Points to Ponder

Re’eh – Master File

**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.

**See that I have set before you today a blessing and a curse (11:26) – Rav Schachter**  would often note that the **Rambam** refers to the power of Bechirah as the concept of Reshus. The reason for the difference, opines **Rav Schachter** in the name of **Rav Soloveitchik** is that while Bechirah involves a selection from the 2 choices before a person, Reshus allows a person to achieve an even wider set of choices – beyond those set before him. **Rav Schachter** would often add that a person is naturally inclined to assert his independence hence Gadol HaMitzuveh V’Oseh. However, by going L’Fnim Mesuras HaDin one also exerts his power of independence and still chooses to follow the word of Hashem.

**רְאֵ֗ה Behold and see (11:26)** - The first word in the Parasha opens our eyes**. Rav Chaim Cohen, (the Chalban)** explains that sights, paired with the idea of listening as mentioned in last week’s Parasha are 2 critical elements in Avodas Hashem. The question is, which one is greater? The Chalban explains that in regard to cognitive matters, the power of sight dominates. However, in terms of the matters of the heart, it is the power of listening that leaves a bigger impact. In terms of Jewish practice, the power of sight is more connected to the study of Torah because it gives you a better picture of the landscape. On the other hand, the Tefillah process is one that requires connection to the heart. The ability to listen is more powerful then.

**בְּרָכָ֖ה וּקְלָלָֽה Beracha and a curse (11:26)** - Why does Moshe say that the blessings and curses are being presented today when in fact they are not delivered for another 14 perakim until Parshas Ki Tavo. Shouldn’t this passage have been recited at Har Eival and Har Gerizim? **The Ramban** “reads” the opening verse as follows, “Behold I place before you today the path of blessing and the path of curse.” In other words, what consequences occur in the future depend on your actions and choices today. I, Hakodesh Baruch Hu, can only show you the way. Which path you take, or do not take, will determine future consequences. Building on **Sforno**’s comments, **Rav Gedaliah Schorr** notes that that the blessing or the curse is dependent on how we perform each mitzvah. If we observe the mitzvot with alacrity, zeal, and knowledge, then they are a source of blessing. If they are done passionlessly and without forethought or clarity, that in itself is a curse!

**See, I am placing before you a blessing and a curse (11:26) –** The opening of the sedra is the word 're'eh' (see). It is in the singular form, whilst the pasuk continues 'giving before YOU today blessing and curses' - this second you is the 'lachem' form, ie the plural 'you.' Why the change? **The Kotzker Rebbe** remarked that this is because everyone sees what they want to see in life; since they see a reflection of what they are and interpret events the way they see fit in accordance with their outlook on the world. This is why the word re'eh ('see') is in the singular - since everyone has different eyesight as we just said. But when it comes to giving blessings that is in the plural, for giving is done without distinction; everyone gets similarly.

**See, I am placing before you a blessing and a curse (11:26) – Sforno** points out that Hashem wants us not to choose being “middle of the road” complacent. Rather, he sets poles for us – Beracha and Klalla – one is the extreme of success while the other is epic fail. One can achieve either based on our choices. The **Vilna Gaon** points out that if we do not rise upward then we fall downward. **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi**  added that there is no middle ground – either we harness the powers of growth through Torah and Yiras Shomayim or we fall. There is no opportunity for stagnation.

**רְאֵ֗ה אָֽנֹכִ֛י נֹתֵ֥ן לִפְנֵיכֶ֖ם הַיּ֑וֹם בְּרָכָ֖ה וּקְלָלָֽה Behold I set before you today a Beracha and a Klala (11:26) - Rav Schachter** would remind us that the Torah is formulating the principles of Bechira Chofshis here. (This was in contrast to much of today’s psychology that argues that behavior and choice is predetermined which he would remind us is an idea that is not in line with Torah thought). Rav Schachter added that when the Rambam formulated this most significant principle in *Hilchos Teshuva* (at the beginning of chapter 5) instead of referring to freedom of will as *bechira chofshis*, as it is commonly referred to, he calls it "*reshus*". In one of his *drashas* for *aseres yemei teshuva*, Rav Soloveitchk suggested that perhaps the Rambam meant to bring out the following idea: in modern Hebrew we refer to the elections as "*bechirot*". At election time, we are presented with a fixed set of candidates (or parties) and we choose from among them. Man, however, not only has "*bechira chofshis*" to choose from among the various options which are presented to him, but he even has "*reshus*", i.e. the ability to choose a path in life which was never even presented to him as an option. Therefore, even people brought up in a totally non-observant family and in an anti-Torah society also have the ability to choose - similar to *yesh me'ayin* - to be observant.

