

Torah sweets

DEDICATED BY THE SIKAVI FAMILY AS A ZECHUT
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RE'EH – THE ROAD TO ELUL: THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS CHANGING

“How many therapists does it take to change a light bulb?

Only one, but the light bulb must want to change.” – sign at an office

Many people realize that they're heading in the wrong direction, but don't feel it's possible to change course. Even if they could transform themselves, people wonder where they would even begin. This mindset is born out of suffering many failed attempts, falling into toxic patterns and addiction, or plain helplessness. The start is found in one word that Hashem tells us at the beginning of the Parsha.

Parshas Re'eh falls out either on Shabbos Mevorchim for Chodesh Elul or Rosh Chodesh Elul itself (this year Rosh Chodesh is next Wednesday). There is a hint to Elul in the Parsha which can help us explore and unlock the power of this special time. This month begins the 40 days from Rosh Chodesh Elul to Yom Kippur, where Moshe Rabbeinu went up after the *Cheit Ha'egel* (sin of the Golden Calf), and Hashem gave him the Torah for the second time. **Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz** comments that there seems to be a duality in the theme of the time, as on the one hand, these are days of judgment, when Hashem decides who will live and who will die. There certainly is an aspect of this whole timeframe that has *pachad* (fear), *haradah* (trembling), and uncertainty, particularly in Yeshiva environs. There was a saying that in Elul even the fish in the ocean are trembling, and the intense atmosphere of seriousness is undeniable.

At the same time, Elul time is called *Yemei Rachamim*, days of mercy and compassion, or *Yemei Ratzayim*, days where Hashem wants to be connected to us. Shlomo Hamelech (Shir Hashirim 6:3) states: *"I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."* In Hebrew, in this phrase (*Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li*), the first letter of each word spells Elul (ל-ו-ל-א). The dynamic between two seemingly contradictory moods is as follows. There is a danger that if we focus so much on the depth of judgment, we can get depressed, lose hope, and feel it's impossible to change. How can we ever meet Hashem's standards - so why bother trying? While Teshuvah is based on hard work, it's also based on optimism, hope, and Emunah in Hashem's mercy and love. Only then can we get the strength to return and change, because we know that Hashem is on our side, waiting and rooting for us. This gives us the inspiration and courage to put in the effort. Side by side with the fear/gravity of judgment, we look at Elul as a time of love and when the gates of Shomayim are open.

Rav Breitowitz connects this idea to the Parsha, which opens with (Devarim 11:26): *"[Hashem says], I am setting before you today the formula of the blessing and curse."* The path to blessing is through a life of keeping the Torah/Mitzvos and living in accordance with Hashem's Will. Then, there's a pathway that leads to curse and destruction - not following in the ways of Hashem. However, the Torah prefaces the whole idea with the word *"hayom* - I'm giving you this pathway today." **Rabbeinu Yonah** writes that the first step in doing Teshuvah is not to think about the past, even though eventually you must have *charata* (regret).

Yet, the first step is to know that *"today is the first day of the rest of your life."* To explain: we ALWAYS have the road of blessing and the road of curse. A person who was traveling on the "cursed path" might throw his hands up and say, *"It's too late for me since I've been traversing on the cursed path for years/decades."* The response to that is *hayom* - not even every day; it's every minute. The choice is still there. There is never a situation where one can't turn around and change, which Rabbeinu Yonah says is a tremendous *chizuk* (source of inspiration). What you are today doesn't have to be what you were yesterday, and what you can be tomorrow is not limited by what you are today. Let's not allow the Yeitzer Hara to talk us into remaining paralyzed victims of the past. We can switch directions with simply a desire and a decision to do so; once we are resolute, Hashem will certainly help us.



HAFTARAH HONEYCOMBS BY RAV MOSHE KLEIN **RE'EH- GETTING OUT THE MUD FOR GOOD**

In this week's Haftarah, the Pasuk (Yeshayahu 54:11) refers to the Jewish nation as being poor, stormy, and inconsolable (because of being without a home). Hashem is trying to comfort the nation and give them hope (ibid.): *"I will line your stones with 'pukh', and I will lay your foundations with sapphires."* The **Metzudas Dovid** tells us that *pukh* is a certain type of sand. Hashem will line us with stones, and to do that properly, He will use sand so that the stones will stay in place.

