah on a door in order to put the Jewish influence that would save the city.

**לְמַ֣עַן תִּלְמַ֗ד לְיִרְאָ֛ה So that you learn to fear Hashem (14:23)** - The idea of Maaser Sheni being a source for Yiras Hashem all of the days seems odd. Surely there are other ways to inspire Yiras Hashem — why Maaser Sheni? **Rav Amital** suggested that this is the power of Yerushalayim (especially in the time of the Mikdash - eds.). Even eating fruit there increases Yiras Shomayim. Sometimes even the mundane can bring us to recognize Hashem.

**כִּ֛י לֹֽא־יֶחְדַּ֥ל אֶבְי֖וֹן מִקֶּ֣רֶב הָאָ֑רֶץ The destitute shall never cease from the world (15:11)** - If this is a fact of life, why does the Kohein Gadol daven on Yom Kippur for a year when Am Yisrael shall not be dependent on one another and not on anyone else? Citing **Rav Chaim Kanievsky in support, Rav Steven Pruzansky** explains that there is a difference between earning a living and helping a person stand on his own 2 feet. Even if a person needs some degree of assistance, the idea that a Jew needs to feel as if s/he is lesser a person and dependent on another is an undesirous thing for the Jewish people.

Haftara

**עֲנִיָּ֥ה סֹֽעֲרָ֖ה לֹ֣א נֻחָ֑מָה  The agitated pauper who is not comforted (Yeshayahu 54:11)** - After last week’s Haftara of promise that Hashem had brought the children back to Yerushalayim, why is Tzion still not getting Nechama? **Rav Zechariah Tubi** quoted the Yakut Shimoni notes that the pauper here refers not to one without money but rather a poverty from Torah, of Tzaddikim and of good actions. Therefore, the Haftara continues, Tzion is not comforted by the big crowds and the fancy buildings made of the fancy stones. The real Nechama for Tzion is the fact that her children are all learning and living Torah lives.