



Shul Decorum: IT'S NOT "Above and beyond the call of duty". "IT IS OUR DUTY".

מאיר לתורה לזכר ר' מאיר בן אהרן ע"ה

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Latest time for morning Shma:-----9:31

Lastest time for Tefilas Shachris - 10:41 (consult your Rav if you miss this time)

Please note: Concerning times mentioned in our Parsha sheet, only the times above are for sure relevant to the current year and to NYC.

*****See Page 10 for our new feature: *****

Insights on the Parsha from the sefer Cheilek Yaakov (by HaRav Yaakov Leib Benjamin zt"l

Parshas Re'eh



Note: Send e-mail to jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com to be put on the e-mail list to receive current year write ups of HaRav Yisroel Reisman שליט"א 's Chumash shiurim.

Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Re'eh 5775

As we prepare for the season of the Yomim Noraim, the season where we take things a little more seriously and hopefully a lot more seriously in our Avodas Hashem. This week's Parsha has in it the Mitzvah of Tzedakah, a reference to the Bais Hamikdash, the place HKB"H will choose because Yerushalayim is not mentioned anywhere in the Torah, it is only Makom Asher Yivchar Hashem. So I am going to say a Vort on Tzedakah and a Vort regarding the Makom Hamikdash.

1. Let me start with the Inyan of Tzedakah because I saw a beautiful Shaila in the Sefer V'harev Na. I would like to share it with you because it deals with a Yesodosdika Kler, a Chakira in Dinai Tzedaka. There is a Kler if Dinai Torah regarding Tzedakah are Choshen Mishpatdika Dinim. That is, that it is either ruled by the rules of Choshen Mishpat, Bain Adam L'chaveiro, between me and the Oni or whether they are Yore Daia'dika Dinim, Dinim that are judged as a Din Issur. The fact that the Halachos are found in Yore Dai'a would seem to indicate that. Well, let me tell you the case in V'harev Na Cheilek Bais on this week's Parsha. They bring that a man had a child that was not well in his house and he went to a Talmid Chochom

and begged him to Daven for the child. He offered him money and the Talmid Chochom refused. The Talmid Chochom then said if my Tefillos will work and be Poel then I will take the money. To which the donor said if your Tefillos are Poel, and the child is healed I will give you 10,000 Shekel.

Of course the story continues that the child was healed (otherwise there would be no story). Now he came for the 10,000 Shekel which was supposed to go to Tzedakah which would be distributed to Aniyim by this Talmid Chochom. He said Nu where is it? To which the person responded well you have to prove to me that it was your Tefillos that caused the child to be healed as that was the deal. If your Tefillos cause the child to be healed then I have to give you the money. I did other things too. I gave money to Kupas Ha'ir, I said Tehillim, who says that your Tefilla was Poel that I should owe you the money? This is the question that Rav Zilberstein brings in the Sefer.

Rav Zilberstein points to Shailos Uteshuvos Chasam Sofer Yor'e Dai'a Siman 240 where he deals with exactly this question. What happens when you have a Safeik regarding Tzedakah, do we say Hamotzi Mai'chaveiro Alav Haraya, if that rule applies then in our case he doesn't have to give the money because after all Hamotzi Mai'chaveiro Alav Haraya you have to prove that your Tefilla was Poel. Or do we say Safeik D'oraissa L'chumra. It is an Issur, if you pledge money and you don't do it, it is a Neder. Safeik Issur L'chumra and then you have to be Machmir Mai'safeik.

The Chasam Sofer says and we find in Yor'e Dai'a 259:5 that if someone has money in his hand and he is M'supak if it belongs to Tzedakah he has to give it to Tzedakah. Says the Chasam Sofer it is a B'feirush Mechabeir in Shulchan Aruch that by a Safeik you have to be Machmir. Obviously it has a Din of Safeik Issur. Therefore, the Psak is that Mai'safeik a person has to be Machmir. Ad Kan is what it says there in the Sefer V'harev Na.

I would like to add that this is a perfect example of not Paskening Halachos from story books, from books that bring down stories even stories of Gedolim, even Piskei Halacha, because this is not complete. In the Sefer it brings the Shitta of the Mechabeir. They don't bring the Rema, the Shach, and GRA. The GRA argues straight out. The Rema makes sort of a Chiluk on this ruling. The Shach stays at a Tzorech Iyun. So there is much more there.

I would like to share with you a second piece and that is in the Igros Moshe, Yor'e Dai'a Cheilek Aleph Teshuva Kuf Nun. He deals with this issue of Safeik by Tzedakah. He makes the following distinction. He says when there is a Safeik if Tzedaka is Chal, whether there is an obligation to give Tzedakah came and I don't know if I am obligated then it has Dinei Choshen Mishpat, it is not Chal. In a case where you know there is an obligation to give Tzedakah and the Safeik is where to give it, in that case the Shulchan Aruch is talking and says Safeik L'chumra. In other words the Chasam Sofer's Shaila is by someone who promised to give Tzedaka but he is not sure to whom, so the Chasam Sofer says to me Machmir. Why be Machmir? Because once there is a Chiyuv Tzedakah it becomes B'dinei Issur.

What does Rav Moshe say? When there is a question if there is a Chiyuv Tzedakah then the Rama's ruling rules and then there is no obligation. If you accept this difference, if you go to the beginning of the story, in our case it is a Safeik if the obligation was Chal and therefore, the person would seem to be Pattur. And so we have an interesting Shaila, two ways of approaching it. In Yeshiva you remember we had differences between Aini Yodai'a Im Nischayavti and Aini Yodai'a Im Parati. Different rules and this is a great example of it. This is what it says in V'harev Na.

