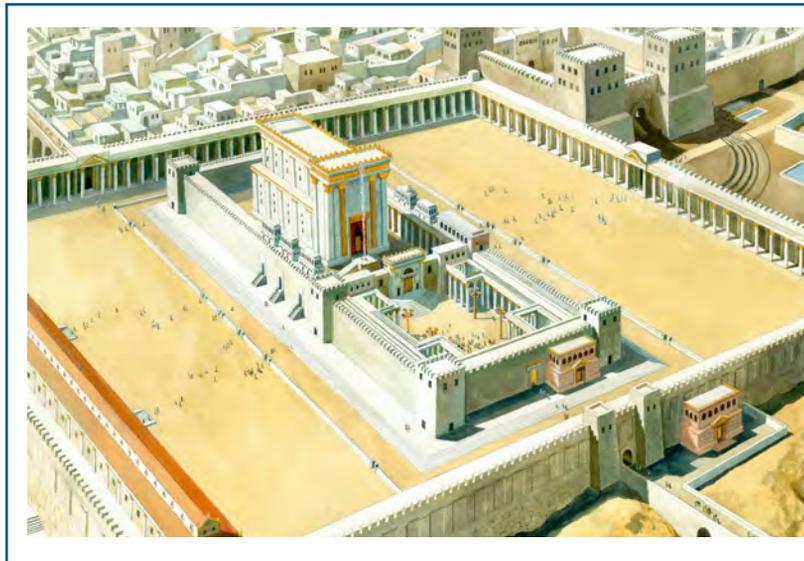




הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY



PARSHAT RE'EH
5782 • 2022

ISRAEL
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הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבָּחַר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בּוֹ לְשֵׁן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם...
דְּבָרִים יב:א

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Dedicated in the memory of the late Mrs. Annette Wolk (Chaya Bat Shalom z"l) of Johannesburg, South Africa who passed away on Tuesday 16th September 2022 (19 Av). We send our condolences to her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the Lamm, Meisler and Wolk families



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120 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

www.mizrachi.org
www.mizrachi.tv
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000
f t i n

PRESIDENT

Mr. Kurt Rothschild z"l

CO-PRESIDENT

Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman

CHAIRMAN

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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EDITOR

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Esther Shafier

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ari Levine

Josh Maurer

Yaakov Panitch

Ian Schwartz

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Leah Rubin

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'The Place that I Will Choose'

The Secret of Jerusalem's Hidden Identity



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

Why the big secret?

Throughout the book of Devarim in general and in this week's Parasha in particular Jerusalem's designation as the holiest place on our earth is purposely hidden from us.

Twenty-two times during the course of the book of Devarim and 13 times in this week's Parasha, Jerusalem, the place that G-d will designate as the permanent resting place of His presence, the *Shechina*, is referred to consistently by the following phrase: "המקום אשר יבחר" – "the place that He will choose" (or similar variations thereof).

Every possible opportunity to mention Jerusalem is systematically squandered in the Torah. This is particularly puzzling for the following two reasons. Firstly, Jerusalem will be mentioned subsequently almost 700 times in Tanach beginning with the very next book of Joshua. Secondly, all nations of the world were aware of the uniqueness of Jerusalem since time immemorial as evidenced by the following traditions cited by leading medieval rabbinic leaders and scholars – Rambam and Rabbeinu Bechayei.

An Ancient Tradition

"And it is a tradition accepted by all that the place where David and Solomon built the altar at the threshing floor of Aravna was the place that Abraham built the altar and bound Isaac upon it, and that was the place that Noah built upon when he left the ark, and that was the altar upon which Cain and Abel sacrificed, and upon which

Adam HaRishon sacrificed when he was created. And from there was born as the sages said that 'Man was created from the place of his atonement.'" (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, The Laws of Beit HaBechira: 2,2)

The very same tradition is mentioned by the medieval Biblical commentator Rabbeinu Bechayei (Devarim: 12:5) on the verse of "On the place that I will show you" in this week's Parasha where he states:

"This place is Mount Moriah (later to be the Temple Mount in the heart of Jerusalem) and it was well-known and famous among the nations of the world who knew, through tradition, its great spiritual value, and it goes without saying that the Jews in the desert knew from their forefathers about the Binding of Isaac. And even though everyone knew the great spiritual value of Mount Moriah, they did not know that this was the place that G-d had designated."

Before answering the question as to why, despite Jerusalem's fame as a place of great spirituality, its identity as the place designated for the Temple is hidden, let's focus first on just how unparalleled Jerusalem's uniqueness is.

O Jerusalem

What emerges from the words of Rambam and Rabbeinu Bechayei is just how central Jerusalem is to the spiritual history of all of humanity – something all nations of the world were aware of.

I often marvel at just how unique Jerusalem is. There is indeed no other place like the Old City of Jerusalem. The following

remarkable fact highlights this so sharply. Incredibly, within a one-kilometer radius of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, there are collectively more shuls, churches and mosques than any other place on earth.

By contrast, the holiest place of Islam, Mecca, has no churches or shuls. Indeed, it is illegal in Saudi Arabia. Christians or Jews do not have any desire to build churches or shuls there. The same is true of the Vatican where there are no mosques or shuls and as many as one thousand churches in the surrounding city of Rome. There are no mosques or synagogues in the Vatican. Moslems or Jews don't have any desire to build a mosque or shul there. Yet, in the close proximity of the holiest place to the Jewish People, there are not only hundreds of shuls but scores of churches and mosques.

Somehow, the place held most sacred by the Jews is also held holy by the other major monotheistic religions representing around half of humanity. There is something about Jerusalem that is not only connected to Judaism's particular religious history but to the history of humanity itself.

Nowhere is this clearer than regarding the last line in the above tradition cited by the Rambam. The Foundation Stone on the Temple Mount is known in Hebrew as the "אבן השתייה" where our sages say that "ממנה הושחת העולם", "from there the world was founded". The clod of earth under that stone, according to our tradition, is the very first clod of earth that was created and from which the entire earth emanated. From this very place emphasizes the Rambam was the physical matter taken by G-d also to fashion Adam and Eve – "they were created from the place of their atonement". The place of their creation is the same place where forgiveness and atonement is possible – through the altar and Temple. The first man-made altars to connect to G-d were erected here – first by Adam and later Noah and then Abraham and eventually the place of Divine connection on a national level – the Temple – built by David and Solomon.

From the dawn of humanity when the first humans were seeking G-d's closeness until this very day, Jerusalem is somehow the place of spiritual rendezvous between Heaven and Earth. The gateway



There is something about Jerusalem that is not only connected to Judaism's particular religious history but to the history of humanity itself.

to G-dliness and the keys to spiritual connection and redemption are rooted in this place.

So stirring is Jerusalem that it evokes spiritual fervor in all. It is the only city in the world where there is a psychiatric condition known as "The Jerusalem Syndrome". At the psychiatric hospital Herzog in Givat Shaul, in the outskirts of Jerusalem, around one hundred people a year suffer from this disorder. Somehow, people come to Yerushalayim and many are moved to feel that they're either the Messiah or one of the saints of human history. No other place stirs the human spirit as Jerusalem does.

Why the Big Secret?

Let's return to our question.

If Jerusalem spiritual greatness was known by all, why does the Torah go out of its way to hide Jerusalem's identity? Why is Jerusalem's designation as the place of the holy Temple purposely hidden from us?

The Rambam refers to this question in his Guide to the Perplexed and gives three answers, all of which indicate the esteem in which Jerusalem is held by everyone –

'For three practical reasons, the name of the place is not distinctly mentioned in the Torah but rather indicated with the phrase "the place that I will choose" (Devarim, 12:11, etc). Firstly, if the nations had learned that this place was to be the center of the highest religious truths, they would have occupied it or fought to defend it most perseveringly. Secondly, those who were then in possession of it might have destroyed it and ruined it with all their might. Thirdly, and most chiefly, every one of the twelve tribes would desire to have this place within its borders and under its control. This would have led to division

and discord, such as was caused by the desire for the priesthood. Therefore, it was commanded that the Temple should not be built before the selection of a king who would order its erection and thus remove the cause of discord' (Guide To The Perplexed, part 3, section 45).

The first two reasons highlight how the very knowledge of the nations of the world that the place of G-d's presence will be in Yerushalayim would evoke extreme responses. Either they would occupy it and defend it with all their might because of its holiness. Conversely, they may destroy and contaminate it. Either way, it will make it much harder for the Jewish People to transform Jerusalem into the place of G-d's presence.

The primary reason given by the Rambam is the third and final one referring to the internal divisiveness within the Jewish People. With the land being divided amongst the twelve tribes and Jerusalem able to be in the vicinity of only some and not others, there would undoubtedly be arguments amongst the tribes. Why should the epicenter of spiritual life be in the precincts of their tribe and not ours? The Rambam brings the example of the priesthood designated for Aharon and his descendants. This, as we know, became one of the major rebellions in the time of the desert, with Korach challenging Moshe and Aharon's leadership and managing to win over two hundred and fifty of the leaders of Israel causing a national tragedy. Therefore the Rambam posits that the only way such a divisive decision could be implemented in a way that all would accept would be for Jerusalem to be revealed only once there was a central government in place. When the tribes were united enough to appoint a king did he then have the due authority to implement such a decision. Only then can Jerusalem be revealed as the gateway to G-d.

Two Great Truisms

This has great two-fold relevance today. Firstly, all G-d seeking human beings see Jerusalem as a critical key to their spiritual story and all feel that they have a stake in it. Secondly, Jerusalem can only be merited by the Jewish people when they are able to preserve unity from within.

PIRKEI AVOT

Aware of Awareness

**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**

Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Scan here to join
Rabbi Taragin's
daily Divrei Torah
WhatsApp group

רבי אומר... והסתכל בשלשה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עברה
דע מה למעלה ממך, עין רואה ואין שומעת, וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבין: (אבות ב:א)

Consciousness

Over the past months, we have seen Pirkei Avot's delineation of the proper view of life. Internalizing and maintaining our consciousness of this view in a way that makes it our life's compass can often be challenging. Rav Ovadia MiBartenura points out that most sins emanate not (just) from desire, but (also) from a (temporary) loss of perspective.¹ Having the right values and goals is not enough; we need to be conscious and driven by them. The mishnayot of Avot speak about how to accomplish this. Two of Avot's perakim begin with advice on how to generate the consciousness that helps avoid sin. The third perek opens by quoting the guidance given by Akavya ben Mahalalel (a tanna who lived in the first tannaitic generation) while the second quotes Rabbi (Rebbi Yehudah HaNasi who lived at the end of the Tannaitic period).²

Though both *tannaim* advise us to focus on three things³, they each recommend a different set of three. This week we will study Rabbi's three.