This is an allusion to the greatness of the Jewish people. Sometimes we see someone with great strengths, but they are all over the place. They are like a storm that cannot be reined in. Hashem assures the people that He will fasten our good parts with sand to make it a sustainable system of consistency. However, **Rav Yonasan Eibeshutz**, ZT"L (in his sefer *Ahavas Yonasan*) tells us a deep idea. On the Choshen, the Torah (Shemos 28:18) tells us that the second row: *nofech, sappir, and yahalom*. He explains that *pukh* is *nofech*, which is the stone of Yehuda (the fourth stone). *Sappir* was the fifth stone corresponding to Yissachar. The message Hashem was telling the Jewish people is therefore as follows. We will have the power of Yehuda (*pukh*) with the foundations of Yissachar (*sappir*).

Rav Eibeshutz explains that the reason the Jewish people are not able to have *Nechama* (consolation) is that we are afraid we will sin. Once we transgress the Torah, we will have to go into *Galus* (exile) again. So, we are afraid of what might be. In other words, what's the point of doing well if we are going to mess up again? This is the primary worry of the Jewish people.

ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PAGE 2 →

Hashem tells us that we can get consoled and not be so nervous. When the nevi'im want to give mussar or console the people that things will get better, they can't tell us if we will be righteous or not because people have bechirah (free will). This bothers the people since we can't expect Hashem to tell us "We won't mess up again" (as that would be Him choosing for us).

Yet, this is what Rav Eibeshutz tells us. Hashem is telling us a recipe of how one can know that he won't mess up again and not be in the storm anymore. He explains that stones are referring to builders. A Talmid Chacham (Torah sage) must be a builder and set up a fortress. After Yehuda falsely accused his daughter-in-law, he had the ability – and the humility – to admit the truth and confess that he made a mistake. If a person has the Middah of Yehuda of not being embarrassed to own his mistakes, then his spirituality will be able to stay inside of him. Hashem will give him the *siyata d'shamaya* (Divine assistance) to keep moving and not falling into the mud.

Then, there is the trait of Shevet Yissachar, who love the Torah. To get out of the quagmire and leave the mud for good, one needs to have humility and devote some time to Torah (to love learning). When one works on these two fronts, one can rest assured of receiving assistance from Hashem to grow consistently.

What does this all mean for us? We must ask ourselves two questions. Are we devoting a few minutes every day for learning? If not, then now is a good time to start. The second question is, are we man enough to admit when we do something wrong? If yes, that's great, as Hashem will help bring us into a very high level. If one just cannot admit their mistakes, this is also a good time to start, as well. All one has to do to get the truth about themselves is ask their trusted friends and family (spouse and children), and they will get the real score.



In this week's Parasha, we are taught about the concept of a navi, a prophet. How does nevuah work? The word for this world is called olam, which is from the Hebrew word *he'elam* (hidden), because Hashem is hidden by the physicality of this world. Therefore, when we can pierce the shadows of this world that block Hashem from us, and reach up above through the illusions, we can sense Hashem. The **Rambam** offers a *mashal* (parable). Imagine that it's a dark, rainy night and you're trudging along through the mud. You can't see the nose in front of your face, as the expression goes. Suddenly, there's a bolt of lightning and everything is lit up, and you can see the city in the distance, but then quickly you are plunged back into darkness. That's navua – it chases away the clouds and allows you to be able to see closely. That's what Hashem gives to a person who can develop themselves, so that they can see beyond the shadows and see clearly.

