

**The Ultimate Blessing (Ki Tavo)**

*Heaven means to be one with God. -Confucius*

This week's Torah portion gives a long list of curses as well as blessings. The curses are frightening. They are so horrible that the tradition is to read them in a hushed tone in the synagogue. The blessings on the other hand are wonderful. We could only wish for them to all come true; blessings of wealth and success, of children and peace, of power and dominion, of honor, recognition and admiration from the ends of the earth.

However, Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the Kli Yakar (1550-1619), on Deuteronomy 28:8, is not satisfied with these blessings. He claims that these blessings are just an appetizer. The true blessing, the ultimate blessing, is something completely different.

The problem with the listed blessings, he feels, is that they are finite. Anything that can be counted is limited. It will come to an end. The highest blessing can only be bestowed on something infinite. All else pales in comparison to a never-ending blessing. Such a blessing can only attach itself to something that will never run out, that can never be taken away – something intrinsic to each individual.

The Kli Yakar claims that the ultimate blessing can only be absorbed by the soul. The infinite human-divine soul is able to achieve the ultimate blessing. That blessing is a connection with God. The development of fear of God, of awe of God, of love of God, creates a new reality deep within us. The striving for an ever-growing God-consciousness pervades our souls for eternity. That is a blessing that is forever.

In this period before the High Holidays, the month of 'return', may we develop this ultimate blessing for ourselves.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

*Dedication*

*To the wonderful and delicious hospitality of Judy and Menachem Maimon.*