

It shall be that if you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d... Then (He)... will make you supreme over the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you. (28:1,2)

The Torah enumerates a number of material blessings which are wide ranging and encompass every area of material life. What should be the primary and most significant blessing? “He will make you supreme over the nations of the earth” seems to be presented more as a *hakdamah*, prelude, to the rest. One would think that our supremacy in the world, the respect, admiration, and certainly the lack of animus against us would not only be an introduction to the blessing – but rather, the greatest blessing in its own right. **Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita**, explains that the Torah is teaching us an important principle. *Elyon al kol goyei ha’aretz*, “supreme over the nations of the earth,” means that we will develop the proper mindset, the correct Torah *hashkafah*, perspective, concerning the value and meaning of blessing. We cannot approach blessing with a gentile/contemporary society mindset. Our barometer for defining blessing cannot be the perspective of the *goyei ha’aretz*. We must achieve supremacy over them. Only then will we be able to appreciate the blessings which Hashem bestows upon us.

Once our perspective on life has been properly established, our understanding of “Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the field” will change. The entire concept of “livelihood,” success with children – indeed, the very foundation of blessing, will have new meaning. Contemporary society’s concept of blessing a curse is for the Torah Jew. A life of materialism and hedonism is certainly not a blessed life. Once we have our heads on straight, our ability to see properly will be modified and magnified.

We now understand why, in *pasuk* 14, the Torah admonishes us not to follow after the heathen idols. What does idolatry have to do with a people who are blessed and committed to listening to Hashem’s word? The admonition concerning idol worship belongs elsewhere – when the Torah addresses *klalos*, curses. The **Maharil Diskin, zl**, explains that the Torah is teaching us not to derive any lesson whatsoever from the behavior of the idol worshippers. A person might be inclined to learn from the mistakes of the pagans. This, too, is included in the prohibition against following after the idols. We must realize – once and for all – that we are *elyon al goyei ha’aretz*, “we are above and beyond the society which sometimes envelops us.” They have nothing to teach us, neither positive nor negative. We do not have to learn from their mistakes, because we are not interested in what they do. We are not on the same page. The sooner our people realize that our Torah is our culture and that the lifestyle of a Torah Jew is better, loftier, completely on a different plane than the lifestyle enjoyed by members of contemporary society, we will be much happier, more satisfied and better Jews.

I close with an appropriate thought from **Horav Yehonasan Eibeshitz, zl**, concerning the *pasuk*, “Hashem will place you as a head and not as a tail” (Ibid 28:13). Obviously if one is a *rosh*, head, he is not a *zanav*, tail. Why must the Torah add the second half of the blessing? It could have

stated simply, “You will be a head.” Rav Yehonasan quotes the *Tanna* in *Pirkei Avos*, 4:20, “Be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.” Apparently, it is possible for one to be a head of “tails,” but to be a head of “heads” is a completely different distinction. The Torah blesses us to be a *rosh*, head, of heads, of lions, of leaders – not a head of weak, obsequious tails. To be a “head” means very little if those who are following are not distinguished. Likewise, we may add that making it in the gentile, contemporary, society does not mean that one has truly become by Torah standards – a *rosh*. We have different values and different ideals. Their heads, whom they venerate, are successful adaptations of their base, materialistic society. After all, would one rather be a famous *rosh yeshivah* or a basketball star? Unless one has the refinement that is inherent in a life of Torah and *mitzvos*, he really has nothing.