2. Once we are on the topic I will pick regarding discussing Yerushalayim something found in another of Rav Zilberstein's extraordinary Seforim which I believe is called Uvacharta Bachaim. There they bring a very interesting Shaila. We have discussed in the past (Ed Note: Vayikra 5775 and Emor 5775 and possibly more times) the question of whether the word Tzion refers to Yerushalayim or to the Bais Hamikdash. We say Tzion Irecha which sounds like it is a city. On the other hand, Tzion is used as a reference to the Bais Hamikdash. Which one is it?

I never had a Halacha L'mayseh difference. Here is a great case. Maiseh Shehaya, one Shavuos someone was Bentching, saying Birchas Hamazon and he was saying Yaaleh V'yavo. After Yaaleh V'yavo instead of going to (ויבנה וירושלים) which he should have done, he went to (ותקונו עינינו בשובה לציון ברחמים). In Bentching he went to Shemoneh Esrei. When it came time to say Modim and bow and he is sitting at his table he realized that he had made a mistake. What do I do now? Do I go to (ויבנה וירושלים) or perhaps the Nusach (המקויר שכינתו לציון) is adequate to cover (ויבנה וירושלים). We Pasken the Nusach of a Beracha is not M'akeiv. Hamishaneh Mimat'bei'a, if you change the Nusach it is not M'akeiv as long as you said the same idea, the same theme. Is (בונה ברחמים וירושלים: אמן) and (המקויר שכינתו לציון) the same thing? Great Shaila.

This was brought to Rav Chaim Kanievsky and he said Tzion and Yerushalayim are two separate things. Tzion is the Bais Hamikdah, Yerushalayim is Yerushalayim the city. Since the Beracha should be (בּוֹנֵה בְּרִשְׁתֵּינוּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) it is not adequate to say (הַמְחִזִּיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן). This is the Psak of Rav Chaim. Very Geshmaka story, very Geshmaka Psak.

There is a Ha'ara on this which is brought there and this is sort of a riddle for your Shabbos table. The Mishna Brura in siman Taf Kuf Nun Zayin in Hilchos Tisha B'av discusses the following Shaila and it is in Shar Tzion Bais. A person forgot to say Nacheim in his Tefilla for Tisha B'av Mincha. The Mishna Brura says that you can say it in the Beracha of Ritzai where we normally say Yaaleh V'yavo we would instead insert Nacheim. As far as ending the Beracha of Nacheim the Mishna Brura says you can end the Beracha with (הַמְחִזִּיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן). The Shar Tzion says one minute, Nacheim ends with (בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם). Is it adequate to end with (הַמְחִזִּיר שְׂכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן)? Says the Mishna Brura that Tzion and Yerushalayim Chad Hu, it is the same thing. It seems to be the opposite of Rav Chaim. What a riddle! In the Mishna Brura's case it is Tzion and Yerushalayim, he said Tzion and should have said Yerushalayim it is good enough. In Rav Chaim's case it is Tzion and Yerushalayim he said Tzion and he should have said Yerushalayim and it is no good. Can we reconcile these two? That is a question for the Shabbos table but again we see that the discussion that I had then about what Tzion is, whether it is a city or the Bais Hamikdash lends itself to significant confusion.

3. After these two ideas I would like end with an appeal. It is rare that I make an appeal in so many years of this phone call Shiur with all of you. I would like to make an appeal. Today is Yom Kippur Kotton for Rosh Chodesh Elul. Today I had to be in Williamsburg and I found myself in the Satmar Bais Medrash here. I was Nispoel. Hundreds of people fasting half a day and at 1 pm right after Chatzos they put out some orange juice and some cookies and I realized that everyone was sitting there and learning and people who stopped in for Yom Kippur Kattan Davening were all fasting half a day. Then they said Yom Kippur Kattan and it was like the first night of Selichos. People saying it with Regesh, it was beautiful. Someone asked me where is your Yom Kippur Kattan? I told him that in our Shul we don't have Yom Kippur Kattan, I didn't want to tell him that in our Shul no one fasts half a day. There is something missing, there is something wrong. We are missing the boat! Rosh Chodesh Elul is coming this Shabbos, will it be any different the fact that Elul has arrived. It is supposed to be by Ashkenazeh Jews, By Litvishe Jews, by Yishiva'leit that we notice the Elul. My father told me that Elul was different when he was a boy. Can't explain it but it was different, Elul was in the air. Shouldn't Elul be a little different to us? Shouldn't it be slightly different? Vasikin these days has Shemoneh Esrei at about 6:05 and it is getting later by a minute a day. Can't we Daven Vasikin in Elul? Can't we have something extra that we can point to that we do in Elul? We have to notice the Elul. We have to take note of it.

Fasting on Erev Rosh Hashono, when I was boy in Yeshiva in the dorm they didn't serve breakfast on Erev Rosh Hashono. Everyone fasted half a day. Today it is rare and only serious people do it. Why don't the Hamon Am do it? Why? Why can't we take these things a little more seriously?

Elul is coming. Let's notice it and take note of it. Try to make sure that it has some meaning in our lives. We want a good year the coming year. We want a year of Beracha, of health, of Parnasa, of Nachas from our children. Do something more. Don't walk around the whole day with Elul on your head, but don't walk around the whole day without Elul on your head! There should be some moments where something is different. Do it. Wishing everybody an absolutely wonderful Shabbos, a meaningful Rosh Chodesh Elul and IY"H a good last month to Taf Shin Ayin Hai (5775). Let's make this a fantastic year in our Avodas Hashem. A Gutten Shabbos and a Gutten Chodesh to one and all!