The **Rema** says that for Moshe Rabbeinu, it was like one bolt of lightning after another, so that he was able to see clearly. He was the only one who had this level; however, another person only got a bolt of lightning and a quick vision. We are told that a false prophet – a person who says Hashem told him something but is lying – is punishable by the death penalty. The reason we don't accept yoshka is that Hashem said, "I will never change these laws and our covenant." Then, if someone shows you signs and wonders and then says, "change these laws," he gets put to death. Interestingly, there's another category: a navi who was given a navua that's meant to be shared, but he refuses to give it.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 89a) tells us that such a prophet is in violation of the law, but he doesn't get the death penalty. Now, we've found some people who have been reluctant over the years. Bila'am comes to mind, where Hashem had to put the prophecy into his mouth like one puts a bit into the mouth of a horse to lead him over to say it. Also, Yonah famously did not want to go to Ninveh to fulfill his mission and tried to run away. Hashem arranged for him to "encounter" a large fish and then a smaller fish until he was ready to follow instructions. However, the Gemara asks the following question: How can Beis Din ever convict a navi for not saying a navua? Isn't Hashem the only One Who knows of the nevua that's sent?

To that, the Gemara replies with an astounding answer. Anyone who's fit for navua hears everyone else's navua; they just can't deliver it unless it's their designated navua. Everybody who is on the "navi network" picks up on all nevuos. The Gemara says during the time of the first Beis Hamikdash, there were 1.2 million prophets, and they were all hooked up to the navi system. Everyone knew about each other's nevuos. That's why Rivkah doesn't tell Yitzchak that the bracha was meant to go to Yaakov (as she heard in Shem and Ever's Yeshivah). She knew that Yitzchak was fit to get a navua, and if he didn't know, then obviously Hashem didn't want him to hear it. The Torah tells us that Yitzchak knew that Yosef was still alive, but he didn't tell him because he figured if Hashem wanted Yaakov to know, He would tell him.

We also find in the Gemara that every now and then there was a Bas Kol. It wasn't like a loudspeaker. After the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, messages went through ruach hakodesh – it was a *bas kol*, an echo of a navua. Everybody who was worthy heard the Heavenly voice. For instance, when Avraham Avinu went to Har Moriah for the Akeidah and saw a cloud, he asked Yishmael and Eliezer if they saw the cloud. Both said that they didn't; yet, Yitzchak said he did. As such, Avraham took just Yitzchak with him because he was the only one who was on the level to receive Hashem's message. We should all be zocheh to hear the Word of Hashem.

SUGARY SAYING BY RAV MENACHEM LOMNER

"For the second time, the Torah lists the kosher animals".

In Parshas Vayikra, we made a point of the fact that this year we can understand the parsha much better than usual. This is because we learned Zevachim and were in the middle of learning Menachos with "the Daf". Now that we recently learned about kosher animals in "the Daf", this week's parsha is a whole new ball game. Many points that we never thought about while learning the parsha were asked in the Gemara. Now, more than ever, is the time to ponder the parsha's teachings in this area.

*Summary: We have discussed that humility cannot only be a mindset, but it also must manifest in the actions that one does. The **Ramchal** specifically pointed out the domains of speaking, walking, sitting, and all of one's movements. Last week, we said that humble people speak softly. No one ever walked away inspired after being yelled at. People are open to being influenced when spoken to gently and sensitively.*

*Now, the Ramchal discusses how one should walk. He writes: “**In one's walking: Chazal said, ‘They sent word from Israel - who is destined for the world to come? He who is meek, humble, stooping on entering and leaving’ (Sanhedrin 88b). One must not walk in an overly erect posture nor with excessive heaviness, heel to toe; rather, as one going to his dealings. Likewise, Chazal said (Berachos 43b): ‘If one walks with an overly erect posture even for four cubits, it is as if he pushes against the feet of the Divine Presence’ and it is written (Isaiah 10:33): ‘and those of lofty height will be cut down.’” (Mesilas Yesharim, Ch. 22)***

To walk bent does not lead to a healthful posture; being a hunchback is not an advantage. On the other hand, **Rabbi Avigdor Miller**, ZT”L, comments that in ancient times, “important people” like aristocrats used to demonstrate their status by picking up their chins and pointing their noses toward the sky. They didn't want to look at anybody, so they raised their heads to avoid looking at the “peasants”. This is symbolic of a tyrant, and therefore anyone who emulates that form of posture is considered arrogant. Some people want to show how “relevant” they are, so they pace very slowly, step by step. Rabbi Miller points out that actually, the Kohanim in the Beis Hamikdash used to walk that way because service of Hashem is so important that every step was taken with the greatest caution.