What's Up

Rebbi encourages reflecting upon Hashem's presence and omniscience. "Look at three things and you will not come to sin: know what is above you, a seeing eye, and a listening ear, and all of your actions are recorded." (Avot 2:1)

The type of consciousness Rebbi recommends has earlier sources in Torah and Nach. The Torah commands us to wear *tzitzit* so that seeing them will help us avoid sin by reminding us of Hashem and His *mitzvot*.⁴ Dovid HaMelech went beyond

remembering G-d and constantly imagined himself in His actual presence. Rebbi takes the idea a step further by encouraging us to focus on the *omniscient* aspects of Hashem's presence.⁵ A consciousness of Hashem's awareness of our actions motivates people to not only avoid sin, but also keep *far* away from it.⁶

The Seeing Eye

The first aspect is "the seeing eye" – Hashem sees everything in our world. Rabbeinu Yonah explains that the seeing eye means more than just abstract knowledge; it means that Hashem is always watching. Many studies have indicated that people are more hesitant to do the wrong thing when they know that others are watching – or even if they see the picture of an eye in front of them.

Students were asked to participate in the so-called Dictator Game, in which one is given money together with the opportunity of sharing any or none of it with an anonymous stranger. Beforehand, and without realising it was part of the experiment, some of the students were briefly shown a pair of eyes as a computer screen saver, while others saw a different image. Those exposed to the eyes gave 55 per cent more to the stranger than the others.

In another study researchers placed a coffee maker in a university hallway. Passers-by could take coffee and leave money in the box. On some weeks a poster with watchful eyes was hanging on the wall nearby, on others a picture of flowers. On the weeks where the eyes were displayed, people left on average 2.76 times as much money as at other times. Ara Norenzayan, author of the book *Big Gods*, from which

these studies are taken, concludes that "watched people are nice people."

Obviously, knowledge of G-d's eyes constantly upon us can have an even stronger impact. That is part of what makes religion a force for honest and altruistic behaviour and *mitzvah* observance: the belief that G-d sees what we do. It is no coincidence that, as belief in a personal God has waned in the West, surveillance by CCTV and other means has had to be increased.

The Hearing Ear

The "hearing ear" expands G-d's omniscience. In addition to seeing our actions, G-d also hears our words. Many of the commentaries see Hashem's eye and ear as able to know our thoughts as well. As Hashem said to Shmuel – "Man sees only up till the eyes (of the other) while Hashem sees straight through to the heart."

Running Record

Rebbe adds that what Hashem sees and hears is also recorded for posterity. This means that our actions are remembered and have long term significance. We are not always careful about our actions because we see them as lacking significance. The Medrash tells us that, had Reuven known that his saving Yosef would be recorded in the Torah, he would have picked him up on his shoulders and taken him back to Yaakov. Similarly, if Boaz had known that Nach would record the way he cared for Rut, he would have given her a four-course meal. We should recognize that all of our actions – even those that seem insignificant to us – are also recorded and have great significance.

Continued on page 7

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

Return to Righteousness - Recipe for Redeption



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

This week, as Shabbat coincides with Rosh Chodesh, we read the haftarah selection from Yeshayahu 66:1-24 which begins with the eschatological promise of rebuilding a Beit Mikdash for Hashem – “Where could you build a house for Me?” 66:1), predicated on proper sacrifices and sincere atonement. The middle of the haftarah describes Tzion as a pregnant woman, and Hashem as the “midwife” who miraculously and painlessly delivers “the son of Tzion” as an expression of our rebirth and redemption. The milk of consolation that ensues provides sustenance and strength, metaphorically evoking maternal sensitivity of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Yeshayahu then describes the universal ingathering of nations who will be united in recognition of Hashem’s glory and sovereignty as Am Yisrael returns to her homeland “on horses, in chariots and drays, on mules and dromedaries” (66:20). The haftarah reading concludes with the prophecy of these changes as permanent “And new moon after new moon, and Sabbath after Sabbath, All flesh shall come to worship Me” (66:23). Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh, currently celebrated exclusively by the Jewish People, will one day become universal holidays celebrated by all as recognition of Hashem as creator and sustainer of nature.

This Shabbat is also the third in the series of seven haftarot of consolation read after Tisha b’Av – (Yeshayahu 54:11-55:5) – “Aniya so’ara”. Though we read instead from Yeshayahu’s final chapter of prophecy in honor of Rosh Chodesh, we shall nonetheless focus on the consolation offered in the haftarah which we would have

read as part of the calendar series. The first in the series of *haftarot* of consolation turned to the people of Israel with words of encouragement, followed by last week’s haftarah wherein the prophet related to the nation’s claim that Hashem had abandoned them. Similarly, this week’s (potential) haftarah reading offers additional words of consolation following the prophet’s assertion – “O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted”! This lack of comfort stems from the painful rift and alienation sensed between Hashem and His people in times of exile. The suffering that ensues in exile defines Am Yisrael as “poor and afflicted” and therefore, the prophet consoles us this week with promises of ultimate prosperity: *Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of rubies, and your gates of beryl, and all your borders of the choicest stones.* (54:11-12)

Yeshayahu’s prophetic visions of material wealth, including windows and streets paved and plated with precious stones, are meant to instill hope that redemption will surely come in a “rags to riches” manner (either literally or metaphorically). It will not, however, occur automatically; it is conditioned on fulfilling Hashem’s will – *Hearken diligently to Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure loving promises of David.* (55:2-3). In the previous haftarot of consolation, the prophet promised redemption based on an everlasting connection between G-d and Israel and as an expression of historical

and existential consequence of exile. This week’s haftarah, read in a timely fashion the week of *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, introduces redemption through repentance; when man assumes responsibility for his actions and mends his ways, he will be redeemed. Subsequently, when Am Yisrael is properly righteous, then we may confidently stand culturally and religiously triumphant against nations seeking to condemn us.

In addition to appreciating the introduction of repentance as the essential component for redemption post-exile, this week’s annual haftarah reading (i.e. had it not been *Rosh Chodesh*), also shares connections and parshanut for this week’s parasha, *Re’eh*. In the parasha we hear of Am Israel referred to as children: “You are children to the Lord your G-d” (14:1) which reverberates in the haftarah – “And all your children will know G-d, and there will be great peace among your children”(54:13). Additionally, the parasha like the haftarah, elaborates on themes of righteousness, particularly with the indigent in society – one must share food with the the Levi, who does not receive a portion of land (12:12, 12:18, 14:27, 14:29), the poor, the stranger, the orphan and the widow (14:29). We are taught to cancel debts at the end of seven years (15:1-3), open one’s hand to one’s impoverished brother, and provide gifts to the Hebrew man- and maid-servants at the end of their respective period of indenture.

This week’s parashah promises: “And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over

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Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: A friend suggested that I go out with a girl, and now Baruch Hashem we are getting married. Is there a halachic obligation to pay the shadchan?

Answer: In order to tackle this question, we must first understand the rules that apply to intermediaries in business. It is evident that a person must pay an agent when he brokers a deal. But what if someone helps a friend without asking for money and as a result, there is significant monetary gain? Does the one who gained need to pay the friend? The Gemara in Bava Meztyah (101a) deals with such situations. In practice, if the friend helped in a manner which is generally paid for, he must be paid even if no stipulation was made beforehand.

The Shulchan Aruch quotes this ruling in a couple of different contexts, one being in Choshen Mishpat 185. The Rema there writes that a shadchan is viewed as an intermediary and should be paid. Similarly, the Rema in other places implies that the rights the shadchan has towards the money are similar to other monetary rights.

Based on this, the shadchan must be compensated whether or not this was agreed upon from the start, even if this is not a professional shadchan (Shu"t Yaskil Avdi)

The poskim write, however, that we act in accordance with the minhag of the place. Therefore, in a place where there is no minhag to pay the shadchan, there is no



You should always appreciate those who help you, and especially when somebody helps you build your home through finding your spouse.

obligation to do so. There were many Sephardim who did not follow this practice, and that is why the Shulchan Aruch does not write this ruling le'halacha. Nevertheless, there are later Sephardic poskim who do obligate one to pay the shadchan.

The Mahari"l is one of many sefarim which mention the shadchan fee. He writes that most of his living came from setting up marriages. The impression we get from the Mahari"l and many other sefarim is that Am Yisrael placed a great emphasis on the shadchan fee throughout the years. Why was this emphasized so much?

Many times when a person does you a favor, you can evaluate how much effort that person put in. Anytime a person works we must compensate. But this is especially true with shadchanut, when we often do not even know how much work and effort the shadchan invested. For example, a person may not realize that his shadchan thought of tens of different options before finding the right match. Additionally, a person does not always

think about all the conversations the shadchan may have had with both sides along the process. Therefore, the poskim may have emphasized the importance of these payments specifically because it is compensating for efforts which cannot easily be evaluated.

Additionally, lack of compensation often implies a lack of appreciation. You should always appreciate those who help you, and especially when somebody helps you build your home through finding your spouse. Hakarat Hatov is an especially important value when it comes to marriage, as it is the basis for partnership. It is thus fitting to start marriage through showing appreciation to whoever helped arrange it.

There is one more point to add. Am Yisrael has practiced paying the shadchan fee because it helps allow people to put in the time and effort to arrange marriages. Many people of course work on shidduchim without expecting monetary compensation. Without compensation, however, it can be hard to dedicate significant portions of time. People should pay shadchanim generously with the realization that this will encourage and allow shadchanim to continue to look for matches. Perhaps through paying a shadchan one will merit to pave the way for a new home to be built.

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*

Continued from page 3

you"(15:6). In the haftarah we are told that if Israel will repent and follow the will of Hashem, then "I [Hashem] shall make an everlasting covenant with you, the everlasting loving promises of David.

Behold, I have made him a witness to the nations, a leader and commander of nations... and nations that did not know you will run towards you" (55:3-5). Righteousness will provide religious-cultural

supremacy for Am Yisrael, and inspiration for the nations of the world!

Shabbat Shalom & Chodesh tov

תקציר פרשת ראה

הרבנית שרון רימון



לעתים ההבחנה מורכבת ומסובכת, ולכן נביאי ישראל התמודדו לא-פעם עם נבואות שקר מסוגים שונים. אולם, התורה נותנת קריטריון אחד ברור: אם הנביא אומר לעבוד עבודה זרה, סימן שנבואתו נובעת מכחות רוחניים נמוכים ומפורדים, המובילים לעבודה זרה. אדם כזה איננו נביא אמת. לא יתכן שנביא ה' יאמר לעבוד עבודה זרה, שהיא סותרת את כל המהות של האמונה בה'. אולם, יש מקרים מורכבים יותר, בהם אין בהירות לגבי אמינות הנבואה. במקרים אלה יש צורך בהתבוננות מעמיקה של אמונה ואהבת ה' כדי להבחין בין אמת לשקר. ככל שהבהירות הפנימית גדולה יותר, כך תהיה יכולת (לשומעים ואף לנביא עצמו) להבחין בין נבואה מאת ה' לנבואת שקר.

עצם התופעה של נבואת שקר היא ביטוי חיצוני לשאלות שמקורן בחוסר בהירות פנימית. נביא השקר אינו שליח חיצוני הבודק את גבולות הנאמנות, אלא הוא פועל יוצא ממצואות של עולם שמעורבים בו אמת ושקר - מציאות של הסתר פנים.

