

PARSHAT RE'AY

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

'BAD INFLUENCES'

1. Review from 12:29 thru 13:19, noting how this section contains four short "parshiot". As you verify this point, see if you can also identify the primary topic of each 'parshia'; and if any of them share a common theme. [Note as well if there are any phrases that repeat themselves.]

Can you identify a common theme for all four 'parshiot'?

2. In what manner does each 'parshia' relate to the topic of "avoda zara" - idol worship. Can you explain how this relates to the fact that Bnei Yisrael are about to enter the land of Israel?

Note the word "b'kirbecha" in 13:6 13:12 & 13:15. Can you explain why it used so often in these sections?

Who are the different types of 'bad influences' in each of these four parshiot?

3. The second of the above parshiot concludes with the phrase "u'biarta ha'rah m'kirbecha" (see 13:6).

Where else is this expression found in this section of the main speech of Sefer Devarim (i.e. within chapters 12->26)? [btw, if you give up try 17:7,12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21,22,24; & 24:7]

Can you explain why this phrase is repeated so often?

Relate this phrase to the common theme of these four 'parshiot'. How does their connection relate to the overall theme of the main speech of Sefer Devarim? In other words, how to these mitzvot help facilitate to the establishment of an AM KADOSH in the Land of Israel?

4. For some reason, the [non-jewish] chapter division of Chumash places the first of these four 'parshiot' in chapter 12! Can you find any logic behind this, based on the topic in 12:20-28?

Can you explain why chapter 13 begins with 13:1 instead of with 13:2? In your opinion, in this case does the 'parshia' division make more sense than the chapter division?

THE CHAGIM IN RE'AY

1. In chapter 16, we find the "shalosh regalim". Review from 16:1-17 and verify that indeed ONLY the "shalosh regalim" are mentioned in this section, and not any other holiday.

In what manner is this unit similar to the presentation of the holidays in Vayikra chapter 23 (Emor) & Bamidbar chapters 28-29 (Pinchas); and in what manner is it different?

In relation to the "shalosh regalim", what details are the same as in the previous parshiot, and what details are new (or different)?

2. Next, compare Devarim chapter 16 with Shmot 23:14-19.

In what manner are these units similar, and in what manner are they different?

Explain why Devarim 16:1-17 is more similar to Shmot 23:14-17 than it is to the section on the holidays in Emor or Pinchas.

Compare these two similar units, and determine which important details have been added in Sefer Devarim? Can you explain why these topics are added in Sefer Devarim?

How do these topics (that have been added) relate to the theme of the main speech of Sefer Devarim? Relate especially to Devarim 12:5-16 (i.e. to the theme of "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem...")!

Based on the above, explain the summary pasuk in 16:16! [How come this pasuk sounds so familiar?]

3. Review 15:19-23, noting how this 'parshia' re: the laws of first born animals precedes the laws of the "chagim" in chapter 16. Is there any logic behind the juxtaposition of these laws?

In your opinion, do these laws of "bchor" belong with previous laws in chapter 15, or with the chagim in chapter 16? How would these laws of "bchor" relate to the laws of "aliyah la'regel"? Why would it relate to the laws of korban Pesach?

See Seforno on 15:19 for a beautiful interpretation!

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

Our shiur on Parshat Veetchanan discussed how the main speech of Sefer Devarim (chapters 5 thru 26) divides into two distinct sections - "ha'Mitzva" - chapters 6 thru 11; and the "chukim u'mishpatim" - chapters 12 thru 26. The following questions discuss the opening section of the "chukim u'mishpatim" section - as it emerges as a primary topic in Parshat Re'ay.

1. The opening psukim of Parshat Re'ay (see 11:26-30) discuss the blessing [or curse] should Bnei Yisrael obey [or disobey] God's laws. In your opinion, does this section relate to the last topic of Parshat Ekev (see 11:22-25), or to the laws that follow (in Parshat Re'ay) that begin in chapter 12?

Is there any logical reason for this 'blessing & curse' to appear specifically at this point in Sefer Devarim?