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Our Mission

In Yaari Im Divshi (4:3:11), HaRav Yonason Eybeshitz zt"l brings the final mishnah in Bava Metzia (10:6): In the case of two gardens, one next to and above the other, separated by a vertical wall of earth covered with vegetables, Rabbi Meir says, "The vegetables belong to the owner of the upper garden," while Rabbi Yehudah says, "They belong to the owner of the lower garden." Says Rabbi Shimon, "Any vegetables which the owner of the upper garden can stretch out his hand and take, belong to him; the rest go to the owner of the lower garden." The halacha follows Rabbi Shimon. R' Yonason explains that this mishnah also contains a deeper meaning. Both the human body and the soul are called "gardens," for like a garden which gives forth produce beyond the physical earth of the garden, a person produces and accomplishes results far beyond the physical matter of oneself. The vegetables in the mishnah represent food, which nourishes both body and soul. Rabbi Meir says that the essence of eating is spiritual, as the physical powers of a human's nutrition come from the nefesh (the "upper garden"), which is spiritual. His proof comes from Devarim 12:23: "The blood (the physical "life" of a body) is the nefesh." Rabbi Yehudah disagrees and tells us that because overeating can actually damage the soul, eating is primarily a

function of the body (the “lower garden”). Comes Rabbi Shimon with a third approach. If we can bring proper intent to eating (“If the owner of the upper garden can stretch out his hand . . .”), eating becomes a spiritually uplifting function; if not, eating only weakens the soul and damages the body. We follow Rabbi Shimon’s opinion and recognize that our thoughts can raise even the lowest physical act into the spiritual stratospheres.

The Slonimer Rav zt”l incorporates Rabbi Shimon’s concept when he discusses the beginning of this week’s parsha: “See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing: that you heed the commandments of HaShem your G-d, that I command you today. And the curse: if you do not heed the commandments of HaShem your G-d and stray from the path which I command you today” (11:26). He asks a number of questions, including, “What sort of ‘blessing and curse’ are these? Wouldn’t ‘reward and punishment’ be more appropriate? Furthermore, why does Moshe say “that you heed” by the blessing, and “if you heed” by the curse? What’s more, why does Moshe say “today” three times?

He answers with a yesod that adds another purposeful dimension to our lives as ovdei Hashem. Every one of us has been sent down into this world for a unique purpose: to accomplish a tikun, a certain accomplishment. No one else can do it for us. The ‘blessing and curse’ mentioned here are not referring to performance of mitzvos, nor to reward and punishment, but to the ability to perform, or, r”l fail to perform, this task. The greatest blessing a person can have is to fulfill his mission; and the greatest curse is to fail in this task, r”l.

Hashem wants us to succeed, and so He places at our disposal precisely what is necessary for every person to accomplish his goal. Everyone has before him an array of purely physical needs – food, clothing, shelter, and much more – which enable him to accomplish his purpose. Furthermore, not only does Hashem provide us with a guidebook (the Torah) and guides (parents and teachers), but He Himself personally directs every Jew to the exact places and times that he is needed to fulfill his mission. Now the verses read, “See, I present before you all the necessities – items, knowledge, and Divine guidance – for you to complete the mission that I have sent you, if you utilize them properly (per Rabbi Shimon’s view of the “gardens”). If, however, you refuse to listen to Me, you will not fulfill your task.” The choice is ours.

Now, a mishnah in Pirkei Avos (4:28) becomes more clear. “Rabbi Elazar HaKappar says, ‘Jealousy, desire, and glory remove a person from this world.’” Others possess that which we do not, and vice versa. There is simply no reason to desire what we don’t have; others need those things for their missions, but we do not need them for ours. Because these three traits run contrary to HaShem’s purpose for placing us in this world, they have no place here, either.

Can we discover our purpose while still in this world? The Slonimer Rav presents a test: When one senses an overpowering urge from the Yetzer Ha’ra away from something, that something is one’s purpose. Before we assume anything, however, preparation is needed. First, one must attain a clear knowledge of one’s self and purpose, which is a complex process in itself. (In Gateway to Self-Knowledge, HaRav Zelig Pliskin shlit”a brings a step-by-step methodology. Alai Shur (64) states: “There is no knowledge that is more difficult to arrive at than honest recognition of yourself.”) Furthermore, our purpose may not become apparent until later in life. Boaz’s mission – to marry Rus and found the Davidic dynasty – did not happen until he was over eighty years old. What’s more, every day for a Jew carries its own purpose. (Thus, the repeated “today”) How often do we wake up with a precise schedule for that day in mind, and fall asleep that night wondering why everything fell apart? Hashem sent us to accomplish a certain task that day, and our plans did not fit in with His. Even if we cannot understand our special purpose in this world, we can trust that the A-mighty is guiding us in every way to success. May we all be zoche to successfully complete all missions that Hashem presents to us.

Perspective for Elul

This week’s parsha falls very close to Rosh Chodesh Elul. Clearly, now is an especially excellent time to begin to prepare for upcoming Days of Awe. The Chofetz Chaim (Shmiras HaLoshon, Sha’ar Hatevunah 4) says that we all know that on Rosh HaShanah, Hashem opens three books: The Book of Life, for tzaddikim; the Book of Death, for reshaim, and the Book for Beinonim, for those in the middle or whose verdict has not yet been decided. Who is a tzaddik? One who has more mitzvos than aveiros. Who is a rasha? One who has more aveiros than mitzvos.

Now, we all want to be in the Book of Life, but no one really knows for sure whether he or she has more mitzvos than aveiros, or the opposite. So what is our strategy?

Says the Chofetz Chaim: if Hashem really wanted, He could look very, very carefully at every one of our mitzvos, find something wrong with it, and take them off the list. We don’t want that. On the other hand, we would really like it if Hashem would overlook the aveiros we have done and not count them. How do we get that to happen?

Answers the Chofetz Chaim: Middah-k’neged –Middah! If we judge the world around us in the best possible way, Hashem will look at us in the best possible way, and therefore He will look favorably upon our mitzvos and ignore our aveiros. On the other hand, if we look upon the world in an unfavorable way, not looking for the great good that is in everything, Hashem might look at us in an unfavorable way, chas v’shalom.