**The Beracha THAT you should listen (11:27) – Rav Shaul Yisraeli**  pointed out that the main beracha is not the reward that comes from keeping the challenge, rather the reward is in the challenge of listening by itself. One who gets the idea finds satisfaction in life itself because he has purpose. Normally we run through life trying to fill that which we find lacking in our existence and how to fill that which is missing. The answer is simple – we are missing the awareness of our greatest tools at our disposal – ourselves.

**אַבֵּ֣ד תְּאַבְּד֠וּן  You shall surely destroy all of the places (12:2)** - The repetitive expression connotes persistent, recurrent destruction. Why do we need a double language? Once something is destroyed surely it remains destroyed? **Rav Dovid Feinstein** explained that Moshe knew that in time the Jews would revert to idol worship. He told them that every time they built a new idol and did Teshuva they needed to go back and destroy the idols again. Yehoshua did not know of this danger since in his time the people were still fresh and enthusiastic in their land and he did not suspect that they would return to idolatry once they had destroyed the idols of the previous inhabitants. That is why he did not pray to remove the Yetzer for Avoda Zara.

**וְאִבַּדְתֶּ֣ם אֶת־שְׁמָ֔ם מִן־הַמָּק֖וֹם הַהֽוּא And you shall destroy its name from that place (12:3)** - Rashi says that this is a directive to call an Avoda Zara by a negative name**. The Brisker Rav**  noted that this is a 2 step Mitzva -- using a nickname and making that nickname a negative one.

**כִּי אִם־אֶל־הַמָּק֞וֹם To the place that Hashem will select (12:5)** - Why doesn’t Hashem mention the place of the Beis Hamikdash expressly? **Rav Aharon Lopiansky**  cited the Rambam who explains that there are multiple reasons. First, when the nations of the world see how central the place is to us, they will argue to possess it. Second, when we are in Galus, whoever has control over the area will try to destroy it. Thirdly, when we control the land, Hashem did not want fights over the land due to ownership challenges. (See how prophetic these reasons are, even until today).

**You should seek out his Shechina (12:5)** – What does mean? The **Rambam** understands the biblical obligation of davening to be, in part, to daven toward the Mikdash. This is the source for the practice facing east. The **Netziv** writes that this is the Rambam’s understanding of our Possuk. He sees that whenever it says to be Doreish Hashem seems to refer to Tefillah. **Rav Schachter**  added that there is an additional level of interpretation – namely that after deciding to build a Mikdash, one must ask the Novi for approval**. Rav Tzvi Hirsch Kalisher** wanted to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash but the issue of needing a Novi to approve was proving to be difficult. Even in the Gemara we find that the second Beis HaMikdash needed a Novi to authorize the building.

**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 errors 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.

**אֶל־הַמְּנוּחָה֙ וְאֶל־הַנַּֽחֲלָ֔ה  To the Menucha and the inheritance (12:9) - Rashi** quotes Sifrei saying that Menucha refers to Shiloh while Nachala refers to Yerushalayim. But wasn’t Shiloh just a stopgap measure and not as significant. Why should it take such a prominent place in Moshe’s blessing? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin** explained that in Shiloh replacing the golden planks with stone – indicates a permanence a setting down of roots. But even though this was not the final destination, it celebrated the first step of taking roots in the land of Israel.

