

Points to Ponder
Re'eh 5774

The Blessing – that you will listen (11:27) – What is the difference between “Es” and “Im” (which is mentioned by the curses)? The **Maaglei Tzedek** answers that Bnei Yisrael regularly listen to Hashem and as such it is assumed by default that they will receive the Beracha. Sometimes things are aberrant and thus the Torah says “Im” – if it should be that you go off pace then you will be cursed.

Seek his Shechina (12:5) – Rav Schachter Shlita would often point out that according to the Rambam, this verse is the source for the idea that not only is Tefillah biblically demanded but that prayer facing east is biblically demanded.

Do not do...each man as is fit in his own eyes (12:8) – Rav Belsky Shlita noted that this is the reason that the period of the Bamos was so hard to eradicate. People falsely deceive themselves that certain practices are indeed spiritual when they are not desired by Hashem. The Bamos was such an example. Ideally, Hashem wants us to listen to his words – that is ideal spirituality. The antidote to doing as we see fit is Shalosh Piamim Bashana Yei'raeh – seeing Hashem where HE wants to be seen.

And you will search out and ask and indeed it will turn out to be true (13:15) – The Sfas Emes noted that Bnei Yisrael too, are the witnesses to the world. However, good testimony requires the ability to potentially be Zomimin. Thus, he says, when Jews withstand challenges of history, it is as if Hashem is declaring Imanu Hayeesem B'Makom Ploni. **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl** would add that this is even true in modern times – no matter the new technology or challenge – we can find Hashem there if we handle it in a responsible way.

And all animals that have split hooves and chew their cud...you may eat (14:6) – Rav Shmuel Yosef Rabinov of London ztl. once explained these 2 signs of Kosher animals as relevant to human existence. The chewing of the cud is a sign to the human to keep reviewing the old for in it there is often nuance for the modern time. It is a sign for Bein Adam LaMakom. This is distinct from the split hoof which represents money and finances (Yikum b'Ragleihem) – which is best off when man “splits” it for Tzedaka.

And you will clear out in the morning and go home (16:7) – Rashi explains that staying overnight is a requirement. **The Ritva (Rosh Hashana 5a)** offers 2 different reasons as to why. Either that Yom Tov itself requires staying over or that the bringing of a Korban requires the person to remain overnight. **Rav Baruch Simon Shlita** quoted **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl** who explained that either way, the goal is to establish a sense of demonstrating that the Mitzva is important to the person.

On the seventh day it is an Atzeres (16:8) – Why is Shavuot called Atzeres when it never is identified as such in the Torah? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** (See also Kedushas Levi Nasso) explains that there are 2 aspects to the concept of Yom Tov – the abstention from work and the actions specific to that holiday (e.g. Sukkah on Sukkot, Matza on Pesach). Since Shavuot has no unique active mitzvah it can be distinguished specifically as “atzeres” since the people do not work.

Haftarah: Ho, everyone who is thirsty, go to the water, even one with no money, go, buy and eat; go and buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Yeshaya 55:1) – Rav Rivlin Shlita explains that water is given to anyone for free, without charge. This is directly opposed to the beginning of our Haftarah, which refers to

coveted stones, precious stones to glorify Zion. We note the difference between the evaluation standards of Chazal and those of economics. Chazal compare the Torah to water because water is necessary for life. Hashem created water in great quantities and availability because water is so necessary for life, but specifically due to this reason water is relatively "cheap" economically. Gold and silver are luxuries, therefore Hashem created them in limited amounts, but it is for this reason that they are relatively "expensive" economically. What is really "valuable" and "important" in life is cheap by market standards, whereas what is neither necessary nor important is economically "expensive." "The Torah of your mouth is better for me than thousands in gold and silver." (Tehillim 119:72) To the masses this sounds odd, but to us it is clear what is really "valuable" and what is really "cheap" in life. **Radak** writes: "Just like it is impossible for the world to exist without water, so too it is impossible without wisdom. The way a thirsty man craves water is also the way the wise soul craves Torah and wisdom."