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה

“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse” (11:26)

Why did Moshe stress that the choice between blessing and curse was presented to them “today” as opposed to at a different time? R’ Nissan Alpert explains that up until this point, as they traveled through the wilderness, their fortunes were

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not dependent on their own actions because they were supported by the merits of their leaders. Their food, water and security were all provided through the merits of Moshe, Miriam and Aharon. However, Moshe warned them that beginning on that day and going forward, their success would hinge on their adherence to the mitzvos. This began on that day. This remains true for all future generations. The success of each individual, his measure of blessing or the opposite, is solely dependent on whether he keeps the mitzvos or not.

Rabbi Shmuel Greineman was the menahel of MTJ in 1940s and a brother-in-law of the Chazon Ish. He also compiled a sefer of the Chofetz Chaim's teachings on Chumash. He writes that he was once visiting the Chofetz Chaim when someone asked the leader of the generation's advice regarding which group of Orthodox Jews he should affiliate himself with. The Chofetz Chaim gave the following answer: "When a person comes to the next world, they will not ask what group you belonged to. Instead they will place a sefer torah before you and ask: 'Have you fulfilled all that is in here?' If one says yes, then he will go to Gan Eden. If not, then he will go to Gehinnom."

We are only measured by our own personal achievements and nothing else. It is up every individual to earn his own reward based on how he serves Hashem. It has nothing to do with which particular stream of authentic Torah Judaism he identifies with. All that matters is whether one does the right thing and makes an effort to follow the path of the Torah and observe the mitzvos.

רָאה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּמְקָלָה

"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse" (11:26)

In his introduction to the parsha, Rabbeinu Bachya teaches that the key to earning blessings through the performance of mitzvos is to cultivate the middah of zerizus, alacrity and diligence. The opposite of this middah is atzlus, laziness, and this kind of behavior prevents a person from being fully motivated to do mitzvos.

To help accomplish this goal, he suggests recalling Chazal's comparison of this world and the next to Erev Shabbos and Shabbos. Everyone knows that Shabbos is always right around the corner and that if he fails to prepare for Shabbos during the week and especially on Friday, then he will have nothing to eat and be ill-prepared when Shabbos arrives. Similarly, one must visualize and internalize the idea that Olam Haba is not something far off in the distance. We will be there before we know it and if we fail to expend the energy to prepare for it, we will find ourselves in big trouble when the time comes. Just as Shabbos is always imminent, Olam Haba should feel imminent to us too. When we feel this way, we will be motivated to act with zerizus because we have no time to delay. We must seek out opportunities for mitzvos because we have a limited window of opportunity to accomplish our goals in this world. One needs to be diligent in order to fulfill the Torah and mitzvos because a lazy person will not bother with them. Zerizus enables us to earn bracha, but laziness prevents us from earning that reward. It is imperative that we develop a sense of urgency so that we act with zerizus.

כִּי לֹא יִחַדֵּל אֲבִיוֹן מִקְרֵב הָאָרֶץ עַל כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה לְאמֹר פְּתַח תְּפַתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ לְאֶחִיךָ לְעֵנִיךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאֶרְצְךָ

"For there will never cease to be needy within the land. Therefore, I command you, saying, you shall surely open your hand to your brother, to your poor one, and to your needy one in your land" (15:11)

Typically, when the Torah tells us to do a mitzvah, it does not also include a requirement to do the preparations necessary to accomplish that mitzvah. For example, the Torah requires us to sit in a sukkah, but does not say anything about building a sukkah so that we have one to sit in. Why then does the Torah tell us to open our hands so that we can give tzedaka to the poor? How else are we to accomplish this mitzvah?

In his sefer Kol Rom, R' Moshe Feinstein answers that by requiring us to open our hands, the Torah teaches us to always be ready to give tzedaka. We should keep our hands open at all times so that poor people should not need to work too hard to collect money. As soon as a poor man presents himself, the donor should be ready to give. Based on this idea, a person should always be sure to have money or a checkbook handy so that he has his hand open to give tzedaka when the opportunity arises.

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman Written by Michael Gutmann

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Seeing is Believing Written by Daniel Sandground

This week we have Parashas Re'eh which along with next week's Parashas Shoftim and the week after, Ki Seitzei, contain the majority of the commandments which are found in the book of Devarim. Up until now Moshe has given over commandments to love Hashem and to accept his oneness and has also spoken of fearing Hashem and the repercussions of transgressing against his Torah. This week's Parasha seems to put these previously mentioned requirements into perspective by stating that the choice between accepting the Torah and living by its ways or chas veshalom rejecting them and living a more exotic lifestyle is no more than... "a blessing and a curse" [11:26]. According to the Ramban this was Moshe's literal take on things saying that

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those who observed the commandments would be blessed and those who did not would be cursed. The Vilna Gaon also comes to support this view, stating that Moshe was offering the people advice that in each aspect of their daily life they would be faced with the choice whether or not to obey Hashem, this would therefore inclusively involve the choice of whether to bring blessing or curse, life or death upon oneself. Rashi however seems to disagree with these opinions and puts this statement down to the blessing and curse which would be later pronounced on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (In Parashas Ki Savo) which will be discussed then, Bezrat Hashem.

