

If you follow My decrees... then I will provide your rains in their time... But if you will not listen to Me... then I will do the same to you." (26:3,4,14,16)

This *parsha* is often misunderstood to be dealing with reward and punishment, blessings and curses. This is absolutely not true. Hashem does not curse. The correct name given to that portion of the *parsha* in which the reader recites the various "responses" to our iniquitous behavior is the "*tochachah*," warning, admonishment. **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, remarks that reward and punishment are applicable in the hereafter. In this world, however, we deal with direct consequences. Every action or endeavor promotes a consequence. If we walk in Hashem's path, if we observe His *mitzvos*, then the consequences are positive. We will receive rain at the most appropriate time, and the land will yield abundant crops. If we produce that which is expected of us. Hashem's response will be one that is consistent with our actions.

When we do not follow in Hashem's statutes, when our behavior leaves much to be desired as human beings, let alone Jews, His reaction is also commensurate with our demeanor. Hashem does not curse. Rather, we bring upon ourselves the consequences to our actions. How often do we ask ourselves, "Why?" Why did this happen to us? Why are our children estranged from us and Judaism? Why are we cursed? Perhaps the answer to this most famous question is to be found in our *parsha* - if we would only open our eyes and search for it.