There are still people today who, upon walking into a room, attempt to suck out all the air and grab the spotlight. You could see their intentions by their gait and the way they carry themselves (body language often speaks louder than words do). Someone who walks with bravado and his chest out is communicating arrogance. The question to examine is: what's the energy that we put off in a room, whether at work or at home? Sometimes, we don't even realize that due to lack of self-awareness, we demand attention and that the source of that is really low self-worth. So, what's the proper balance in terms of the way one should walk?

The Ramchal suggests one be slightly bent, navigating through a place in an unassuming and inconspicuous way. It might be tedious to always keep track of every move, so the guiding idea should be just to walk like you have somewhere to go (but not in such a rush that one is knocking people over). When we are busy with getting to our tasks and focus on accomplishing our goals, we resemble humble individuals.

MILK'N'HONEY FROM JERUSALEM, BY RABBI JONATHAN TAUB **RE'EH – WHAT MIGHT BE IN THIS FOR THEM?**

One of the topics in Parshas Re'eh is the enticement to serve idolatry. We read (Devarim 13:6): “*If your brother, your own mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your closest friend entices you in secret, saying, ‘Come let us worship other gods.’”* **Rashi** explains: “Your brother means, your brother on the father's side. The son of your mother, i.e., your brother on the mother's side.” Why is the brother on the mother's side mentioned explicitly, whereas the brother on the father's side is not?

The **Chidushei HaRim**, the first Rebbe of Gerrer chassidus, explains that when a paternal brother comes to entice to serve idolatry, it is easier to resist his lures. This is because it is evident that the brother may well have ulterior motives. He wants his brother to serve idol worship and be killed by the Beis Din for the sin, which will then cause him to inherit his brother's share of their father's estate. However, when a maternal brother is trying to entice, he can assert that he has no underhanded intentions whatsoever. He will claim he is only concerned, or the welfare of his brother. Therefore, it is easier to become the prey of a maternal brother. For this reason, the Pasuk states explicitly “the son of your mother” to highlight the extra precautions that must be taken with the enticement of the son of your mother.

With that in mind, we now understand the words of Sarah to Avraham (Bereishis 21:10) in a new light: “*Cast out that slave woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son, Yitzchak.*” Sarah's concern was that since Yishmael would not inherit Avraham, he might be able to influence Yitzchak, as Yitzchak would have no grounds for suspecting ulterior motives. There is a very important lesson for us here. When someone is suggesting a course of action for us, unless it is someone who we can really trust, we should always ask: What might be in this for them? A very important piece of advice: “Forewarned is forearmed!”

SHORT STORY **BY YONI SCHWARTZ**

In the 70s, Avraham Shlomo, not even ten years old, moved with his family from Argentina to Williamsburg. Being Sefardi and not speaking Yiddish or English, going to a Satmar school was daunting. His worst nightmares came true when the boys in school started to pick on him. It broke him down little by little. It was so much that he had to switch schools. But where would he go? His mother, dedicated to getting her son the best Torah education, sent him to the Tosher Yeshiva. However, the boys picked up on his broken English and Yiddish as well, and they also began picking on him.

This time, he was shattered. Avraham picked up the phone: “Mommy, I'm coming home. I can't take this anymore.” She quickly called the **Tosher Rebbe**, ZT”L, explaining the situation. Shortly after, the Rebbe called him into his office. “Are you the Shas bochur?” the Tosher Rebbe asked. Avraham replied, “No, that's not me.” Avraham was so emotionally drained from all the bullying that he could barely learn. The Rebbe responded, “No, no, I heard that you're the Shas bochur.” Avraham responded, “Rebbe, that's just not me.”