מקורה הוא אלקי או שמה מקורה בכחות הטומאה ועבודה זרה.

יסודה של האלילות הוא בכוחות המצויים בעולם, הקרויים בפי חז"ל "מזלות" ו"שרי אומות העולם". כשרון הנבואה מאפשר לאדם לחוש בהשפעתם הכבירה של אותם כוחות רוחניים. כך, אנשי הרוח של אומות העולם סיגלו לעצמם את יכולת ההקשבה לאותם כוחות, ונעשו לנביאי עבודה זרה הקוראים לעבוד את המזלות והמלאכים. אולם, כחות אלה עלולים לטעות ולהטעות מאחר והם אינם המקור וההשגה העליונה ביותר.

הכח העליון ביותר, מקור כל הכחות המאחד את כל כולם ושולט בהם הוא הקב"ה. ההשגחה על עם ישראל איננה מתווכת על ידי מלאכים ומזלות או כחות רוחניים אחרים, אלא היא הנהגה ישירה על ידי ה'. לכן גם הנבואה שאליה שואפים ישראל היא נבואה המקבלת את דבר ה' באופן ישיר מפי ה', ולא ע"י כחות נמוכים יותר, העלולים לטעות ולהטעות. התורה מצפה מישראל להצליח להבחין בין נבואה המגיעה מכחות רוחניים נמוכים, לבין נבואה המגיעה ישירות מפי ה'. כיצד נעשית הבחנה כזו?

פרשת ראה, במסגרת אזהרות רבות מפני עבודה זרה, מזהרים בני ישראל שלא לשמוע לנביא האומר להם לעבוד עבודה זרה. אנו רגילים לחשוב ש"נביא" הוא אדם המביא את דבר ה' לעם, ואם כן - איך יתכן שנביא יאמר לעבוד עבודה זרה? ואם הוא איננו מדבר בשם ה', מדוע התורה קוראת לו "נביא"?

התלבטות זו דורשת מאיתנו לערוך בירור במושג הנבואה. נביא הוא אדם בעל כשרון רטורי, ובעל כוח רוחני מיוחד, המסוגל לראות צפונות ונסתרות, ומקורב לה'. מתוך כך הוא קולט את דבר ה' ורצונו, ומעביר אותו אל העם, וכן להפך - הוא מסוגל להתפלל באופן מיוחד, המביא את דברי האדם אל האלקים באופן שיתקבלו.

אולם, התופעה הרוחנית של נבואה קיימת גם במדרגה נמוכה יותר. ישנם אנשים בעלי כח רוחני מיוחד, המסוגלים לדעת צפונות ונסתרות (כגון ידיעת עתידות או ידיעת מעשים של אדם שנעשו בסתר וכדו'), אך הידיעה שלהם איננה מגיעה מתוך קרבת אלקים, אלא מחיבור לכחות רוחניים נמוכים יותר. הפער עלול להיות כה גדול עד שהנביא עצמו איננו יודע מניין קיבל את עוצמתו הרוחנית: האם

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Rebbe's Mishneh In the Tech Age

The Chofetz Chaim used this mishnah to explain the technological developments of the beginning of the 20th century. He commented on the invention of the phonograph that: "Earlier generations more readily believed that G-d sees, hears and records our actions. Unfortunately, in our (his) generation, people have less faith. Therefore, the phonograph had to be created so people could believe in the possibility that G-d is recording our actions and voices."

What does this say about the explosion of recording technology in the hundred year's since then? Maybe we need the reality of knowing that our every move can be observed, heard, and recorded by cameras,

eyes, and satellites to help us believe that Hashem is doing the same.

May the knowledge of the FBI's records help us recognition in Hashem's similar capability and may our focus on this capability keep us far from sin and inspire us to live our lives properly.

● Summarized by Rafi Davis.

1. Chazal (Talmud Bavli, Mesechet Sotah 3a) attribute sin to a 'ruach shtut' (silly spirit) that enters man.
2. The first perek of Avot tracks the *ba'alei hamesorah* all the way down to the generation of Hillel and Shammai. From Hillel and Shammai, the Mishnah moves to Rabban Gamliel, who was not technically the *ba'al mesorah*, but, rather, the son of Hillel. From there, we track by lineage, continuing with Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and continuing down to the heritage of Rabbi Yehudah

HaNasi (known as Rebbi), who lived in the last generation of the Tanna'im. He is chosen to open the second perek of Avot in order to highlight his central role in editing the Mishneh.

3. The fact that tannaim from both ends of the Tannaitic period encourage reflecting upon three things shows the relevance of this model to different historical periods.
4. See Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mezuzah 6:13) who uses tzizit as a model for the mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah. All three mitzvot are meant to help us avoid sin by reminding us of Hashem's presence in our lives.
5. Tehillim 16:8. See Rema who opens his comments on the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 1:1) by describing this pasuk as the great principle of the Torah and personal growth.
6. See the commentary of the Maharal where he explains that Rebbi uses the language of 'I'dei aveirah' to connote the need to keep far away from sin. Once one is caught in the throes of sin, it is hard to separate.

A Path that Leads to Happiness



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

The word “happy” appears seven times in this week’s Torah portion. When we examine these occurrences of the word “happy” we discover that happiness invariably ensues when we give to others or share what we have with them.

Here are two passages that illustrate the point:

“And you shall rejoice in your Festival – you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, who are within your cities”;

“You, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, and the Levite who is in your cities – you shall rejoice before the Lord, your G-d, in all your endeavors.”*

Happiness appears in the presence of the family, the servant, the widow, the stranger, the orphan, and the poor. Happiness comes when we leave the “I” and enter the “We.” There is giving and no taking. Is the search for those in our neighborhood surroundings who are isolated, ill, or in need the path to our own personal happiness?

The parasha shows us a fascinating and unexpected path towards finding happiness. It’s a revolutionary kind of happiness that depends not on our own accomplishments but rather on our concern for others.

■ ■ ■

“There are so many powerful lessons for our lives in the first verse of this week’s Torah portion.” So said Dr. Yaakov Agatstein last year on the occasion of his son Daniel’s Bar Mitzvah.

“Hundreds of times I heard Daniel practice this verse: ‘Look I set before you today a blessing and a curse.’ (Deuteronomy 11:26) Have you noticed how the verse begins? ‘Look’ (Re’eh) is in the singular. G-d is speaking personally to you. You alone are responsible for choosing correctly. From Bar Mitzvah age forward this is especially important: Don’t wait for others and don’t hold them responsible for what you do. You are already an adult.

Later in the verse the word ‘today’ appears. Why today? After all, this verse was spoken thousands of years ago. But every day this choice between a blessing and a curse is given to us. Each day we get a chance to start fresh, from the beginning. Today as well. ‘Look I set before you today a blessing and a curse.’”

■ ■ ■

Today is the 1st of Elul. Many in the Jewish world return to their studies (may you be successful). Beginning tonight, Sephardim will start to say selichot, communal prayers asking for Divine forgiveness. And the sound of the shofar will be heard throughout the month of Elul, its siren call awakening something different in each of us.

I once heard the idea that in the month of Elul we need to turn our attention in two directions that are neglected throughout the year: within and above.

Within – toward self-improvement. Throughout the year, we tend to complain about events and people, whether in the news and or in our own lives. Sometimes the criticism is justified, but now is the time for soul-searching and self-investigation. To check what we – not others – are doing. On the High Holy Days, our declaration is “Ashamnu, bagadnu” (We

have transgressed, we have acted treacherously). It’s about us and no one else.

Above – toward G-d through prayer. The gates of heaven are always open, but this month is considered an especially propitious time to connect with G-d. Last year, the Corona Cabinet announced that “hope is not an action plan.” That is correct, but to every action plan, it is necessary to add hope, optimism, and faith.

Here’s wishing everyone a good month with lots of good news.

■ ■ ■

“The month of Elul is a month of accounting, both materially and spiritually. In order to make sure that a business is running profitably, the owner must draw up a balance sheet every now and then, accounting for profits or successes and losses or deficiencies. This is how the work that a business does is properly evaluated. And so it is in the spiritual work of worshipping Hashem, may He be blessed. All year long everyone is preoccupied with Torah, mitzvot, and character refinement. And then the month of Elul arrives, the month of an honest accounting of the soul. Everything that happened during the year is examined. Spiritual successes are noted and reinforced while spiritual deficiencies are rectified. And by doing this beneficial preparation, all will merit a good and sweet new year, both materially and spiritually.”

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

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For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi
Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“The entire word that I command you that you observe to do, you shall not add to it and you shall not subtract from it” (Devarim 13:1).

This verse contains two prohibitions. First, it is forbidden to add on to that which is commanded in the Torah (e.g. using five species on Sukkot or making Tefillin with five compartments, as opposed to the required four). Second, it is forbidden to subtract from that which is written in the Torah.

The Sefer Ollelot Ephraim (Ma'amar 385, by the author of the Kli Yakar) questions the need for this second prohibition. If we already know that it is forbidden to add to the Torah, how much more so should it be forbidden to take away from it! Furthermore, from the fact that we are required to keep the commandments of the Torah, it is already intrinsically forbidden to reject them. Why do we need a



If we already know that it is forbidden to add to the Torah, how much more so should it be forbidden to take away from it!

separate commandment to tell us what we already know?

The Sefer Ollelot Ephraim, therefore, explains that our verse should not be read as containing two prohibitions, but instead should be understood as a single prohibition, with a consequence - that we should not add on to the Torah SO THAT we will not come to subtracting from it.

Adding to an artisan's creation implies that it was previously lacking. Similarly, adding on to the Torah, by suggesting that the Torah was previously incomplete,

inherently subtracts from it. Once its value has been undermined and the Artisan's ability has been brought into question, the entire system becomes vulnerable and subtraction becomes inevitable. By adding on, we may end up taking away.

Sometimes, more is less. This is especially true when it comes to matters of debate. The passion, desperation or heat of an argument can lead to the development of extreme opinions. Whilst those who take arguments to an extreme may feel that they are significantly strengthening their cause, the reality is that such an approach is counter-productive. Far from attracting others to what may be a just cause, extremism only encourages opposition and polarization.

There are times when we must take strong stances, but we must never lose balance or perspective. By taking our arguments to extremes, we only stand to lose.

Shabbat Shalom!

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ומחנכות (תודה גדולה לכם!) צריך לזכור שהקשר הכי משמעותי בחיים הוא כנראה הקשר הזה – של אבא ואימא עם ילדיהם. בכל הכתבות שעושים עכשיו על "המורים הכי טובים", אין ספק שהמורים הכי משפיעים עלינו הם ההורים. הרי כמעט כל קשר אפשר לנתק. חברות יכולה להסתיים, נישואים יכולים להיגמר בגירושין, חוזה אפשר להפר – אבל קשר של הורות אי אפשר להפסיק בשום אופן. גם אם רבים ולא מסכימים ואומרים דברים חריפים, הורים וילדים לא יכולים לבטל את מה שמחבר ביניהם.