Compare this commandment in 11:26-30 to the special commandment to conduct a ceremony at Har Eival, as described in 27:1-8; noting how 27:1-8 is the first commandment to Bnei Yisrael immediately after Moshe Rabeinu completes his main speech. Relate this as well to the identification of the "chukim u'mishpatim" section of the main speech, and the overall structure of Sefer Devarim.

2. Note how 11:29-30 describes the location in the Land of Israel where this blessing and curse will be bestowed. Then, note the transition of topic in 11:31-32. Can you explain the logic of this transition?

How does 12:1 relate to 11:31-32? If you were dividing up Sefer Devarim into chapters, would you have begun a chapter division in 12:1? If not, where do think would you have been a better spot to begin the chapter from?

In your opinion, does the division of 'parshiot' (and Parshat ha'shavua) make more sense than this particular division into chapters? Is there any logic in beginning a new unit with 12:1?

3. With the above questions in mind, study 12:1 thru 12:28 and divide this section into paragraphs. Give a short title for each paragraph (thus creating an outline), and then attempt to follow the flow of topic. How would you title your outline? [In other words, what is the primary theme of this section?]

4. Based on 12:1, it becomes quite clear that the CHUKIM & MISHPATIM section of Sefer Devarim begins with 12:1. Relate this back to our earlier study of Sefer Devarim, noting especially 4:1, 4:44-45, 5:1, 5:28, 6:1, 6:20 etc. Note as well how this section concludes with 26:16.

As you study from chapter 12 thru chapter 26, attempt to determine how this "chukim u'mishpatim" section is different from the "ha'mitzva" section that preceded it (in chapter 6 thru 11).

As you scan those chapters [don't read, that would take you too long], be sure to follow how these chapters constitute a very long but continuous speech.

Based on these observations, why should the primary topic of chapter 12 be of thematic importance?

5. Based on you outline from question three above, what is the primary topic of chapter 12?

How does the topic of 12:2-4 relate to this main topic?

Do we find this topic again later in this unit; if so, where?

[In case you didn't figure it out, note the repetition of the phrase "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem".]

6. Based on its description in chapter 12, as well as its mention in 14:22-27, 15:19-16:17, 17:8-12, and 26:1-8, what is supposed to be the primary function of this "makom asher yivchar Hashem"?

Why do you think that it is the first primary topic of the CHUKIM & MISHPATIM section of the main speech?

How will this "makom" help the people of Israel achieve the covenantal goal of becoming God's "am kadosh"? [See Shmot 19:4-6, Devarim 5:1-2, 7:5-8 (not parallel to 12:1-5) & 26:16-19.]

7. Does the Torah inform us of the precise location of this "makom"? If so, where is it supposed to be?

If not, why not? Relate to 12:5!

In your opinion, how does this "makom" relate to the Mishkan?

Why do you think that the Mishkan is not mentioned in this Parsha (or for that matter, in Sefer Devarim at all!)?

[In your answer, try to relate to our introductory shiur regarding WHEN these mitzvot were first given to Moshe Rabeinu (i.e. the story in 5:20-30), and the famous machloket between Rashi and Ramban concerning when the mitzvah to build the Mishkan was first given (i.e. before or after chet ha'egel).]

8. Review Breishit 28:10-22, noting how often the word "MAKOM" is used in these psukim. What is special about this "makom", and according to Yaakov's vow, what is this "makom" destined to become? Relate your answer to the above questions.

9. Review 26:1-10, i.e. the mitzvah of "mikra bikurim", noting how this mitzvah as well must be observed in the "makom asher yivchar Hashem; and its location in the main speech.

In your opinion, what is the purpose of this mitzvah, and why must it be performed only in the "makom asher yivchar Hashem"?

How does it relate to the underlying theme of the main speech, and why do you think that it was chosen to conclude "chukim u'mishpatim" section.

10. If you have ample time, review the remainder of Parshat Re'ay (i.e. chapters 12 thru 16), and construct an outline that shows its flow of topic. Attempt to explain its logic, and how these mitzvot relate to the primary theme of the main speech.