Moshe's statement of advice is introduced with the word “ראה/Re'eh” [11:26], “see” a word we don't see as an introduction to previous statements given over by Moshe, so we must ask, why the use of this particular word here? The Malbim brings down that this usage of the word “ראה/Re'eh” is because the blessing and curse described here by Moshe are not simply promises for the future but actually a visible property which exists amongst the Jewish people. He goes on to explain that one can actually see that people who observe the Torah have a sense of accomplishment, fulfilment and spiritual growth whereas those who go against it can be seen to live mundane lives which lack such achievement or satisfaction. The blessing and the curse is therefore there for all to see and in fact it is a common phrase amongst people working within the kiruv movement that one simple way of convincing a strayed Jew that he should be living a life based on Torah values is through 'two Shabbos's and one wedding'. Through 'seeing' the warmth and family orientation of a proper Shabbos meal or the purity of a Jewish wedding, one would immediately realise that keeping the Torah was the way forward and that the people who do so are blessed. On the flip side I would propose that the same can be said on the other side of the fence and through observing the drabness, emptiness and lack of spirituality within the lives of non-Torah observant Jews one could come to see that they would rather have the blessing than the curse. Through having this choice, Sforno proposes that Moshe was also pointing out to Israel that it was not like other nations. Such extremes exist for the Jewish people whereby the blessings they are promised for keeping the Torah are extraordinary and miraculous, as seen through their victories in the battles against the Canaanite nations. The opposite is also true however, with terrible ordeals and disasters facing us if we do not live up to our expectations. This blessing and curse can be seen quite clearly through time with the Jewish nation living lives of huge achievement at times, striving for great heights, certainly blessed... but also unfortunately we have experienced the curse of constant persecution and tragedy through the course of our history... maybe this is what Moshe meant by his introduction with the word “ראה/Re'eh”, “see”.

Moshe then goes on to reiterate to the nation the sanctity of the Land which they are about to enter and this perek contains commandments which have a particular relevance to Eretz Yisrael. This includes the repeated mitzvah to destroy the Canaanite idols which they would find when entering the land and also the interesting commandments based around making offerings on private altars and the laws pertaining to the consumption of redeemed offerings and unconsecrated meats. In amongst these commands we are reminded not to consume blood with the Torah stating that... “Only be strong not to eat blood, for blood it is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat” [12:23]. Chazal tell us that from the use of the lashon 'be strong' we can infer that there used to be a potent urge to eat (or drink) blood in those days which we of course had to avoid. It is brought down in various kabbalistic sources that the soul of a being is contained within its blood and it was therefore commonly used for witchcraft and other strange types of supernatural activities. According to Rashi in Parashas Acharei, it is because life is dependent upon the blood that Hashem designated it as the medium that goes upon the Altar for atonement offerings. It is also explained by the mefarshim that the reason we cover the blood of a slaughtered animal is because, since the soul resides in the blood, it is not proper to eat the flesh of an animal while its blood is exposed. We are of course extremely machmir on the prohibitions relating to blood today with Kosher meat going through various processes in order to 'drain' the blood from it... and just to note what you see dripping out of your 'rare' steak is not considered halachically to be blood. Anyway why are we going on this massive rant about blood... because after studying some of the commandments related to blood, unless you are a bit psychotic, I would expect most people to cringe a little at the thought of consuming blood and therefore question why we would have to 'be strong' to avoid it... surely this is one of the easiest mitzvahs in the Torah for us?... And that is exactly the point; the Torah is trying to relate to us how important it is for people to strengthen themselves in the performance of the commandments, for if Moshe had to use such a strong language to warn Israel against the consumption of blood, which is frankly repugnant, how much more so must people strengthen their resolve to avoid forbidden activities that are truly tempting!

Also brought down in this week's sedra are the commandments concerning a false prophet. According to the Ibn Ezra, its placement at this point is due to Moshe having warned the Nation against the temptation of idolatry and its practices, he now turned to the sort of phenomenon that could lead Israel to indulge in such madness. Obviously the danger of a false prophet is clear to see with a huge amount of blood shed from the false teachings of Mohammed and the man on the cross throughout history. The Torah specifically states that “he will produce a sign or a wonder” [13:3] which Rashi interprets as a supernatural

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event or a miraculous occurrence on Earth. According to Ramban this could also be a miracle which is foretold by the posing prophet. Another feature of this devious character is hidden within the language used by the Torah when it says "a prophet or a dreamer of a dream" [13:2], implying that a prophet might claim to have received his vision while he was awake or in a vision in a dream. Ramban comments that the Torah uses these terms figuratively regarding someone who never had actual communication from Hashem, but had some sort of spiritual potential that seemingly enables him to divine messages or to predict the future, thus making people believe he is a prophet. Whereas Moshe's prophecy was accepted because there were 600000 kosher witnesses (men above Bar-Mitzvah age) personally present at the revelation at Sinai (which works out at around 3 million people in total including women and children), the testimony of a false witness is usually based on one single person. We are taught that any later prophets who reveal 'signs', 'wonders' or 'revelations' are acceptable only if we are instructed by the Torah to believe them. Consequently the Rambam teaches that only prophets whose prophecies are in accord with G-d's laws are to be considered valid. The Moshiach will be one of these prophets who will work within the boundaries of the Torah and will therefore be accepted. What we see with Mohammed and the other famous one are clear-cut false prophets which the Torah accurately predicts through their behaviour and intentions. So why does Hashem allow such false prophets to come about? Well the answer is in the Torah... "for Hashem, your G-d, is testing you to know whether you love Hashem, your G-d..." [13:4]. An easy test to pass?

ELUL IS AROUND THE CORNER

AISH: Falling in Love in Elul by Rabbi Jason Gelber

The month of Elul is an acronym of a verse from Song of Songs, "Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li," "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me. This concept -- loving God and feeling His love for us -- is a central theme of Elul. But this month doesn't have one love-inspiring holiday in it! What is it about this month that represents the relationship of love between us and the Almighty?

We all know about the natural love that a parent has for a child. Even before birth, the mother is giving of herself, literally, and the giving never stops.

But what about a child's love to his parents? When does the child begin to truly love the parent?