“What?” responded the Rebbe. “I heard that you're very talented, bright, and diligent in your learning...and I heard that you're the Shas bochur. That Friday night, when all the Chassidim were gathered during the Tish, the Rebbe said, “Pass the *shirayim* (a great honor) to the Shas bochur”. Everyone looked around and wondered, “Who is the Shas bochur?”

Avraham Shlomo's face was glowing. If the Rebbe said that he was a “Shas bochur,” then he had to start cracking. That year, he finished 400 pages of Gemara! Not too long after, he finished the entire Shas. It turns out that he was very gifted. When he was told by his peers that he was dumb, those were the expectations he lived up to, but when the Rebbe said he was a Shas bochur, he acquired new expectations to live up to. Years later, he started what became the most famous Yiddish shiur on Kol Halashon that has a level of depth and understanding almost unparalleled by his contemporaries - all because a great Rav believed in him.

Comment: In this week's parsha, Re'eh, we read (Devarim 14:1): “Children are you of Hashem, your G-d...” Then the Torah lists various prohibitions that are not fitting for people of such standing. The Torah sets high standards for us and therefore makes us greater than we otherwise would have been.

It's a shame that many people think that only they were created in the image of G-d, but not, for example, the kid in school who struggles socially or the person in our community who acts slightly awkward. Avraham Shlomo dealt with bullying that still occurs in our schools. If we took the time to remind our kids to see the greatness in others and themselves, much trauma and emotional anguish would be avoided.

AVARECHECHA B'CHAYAI BY R'MICHAEL SPZILZINGER
RE'EH – THE COST OF LAZINESS

This weekly column draws from Rabbeinu Bachya's introduction to each Parsha, linking it to a verse in Mishlei, and offering practical insights and takeaways.

“Me’Choref Atzel Lo Yacharosh, U’Sheal baKatzir V’Ayin - in winter the lazy man does not plough; at harvest time he seeks but finds nothing” (Mishlei 20:4)

One of the negative character traits that Shlomo HaMelech concerns himself with in Sefer Mishlei is Atzlus - laziness. **Rabbeinu Bachye** outlines the four general areas where laziness shows up

Laziness of Property

“Ba’atzaltayim Yimach HaMikareh, UB’Shiflus Yadayim Yidlof HaBayis”. Sometimes we notice a red flag issue in our house. A leak here; a creak there. You know there’s something more under the surface, but it doesn’t seem to be pressing at the moment - until it becomes urgent. If you don’t take care of those brake pads now, replacing the cylinders is going to be a much more costly repair.

Laziness in Health

Rabbeinu Bachye’s angle here is really in regard to making sure one has the means to be able to buy food. Effort must be exerted to achieve the basics, even if one will be satisfied with the bare minimum. Yet, to rely only on miracles to get one’s basic nutrition can leave him liable to negatively affect his health.

Laziness of the Nefesh

Despite being aware of their own shortcomings, some people make little or no effort to work on their middos (character traits). The excuse is that it seems to be against their nature to do well in the areas that need work. Rabbeinu Bachye likens this to a person who does not work a piece of land because it is not perfect, neglecting the fact that with more effort he can produce something of value.

Laziness to Torah and Mitzvos

The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 3a) states: *“One who toils on Erev Shabbos will have what to eat on Shabbos”.* Chazal exhort us to take advantage of the opportunity of this world. This is the Olam Ha’Asiya. After a person passes to the next world, there is no more opportunity to “prepare your food”. You can only enjoy what you came with. Don’t squander the opportunity!

Connecting to the Parsha

We see the common thread here: we have choice. We can choose to act with *Zerizus* (enthusiasm) and create eternal life for ourselves, or we can choose laziness and allow the entropy of Klala (curse) to fester. Re’eh - look and see these paths in front of you and choose Bracha! The takeaway is that every area of life either grows through attention or declines through neglect.

Self-reflective question

What small step can I take today that will spare me a much larger problem tomorrow? If my future reflected today's habits, what kind of harvest would I expect?

