

Parshas Re'eh

In this week's Parsha, Re'eh, Moshe repeats the curses that would happen if the Jews didn't listen to and follow Hashem—specifically, the commandment against following the gods of others. Then, in the second Aliyah, Hashem commands us to build the Beis Hamikdash and the laws around sacrificing animals and sketching animals outside of sacrifices.

The law explicitly follows the commandments against idol worship and destroying that part of society, perhaps because Hashem says that to build a sanctuary, we must first destroy the false gods of the world around us. This means, not only on a societal level, but we must build on a personal level a sanctuary within ourselves to support the ability to serve Hashem.

In the third Aliya, Hashem recognizes that these false idols and prophets may confront us as a test of loyalty and that by remaining loyal, we can trust that Hashem remains our saviour and protector.

The importance of false prophets in connection to idol worship is that they are the same. By adding or detracting from the Torah, you are questioning its legitimacy, and in doing so, you are doing what a false god does, which is denying the truth that Hashem is the one true king of the universe. Just as serving false gods is a denial of the whole Torah, so too is believing change shrouded in false truth is a denial of the Torah.

We live in a world full of false prophets and entities that have divine-like characteristics because of how they are presented in the media. We must work to shun those false truths, stay on the Torah's path, and always remember the same. In doing so, we heed the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, both on the individualistic and communal levels.

In this way, in the fourth Aliya, Hashem explains how we must distinguish ourselves from the nations of the world. We are different, and we are, therefore, continually recognized for this. As it says in 14:2, and Rashi explains, we are part of a lineage inherited from our forefathers and who Hashem chose. The connection to the earlier listed sacrifices, as well, is that Hashem tells us we can be different from those around us and from the animals which he instructs we can and cannot eat.

We live in a time when more and more people are trying to recede into their animalistic selves, the part of humanity that acts on impulse and not on discipline and thoughtfulness. Hashem in this Parsha, and throughout the Torah, gives us the path to achieving a higher self, revealing the whole potential of humanity, unlike anything else in the world that is false or retains at a level that feeds the animal soul. Parshas Re'eh reminds us of the opposite. We have the Torah and the path to achieving greatness, and in doing so, we smash the idols and false gods around us to be a sanctuary for Hashem on an individual level. Then, we can collectively receive the Beis Hamikdash with Mashiach and be freed of the shackles of the falseness of this world.