

Parshas Re'eh

This week's parsha is Re'eh and Rosh Chodesh Elul. Rabbi Yossi Holzberg of the Markham Street Shul in Toronto relayed that the name of the parsha is the Roshei Teivos of Rosh Chodesh Elul Higiya (Reish, Alef, Hei). Which means that the month of Elul is arriving.

This week's parsha opens with the statement, "see, I put before you this day blessings and curses..." (11:26). The outcome of keeping or not listening to mitzvos are placed in front of us equally. We are given a repetition of that which was told to us on Mount Grizim and Mount Eival. The Parsha tells us of the holiness of the land which the Jews were to enter (Eretz Yisrael), and the rules of when, and how one can offer a sacrifice, and the sacrality of the consecrated food. This connects with the fact that the Posuk elaborates on the "curses" as it relates to straying from the path and serving false gods. We see a reiteration of the fact that we do what we do specifically because Hashem said so, and not based on our own devious reinterpretations or reimagining of the way things ought to be. Meaning there is a Torah process for how to live as a Jew, and it is on a spectrum, but outside influences and lenses could result in straying from the righteous path. Therefore, the Posuk repeats how and when we can eat consecrated items, it is not up to our own interpretation, it is how Halacha dictates, based on Torah.

We are taught about tithing, and not to follow the path (as enticing as it may be) of the other nations. In this way we are taught again about how to treat Jewish slaves, who find themselves in the subservience of an owner (Perek 15 tells us to be righteous to our neighbors and leads into Jewish slaves).

The end of chapter 15 and beginning chapter 16 the Parsha concludes with the Holidays (which we read on the holidays). This conclusion seems befitting to telling us to stay on the righteous path, as the holidays act as mile markers of reminding us of our connection to Hashem throughout the year. Just as Avraham dug wells for the future generations to know who and where they were dug, so to, Hashem sprinkles the "wells" of connection ability throughout the year, so we remain close to our father in Heaven. Just as the Parsha began with not deviating from the path of righteousness and Torah, so to we know that the Holidays cannot be performed outside of how Halacha dictates (as Rashi explains on 16:1 about leap years in order to ensure that Pesach – and other holidays- do not fall out on the wrong time, rather they must arrive in the time designated in the calendar for them, and that day is so significant that there may be punishments for not correctly following the mitzvas- primarily the wrongdoings-of that day).

The haftora is from Yeshayahu 54:11-55:5- while some add for Rosh Chodesh, this haftora crosses over with Parshas Noach and Ki Seitzei (and it rolls into the Haftora we also read on a public fast day at Mincha). The Haftora in perek 55 begins with the statement "everyone who is thirsty go to the water..." which references the study of Torah (Rashi) as a method to bring Mashiach. So we see a direct connection to the Parsha which tells us to follow the edicts of the Torah in order to be blessed. As the Maamer Isa B'Medrish Tehillim states, just as one cannot live without water and water is the essence of life, so too, Torah is the essence of life. In this way may our month of Elul be a blessed month of preparation for the New Year.

Good Shabbos!