

Judges and police (16:18) – The Midrash comments that one should learn from the ant which has no judge or policeman watching over it and still does its work despite its 6 month average lifespan, it continues to store much more food than necessary since it hopes that Hashem might expand its life and it will then be ready for the life. **Rav Altusky ztl.** notes that even though this miracle never happened to any ant, this ant does not give up hope since Hashem has the ability to do anything at any moment. Laziness begets giving up and the Midrash encourages us not to do so and set up a society without worry about when it will be utilized properly.

You shall place a king upon you (17:15) – The Gemara (San. 20b) discusses a Machlokes as to whether appointing a king is a Mitzva or not. According to those who hold it is a Mitzva, why did the Jews wait? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that the request of the people was a precondition to the Chalos HaMitzva. Prior to the point of Shaul the people did not feel the need to ask. If that is the case, we can understand that the obligation had not started as yet.

The first of your grains, vineyard and olive press and the first of the shearings of your sheep you shall give to me (18:4) – Min Hatorah, the only obligation to separate Terumah and Maser applies to Dagan, Tirosch and Yitzhar. **Rambam** explains that the Torah singled out these items to teach us that anything like them – including all fruits – are Chiyav in Terumah and Maaser. **Shittah Mikubetzes** (BM 88b) notes that only the 7 Minim are Chiyav biblically. **Ramban** limits the requirement to separate Terumah even from grapes and olives to only oil and wine. **Rabbi Akiva Eiger** challenges Ramban here because the Mishna clearly allows one to separate Terumah using olives to count for olive oil. This would be forbidden according to Ramban! The **Chazon Ish** explains that Ramban refers to grapes and olives about to be pressed. These are chiyav.

Be Tamim with Hashem (18:13) - What does it mean to be Tamim? **Ibn Ezra** defines Temimus, as entailing simplicity. **Rambam** sees it as a purely intellectual-philosophical understanding of the concept, and **Ramban** views being Tamim as developing an all-embracing relationship, intellectually and emotionally, with the Almighty. **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** noted that all three are correct in the right context. There is a time and a place for each approach in our religious consciousness. And we must be sure not to disparage either those who appear more naive than ourselves spiritually, nor those who have an even greater degree of sophistication in their Avodas Hashem.

Do not fear them (20:3) – **The Rambam** counts not being afraid about going to war against an enemy as a Mitzva. **Raavad** challenges this and sees it as a promise because it is impossible to expect a human not to have fear when facing such a perilous situation. **Rav Binyomin Eisenberger Shlita** explained that the Rambam is speaking about a different war than the Ravad is. The Raavad speaks of a war between men. The Rambam speaks about man's battle with himself/his Yetzer HaRa. Hence the Raavad knows that his battle cannot be without fear based on command alone while the Rambam demands that man step up to the challenges of fighting his own inclination.

For man is like the tree of the field (20:19) – **Rav Gedaliah Schorr ztl.** explained the comparison by noting that unlike vegetation that needs to be rejuvenated yearly, trees learn to sustain themselves. Man too, needs to work on himself so that his strengths reinvigorate him. He should not need to constantly plow to find his own strengths. He should know where they are, work on them and bring forth beautiful fruit – while not allowing these talents to be blighted out into waste.

And you shall destroy the innocent blood from within your midst (21:9) – **Ibn Ezra** notes that this is punishment for having innocent blood in that if we follow the word of Hashem with Yashrus, blood will not spill. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl.** asked how this was possible if, after all, everyone has free choice? How does one person's Yashrus make sure that the next one does not choose to murder? He answered that it is a nurture thing. When the environment is one of Yashrus, it does not enter someone's head to do the opposite and murder.

Haftorah: You have forgotten Hashem your maker, who spreads out the heavens (Yeshayahu 51:13) – **Rav Schwab ztl.** pointed out that the Novi is reminding the Jewish people to get past the symptom and to focus on the root of the problem that leads to all of the Tzaros – our own shortcomings and failings in the eyes of Hashem because this is what is causing the enemies to hate us. Rav Schwab ztl. added that Yeshayahu is not only speaking to the threat of the Assyrians, he is speaking to the Jew facing the enemies of his generation -- even the arabs – to know that it is not just to them we need to our focus but rather to Hashem and the shortcomings in our relationship with Him.