



## DIVREI MENACHEM

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# Sustainability in the Torah

In this week's Parshah, the opening sentence urges us to follow Hashem's statutes, observe the commandments, and perform them. Rashi explains the seeming redundancy of expression by asserting that the intense study of Hashem's decrees, to better understand the commands and practice them, is the optimal formula for receiving the ensuing Berachot.

The blessings acquired for such loyal actions confer on both the individual and the nation. In but ten sentences (in contradistinction to the numerous verses recounting the punishments for disloyalty to Hashem), the Torah recounts a life full of material rewards – seemingly an unfitting prize for spiritual accomplishment!

These ten sentences, however, possibly match the ten pronouncements with which Hashem created the world, as if to suggest that the ultimate spiritual reward can be accomplished through material benefit. For, after all, in a land where the rains fall in the appropriate time (the first of the blessings), the human, animal, and plant worlds all benefit for the good of mankind, in general, and Eretz Yisrael, in particular.

In such a world, bereft of hunger,

poverty, and insecurity, we are better able to serve Hashem, observe His statutes and earn the ultimate spiritual rewards in Olam Habba. For the initial outcome, as described in the Torah narrative, is that Hashem will walk among the people to be their God and “they will be a people unto me” (Vayikra 26:12).

In today's parlance, we might say that the “rains in their time” is Hashem's way of ensuring sustainability. The world will live in harmony, nature taking its natural course to create mutual interdependence and homeostasis. And, of more import, following the biblical narrative, is that in Eretz Yisrael, we shall fulfil a dream: “*Venatati Shalom Ba'aretz*” – ‘I shall induce peace in the Land.’

For the Ramban, this means that brothers will no longer fight among themselves. In other words, there will (finally) be unity in Israel! Of course, in that context, and in conclusion, we might remind ourselves that one of the primary principles that we are to imbibe and observe as Jews is the command to “Love your neighbour as yourself.”

So, as we prepare to wish each other “Shabbat Shalom,” let us say together:

עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל כל

■ ישראל ואמרו אמן.

Shabbat Shalom!

Menachem Persoff