SUGAR RUSH ON 613 MITZVOS BY RABBI ELI REIT
MITZVAH # 223 – LAWS OF SOTAH

A married woman spent a lot of time with another man, and her husband got jealous, warning her to not be secluded with him. If she then goes into seclusion with the other man, the husband brings her to the Beis Hamikdash. She drinks special water, Mei Sotah, which is administered to her by a Kohen. The Kohen warns her that her stomach would explode if she had relations with the other man. She answers, "amein" and then drinks the water. If she admits to having extramarital relations, she doesn't drink the water and must get divorced, as the Pasuk (Bamidbar 5:12) says, "any man whose wife undermines him..."

*THE LEARNING IN THIS MAGAZINE IS DEDICATED AS A
COMPLETE AND SPEEDY REFUAH FOR LEEBA MIRIAM GEULAH
BAS LEAH AND ALL THOSE WHO NEED IT.*

SHALOM BAYIS AND THE PARSHA
BY RABBI YITZ GREENFIELD

RE'EH – YOUR SPOUSE, YOUR AVODAS HASHEM

There is an insightful Pasuk in this week’s parsha that says (Devarim 13:5) *“You should follow Hashem your G-d, and Him you should fear, His commandments you should keep, and His voice you should listen to, and Him you should serve, and to Him you should cling.”* The **Ohr Hachaim** explains that this Pasuk is spelling out the various elements that comprise how we should follow Hashem. The first element in our service is accepting the yoke of Heaven and rejecting the dictates of any other power in the universe. “Only Him do we fear” means we should not be scared or nervous of any other power, as we understand that Hashem directs every moment of life perfectly and lovingly. “His commandments we should observe” means not the demands of any other religion, chas v’shalom.

We want to actively reject the things in life that do not align with Hashem’s values. Listening to Hashem’s voice and serving Him means we are listening only to the teachings of the Torah, and we are serving Hashem exclusively. The Pasuk concludes by telling us to cling to Hashem. The question here is: how can we cling to Hashem when we are flesh and blood, and He is a spiritual Being?

The Ohr Hachaim understands this to mean that we should honor Torah scholars because they are the carriers of the Shechinah (Divine Presence). By honoring those who learn Hashem’s Torah, we will be clinging to Hashem. Rashi has a different interpretation; he states that clinging to the ways of Hashem means performing acts of kindness and becoming a giver like Hashem.

We can take the message of this Pasuk to heart and apply it to our marriages. We want to cling to Hashem, so according to the Or Hachaim, we can show honor to a Talmud Chacham. We are used to thinking talmidei chachamim are the people who know the entire Torah. According to **Rav Reuven Feinstein**, shlita, this is not so. Being a Talmud Chacham simply means someone who learns and who understands the learning he is in the middle of. In Pirkei Shalom (page 247), Rav Reuven quotes the Gemara (Brachos 58a) which tells us, “Just as people’s appearances are not the same, their minds are not the same.” He explains the intellect of every person is unique, and so every member of Klal Yisroel has a certain clarity and understanding in Torah that cannot be duplicated.

If one’s husband learns Torah daily or weekly, by giving our husband honor and respect, we are fulfilling this Pasuk - according to the Ohr Hachaim - and clinging to Hashem! When a wife doesn’t interrupt her husband when he speaks, when a wife greets him with love and respect, using a kind tone of voice, when she looks him in the eye when she speaks to him, when she makes sure to have the food he enjoys and serve him first, all of these examples are forms of clinging to Hashem, according to the Ohr Hachaim.

According to the interpretation of Rashi, if we do acts of kindness for our spouse, that is clinging to Hashem. The next time we change the oil in our spouse’s car, put up a wash, make dinner, prepare lunch, drop something off at the cleaners, pay a bill, give a smile, write a sweet note, or any of the hundreds of acts we do daily, let’s have the proper kavana (motivation) and see what we are doing for what it REALLY is, an opportunity to cling to Hashem.

It is not easy to give respect to someone we see all the time and are so close to. It sometimes might feel tedious to do acts of kindness for our spouse all the time, but the dividends are worth the effort. May Hashem bless our efforts with success and shine the light of Shalom Bayis into our homes.