זה קשר כה חזק ועוצמתי ובסיסי, שפרשת השבוע, "ראה", משתמשת בו היום כדימוי לקשר בינינו לבין אלוקים: "בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" נאמר בפרשה. גם בקשר הזה, אם נוצר נתק, גם אם התרחקנו, התבלבלנו, שכחנו מה היעד שלנו – אנחנו תמיד נשארים בניים.

בפרשת השבוע מופיע הפסוק המפורסם: תָּמִים תִּהְיֶה עִם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ. קשה מאוד לשמור בימינו על תום, כנות ופשטות, בלי לעג וציניות, אצלנו וגם אצל ילדינו. הסיפור הזה מזכיר לנו כמה צריך להתאמץ כדי לא לאבד את התמימות.



שנת הלימודים לא מתחילה עכשיו, היא מסתיימת. שנת הלימודים האמיתית מאחורינו. החופש הגדול הוא זמן הלימוד הכי משפיע ומשמעותי, הזמן שבו הילדים לומדים איך החיים האמיתיים נראים – איך ההורים שלהם מדברים, עובדים, נוהגים, מתנהגים בפארק או במלון, ואיך כל העולם הזה שמחוץ לבית הספר מתנהל. ברור, החופש ארוך מדי ולכן מפלס העצבים שלנו שהם נחשפו אליו גדול מדי. היה מתסכל ומרגש, מאתגר ומשמח, מתיש וכיפי. רגע לפני שאנחנו "מפקידים" אותם שוב בידי מחנכים

נהג האוטובוס משה ירט סיפר שפעם עלו לאוטובוס שלו אימא וילדה קטנה. לא היה להן מספיק כסף ברב-קו, והוא הסביר שכדאי להן לרדת בתחנה הקרובה, לטעון את הרב-קו בזול ולהמשיך בנסיעה, במקום לשלם לו מחיר יקר יותר. האימא בתגובה הודתה לו בחום ואמרה: "תודה רבה לך! באמת, תודה רבה!". הילדה שמעה ואמרה לאימא שלה: "אימא, מה הנהג עשה לא בסדר שאת אומרת לו ככה?". האימא לא הבינה: "הוא עזר לנו, אז הודיתי לו". והבת התעקשה: "את אמרת 'תודה רבה לך באמת!', זה מה שאומרים למי שעשה משהו לא בסדר". הנהג הקשיב לשיחה ונדהם. הוא קלט עד כמה הדיבור שלנו הופך להיות ציני. ילדה כל כך צעירה שומעת את המילים "תודה רבה לך באמת", אבל כבר רגילה לשמוע את המשפט הזה בציניות, בסרקזם, כמשהו שנאמר לא כתודה אמיתית, אלא כנזיפה.

The Second Tithe and Strong Societies



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Biblical Israel from the time of Joshua until the destruction of the Second Temple was a predominantly agricultural society. Accordingly, it was through agriculture that the Torah pursued its religious and social programme. It has three fundamental elements.

The first was the alleviation of poverty. For many reasons, the Torah accepts the basic principles of what we now call a market economy. But though market economics is good at creating wealth it is less good at distributing it equitably. Thus the Torah's social legislation aimed, in the words of Henry George, "to lay the foundation of a social state in which deep poverty and degrading want should be unknown."¹

Hence the institutions that left parts of the harvest for the poor: *leket*, *shicheha* and *pe'ah* – fallen ears of grain, the forgotten sheaf, and the corners of the field. There was the produce of the seventh year, which belonged to no-one and everyone, and *ma'aser ani* – the tithe for the poor given in the third and sixth years of the seven-year cycle. *Shmittah* and *Yovel* – the seventh and fiftieth years with their release of debts, manumission of slaves, and the return of ancestral property to its original owners, restored essential elements of the economy to their default position of fairness. So the first principle was: no one should be desperately poor.

The second, which included *terumah* and *ma'aser rishon* – the priestly portion and the first tithe, went to support, respectively, the Priests and the Levites. These were a religious elite within the nation in biblical times with no land of their own, whose role was to ensure that the service of G-d – especially in the Temple – continued at the heart of national life. They had other essential functions, among them education and the administration of justice, as teachers and judges.

The third was more personal and spiritual. There were laws such as the bringing of first-fruits to Jerusalem, and the three pilgrimage festivals – Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot – as they marked seasons in the agricultural year that had to do with driving home the lessons of gratitude and humility. They taught that the land belongs to G-d and we are merely His tenants and guests. The rain, the sun, and the earth itself yield their produce only because of His blessing. Without such regular reminders, societies slowly but inexorably become materialistic and self-satisfied. Rulers and elites forget that their role is to serve the people, and instead they expect the people to serve them. That is how nations at the height of their success begin their decline, unwittingly laying the ground for their defeat.

All this makes one law in our parsha – the law of the Second Tithe – hard to understand. As we noted above, in the third and sixth year of the septennial cycle, this was given to the poor. However, in the first, second, fourth, and fifth years, it was to be taken by the farmers to Jerusalem and eaten there in a state of purity

You shall eat the tithe of your grain, new wine, and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your G-d at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your G-d always. (Deut. 14:23)

If the farmer lived at a great distance from Jerusalem, he was allowed an alternative:

You may exchange the tithe for money. Wrap up the money in your hand, go to the place that the Lord your G-d will choose, and spend the money on whatever you choose: cattle, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever else you wish. (Deut. 14:25-26)

The problem is obvious. The second tithe did not go to poor, or to the priests and Levites, so it was not part of the first or second principle. It may have been part of the third, to remind the farmer that the land belonged to G-d, but this too seems unlikely. There was no declaration, as happened in the case of first-fruits, and no specific religious service, as took place on the festivals. Other than being in Jerusalem, the institution of the second tithe seemingly had no cognitive or spiritual content. What then was the logic of the second tithe?

The Sages,² focussing on the phrase, "so that *you may learn* to revere the Lord your G-d" said that it was to encourage people to study. Staying for a while in Jerusalem while they consumed the tithe or the food bought with its monetary substitute, they would be influenced by the mood of the holy city, with its population engaged either in Divine service or sacred study.³ This would have been much as happens today for synagogue groups that arrange study tours to Israel.

Maimonides, however, gives a completely different explanation.

The second tithe was commanded to be spent on food in Jerusalem: in this way the owner was compelled to give part of it away as charity. As he was not able to use it otherwise than by way of eating and drinking, he must have easily been induced to give it gradually away. This rule brought multitudes together in one place, and strengthened the bond of love and brotherhood among the children of men.⁴

For Maimonides, the second tithe served a social purpose. It strengthened civil society. It created bonds of connectedness and friendship among the people. It encouraged visitors to share the blessings of the harvest with others. Strangers would meet and become friends. There would

be an atmosphere of camaraderie among the pilgrims. There would be a sense of shared citizenship, common belonging, and collective identity. Indeed Maimonides says something similar about the festivals themselves:

The use of keeping festivals is plain. Man derives benefit from such assemblies: the emotions produced renew the attachment to religion; they lead to friendly and social intercourse among the people.⁵

The atmosphere in Jerusalem, says Maimonides, would encourage public spiritedness. Food would always be plentiful, since the fruit of trees in their fourth year, the tithe of cattle, and the corn, wine, and oil of the second tithe would all have been brought there. They could not be sold and they could not be kept for the next year; therefore much would be given away in charity, especially (as the Torah specifies) to “the Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow.” (Deut. 14:29)

Writing about America in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville found that he had to coin a new word for the phenomenon he encountered there and saw as one of the dangers in a democratic society. The word was *individualism*. He defined it as “a mature and calm feeling which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends,” leaving “society at large to itself.”⁶ Tocqueville believed that democracy encouraged individualism. As a result, people would leave the business of the common good entirely to the government, which would become ever more powerful, eventually threatening freedom itself.

It was a brilliant insight. Two recent examples illustrate the point. The first was charted by Robert Putnam, the great Harvard sociologist, in his study of Italian towns in the 1990s.⁷ During the 1970s all Italian regions were given local government on equal terms, but over the next twenty years, some prospered, others stagnated; some had effective governance and economic growth, while others were mired in corruption and underachievement. The key difference, he found, was

the extent to which the regions had an active and public-spirited citizenry.

The other example focuses on the “free-rider” attitude. It is often tempting to take advantage of public facilities without paying your fair share (for example, travelling on public transport without paying for a ticket: hence the term “free rider”). You then obtain the benefit without bearing a fair share of the costs. When this happens, trust is eroded and public spiritedness declines. This is illustrated in an experiment known as the “free rider game,” designed to test public spiritedness within a group. We mentioned this study earlier in this year’s series, in parshat Ki Tissa.

In the game, as you may recall, each of the participants is given a certain amount of money, and then invited to contribute to a common pot, which is then multiplied and returned in equal parts to the players. So, for example, if each contributes \$10, each will receive \$30. However, if one player chooses not to contribute anything, then if there are six players, there will be \$50 in the pot and \$150 after multiplication. Each of the players will then receive \$25, but one will now have \$35: the money from the pot plus the \$10 which they originally received.

When played over several rounds, the other players soon notice that not everyone is contributing equally. The unfairness causes the others to contribute less to the shared pot. The group suffers and no one gains. If, however, the other players are given the chance to punish the suspected cheat by paying a dollar to make them forfeit three dollars, they tend to do so. The experiment demonstrates that there is always a potential conflict between self-interest and the common good. When individuals only act for themselves, the group suffers. When the free-riders stop acting selfishly, everyone benefits.

As I was writing about this in 2015, the Greek economy was in a state of collapse. Years earlier, in 2008, an economist, Benedikt Herrmann, had tested people in different cities throughout the world to see whether there were geographical and cultural variations in the way people played the free rider game. He found that in places

like Boston, Copenhagen, Bonn, and Seoul, voluntary contributions to the common pot were high. They were much lower in Istanbul, Riyadh, and Minsk, where the economy was less developed. But they were lowest of all in Athens, Greece. What is more, when players in Athens penalised the free riders, those penalised did not stop free-riding. Instead they took revenge by punishing their punishers.⁸ The conclusion drawn was that where public spiritedness is low, society fails to cohere and the economy fails to grow.

Hence the brilliance of Maimonides’ insight that the second tithe existed to create social capital, meaning bonds of trust and reciprocal altruism among the population, which came about through sharing food with strangers in the holy precincts of Jerusalem. Loving G-d helps make us better citizens and more generous people, thus countering the individualism that eventually makes democracies fail.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What justification do you think people sometimes give for acting as free-riders?
- What issues do you think free-riding causes to society as a whole?
- Do you agree with Rambam’s theory that gently encouraging additional charitable-giving allows societies to strengthen as a whole?