PART III - PARSHANUT

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LO TAASUN KEYN...

1. Review once again Devarim 12:1-4.

If you only read up to pasuk 4, how would you interpret: "Do not do this to Your God" in 12:4? [In other words, what does the word "keyn" [this?] refer to?]

2. Now continue on by reading 12:5-6, noting how the word "ki" in 12:5 should connect this pasuk to 12:4. How does this affect your interpretation of 12:4?

In other words, based on 12:5 - how would you explain the word "keyn" in 12:4?

Does your new interpretation contradict your original one, or complement it?

Now, we will see how the classic commentators dealt with these questions.

3. Read Rashi on 12:4, noting how he offers two interpretations. Explain why Rashi found it necessary to offer both explanations (based on your answers to the above questions).

4. Next, see Rashbam. Note that he only offers one interpretation. Does Rashbam's "pirush" correlate with either of Rashi's?

If so, which one?

Would you consider Rashbam's approach in this case as the 'simple pshat'?

Is this usually Rashbam's approach in his commentary?

Note how both Ibn Ezra & Chizkuni (on 12:4) follow a similar approach.

5. Next, see Ramban, noting how (and why) he first quotes Rashi. In what regard does he disagree with Rashi, and what does Ramban mean when he defines Rebbe Yishmael's opinion as "smach shel aggada"?

Note how Ramban concludes by explaining how both interpretations can actually complement each other, in a manner that 12:4 relates to both 12:2-3 and 12:5-6! As usual, relate this to our opening discussion.

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"A'SER TA'ASER"

1. Translate the phrase "a'ser ta'aser". [What is the common "shoresh" of these two verbs?]

Is this a new command, or does it refer to something that the Torah has already mentioned?

Then, see Ramban on 14:22-23. To appreciate this Rabman, you need to know your Chumash, but if you have time to study it carefully, note how comprehensive his approach is, and he makes every effort to support Chazal's halachik understanding of these psukim, and based on pshat as well!

2. These laws of "ma'aser" are recorded among many other laws in Parshat Reay. In your opinion, how do they relate to the previous topic of 'forbidden animals' in 14:3-21, and the laws of "shemitta" in chapter 15?

Then, see Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni on 14:22, noting how they relate to this question.

EATING AND FEARING...

3. Read 14:22-23, noting the closing phrase "Imaan tilmad l'YIRA et Hashem..." - i.e. we are commanded to eat MAASER SHENI in Yerushalayim in order that we LEARN TO FEAR GOD. Can you explain how 'eating out' in Yerushalayim would teach someone how to fear God?

For an interesting insight, see Rashbam, Ramban, Chizkuni and Ibn Ezra on this phrase in 14:23.

"BANIM ATEM"

1. Review 14:1-3, and first - simply attempt to translate these psukim and understand their flow of topic. Can you relate these psukim to:

the last topic discussed in chapter 13?

the overall theme of the main speech of Sefer Devarim?

Would you consider 14:1-2 as a type of introduction to a wider set of laws, or simply several specific laws?

2. Compare 14:1 to Vayikra 21:5. Is this the same law, or a different one?

Did you understand that both "lo titgod'du" and "lo tasimu korchach..." relate to something done after someone passes away, or does "lo titgod'du" stand alone (i.e. not connected to death)?

Finally, what is the connection between the laws in 14:1 and the reason given in 14:2. [Relate to 26:16-19.]

3. Now, see Rashi, noting how he answered the above questions. Then see Ibn Ezra, noting how he answered the above questions as well, and how his interpretation is different. Next, see Seforno, noting how even though his "pirush" is similar to Ibn Ezra, it is nonetheless different. Can you explain why?

Finally see Ramban, noting how he also answers the above questions, but how his interpretation is different than Rashi and Ibn Ezra's! Note how (and why) he quotes Ibn Ezra, and especially his concluding comments re: to the degree of sorrow that one is allowed to feel after the loss of a loved one.

In all of the above interpretations, how does the opening phrase of "banim atem" relate to the limitations that the Torah puts on one who mourns the loss of a loved one?

b'hatzlacha,
menachem