**אַתָּ֨ה וּבִנְךָ֤ וּבִתֶּ֨ךָ֙ וְעַבְדְּךָ֣ וַֽאֲמָתֶ֔ךָ וְהַלֵּוִ֖י אֲשֶׁ֣ר בִּשְׁעָרֶ֑יךָ וְשָֽׂמַחְתָּ֗ And you shall rejoice before Hashem with all of your Maaser Sheni (12:18)** - How does ma’aser sheni bring about simcha? **Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch** notes that in the previous possuk we are told we cannot eat Maaser Sheni out of Yirushalayim. Rav Bloch explains that our goal is to synchronize our body with our neshama. If we were to actually synchronize them, we would be incapable of eating Ma’aser Sheni out of Yerushalayim. Based on this, we could explain the reference to simcha. Simcha is a state of being that is only achieved when we are true to ourselves. If our body and soul are in sync, it can really bring about simcha.

**רַ֣ק חֲזַ֗ק לְבִלְתִּי֙ אֲכֹ֣ל הַדָּ֔ם Just be strong not to eat blood (12:23)** - The Gemara (Chullin 142a) notes that this is an easy Mitzva since we do not like blood anyway. How come it needs strengthening if it is so easy to keep? **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon**  explained that there are 2 aspects to observing Mitzvos. On the one hand we are involved in the performance of the Mitzva itself and at the same time we are rewarded for the Tircha, the efforts extended in the performance of the Mitzva. We do not know the reward of the former -- the Mitzva itself but we DO know and are rewarded for, the Tircha of the Mitzva and that is independent of price of the Mitzva.

**Just strengthen yourselves not to consume blood because the blood is the soul (12:23) – Rashi** reminds us that not eating blood seems to be one of the easier Mitzvos to keep since people do not desire it too much. Still the Torah stresses the need to strengthen oneself in order to realize how one needs Chizzuk in Mitzvos. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel**  explains that the message here is that one needs strength even to do easy Mitzvos. One needs to passionate and strong even about these lest one’s lack of passion lead him to sin.

**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. Ben 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 riven not to be useful in preserving the nation in the long run.

**When a prophet or a dreamer arises and performs a sign (13:2) – Rav Zevin**  points out that there are 2 primary reasons people sin – mistaken beliefs or desire for the sin. Both have the ability to overpower a person in plain sight. The cheaters would perform an Os (in Shomyaim for those with ruined philosophies) or a trick (in physical slight of hand). We need to be careful not to fall prey to both attempts to sway us by watching ourselves – using our mind’s eye – to be on guard to falling into traps of the trade.

**When a Novi comes and brings you a sign (13:2-4) – Rav Yechezkel Levenstein**  points out that the signs and magic are not the reasons to trust the Novi. There are parallel signs in what he calls the Merkava Timeiya and the Merkava Tehora. The trick is to use the sign to open your mind and contemplate whether the message behind the dog and pony show is one of truth or falsehood. The job of the Yetzer HaRa is to try to make sheker appear truthful. Our job is not to be fooled – truth stands on its own forever.

**וְאֹת֥וֹ תַֽעֲבֹ֖דוּ And serve Him (13:5) - Rashi** explains that we are to serve Hashem in his Mikdash. **Ramban** (in VaEschanan 6:13) says we can serve Hashem in His Torah and in His Mikdash. What is Avoda in Mikdash? It refers to Korbanos. And Avodah in Torah? To learn Torah. **Rav Elya Svei**  added that like a servant whose only purpose in existence is to do the will of his master, we can serve Hashem best by being entrenched in learning through connection to Hashem totally.

**After Hashem you should go (13:5)** – the Hebrew words Achar and Acharei both refer to “going after” or “Behind”. However, the word Achar implies a closer following and Acharei implies from a distance. The Sefer Maayanah Shel Torah quotes a conversation between the **Chofetz Chaim** and the **Gerrer Rebbe** about why the more distant Acharei is used in this context. The Gerrer Rebbe is quoted as having explained that the further one feels from Hashem, the closer he is likely to get due to the desire of U’Bo Tidbakun. **Rav Chaim Kanievsky**  added that it is impossible to be close to Hashem – the whole experience of being in Hashem’s presence is achieved in seeing the whole picture and that, comes from a distance.