I discovered the answer when my oldest son was born. The physical and emotional exhaustion of caring for a newborn -- one that liked to cry, and didn't like to sleep -- was like nothing my wife and I had ever encountered before. Thinking about everything our parents had done for us -- happily, too! -- there was no way we could ever repay them. The sheer enormity of their caring for us was bigger than we were. In these life-changing weeks following the birth of our first child when we transformed from being children into parents ourselves, our appreciation and love for our own parents transformed as well.

When the child becomes a parent himself and experientially feels how much his parents have done for him, that's when the child begins to truly love and appreciate his parents. To the degree that the child recognizes how much his parents have given him, to that degree his love for his parents will grow.

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe writes, "Gratitude awakens love in the receiver and naturally inspires it in the giver as well."

This is the key to understanding the experience of love in Elul.

Every year on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur we humbly submit our prayers and supplications to God, begging to be inscribed and sealed for a good year. As the season of the High Holidays draws to a close, the rest of the year we watch as our fate unfolds. It is at that last point of the year, the final month of Elul, that we can look back and see the entire past year spread out before us. That's when we can fully appreciate that we were indeed sealed in the Book of Life. We can see the myriad blessings that God heaped upon us and our loved ones. And the more we savor the details of the blessings God bestowed upon us, the more our appreciation will grow.

In Elul we come full circle, back to where we started from, and see with a new depth of feeling the enormous gift of love that God has showered upon us. In that moment of gratitude to Him we can feel a deep love for Him. I am for my beloved, and my beloved is for me.

In all of our relationships -- marriage, friendship, business -- we are natural experts at seeing what those around us are doing wrong. We have to make a real effort to focus on what's going right. But it is only when we re-train our eyes to see how much the other is actually doing and giving for us that our feelings of gratitude and love will grow.

Rabbi Wolbe recommends engaging in daily exercises to strengthen our "gratitude muscle," the most potent of which is a verbal recognition of another's kindness. Three times a day practice saying thank you to people who may perform everyday kindness to us. And if you look carefully, you'll see that there are more than enough opportunities. There is the postman who

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delivers the mail, the cashier who scans our food at the supermarket, and the salesman who helps us find what we need at the store. We are in fact receiving all the time -- from God and others around us, and have so much to be grateful for.

Let's use this Elul as an opportunity to recognize the kindness that others have done for us, and especially to reflect on how much our Father in Heaven has done for us in the past 12 months. As we head into the month of Elul, followed by the High Holidays, may our hearts be so full of appreciation and love for the Almighty, and may we all be inscribed in the Book of Life.

Aish Hatorah: Forty Days to a New You by: Joel Padowitz

The most auspicious time to embark on a program of self-development the first day of the Hebrew month of "Elul." For many generations, Elul has been a time for personal change and renewal. Elul, as the month preceding the High Holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, is the time specifically set aside for preparing for those events.

THE FIRST ELUL To put Elul into historical perspective, recall the story of the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. They had blundered badly with the Golden Calf, and things were not looking good vis a vis their relationship with God. It was on the first day of Elul that the reconciliation process began. On that day, Moses ascended Mount Sinai (for a third time), where he spent 40 days in prayer on behalf of the nation. At the same time, the Jews themselves plumbed the depths of their hearts and renewed their conviction to accept the challenge they'd received at Sinai.

Forty days later, the Jews had raised themselves up to a spiritual position where they were once again fitting for a relationship with the Divine. On that day Moses descended the mountain with a second set of the Ten Commandments, symbolizing God's forgiveness and the reinstatement of the Jews as the people who would bear God's message. That day of reunification was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

PATTERN OF FORTIES Why did the process take specifically 40 days? What's more, the theme of 40 seems to show up in dozens of places in the Torah. The first time Moses ascended the mountain, he was also there for 40 days. Also, in the story of Noah and the flood, the rain fell for 40 days. The Jews wandered in the desert for 40 years. And a Jewish ritual bath ("mikveh") must hold a minimum of 40 units of water.

And the list of "forties" goes longer still...

Forty represents the concept of renewal—a new beginning. Forty means that something might look like the same old thing on the surface, but its essence is totally new. Consider:

The first time Moses ascended Mount Sinai for 40 days to receive the Torah, the Jews were transformed from a collection of individuals into a nation. Noah's 40 days of rain symbolized the world starting again from scratch. The 40 years of wandering was the transformation of a Jewish people entrenched in Egyptian slave mentality, to one that understood true freedom. And immersion in a mikveh is the consummate Jewish symbol of spiritual renewal. (Similarly, it is no coincidence that God designated 40 weeks of human development in utero.) The 40 days from Elul until Yom Kippur was crucial to renewing the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Whenever we perceive God as being distant, we can be certain that God wasn't the one who moved away. The people had become unworthy of such an intimate relationship. They spent those 40 days changing their inner selves, and ever since then, Elul is the ideal time for personal improvement and renewal.

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE? The Sages teach that from the moment of human conception, it takes 40 days before the soul enters the body for the first time. Yom Kippur, which is 40 days after Elul, is the day of spiritual re-birth. That is to say, it is the day on which a "new you" will be born. Thus the first of Elul marks the "conception" of the new spiritual you. The development necessary to receive your renewed soul begins now. So who would you like to be in 40 days? Imagine for a few minutes that anything is possible. Suppose you could remove all that is bad and enhance all that is good about yourself. Who would you like to be? Spend a few minutes visualizing the ideal "you." (It's best to write this down.)

Think about these types of questions:

What kind of friend, or parent would you like to be? How would you act in public? How would you run your private affairs? What habits would you like to break? How would you like to speak? What would you devote your time and energies toward? What would you like to understand? What spheres would you like to have greater control over? What things would you rather not repeatedly enter your mind? What condition would you like your body to be in? In what areas would you like to be more careful? In which areas would you rather be more carefree?

