

## Lesson 18 – Where did שמע אם והיה Go?

**Background:** Students say Keriat Shema every day but probably don't realize that the three paragraphs are not back to back in the Torah but come in different places.

### Activity:

Ask: *Where is the שמע אם והיה paragraph?*

See if any students can find it themselves. It will be a surprise to them to find they are not adjacent. This curiosity may help them pay attention to this lesson.

Ask: *Why did the Rabbis choose these two paragraphs to make up Keriat Shema out of all of Sefer Debarim?*

In order to answer this question we must look at the structure of Moshe's second speech. After the Ten Commandments, Moshe recalls that Hashem told him to stay behind so that Hashem could teach him המצוה והחקים והמשפטים (5:28). Moshe now retells these commandments to Bnei Yisrael – א-להיכם ללמד אתכם – וזאת המצוה והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' (6:1). These three terms seem to be keywords each referring to a different category of commandment.

Ask: *What is the difference between the three terms: מצוה, חוק, and משפט?*

The word מצוה literally means a commandment and implies something one does in devotion to his Commander. This includes loving Hashem and being committed to the Berit. The word חוק literally means to inscribe in stone or to legislate. This category includes religious rituals such as kashrut, sacrifices, and holidays. The word משפט means justice or fairness. This includes civil laws which are necessary for the well-being of society and are readily understood by human reason.

Now compare 6:1 to 12:1. Both Pesukim are introductions to sections of the speech. But notice that המצוה is missing in 12:1. It therefore seems that the מצוה section ended in Perek 11 and Perakim 12 and on will start a new section.

### דברים פרק ו:א

וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה הַחֲקִים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְדֹנָד אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:

### דברים פרק יב:א

אֵלֶּה הַחֲקִים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְדֹנָד אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֶיךָ לְךָ לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כָּל הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל הָאָדָמָה:

In fact, a quick scan of chapters 6 to 26 shows that 6 to 11 focus on devotion to Hashem and motivation to keep the Berit, while 12 to 26 are full of ritual and civil laws. Therefore, 6:1 introduced all three coming sections, while 12:1 introduces the remaining two sections.

Ask: *Look back at the Ten Commandments. Which of them are מצוות, which are חוקים and which are משפטים?*

The first two are מצוות because they are direct commands from Hashem about how to and how not to worship Him. The next two are ritualistic – how to swear and the Sabbath. Honoring parents has elements of both a ritual law and a civil law. The rest are all civil laws. Therefore, the structure of Moshe's second speech parallels the Ten Commandments.

Ask: *Locate the first paragraph of the מצוה section.*  
The שמע paragraph.

Now let's jump to the end of the מצוה section. The last thing we find are blessings and curses (11:26-32). Blessings and curses always come at the end of a section. Notice that after the first two commandments in the Ten Commandments also comes a promise of reward and punishment (5:9-10). The section right before ראה is then the end of the מצוה section which is the יהיה אם שמע paragraph. Although there is second paragraph (22-25), that one deals with immediate reward and punishment relating to conquering the land whereas the first יהיה paragraph is more relevant to future generations and so it is better suited for the daily Tefillah.

We can now understand why we recite these two paragraphs in particular. They are the opening and closing of the מצוה section. We should really read the entire section, but once we study what is in between, we can read the beginning and end, which summarize the most important points, and keep the rest of the section in mind.

Structure of Moshe's Second Speech Perakim 5-26		
A. The Ten Commandments		
5:1 - 5 Introduction to Ten Commandments		
5:6 - 18 The Ten Commandments		
5:19 - 30 Experience of Har Sinai		
B. Elaboration of the Ten Commandments		
6:1 – 3 Introduction to Moshe's Elaboration of the Ten Commandments		
6:4 – 11:25 מצוה section		
6:4 – 9 Opening Section – שמע ישראל Paragraph		
6:10-11:12 Body of מצוה section		
11:13–25 Closing Section – יהיה אם שמע Paragraph		
11:26 – 32 Blessings and Curses		
12:1 – 16:17 חוקים section		
16:18 - 26:19 משפטים section		
Elaboration	Ten Commandments	Section
6:4-11:25	I & II	מצוות
11:26-32	5:9-10	Blessings & Curses
12:1-16:17	III, IV, & V	חוקים
16:18 - 26:19	VI - X	משפטים

[L18 Perek 6-11 - Structure - Summary Chart.doc](#)