**And you should cleave to him (13:5)** – What is the love toward Hashem from a person all about? And how does one achieve Deveikus? **Rav Dovid Povarsky**  explained that it is based on the idea of following that which Hashem does (Mah Hu Af Ata <see Sotah 14a>). That means that when we follow Hashem’s ways we are cleaving to him. This is love. Chana notes this when she notes that there is no one who is Kadosh like Hashem and none like him. The connection is clear. When one follows Hashem’s path and turns down his own desires – he is more Kadosh and sticking to Hashem’s plan for him.

**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.

**נֵֽלְכָ֗ה וְנַֽעַבְדָה֙ אֱלֹהִ֣ים אֲחֵרִ֔ים אֲשֶׁר֙ לֹ֣א יָדַ֔עְתָּ  Other Gods whom you do not know (13:7)** - Why do we constantly highlight the idea that these are “other Gods whom we do not know”? **Chasam Sofer** explains that this conveys the message that in every generation there will always be new ideologies that are antagonistic to Torah but will claim that they have something new to offer whereby they try to entice and recruit people to their ideology but each one fails. **Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski**  added that this teaches us that one may not be gullible. Sometimes we are so wishful for the simple, effortless bliss that leads one to latch onto every fad that comes into practice. If the Chiddush is brand new and never heard of before, it is probably not ok.

**Don’t take pity on him don’t be compassionate and do not conceal him (13:9) – Rav Aharon Kotler** notes that the compassion shown to all Jews is directly challenged by the harsh punishment doled out to the Meisis. Rav Aharon adds that if this is the case of the Meisis then the contrapositive must be true as well, for the Mikareiv. **Rav Noach Weinberg**  adds that the Meisis tried to destroy the world. But one who tries to bring the Jews back is building many, many worlds.

**Don’t listen to him (the Meisis) and do not show compassion (13:9) – The Rambam** notes that we treat the Meisis extremely harshly --- we hide the witnesses, he needs no warning can be subjected to double jeopardy, and isn’t defended by the court among other anomalies unique to this Avaira**. Rav Aharon Kotler**  notes that the desire to punish is 1/500 the desire to reward. Thus, if one Meisis is treated in such a difficult and harsh way – the opposite, namely, a Mekarev, must be the most righteous and will be rewarded 500 times more than the Meisis is punished.

**Be careful lest you offer a Korban in any place you shall desire (12:13) – Rashi** notes that if a Novi tells you to bring a korban outside of the Beis HaMikdash, you may – as we saw with Eiyahu on Har HaCarmel. The difference, notes the **Maharil Diskin**, is whether YOU are deciding what is Raui based on what appears to YOU to be an appropriate place versus the words of a Novi who IS a Roeh. He adds that this is why Manoach’s korban is not cited as a proof by Rashi – for Manoach was not sure if his korban was supposed to be brought out of the Beis HaMikdash until after he saw it was accepted.

**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.

**אֲשֶׁ֛ר אָֽנֹכִ֥י מְצַוְּךָ֖ הַיּ֑וֹם לַֽעֲשׂוֹת֙ הַיָּשָׁ֔ר  To do that which is Yashar in the eyes of Hashem (13:19) - Rav Dovid Kviat** explains that the sections of the Torah of the Novi Sheker, the Meisis and the Ir HaNidachas are tests to follow Hashem and not a powerful and persuasive leader. A person needs to first guarantee that the leaders’ words are consistent with Toras Hashem. This matter has tripped up many in Jewish history including great ones. We need to be sure that claims are consistent with Hashem’s Torah or the leader is leading us away.

**לֹֽא־תְבַשֵּׁ֥ל גְּדִ֖י בַּֽחֲלֵ֥ב אִמּֽוֹ: Don’t cook a kid in its mother’s milk (13:21) – Ramban** comments that uniquely, this food is not disgusting. Rather consuming it will diminish one’s kedusha. How? Ramban explains that it is through the Midda of Achzariyus - a lack of Rachmanus. How? The Torah’s description is not of milk and meat it is of mother and child. The Torah is introducing a distance here. How does this relate to Kedusha? **Rav Binyomin Eisenberger** suggested that Kedusha is achieved by detaching from one’s own interest and being ready to sacrifice for the well-being of others. We see this clearly with the idea of Lo Tivashel.