Once you have generalized the ideal you, try to describe that person in the most specific detail possible. This is not to say you will necessarily become that person in the next year, but if you don't know where you are trying to go, you won't get there.

Articulate some concrete goals. That is the first step toward permanent change for the better. As the Talmud says: In the way in which a person wants to go, that is the way in which he will be led. (Makkot 10b) Excerpted from "Spiritual Accounting—A Practical Guide to Permanent Change," by Joel Padowitz.



WAKING UP TO THE SOUND OF THE SHOFAR

Coming out of the Summer into the month of Elul can be quite a shock. One is suddenly plunged into a world of thinking about teshuva, change, and responsibility. If a person plunges into the teshuva process too fast and too suddenly, it can turn him off to the upcoming holiday season. That is why it is necessary to slowly, but surely, ease yourself into the month of Elul and the holidays. The following are a few suggestions that have proven helpful to individuals wanting to ease their way into the Elul time period.

The general rule is to ease yourself into the obligations of the Forty Days until Yom Kippur in stages. You first start doing the things that are easier and then slowly start tackling the more difficult and complicated things. (Many of the following examples are adapted from Shaar Elul, Shaar Gimmel, HaRav Shaul Wagshall)

Step 1 – Strengthen yourself in the areas that you are strong in all year round. For example, if you are naturally good at learning halacha, start off your learning seder with an especially strong dedication to learning halacha.

Step 2 – Learn the things that inspire and energize you the most. Pick out your favorite areas of mussar or learning that really give you a charge and learn them well. This will slowly charge you up for the upcoming work that you have to do.

Step 3 – Start strengthening yourself in your davening. Now is the time to start working on praying in the proper way. Maybe make a commitment to come to davening five minutes early in order to be able to clear out your mind for the davening. Maybe start davening at a more controlled speed that enables you to really focus on the words. By strengthening your prayer, you will get a lot of spiritual strength which is so necessary at this time of year.

Step 4 – Strengthen Yourself in Your Learning. Everyone needs to strengthen his dedication to learning during this time period. Included in this is to begin your learning seder on time and not let yourself be distracted unnecessarily.

Step 5 – Make a conscious effort to be more careful in your relationships with your fellow man. For those of you who are married pay particular attention to the relationship with your spouse. There can be nothing more deflating to the Elul spirit than getting into a dispute with someone. Also, one of the essential parts of the teshuva process is working on interpersonal relationships and repairing any damage that you might have caused.

Step 6 – In a very general way, start to think about where your life is and where you want it to go. Keep it very general and very nonspecific at this time.

All these steps should slowly start to wake you up out of the sleep of the rest of the year, particularly the Summer. From these steps a person will start to feel uplifted, and from this will come the desire to start correcting the rest of the things that need to be fixed.

Over the next few days we will be exploring other areas and ways to wake ourselves to Elul and the holidays.

Insights on the Parsha from the *sefer*

Cheilek Yaakov

by HaRav Yaakov Leib Benjamin ל"צ

With the help of Hashem Yisborach, Who is the Last and First (*Achrein v'Rishein*)

I shall write my ideas on seder "*Re'eh aneichi neisein*"

And may He protect us from obstacle and error like the pupil (*k'ishein*)

The Torah says, "You shall do that which is good and upright in the eyes of Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 12:28). Rashi, quoting the Sifri, explains that "good" refers to that which is good in the eyes of Heaven, and "upright" refers to that which is upright in the eyes of man. This is difficult to understand, though, because the verse itself concludes, "in the eyes of Hashem," which would seem to imply that both terms—good and upright—are specifically referring to Hashem's perspective.

Perhaps we can suggest the following resolution. The Gemara (Kiddushin 40a) asks on the verse in Yeshaya (3:10), "Praise the righteous man, for he is good," is there such a thing as a righteous man who is *not* good? The Gemara answers that a *tzaddik* who is good to Heaven and to his fellow man is a "good *tzaddik*," whereas a *tzaddik* who is good to Heaven but not to his fellow man is a "*tzaddik* who is not good." Clearly, when the Sages here describe someone who is "not good to his fellow man," they do not mean that he *harms* other people, because such a person is wicked—certainly not any sort of "*tzaddik*." Rather, they are describing an individual who does not actively try to help others. A "good *tzaddik*," by contrast, fully carries out Hashem's will by doing for others in addition to fulfilling his obligations towards Heaven.

The Midrash (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 8:13) teaches that when we carry out Hashem's will, He supervises us with "both eyes," so to speak; if we do not, G-d forbid, He only supervises us with "one eye." Based on this, we can offer a novel interpretation. Our *posuk* is saying that one who is "good" to Heaven and "upright" to man, thereby carrying out the *ratzon* Hashem in full form, will merit to be "in the eyes of Hashem," supervised with "both eyes" from Above.



The Tanna R' Meir (Kiddushin 36a) holds that the Jews are always called "children of Hashem," even if we do not do the right thing. We can see a hint to his view in the *posuk* itself: "You are children of Hashem, your G-d (*Elokeichem*)" (Devarim 14:1). Even when Hashem is called "*Elokeichem*," interacting with us through his attribute of strict justice due to our sins, nevertheless we are still "children of Hashem."

לבי אומר לי

לזכר נשמת לוי צחק בן ישראל ע"ה

KROTH

Why is there the introductory pasuk of ברכה וקללה ... ראה אנכי נתן... The torah could have just gone right into ראה... את הברכה אשר תשמעו? Why do we need this extra pasuk?

The pasuk says ברכה וקללה. In the true reality of things there is no such thing as a קללה - everything is good.