1. “Moses: Apostle of Freedom” (address first delivered to the Young Men’s Hebrew Association of San Francisco, June 1878).
2. Sifrei ad loc. A more extended version of this interpretation can be found in the Sefer ha-Chinnuch, command 360.
3. See also *Tosafot*, Baba Batra 21a, s.v. *Ki MitZion*.
4. *The Guide for the Perplexed* III:39.
5. *Ibid*, III:46.
6. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Book II, ch. 2.
7. Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993.
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Yerushalayim Was Not Divided



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

The Parsha speaks about building the Beis HaMikdash in a specific location: “the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose from among all your tribes” (Devarim 12:5). The Sifrei understands that the connotation of מכל שבטיכם is that the area upon which the Beis HaMikdash is built should belong to all of the shevatim.

According to one opinion, Yerushalayim was also divided among the shevatim in the same way that all of Eretz Yisrael was, and Yerushalayim was given to the members of the shevatim of Yehudah and Binyamin. It is considered to belong to all the shevatim because at a later point, Dovid HaMelech purchased, with communal funds, the area of the future Beis HaMikdash from these shevatim (Zevachim 116b).

However, the accepted opinion is that Yerushalayim was not apportioned among the shevatim from the very outset, and the Beis HaMikdash is therefore on a site that is מכל שבטיכם.

The Gemara in Zevachim (53b) says that the southeast corner of the mizbe'ach had no yesod (base). This was because there was a strip of land that projected out from Yehudah's portion into that of Binyamin, as the boundary between the territories of shevet Yehudah and shevet Binyamin cut across the azarah of the Beis HaMikdash at that exact spot. No area of the mizbe'ach could be in Yehudah's portion, only in Binyamin's portion.

The Maharsha (Chiddushei Aggados) explains the reason for this rule. The crown of royalty is connected to Beis Dovid, which descends from shevet Yehudah. There must be a separation between the institution of the government, the

kesser malchus, and the avodah in the Beis HaMikdash, the kesser kehunah, which must function independently, without being under the control of the king.

Tosfos asks a fundamental question. If the accepted opinion is that Yerushalayim was not divided among the shevatim, then it belonged to all of Klal Yisrael. If so, the mizbe'ach, and all of Yerushalayim for that matter, were not in the portion of Binyamin or Yehudah, and there should have been no need to make any adjustment in its construction!

The Soloveitchik family related the following answer, which presumably originated with Rav Chaim. Regarding the chalukah (division) of Eretz Yisrael amongst the shevatim, there are “tzvei dinim” (two principles) that must be considered. First, upon division of the land, the area given to each shevet was labeled, halachically, as the chelek (portion) of that particular shevet. This aspect of the chalukah was in the realm of issur veheter (ritual law, that which is forbidden or permitted), as the seven-year chalukah constituted the conclusion of the previous seven-year kibbush of the land, which is what was mekadesh Eretz Yisrael in the days of Yehoshua bin Nun (Kesubos 25a).

However, the chalukah of Eretz Yisrael entailed an additional aspect – that each shevet was given ownership of its particular chelek. This was in the realm of dinei mammonos (monetary matters), in the same way that a yerushah in the state of tefusas habayis is divided among the various individual inheritors.

The distinction between these two aspects of the chalukah of the land is illustrated by a comment of the Ra'avad cited by Rav Chaim. The Ra'avad holds that the

chalukah of the land to the shevatim was carried out by means of the urim vetumim. On the other hand, the subsequent chalukah of a shevet's portion among the various families within that shevet was performed by means of a mere goral. The rationale behind this distinction is that the purely monetary division to confer ownership to individual families, as would be carried out between two partners, could be done via a simple goral. However, the chalukah to the shevatim, which completed the mitzvah of kibbush ha'Aretz in the realm of issur veheter, thereby sanctifying the land, required the use of the miraculous urim vetumim.

The second aspect of the chalukah, to confer monetary ownership of the land to the shevatim, did not affect the halachic status of these sections. In fact, monetary ownership (aside from hekdesh ownership) never creates an intrinsic change in an object; it merely causes an extrinsic change, a relationship between the object and its owner.

The halachic status of the land, labelling a section as the chelek of a particular shevet, was determined solely by the first aspect of the chalukah. After the chalukah to the shevatim, the chelek of Yehudah took on a status of its own for the purpose of ibbur hashanah, and the chelek of Binyamin took on a status of its own for the purpose of building the mizbe'ach. Thus, an adjustment to the construction of the mizbe'ach was necessary to ensure that it be placed only in the chelek of Binyamin.

We may now answer the question of Tosfos. When we rule ירושלים לא נתחלקה לשבטים, we refer to the dinei mammonos facet of the chalukah – that the shevatim of Binyamin and Yehudah never received ownership of Yerushalayim.

Continued on next page

We Create Our Own Reality



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

One of the more famous Pesukim in the Torah is found in this week's Parsha, "וְנָתַתְּ לָךְ רַחֲמִים וְרַחֲמֶיךָ", that Hashem says that He will give the Jewish people רחמים. The Gemara in Shabbas brings down the concept of "כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמין עליו מן השמים, וכל שאינו מרחם על הבריות אין מרחמין עליו מן השמים."

Hashem says that anyone who has רחמים on His creations, then Hashem will display רחמים to that person, and one who does not display רחמים to His creations, Hashem will not treat that person with רחמים. The אור החיים makes a point here, in line with his opinion in many other places in Chumash, that a person has the ability to create his own reality. If a person lives as a cruel person, then he creates a world of cruelty that he is living in, then naturally Hashem will act towards that person with cruelty. However, if a person lives as a merciful person, with the trait of רחמים, then the world that he has created is that of רחמים, and therefore Hashem will act the same way towards that person.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz takes this idea and applies it to Davening as well. Our entire Davening is asking Hashem to have רחמנות on us, to answer our Tefilot and treat us with mercy. "כרחם אב על בנים", the same

way a father has mercy on his children, so too we are asking Hashem to treat us with mercy. Therefore, Rav Shmulevitz says that as an עצה, advice, to allow us to be answered is to gird ourselves with the מידה of רחמנים. To think about other people when we Daven. To give Tzedakah when someone comes around to collect during Davening. To create a world that is entrenched with רחמנים, and thereby allow Hashem to answer our Davening with רחמים.

With this understanding, Rav Moshe Feinstein explains something that is very difficult to understand in ב שמואל, namely Dovid's attitude towards Avshalom. Avshalom rebels against his father Dovid, and does a lot of very improper things towards Dovid. He runs after him to try to kill him, and treats the wives of Dovid improperly. Yet, after all of that, we still find that when Avshalom is killed, Dovid cries and says "בני אבשלום, בני בני אבשלום". In fact, Yoav gets upset at Dovid for mourning so much over the loss of Avshalom. So many people had risked their lives to save Dovid from the rebellion of Avshalom, and now all of a sudden when Avshalom was killed, Dovid starts mourning? Yet, Rav Moshe explains based on the same point that we discussed

before. The job of a person is to create an aura of רחמים around him, a sense of true mercy. We ask Hashem to have treat us with רחמים like "כרחם אב על בנים" even if we do not deserve it, but to do so we have to create a reality of רחמים like "כרחם אב על בנים", and allow Hashem to relate towards us within that reality that we have created. Therefore, what better moment for Dovid to do so than having a child that is totally not deserving of רחמים, but nevertheless treating him with רחמים. Avshalom did not deserve the mercy of Dovid, yet Dovid nonetheless acted with mercy towards him, and therefore created a reality of רחמים אב על בנים around him.

This is a tremendous recommendation for us as we head in to the month of Elul. We are praying to awaken the רחמים from Hashem for ourselves and for all of ישראל. Yet, to do that we must first start living within a world of רחמים, a world where we are merciful to others. We must first become people that are מרחם to others, and then we can ask to be מעורר רחמי שמים on the Jewish people. Then we can fulfill the phrase of "כל המרחם על הבריות, מרחמין עליו מן השמים".

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

Continued from previous page

Therefore, when it comes to monetary matters, one who lived in a house in Yerushalayim was unable to charge rent for the house, because he was not really its owner. However, in reference to the issur veheter facet of the chalukah, all of Eretz Yisrael, including Yerushalayim, had

to be included in the division. After all, this chalukah is what completed the kibbush ha'Aretz, endowing the land with its kedushas ha'Aretz. As such, even though it is true that ירושלים לא נתחלקה לשבטים, it is still accurate to consider the mizbe'ach to have been built in the chelek of Binyamin,

since half of Yerushalayim was labeled as the chelek of Binyamin and the other half was labeled as the chelek of Yehudah.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha.

Our Annual Wake-Up Call



Colonel Rabbi Menachem Sebbag
Chief Rabbi to the Dutch Armed Forces

The alarm clock must be the most annoying gadget ever invented. Luckily though, the inventors were also smart enough to create the snooze button! That irritating beep, growing louder and louder, forcing us away from the soft clouds of sleep can be simply stopped by swinging left or right and enjoying the resulting silence.

We've all been there. Half-awake. Knowing that a new day is about to begin but trying to delay it just a little longer. Knowing you've hit snooze but that your clock will scream any minute. Wanting to cherish those last moments of tranquility, of not being completely in tune with reality. Slowly you become aware of other sounds - birds chirping, cars rushing by, children playing... but it's all still a little vague. Then that shrill howl again. Again the swinging left. Again the silence. We just need a little more time...

We are beginning Elul, followed by the High Holidays: Rosh Hashanah, followed by the 10 days of repentance and culminating in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On Rosh Hashanah, we fulfill the commandment of blowing the shofar, but interestingly enough, not for the first time. We are beginning to blow the shofar every day of the month, the month of Elul.

Elul in Jewish tradition is understood as an acronym for a verse in the Song of Songs, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine - אני לדודי ודודי לי," with the first letters spelling אלול in Hebrew. This hints that Elul is a time of love and connection, an opportunity for a renewed relationship with G-d. The shofar blast is meant to trigger self-reflection, so that we can forge a stronger connection with G-d.



You can only become balanced if you are spiritually awake. If you are still spiritually sleeping during the days of repentance, you are much too late.

Rambam famously emphasizes this:¹

"Despite the fact that the blowing of the ram's horn on Rosh Hashanah is an explicit decree in the Scripture, it is also a crying out, as if to say: 'Awake, O you sleepers, awake from your sleep! O you slumberers, awake from your slumber! Search your deeds and turn in repentance. Remember your Creator, O you who forget the truth in the vanities of time and go astray all the year after vanity and folly that neither profit nor save. Look to your souls, and better your ways and actions. Let every one of you abandon his evil way and his wicked thought...'"

Would it not make more sense to keep blowing the shofar throughout the 10 days of repentance and Yom Kippur? Surely the trigger for self-reflection is needed most when we are trying hardest to renew the spiritual bonds and balance our lives. The balance between the urgent and the important. The urgency of making a living or the importance of living. The urgency of closing the deal or the importance of spending more time with our children. The urgency of corporate investment and the importance of spiritual investment.