**לֹ֣א תִתְגֹּֽדְד֗וּ Lo Tisgodidu (14:1)** - Literally this refers to a prohibition against cutting oneself but Rashi reminds us that it also reminds us not to turn ourselves into separate factions. How do these different explanations make sense? **Rav Sabato** explained that because we are all the choice children of Hashem we must never divide into disparate groups. Such division is like a cut on life flesh as the nation is a single united organism. Hence we daven every Shabbos afternoon that Hashem is one and his name is one and who is like his nation Am Yisrael, a single united nation.

**You are sons to Hashem…Lo Tisgodidu (14:1) – The Yalkut Shimoni** explains that we should not become separate groups lest it create a gap (a baldness) within us. The **Ksav Sofer** explained that the precondition of being Banim is by not separating ourselves into Agudos. Hashem can forgive challenges to His Kavod but not for his son.

**You are sons to Hashem Lo Tisgodidu (14:1)** – The Gemara notes that we are not permitted to make different groups (Yevamos 13b). If that is the case, how do we have such diversity in Yiddishkeit? **Rav Shteinman**  explained that the Issur is based on the idea that the Torah should not look like it has 11 different versions. He adds that this is the case only when it looks that way at one time. Different customs in different places are not Agudos Agudos.

**You are children onto Hashem, Lo Titgodidu (14:2) – Rashi** attributes an asthetic reason for not making the injuries**. Ibn Ezra** note that one needs to trust Hashem the way we trust a parent. **Ramban** adds that too much overt mourning is a challenge to one’s faith and needs to be put into check. The **Chizkuni** notes that we are not abandoned with the death of a loved one, it is merely the soul returning to its first family – Hakadosh Baruch Hu. **Netziv** adds that to go beyond the Torah’s demands is not respect for the dead, it is merely trying to remove pain and will not work.

**מַפְרֶ֣סֶת פַּרְסָ֗ה וְשֹׁסַ֤עַת שֶׁ֨סַע֙  Anything that has a split hoof and chews its cud (14:6)** - In discussing the case of the Zebu, **Rav Schachter**   noted that the gemara in Chullin relates a story that one of the Amoraim once ate an animal which he thought was kosher based on the Simanim given in the Torah, but later figured out it didn’t actually have the Simanim. **Rashi** writes that therefore one shouldn’t eat an animal based on the Simanim alone, and should only eat it if he has a mesorah that it’s kosher. The **Chochmas Adam** understands that this idea of Mesorah does not only apply to birds but to animals as well. An animal called a zebu was introduced to Israel during the Chazon Ish’s time which required little water, but gave milk like a cow. The **Chazon Ish** paskined that you can’t eat it based on the Chochmat Adam that we lacked a Mesorah for the animal. However, scientists  began to breed hybrids of Zibus and cows, and the gemara says that kosher animals can be bred with kosher animals but it’s physically impossible for them to breed with non-kosher animals. Thus, Zebus must be Kosher. too!  Rav Schachter explained that even though the Chochmas Adam  requires a Masorah to eat animals that have Simanim, in the case of Zebu, the mesorah of  “mating as a sign” meant that the Kashrut passed to the offspring, and the Masorah does, as well.

**כֹּ֧ל אֲשֶׁר־ל֛וֹ סְנַפִּ֥יר וְקַשְׂקֶ֖שֶׂת תֹּאכֵֽלוּ: Fins and scales (14:9)** - The Talmud notes that a father has a number of things he needs to teach his son. One is perhaps to teach him to swim. Why? **Rav Elyashiv**  explained that swimming teaches a person how to go against the tide allowing him not to be afraid of a lot of water. This, said Rav Elyashiv, is the intent of the Possuk concerning the fish. Just like fish have fins and scales that help them stem the tide, the Jewish nation has the Torah and the Mitzvos.