In the previous parsha of עקב the torah says עקב ... תשמעון... We live on the level of תשמעון being able to hear. We say שמע ישראל because we don't see Hashem clearly. When the Jews went to the gas chambers they said- שמע ישראל - did they see Hashem? No. they could only say שמע - they hear. The level of seeing is higher. Our parsha says ראה the level of seeing היום נתן לפניכם - is a reference to the ultimate geula. Galus is the night (that is שמע ישראל). The ultimate geula is היום the day (ראה - seeing). On the day you will see bracha. We know a person has to make 100 brachos a day and generally we make brachos on good things, yet there are things that we perceive as bad (ברוך דין האמת) we don't see it good, we see it as a קללה. But when the day comes היום we will not only understand the bracha but we will understand קללה because when you read קללה backwards (because that is what we will do by the ultimate geula go back and see how everything was really bracha) קללה backwards is הלל just like we make 100 brachos on the good we will be able to say 100 הלל's on what we perceive as bad. This is the level of ראה היום. The next pasuk goes back to our regular understanding of ברכה וקללה because it leaves ראה and goes back to תשמעו hearing. The gematria of ברכה וקללה is הכולל (עם המלך המשיח).

Why specifically this prohibition does it say לה בנים אתם? The people that one generally mourns for the most are ones parents. One may even be compelled to go against the הלכה to mourn for ones parents according to the prevalent mores of his society. This is how he will show respect. So the torah says you are hashems sons (children). Your parents; and in fact your parents are also children to hashem and if you're mourning respect for them goes against the torah it is not respect.

לזכר נשמת

חיה שרה בת דוד

מרים ליבא בת אהרן

By: Avraham Martin

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The Limits of Charity

The Torah affirms the importance of charity:

עשר תעשר - you shall tithe... (14:22) A double statement means to repeatedly do it, an unlimited amount of times. The difficulty this poses is that the Gemara in Kesubos caps the permissible amount of charity at no more than 20% income. These are mutually exclusive concepts.

The Vilna Gaon deduces that if the Torah requires endless generosity, it can only be that the reward for charity is the ability to give more, without hindering the giver. The Gemara in Taanis therefore says that עשר בשביל שתתעשר - a person will never be limited in their ability to give charity over time.

Parsha Thought

BY YITZY ADLIN

ע"ה Eli Schonbrun and Dani King לזכר נשמות
לזכר נשמת מלכה בת יהושע
לרפואה שלמה משה צבי בן לאה

Re'eh

The Torah addresses the special status of the Jewish people as Hashem's children and enumerates various things that people of such an exalted status can and cannot do. Among the items mentioned are the birds that we cannot eat, one of which is the chasidah, which Rashi tells us refers to the stork. It's called the chasidah? because it does chesed with its friends by sharing food with them.

There is a gemara that says that mice are wicked creatures for when one spots a pile of fruit he summons all his friends to come partake in the feast. Why do we praise the stork for sharing its food and criticize the mouse?

Maayana Shel Torah explains the difference. The stork gets its food from nature, eating fish or other small insects that are ownerless, so when it shares its food it's sharing from its own. However, the mouse is stealing other people's food. It goes into people's homes, finds food and calls all his friends to join in the theft. So while they are both sharing their find with their friends, the mouse's comes at the expense of others and kindness done at another's expense is actually wickedness.

Right after the laws of what we can and cannot eat, the Torah tells us עשר תעשר את כל תבואת זרעך, tithe, you shall tithe the entire crop of your planting. The gemara tells us that in instances where the wording is doubled, that it means you should keep doing it even up to 100 times. Here, however, it seems problematic to say that you should give a tenth 100 times because we know that a person shouldn't give more than a fifth of his money to charity. If you're going to give 100 times, it will be way more than a fifth.

The Vilna Goan explains that really here, too, it could mean 100 times, for we know that there is a special blessing on one who gives charity. עשר בשביל שתתעשר, give so that you will get wealthy. Therefore, if you give a tenth then you will get more money and be required to give again. When you give again, then you will get more and the cycle will keep repeating itself even 100 times.

There's a story told about רבי חיים מטשרנוביץ when he was a rebbi for school children. One of his students recounted that one Thursday, the rebbi was teaching them this parsha and kept going over this concept of giving to someone even 100 times. He kept repeating it and said, "if someone comes to you again and again, don't say I already gave you; rather keep giving and give again". He went over it so many times that one of the students thought to himself, if the rebbi keeps stressing this to us, he must be on this level to want us to be on that level, too. Just to be sure, when this boy came home, he asked his father to give him the rebbi's pay for the month so that he could give it to him. The father gave him the money; the boy took it and cashed the money into 100 ten dollar bills.

Then he went to the local town beggar and told him that the rebbi has a lot of cash. He should keep going to him to ask for money at least 100 times.

Then the boy went to the rebbi, gave him the cash and the rebbi took it and put it in his drawer. A few minutes later, the beggar comes knocking on the door and the rebbi gives him a 10, then goes back to his learning. A few minutes later, another knock on the door. It's the beggar again. The rebbi smiles at him and gives him another 10. This scene repeats itself all through the day until all the money is gone. The boy, seeing that his rebbi was really a tzaddik and practiced what he preached, felt bad that now the rebbi would have no money for the month. He went back to his father, crying and told him what he had done. The father, seeing that his son really felt bad, gave him the money again to give to the rebbi with an apology.

The boy went back to the rebbi with the money and with real remorse tells him what he did and begs the rebbi's forgiveness for putting him in that situation and challenging him like that. The rebbi forgives him and says, "don't worry; it was no challenge". That is what Hashem said to do and if you do it, there is no way to lose out.

We need to take this lesson to heart and know that if we follow what the Torah tells us to do, we won't lose out. However, that only works if we do it for ourselves. To be pious on someone else's account is not what the Torah wants from us. As we come into Elul, we should all try to improve ourselves, but sure that on our climb up, we're not hurting anyone else!