You can only become balanced if you are spiritually awake. If you are still spiritually sleeping during the days of repentance, you are much too late. This is the time to work. To stand before G-d and ask ourselves the ultimate question: what have I done this past year that has been worthwhile? Did I waste time or did I share it, with my faith, with G-d, with those in need? Knowing that none of us will live forever, this is the time to ask G-d for another year. To grow, to share and to give.

The shofar is our G-d-given alarm clock. Warning us not to slumber through life. Throughout Elul we press snooze and slowly awaken to spiritual reality. Its purpose is to completely wake us up in time for Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah we hear the final awakening that has us standing, awake and fully aware that there is work to do! That shrill cry of the shofar is meant to tune out the static of our dreams and escort us into the reality of life, to hear the sounds of heaven. It is now the work begins. It is now we begin to live!

May the Almighty bless us, our families, the State of Israel and all peoples of the world with a state of spiritual awakenedness all year round, and may He write us all in the Book of Life.

1. Hilchot Teshuva 3.

Tzedakah – Twice the Charm!



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

In Parshat Re'eh we encounter the mitzvah of Tzedakah. It is interesting to note that twice the Torah uses double language in connection with this mitzvah:

First we are instructed: לֹכֵחַ פֶּתַח תִּפְתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ – “you shall open your hand to him” – the double language of “*patoach tiftach*” is used. (Devarim 15:8).

Then after warning that one should not withhold supporting the underprivileged as the shmita year nears (appropriate to us as it is a *shmita year*) – the Torah reiterates (Devarim 15:10): נָתַחַן תִּתֵּן לוֹ – “You shall surely give him”, again using the double language of “*naton titen*”. What is the significance of this double language?

During the summer months, there is a custom to learn *Pirkei Avot*. In Chapter 3:15 it states:

הַכֹּל צְפוּי, וְהָרְשׁוּת נְתוּנָה, וּבְטוֹב הָעוֹלָם נִדוֹן, וְהַכֹּל לְפִי רֹב הַמַּעֲשֵׂה.

All is foreseen, and freedom of choice is granted. The world is judged with goodness, **but in accordance with the amount of man's positive deeds**. The last clause emphasizes that the **quantity** of our positive deeds is significant.

This is a concept that is referenced by many and cited by the *Sefer Hachinuch*



By repeating the act of giving, the trait of generosity becomes embedded into our personality.

on several occasions – stressing that אַחֲרֵי הַפְּעוּלוֹת נִמְשָׁכִים הַלְּבוּבוֹת – our heart follows our actions. In other words, it is crucial to conduct ourselves in a certain manner, as our conduct influences our attitude and belief. When we repeat certain activities, they become innate within us. For example, the *Chinuch* (mitzvah 16) explains that it is prohibited to break a bone while eating the korban Pesach, because eating in such a manner is not befitting of nobility and we ought to conduct ourselves in a dignified manner. If we act like an animal, it will impact our behavior.

The Rambam in *Perush Mishnayot on Avot*, applies the imperative of *Tzedakah* to the lesson taught above regarding quantity of deeds. The Rambam posits that it is preferable to donate one gold coin to a

thousand individuals rather than to contribute one thousand gold coins to one single individual. By repeating the act of giving, the trait of generosity becomes embedded into our personality.

Based on this Rambam, the L'hitaneg B'tanugim suggests that the repetitive language of *naton titen* and *patoach tiftach* is to indicate that the more one engages in the act of charity the more significant the impact on the giver. He relays a story in which Rav Chaim Friedlander visited Rav Schach and informed the Rav that he was very ill and his days were numbered. Rav Friedlander inquired as to how to spend his remaining time – studying Torah or working on his *midot*. Rav Schach replied that he should focus on improving his *midot*. If that was the instruction to Rav Friedlander who was the mashgiach of Ponoveitz and the prize talmid of Rav Dessler, then we ought to focus a bit more on our *midot*.

As the Yamim Noraim are around the corner, it is time to place more of an emphasis on our *midot*. To try to engage to an even greater degree in the performance of *hesed* and *mitzvot* so that we can engrain positive attributes within our personality.

Seeing the Good



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

At the beginning of this week's parsha, Parshas Re'eh, Moshe says to Bnei Yisrael: *See, I am setting before you, on this day, blessings and curses* (Devarim 11:26).

While there are *shivim panim la'Torah* and many interpretations of each word, phrase, and *pasuk* in the Torah, the following insight is relevant to each and every one of us, at each and every age and stage. With so many challenges, struggles and questions in life, sometimes it becomes difficult to remember to count our blessings and focus on the good that we have.

As King David instructs and exhorts us, with his wisdom and faith: *Who is the man who desires life, who loves days? One who sees the good* (Tehilim 34:13). The key to living a life of well-lived and loving days is to be a person who focuses, not on what is lacking, but on what is present and blessed.

Commenting on the first verse of the parsha, Rabbi Yissocher Frand writes, "Quirks in the grammar of the Torah's verses hold many lessons for us. Moshe tells the Jewish people, 'See (*re'eh*), I am setting before you (*lifneichem*), on this day, blessings and curses.' The word *re'eh* is in the singular form of the verb (*lashon yachid*), but the preposition of *lifneichem* is plural (*lashon rabim*). Why the discrepancy and inconsistency?"

"Furthermore, why was it necessary to preface the gift with the word 'see'? If you give someone a present, is it necessary to tell him, 'Look, I am giving you a present'? Is it necessary to point out the obvious?"

"The answer is that blessings are not always so obvious. If we don't make an effort to 'see' them, to perceive them, we may not even be aware that we have been blessed. If we think about it, life is full of blessings. In fact, life itself is the greatest blessing. But we take all these things for granted and do not realize how blessed we are. Therefore,

the Torah reminds us to 'see' the blessings Hashem has given us.

"The Kotzker Rebbe *zt'l* (1787-1859) points out that blessings can be given collectively to many people, but each individual will perceive it in his own way, depending on his own particular personality and outlook. Blessings can be universal, but the perception of them is always individual. Therefore, when Hashem tells us to 'see' He uses the singular form, but the placement of the blessing is expressed in the plural" (Rabbi Frand on the Parashah, p.262-263).

Perhaps it is human nature to focus more on what we lack than what we have. However, if we but stop and contemplate the grandeur of the world around us, the great gift of life itself, the workings of the human mind and body, and the privilege of being part of *Am Yisrael*, perhaps then we would truly 'see' all the blessings spread out before us.

Miriam Peretz is a well-known Israeli woman, mother and spokesperson and the face of many Israeli families who have lost sons in battle R"L. Miriam lost two sons in the IDF; her son Uriel (age 22 years) fell in 1998 in battle with Hezbollah in the north, and her son Eliraz (age 31 years) fell in 2010 in battle with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, HY"D. Between the loss of her first and second son, her husband Eliezer a'h died at the age of 56 years old, which Miriam attributes to a broken heart. And yet... incredibly, this woman of valor lives a life of: *רְאֵה אֶנְכִי נֹחֵת לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ* - recognizing and counting her blessings, and noting the constant presence of G-d in her life.

Miriam powerfully relates, "In the past few years, I have held a constant dialogue with G-d. I discover His mercy in every step of my life, in every angle and situation. On Rosh Hashana eve, I was slicing meat and I almost cut off my finger. At the last second, the knife fell from my hand. I lifted my eyes

from the sink, looked through the window to the skies, and said to G-d: 'Thanks for thinking of me. Thanks for having mercy on me, for permitting me to stand in synagogue this Rosh Hashana without a bandage on my hand. I could have been seriously hurt, but at this crucial moment, You were here with me. Thanks for your kindness to me.'

"There's nothing worse than losing two sons. Yet I, who experienced the worst that could possibly happen, am busy all day long finding G-d's kindnesses. One day I decided to do an exercise. I took a piece of paper and drew two columns. At the top of the first, I wrote 'List of my complaints to G-d,' and for the second, 'List of G-d's kindnesses.' The first list was short: Uriel, Eliezer and Eliraz were taken from me before their time. The second list was practically endless: my daughter Bat-El got married, little Gili danced and sang at their wedding, Uriel's friend came to visit, my daughter-in-law Shlomit invited me to spend Shabbat at their home, despite a slipped disc in my back I can still go up the stairs and climb up to my children's graves, I can open my eyes, stand on my feet, enjoy the blossoming of the trees, laugh with my rambunctious grandchildren - and the list goes on and on.

"My dance with G-d has become a daily event. I feel a deep connection to Him. I get up from bed after a sleepless night, I see the sun in the window and say, 'Thanks for what I have right now.' Not for the good that might come tomorrow or the next day, but for now. I say, 'Thanks, G-d, for not forgetting me, for never being too busy for me. You're always available to listen to my pain'" (Miriam's Song, p.375-376).

May we always be blessed with many blessings, and may we have the courage, humility, foresight and *hakaras ha'tov* (recognition of the good), to realize and appreciate all the *brachos* that G-d showers upon us.

HaMakom Asher Yivchar Hashem



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

When we speak of Jerusalem, we usually relate to either one of its two aspects: its geographic location or its function as the national center of the Jewish Nation

Surprisingly enough, Chumash never mentions its specific name nor its precise location. However, its concept – the national center of the Jewish Nation – emerges as a central theme in Sefer Dvarim.

“These are the ‘chukim and mishpatim’ which you must observe in the land which Hashem is giving you...:

- You must totally destroy all the sites where the nations worshipped their idols...on the high hills and mountains...you must **eradicate their names** from this place.
- **Do not worship your G-d in this manner** (in multiple places of worship – read carefully!).
- Rather, **at the site which G-d will choose** – ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem – amongst all your tribes, **lasum et shmo sham** – “I’shichno ti’drshu u’bata shama”
- **There** you must bring all of your offerings and tithes etc. Eat and rejoice there in front of your Lord...
- ...After you cross the Jordan and enter the Land and find rest from your enemies and enjoy security, then – **ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem l’shakeyn shmo sham** – bring **there** everything I command...
- Be careful not to offer your sacrifices anywhere that you want, rather at **ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem,**

only **there** may you bring your offerings...”

Note that the first commandment – to destroy all places of idol worship in order to eradicate the **names** of other gods from your land – serves as a ‘pre-requisite’ for the commandments which follow – to establish a central **location where G-d’s name will dwell**. Thus, the primary topic of this opening parsha is Bnei Yisrael’s obligation to transform Eretz Canaan into a land in which G-d’s Name (i.e. reputation) becomes recognized. This is accomplished not only by ridding the land of the names of **other** gods, but also by establishing a national religious center – **ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem l’shakein shmo sham** – that will facilitate the dissemination of the Name of G-d.

Not only is **‘ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem’** repeated several times in the opening parsha, but this phrase is also mentioned some **twenty** times throughout the entire **chukim and mishpatim** section of the main speech.

Thus, this location – **ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem** – is much more than the place for the offering of “korbanot.” It is to evolve as the National Center of the Jewish people.

What is the purpose of this center? How does it function?

These mitzvot pertaining to this site, when performed properly, help shape our national character as G-d’s special nation. The establishment of this center, and the obligation of every individual to frequent this site, ensure the unity of both the people and the religion. Without such a center, within several generations we would likely break down into twelve different religions, rather than twelve tribes.