**כִּ֣י עַ֤ם קָדוֹשׁ֙ אַתָּ֔ה For you are a holy nation onto Hashem (14:21) - Sifrei** explains that this means that you need to sanctify yourself with that which is Mutar to you. When you think something is Mutar but the people around you do not, you should not permit it in front of them. **Rav Wolbe** explained that we make ourselves holy in this regard because when we are in the presence of those who are more scrupulous it should arouse in us a desire to emulate them at least while in their presence.

**לְמַ֣עַן תִּלְמַ֗ד לְיִרְאָ֛ה So that you will learn to fear Hashem all of your days (14:23)** - The purpose of Maaser Sheni where a second tithe is taken in the 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th years of the Shmittah cycle is somewhat debated by the Meforshim. The **Ramban** explains that the purpose is, as stated, “So that he should learn to fear Hashem,” because the national teachers are prevalent there to teach him. The **Hadar Z’keinim** continues that the hope was that people might even stay after the *chagim* to learn more. **Rav Yosef Carmel**  adds that going to Yerushalayim is not just about bringing *korbanot* but also about taking a break in the daily activities to grow from spiritual and emotional perspectives in a holy place with holy people. This is a wise use of the significant tithe of the produce. Today as well, one of the important jobs of “Torah professionals” is to be concerned with the emotional health of their students/congregants and see to it that we make sure that everyone comes through Torah experiences inspired.

**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.

 **וְהַֽעֲבַטְתָּ֞ גּוֹיִ֣ם רַבִּ֗ים וְאַתָּה֙ לֹ֣א תַֽעֲבֹ֔ט וּמָֽשַׁלְתָּ֙ בְּגוֹיִ֣ם רַבִּ֔ים וּבְךָ֖ לֹ֥א יִמְשֹֽׁלוּ: You will lend to other nations and not need to borrow. You will rule over them and not they over you (15:6)-** How would you come to need to borrow if you are a lender? How can you be led if you are leading? The **Chasam Sofer** explains that these apparent opposites are indeed possible at the same time. For when a person is so tied down to his possessions that s/he can never miss a day of business, then the person is a lender but really subsisting like a person who is a borrower. Similarly, one without time for Avodas Hashem in a world that you are tied to the nations of the world even if you are on top of them intellectually and financially.

**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.

**For there will never be no poor within the land (15:11 )** – If anything, this is a reason NOT to give Tzedaka! Why keep giving Tzedaka if we will never fill the void? The **Abarbanel** explains that the Talmud notes that poverty is a wheel that keeps rolling hitting each in his right time. Abarbanel explains that this reason reminds us that we will need at one time and this obligates us now. **Rav Schachter**  noted that many think this is the reason for all of Mitzvos Bein Adam L’Chaveiro – we will do so that others will do for us. He added that this is part of the Zechus that exists with the giving of Tzedaka in connection to the recitation of Yizkor. We give Tzedaka as a Zechus for those who passed and in its merit someone else will do the same Zechus for us.

**פָּ֠תֹ֠חַ תִּפְתַּ֨ח אֶת־יָֽדְךָ֜ לְאָחִ֧יךָ  Open your hand to your brother (15:11) - Rav Yitzchak Sarim**  (one of the greats of The Syrian community) explained that there is a hint in these words. The first letters of the words Es Yadcha Lo make up the word Ayil teaching us that he who opens the hand to the poor, it is as if he offered an Ayil as a korban.

**לֶ֣חֶם עֹ֑נִי כִּ֣י בְחִפָּז֗וֹן יָצָ֨אתָ֙ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם Because you left Mitzrayim quickly (16:3) - Ramban** explains that Lechem Oni reminds us of the speed that we left Mitzrayim. **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide**  explained that Lechem Oni refers to 2 things -- the fact that freedom came so fast that we did not have have time for the bread to rise and that in Egypt the people lived in EEnoi -- in distress and the bread highlighted that distress. This is hinted to in the Haggada when we note that Ha Lach Mah Anya Dee Achaclu B’Ara D’Mitzrayim.

**וְשָֽׂמַחְתָּ֞ לִפְנֵ֣י | ה אֱלֹהֶ֗יךָ אַתָּ֨ה וּבִנְךָ֣ וּבִתֶּ֘ךָ֘ וְעַבְדְּךָ֣ וַֽאֲמָתֶ֒ךָ֒ וְהַלֵּוִי֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר בִּשְׁעָרֶ֔יךָ And you shall rejoice in front of Hashem (16:11) - Rambam** notes that one who closes the door to his Chatzer and eats and drinks with his kids and not the poor is not having a Seudas Mitzva but rather a meal for his own stomach. **Rav Schachter**  noted that this is a general aspect of the concept of Simcha – that one shares with others – whether in his learning, his meals or his life.

**And the Levi in your midst (16:10)** – Why does the Possuk mention the Levi in your midst specifically in regard to Shavuos and the Simcha associated with that holiday? **Rav Moshe Feinstein**  explains that the Gemara notes that everyone agrees that on Shavuos you need Lachem. Now, for a Levi and other Talmidei Chachamim this makes good sense for after all, he is involved in learning. But what about the person who is working? Thus, the Torah tells us to take him into our midst and make sure the joy begins in the right place and go from there.

**וְשָֽׂמַחְתָּ֞ לִפְנֵ֣י ה אֱלֹהֶ֗יךָ And you shall rejoice before Hashem (16:11) - Rashi** cites the Midrash that Hashem says if you bring joy to “My” four, he will bring simcha to yours. His 4 include the Levi, Ger, Yasom and Almana while ours include children and staff. **Rav Yaakov Bender** notes that this teaches us that it is not enough to invite guests or give Tzedaka, we need to make the recipients feel part of the Yom Tov experience.

**וְשָֽׂמַחְתָּ֞ You shall rejoice in your holiday (16:11) - Rashi** explains “If you bring joy to Mine – I’ll bring joy to yours″. That is, Hashem tells us that if you take care of “My″ people (the poor, the weak, those who are lacking) – I will bring joy to you and your family. **Mrs. Sivan Rahav Meir** explained that in an age of pursuit of happiness, this is a revolutionary worldview: Hashem does not call upon us to look for joy in distant places or in materialistic accomplishments, titles and degrees, but rather – to understand that the real source of joy is in our rapport with others and in our attitude towards others. A revolution of joy.

**And you shall rejoice (16:11, 16:14)** – Why does it not mention an obligation to rejoice on Pesach as it does by Shavuos and Sukkkos? **Rav Moshe Feinstein**  suggested that on Pesach it is only logical to assume that one would share the simcha – after all, it celebrates going from poverty to freedom. The whole nature of Pesach is that it shows that wealth and poverty are inconsequential as it all belongs to Hashem and that in the end, he owns everything so why not share it with everyone?

**And you shall be only happy (16:15)** – If one loses a relative before Sukkos, the onset of Sukkos removes the Shiva. Sukkos counts as 7 days removing another 7 days and Shmini Atzeres removes another 7 days. Accordingly, Sukkos removes 21v out of 30 days of a Shloshim. **Rav Nissan Alpert**  explains that this is hinted in the use of the word “Ach” which is the Gematria of 21 – the 21 days of only Simcha even when confronting Shloshim.

**לֹ֧א יֵֽרָאֶ֛ה אֶת־פְּנֵ֥י ה' רֵיקָֽם:And you will not appear empty handed (16:16) - Rashi** explains that you need to bring Olos and Chatas instead. In Sefer Hamitzvos the **Rambam** notes that this Mitzva is only active when there is a Beis Hamikdash and you can bring Chagiga and Riyah. Why does he limit the reference to these 2 korbanos— we cannot bring ANY of the korbanos? **Rav Meshulem Dovid Soloveitchik**  explains that even if there were a basis to allow the bringing of korbanos without a Beis Hamikdash, these 2 could not be brought since their bringing is predicated on having a Bayis.

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.