Sefer Dvarim never specifies the precise, geographic location of this site, i.e. the specific location for the construction of the Bet HaMikdash. The site is referred to as simply, “the place that God will choose” (“ha’makom asher yivchar Hashem”).

Parshat Re’ay does, however, offer us a hint – however subtle – as to how we are to identify this site: “I’shichno ti’drshu, u’bata shama” (12:5).

G-d will show us the site only if and when **we** look for it. This ‘hide and seek’ type relationship is reflective of every Divine encounter. God is found only by those who **search** for him. Just as this principle applies on the individual level, it applies on the national level, as well. Only when Am Yisrael, as a nation, begins a serious search for G-d will G-d show them the appropriate means for His symbolic residence among them.

The generation of Yehoshua did not succeed in establishing the permanent Mikdash after conquering the Land. Instead, they erected the temporary structure, the Mishkan, in Shiloh. There it remained, generally neglected, throughout the period of the Judges. Shiloh itself was eventually destroyed by the Philistim during the time of Eli and Shmuel. [See Shmuel I, ch. 4.] In the meantime, the Mishkan and the “aron” wandered from one location to the next. It was only during the reigns of David and Shlomo that Bnei Yisrael actively aspired to build the Mikdash.

One of David’s first initiatives upon assuming the throne was to gather the nation in order to bring the “aron” (the holy ark) to the capital city. David Ha’melech observes that the nation had neglected the “aron” during the generation of Shaul. For King David, however, bringing the “aron” to

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The Real Wealth



Rabbi Eli Mansour

Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

The Torah in Parashat Re'eh presents the Misva of Ma'aser Sheni, which required farmers in Eretz Yisrael to bring one-tenth of their produce to Jerusalem and eat it there in the city. They also had the option of transferring the Kedusha of the Ma'aser Sheni onto money and bringing the money to Jerusalem where they would use it to purchase food which they would then eat. The Torah says that the purpose of this Misva is “Lema'an Tilmad Le'yir'a Et Hashem Elokecha” – so that the people would learn Yir'at Shamayim, fear of Hashem.

How does this Misva engender Yir'at Shamayim? Why would someone achieve a keener spiritual awareness by eating a portion of his produce in Jerusalem?

The Sefer Ha'hinuch explains that this Misva brought one Yir'at Shamayim by compelling him to spend time in the holy city of Jerusalem. The person had to eat the entire tithe in Jerusalem, and thus had to spend several days, or perhaps a week or two, in the city. Jerusalem was the site of the Bet Ha'mikdash and of the Sanhedrin, which consisted of the nation's seventy-one leading sages. When visiting Jerusalem, one had the opportunity to see the service in the Mikdash, spend time with the Kohanim, and bask in the environment of Torah and Kedusha that permeated the city. This experience had an effect. A person would not leave Jerusalem without absorbing some of the holiness of the city, and this would lead him toward higher levels of Yir'at Shamayim.

This command of Ma'aser Sheni begins with the words, “Aser Te'aser.” The Talmud,



How does this Misva engender Yir'at Shamayim? Why would someone achieve a keener spiritual awareness by eating a portion of his produce in Jerusalem?

in a famous passage, notes the seemingly redundant expression and explains it to mean, “Aser Bishbil She'tit'asher” – “Give a tenth in order that you will be wealthy.” This is generally understood as referring to the Misva of “Ma'aser Kesafim,” donating one-tenth of one's earnings to charity, in the merit of which one earns wealth. Indeed, I personally know several community members who became wealthy once they began making a point of donating one-tenth of their earnings to charity. But we can arrive at a much deeper meaning of the Gemara's comment once we realize that this Pasuk is written in reference to Ma'aser Sheni. The Pasuk is saying that one should observe this Misva in order to acquire the real “wealth” – Yir'at Shamayim. This is the true fortune to which all of us should aspire – closeness with G-d, a keen awareness of His presence, and a desire to perform His will. We must observe the Misva of Ma'aser Sheni in order to achieve this inestimable treasure.

Although we cannot observe the actual Misva of Ma'aser Sheni nowadays, we can and must observe the general message conveyed by this Misva, by placing ourselves in an environment of Kedusha.

The Misva of Ma'aser Sheni is predicated upon the basic premise that people are affected by their surroundings. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that we can live in places without a strong Torah presence and somehow retain our connection to Torah. We are affected by our environment, and it is therefore imperative for ourselves and our children to live not in the place where we can earn the most money or enjoy the best luxuries, but in a place with a strong religious community and Torah foundation.

To its immense credit, our community has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to build a phenomenal religious infrastructure – synagogues, yeshivot, Mikvaot, adult education programs, and so on. Our parents and grandparents understood the necessity of a Torah atmosphere, that the “fortune” of Yir'at Shamayim is earned through the Misva of Ma'aser Sheni, by placing ourselves in an environment of holiness, and they worked tirelessly to create such an environment. It is crucial that we continue this legacy by continuing to avail ourselves of this infrastructure and continuing to maintain it. A person should never think that he can bring his family to some remote location and they will somehow manage to preserve their religious commitment. The “wealth” of Yir'at Shamayim requires an environment of Torah, as it is only in such an environment that we and our children can withstand the secular influences that abound and further develop our connection to Hashem and His Torah.

Search Required



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

Instead of specifying the place where the Beis Hamikdash would be built, the Torah repeatedly says that the Beis Hamikdash shall be in “the place Hashem your G-d will choose.” This phrase is used no less than sixteen times in this week’s parsha alone. According to our Sages, this is why the Beis Hamikdash is called “בית הבחירה, The House of Choice.”

But why is the location of the Beis Hamikdash treated by the Torah as such a mystery? It is clear from Chazal that Hashem designated the future location of the Beis Hamikdash from the beginning of time, even carving out the site of the alter and canals for the wine libations at the time of the six days of creation (Sukkah 49a). The Rambam (Beis Habechira 2:2) teaches that:

There is a tradition maintained by everyone that the place where Dovid and Shlomo built the alter is the same place where Avraham built an alter and bound Yitzchak, the same place where Noach built [an alter] when he left the ark. It is the [location of] the alter on which Kayin and Hevel offered sacrifices, and on which Adam sacrificed an offering when he was created, and Adam was created from that place. The sages say, “Man was formed from the place of his atonement.”

The answer to our question lies in the very same pasuk we started with. In order to find the location of the Beis Hamikdash, “you shall seek Him there at His dwelling.” We must seek it out. As the Midrash (Sifri) says, commenting on the pasuk, “Seek and you shall find it. And afterward, the prophet will tell you [that it is the correct spot].” Expanding on the Ramban on the same pasuk, the Malbim says: “This teaches them that Hashem will not reveal the chosen place through

His prophets until they make an effort and seek it out. Then, [Hashem] will pour a spirit from above upon them after the appropriate preparation...” Along these lines, the Chasam Sofer (Resp. Yoreh Deah 234) teaches that the location of the Beis Hamikdash was “hidden until [Hashem] illuminated their eyes in the days of Dovid Hamelech.”

Dovid wrote about himself (Tehillim 118:22), “The stone despised by the builders became the cornerstone.” It became the very foundation of the entire Beis Hamikdash. Even after Shmuel Hanavi told Yishai that one of his sons would be the next anointed king and excluded all of Dovid’s other brothers, it still never even occurred to his father and brothers that Dovid could possibly be the anointed one (Shmuel I 16:6-11). Yet Dovid, the “stone despised by the builders,” became the cornerstone, the beginning of a new dynasty to which Moshiach himself would eventually trace his lineage.

Dovid said (Tehillim 42:8), “All of Your breakers and waves passed over me.” He went through so much suffering. Chazal even discuss (see Yevamos 77a-b) whether Dovid was allowed to marry into the Jewish people! Dovid certainly knew what it meant to feel “unchosen” and what it meant to seek, work, long, pray, and toil until he found his place in the Jewish people. Hashem therefore chose him to clearly reveal the location of the Beis Hamikdash and build its foundation. Dovid Hamelech represented the pinnacle of choice, the highest fulfillment of our obligation to “seek Him there at His dwelling and come there.”

All Dovid Hamelech sought was the place where Hashem’s presence could be felt on a permanent basis in this world. He

conducted his investigation by indefatigably searching through the streets and markets of Yerushalayim, looking for clues, comparing each location to maps and psukim, trying to find the exact location of the alter and the Holy of Holies. That is why Hashem answered his prayers and rewarded his search with success. Hashem chose the place where we chose Him (ibid. at 13-14), “For Hashem has chosen Zion, He desired it for a dwelling-place. This is My resting place forever, here I shall dwell, for I desired it.”

It is the same now. We may know the location of the Beis Hamikdash but strangers defile it every single day and we cannot rebuild. Vile terrorists fire rockets at Yerushalayim and Jews all over Eretz Yisroel. So we continue to daven for the Beis Hamikdash, to seek it out. As the Tiferes Shlomo says, “Even if we know this place, that it is in Yerushalayim, and that no other place will be chosen, nevertheless, it is still impossible to build [the Beis Hamikdash] there until Hashem chooses our prayers and desires ‘from all of your tribes,’ that they are worthy that it should be built for them and that Hashem should cause His presence to dwell among them.”

We may know where the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt, but there is so much impurity standing in the way and the right time has not yet arrived. In fulfillment of the pasuk, “you shall seek Him there at His dwelling,” we must daven and hope for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash constantly.

The Complainer



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

“**T**his week’s portion Reah repeats G-d’s “Kosher List,” of mammals, fish and birds, suitable for Jewish consumption. In the category of birds, the Torah enumerates twenty-four species of birds which are not kosher. One of them is called by three names – the Raah, Dayah and Ayah.

The Talmud explains that these are three names for the same bird. The Torah specifies all of them, because if it would mention only one name, then if someone knows the bird by one of its names not mentioned in the Torah, he might have entertained the idea that it was kosher.

What type of bird is this Raah/Ayah/Dayah creature? Many have translated it as the Vulture or the Hawk. Yet, after all the research, it seems that the most accurate translation for the Raah bird is the Kite, or in its scientific term – the *Milvus*. Indeed, in Arabic the Kite is known as the “Chadaa” (כחאדא), quite similar to the biblical Dayah.

Why three names for the same bird? “Raah” stems from the verb “to see.” “Dayah” is from the verb “to fly, soar, or glide.” “Ayah” is from the verb “to wail, scream, cry.” All these names describe characteristics of this bird. This Kite indeed is scattered all over the Middle East, feeding chiefly on smaller birds, mice, reptiles, and fish. In the capture of fish the Kite is almost as expert as the osprey (the “Shalach” in the biblical language), darting from a great height into the water, and bearing off the fish in its claws. The wings of the Kite are long and powerful, bearing it through the air in a peculiarly graceful flight. That is why it has been called the Glede or the Kite, representing its gliding movements.