 **וְרַ֖ב שְׁל֥וֹם בָּנָֽיִךְ All of your children will be students of Hashem and your children’s peace will be abundant (Yeshayahu 54:13) - Rav Pam** noted that the watchmen on the mountains play a significant role in Jewish history. At one point they were a stop gap of the king Yeravam to prevent Jews from going up to Yirushalayim. Yirmiyahu dreamed of a day when the same watchmen would actually ENCOUAGE the people to go to Yirushalayim. The difference will be from within the spiritual awakening of the people --- when the children will be students of Hashem.

**All of your children will be students of Hashem (54:13) – Rav Pam**  noted that in the times of Yerovam, guards were stationed at Har Efraim to stop the Jews from going to Har HaBayis in order to fulfill the obligations of Aliyah L’regel. Yirmiyahu mentions that in the future the watchmen will call out Kumah V’Naaleh Tzion – there will be a transformation wherein people would be ENCOURAGED to travel to Yirushalayim to serve Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash. Rav Pam noted the spiritual awakening in Eretz Yisrael and hoped to see the turnaround of Jewish life turned toward the celebration of Torah based living until Yeshayahu’s prophesy of everyone learning Torah is truly actualized.

**בִּצְדָקָ֖ה תִּכּוֹנָ֑נִי  Establish yourself through righteousness (Yeshayahu 54:14) - Rav Dovid Feinstein** noted that charity and righteous acts to those less fortunate will be the foundation of Am Yisrael’s reestablishment on the land. Some of these acts include the forgiving of loans in the Shmittah year, consistent giving of Tzedaka and giving Maaser as discussed in the Parasha.

**Haftara for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul**

**(Shabbos Rosh Chodesh)** – The end of Yeshayahu is one of the most intense and difficult sections of a dififcult Sefer to explain. **Rav Shimon Schwab**  points out that the entire Gog U’Magog episode has been veiled on purpose and that man’s responsibilities are not to figure out the specifics but rather to know the general and be ready to understand the specifics when they materialize. Rambam notes that constant focus on these matters does not lead to Yirah or Ahava.

**And the land is my footstool (Yeshayahu 66:1—Shabbos Rosh Chodesh)** – What does Yeshayahu mean in his description? **Rav Schwab**  explained that humans, as opposed to angels, are able to choose to serve Hashem or not to. Everything else in creation submits itself to the instinctual will of Hashem. Hashem’s Kedusha was brought down to the earth by man’s service of Him.

**וְהָיָ֗ה מִֽדֵּי־חֹ֙דֶשׁ֙ בְּחָדְשׁ֔וֹ And it will be on each Rosh Chodesh everyone will come to bow in front of me (Yeshayahu 66:23)** – While the Navi speaks about this experience in the future, it is strange. The rules of the Torah are not supposed to change. Here, the Novi is promising that in the future everyone will be Oleh Regel on Rosh Chodesh. That is not the case today. So how do we understand the difference? **Rav Schachter**  would often note to us that the Mitzva of greeting one’s Rebbe on Yom Tov is connected to the idea of being Oleh Regel. It would follow that if one could not do one, one is not obligated in the other (This is the opinion of the **Noda B’Yehuda**). However from the Isha Shunamis we learn that while it was an obligation to be Oleh Regel (and Mikabel Pnei Rebbe) on the Regalim, it was a Reshus on Rosh Chodesh. What the Novi is telling us is that in light of the fact that we are distressed about losing all of the obligatory opportunities when there is no Beis HaMikdash (on the regalim) in the future, Bnei Yisrael will grab even the OPPORTUNITIES (Reshus) on Rosh Chodesh in order to “make up” the lost chances. This is the intent of the Possuk.

O all who are thirsty go to water (Yeshayahu 55:1) - The Navi identifies 4 forms of different Torah nourishment – water, food, wine and milk. Rav Shimon Schwab explained that water and food identify the Torah as the basis for life. Life cannot exist without water and food and spiritual life is impossible without Torah. It is impossible to know good and bad without Torah. The Torah is the basis. Wine refers to the inner peace and happiness which the Torah brings about and milk alludes to the mother’s milk power of Torah to sustain and grow spiritual life.