The sight of this bird is remarkably keen and piercing. From the vast elevation to

which it soars when in search of food, it is able to survey the face of the land beneath, and to detect the partridge, quail, chicken, or other creature that will become its food.

Should the Kite suspect danger near its nest, it escapes by darting rapidly into the air, soaring at a vast height above the trees among which its home is made. From that elevation it can act as a sentinel, due to its incredible eyesight, and will not come down until it is assured of safety.

What is remarkable is that seventeen centuries before all of the scientific research, the Talmud described it in a few words: *Rabbi Abahu said, the Raah bird is the same as the Ayah. Why is this bird it called “Raah?” Because it sees exceedingly well.*

The Talmud proceeds to prove this from a verse in Job: “*There is a path which no bird of prey knows; and which the kite’s eye has not seen.*” The very fact that the biblical verse underscores the fact that the Kite’s eye has not perceived the hidden path indicates that the kite usually possesses piercing vision.

The Talmud continues to illustrate the kite’s keen eyesight: *We have learnt that this bird stands in Babylon, and sees a carcass in the Land of Israel!*

Now, that’s impressive, being that the distance between Babylon (present day Iraq) and Israel is some 500 miles.

The obvious question is why the Talmud uses such a strange illustration? It could have used so many more examples of what the bird is capable of seeing and where it is capable of seeing it.

Another, more substantial question: The reason some animals are not kosher is that the negative characteristics these animals possess can have a negative impact on their consumer. “You are what

you eat” is not only a cliché. It is why we are instructed to abstain from eating certain animals whose traits we would not wish to incorporate into our psyche. Kosher animals, on the other hand, are characterized by peaceful traits that are worth imitating.

But why, then, is this bird not kosher? Surely keen eyesight and perception are worthy traits.

The Talmud is not only illustrating the keen vision of the Kite, or the Raah; it is also explaining to us why it is not kosher: When you gaze at the land of Israel, you can see many things, including many positive and heartwarming items; yet what does this bird see? Corpses! Being a carnivorous bird, which kills, devours and eats the meat of other animals, its eyes gaze at Eretz Yisroel but observe only one thing: the carcasses in the land!

This is what makes it a non-kosher animal—because this quality is prevalent among some people as well, and we do not want to “eat” and incorporate this type of behavior into our psyche.

Some people are simply chronic complainers. They will gaze at their wife, children, relatives, and community members and all they will see are flaws, deficiencies, mishaps and negative attributes.

Some people never stop criticizing everybody and everything. While some see the good in everybody, even in the worst situation or person, these characters manage to somehow see the evil in everybody and in everything. They can always show you how everyone has an “agenda,” and everyone is driven by ulterior motives; there are smelly carcasses everywhere.

Are they right? They may be partially, or even completely correct. Every person has flaws. Even the greatest saint has demons;

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Re'eh: Why Wait?



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

The grown children of an *alter yid*, an elderly man, came together for the departing of their beloved father. As they gathered around the patriarch of the family and prepared for his transition, they began to intone the traditional *Vidui* (teshuvah prayer) and the Shema. Turning to his children, the man mustered his strength for a final request: “*Mine teireh kinder*, my sweetest children, please, before I leave this world, run to your mother and bring me one last piece of Mommy’s delicious *kokosh* cake...it’s my favorite.” The children rushed to fulfill their father’s final request. After what seemed to be an eternity, they sheepishly returned – without the cake.

“Dear children... Where is the *kokosh*?”

“We are so sorry, *Tatteh*... Mom said she is saving the cake for after the funeral...”



רֵאָה אֲנֹכִי נִתְּן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרַכָּה וּקְלָלָה:

“*Re'eh*, behold, I set before you *ha-yom*, today, a blessing and a curse. The blessing is if you will heed the commandments of Hashem your God which I command you *ha-yom, today*. And the curse is if you do not obey the commandments of Hashem your God, but turn away from the *derech* that I enjoin upon you *ha-yom, today*, and follow other gods, whom you have not known.” (*Devarim*, 11:26–28)

The directive in our *sedra* is simple and clear. We are empowered to choose to make the most of our lives, to determine our fate and create the reality in which we desire to live. The responsibility is ours, and we have the choice to embrace a *derech* of blessing and reveal good, or the opposite. We are the masters of our own fate, and the Torah places directly upon

us the ultimate accountability for the life we lead.

This Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh Elul; preparation for the High Holiday season is upon us and our focus is turned sharply toward self-improvement, growth and *teshuvah*. Chazal teach us that whenever the Torah uses the term *v'atah*, “and now”, it implies the possibility and opportunity for spiritual realignment and a new beginning: אִין וְעַתָּה אֲלֵא תְשׁוּבָה, “There is no mention of *v'atah* that does not refer to *teshuvah*.” A prime example is the verse, וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׂאֵל מֵעַמּוֹ, “*V'atah*, and now, Yisrael, what does Hashem require of you...?” This becomes ‘*Teshuvah* is what Hashem requires of you, here and now...’ (*Midrash Rabbah Bereishis*, 21:6)

‘Today’, meaning ‘now’, is synonymous with *teshuvah*.

Once, Reb Nosson of Breslov overheard Rabbeinu, Rebbe Nachman, zy’a, repeating the mishnah, “Make *teshuvah one day* before your death” (*Avos*, 2:10), stressing over and over the phrase *yom echad*, “one day!” Reb Nosson explained Rabbeinu’s intention: doing *teshuvah* even “one day”, any day before we leave this world is of the utmost significance.

So many of us give up on the positive impulse to do *teshuvah*. It is as if we are prevented from doing so by our baggage from the day before and our doubts about the day to come. We are haunted by our past and anxious of what the future holds. We think that our past mistakes hold us back from holiness, and as a result, our future seems fraught with potential failures. We might also think, ‘What good is it if I do *teshuvah* now, since I will probably just go back to my old ways later?’ This causes us to procrastinate.

Rebbe Nachman therefore implores us: ‘Don’t worry about the future, just seize the moment and do *teshuvah*, turn back toward Hashem for even just one day, while you are alive.’ And which day is best? This ‘one’, this present day, starting with this present moment.

Rebbe Nachman says: “It is an important rule in *avodas Hashem* to focus only on today. One should not think today about tomorrow ...לא ישים לנגד עיניו כי אם אותו היום ואותו השעה... one should not place before his eyes anything but that day and that moment.” Sometimes the world of *avodas Hashem* can seem overwhelming, heavy, or even burdensome. However, when a person considers that he has only ‘this day’, he will find it no burden at all.”

In our pursuit of *teshuvah* and healing and restoration of our relationship with Hashem, Rebbe Nachman’s advice is clear. We ought to immediately attach an action-point to our inspiration...

שְׁלֵא יְדַחֶה אֶת עֲצָמוֹ מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם, לְאִמֹר: מָחָר אֶתְחִיל, מָחָר אֶתְפַּלֵּל בְּכֹנֶה וּבְכַח כְּרֵאוֹי, וְכִיוּצָא בְּזֶה בְּשָׂאֵר הָעֲבוּדוֹת, כִּי אִין לְאָדָם בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כִּי אִם אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם וְאוֹתוֹ הַשָּׁעָה שְׁעוּמֵד בוֹ, כִּי יוֹם הַמַּחְרָת הוּא עוֹלָם אַחֵר לְגַמְרֵי.

“A person should not procrastinate from one day to the next, saying, ‘I’ll start tomorrow; tomorrow I’ll pray more attentively, and with proper enthusiasm,’ and likewise for other devotions. For a person’s world consists only of the present day and moment. Tomorrow is a different world entirely.”

(*Likutei Moharan*, 272)

Our *sedra* urges us to seize the day, to savor every moment we are alive and appreciate the opportunity we have before us: don’t save the *kokosh* cake for later. Return to Hashem in *teshuvah*, now.

Choosing Correctly

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Choices. We encounter them daily, sometimes even feeling bombarded or overwhelmed by the decisions we must make. In truth, every assessment comes down to two primary choices, blessing and curse. Our parashah begins with the declaration, “See that I am placing before you today, a blessing and a curse” (Devarim 11:26). Are there really no other choices? Let us explore the presentation beginning with the opening word ‘see’ and the emphasis on ‘today’ to understand the approach introduced here.

The Seforno teaches that in fact there is no middle ground in the choices we make in life. Rav Gedalya Schorr quotes the Chovot Halevavot to explain that even one’s mundane activities such as eating become mitzvot if done with the attitude to serve Hashem. Being mindful and conscious that each act we do has the potential for holiness is choosing blessing.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz in Da’at Torah underscores how Torah and mitzvot are the purposes for which we were created. One’s focus should be on living with the



Being mindful and conscious that each act we do has the potential for holiness is choosing blessing.

goal of doing ratzon Hashem, everything else should be secondary. The Ramchal in Mesilat Yesharim teaches that through observing the mitzvot we gain a connection with Hashem, the ultimate goodness in this world. Making choices that are in sync with Hashem’s will is undeniably choosing blessing.

Rav Chasman in Ohr Yahel notes that Hashem specifically says here ‘see’ as opposed to ‘know’, or ‘hear’. When following the derech Hashem the benefits will be so tangible that one will see the manifested blessings before him. Such is living with the reality that each mitzvah we do accrues great reward and develops our spiritual selves to the fullest. With this perspective, the yetzer hara is less tempting and we are not as inclined to

be distracted by ancillary affairs. Recognizing the alternative to blessing helps us make positive choices.

Every morning we begin the morning blessings with thanking Hashem for the ability to discern, “lehavchin’, between day and night. Rav Gamliel Rabinovitz understands day as referring to a life of blessing and night to a life of curses. The Sefat Emet, quoting his grandfather the Chidushei Harim, explains that each day we can choose to do good, to lead a life of blessing. Each day is a fresh start with new choices. Hence, we can read our passuk as, “See, I am placing before you TODAY” i.e. I am giving you TODAY, a new opportunity to choose blessing or curse. One need not be locked into the choices he has made in the past. This is further supported by the Meor Vashemesh explaining the concept of binah, discernment, as it relates to teshuvah. This first morning blessing exhorts us to take advantage of a new day. It is an ideal time to make the correct choices that will bring us closer to our spiritual potential and bring infinite blessing to our lives

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Yerushalayim is the highest national priority. After the “aron” finally settles in his capital city, David’s next request is to build a permanent house for the “aron,” the Bet HaMikdash.

Even though the Temple itself is only built by his son, Shlomo, its precise location is designated in David’s own lifetime. At that time, Har Ha’Moriah, the site of “Akeidat Yitzchak,” was chosen to be the permanent location of the Temple for all time.

According to the guidelines of Sefer Dvarim, ‘Jerusalem’ is destined to become more than just the city which houses the Temple. Ideally, Jerusalem should become the National Cultural and Religious Center of the Jewish people, incorporating and embodying all the qualities required for this city by Sefer Dvarim. This aspiration is found in the prophecies of most later prophets.

Today, be it for halachic, technical, or political reasons, we are not permitted

to rebuild the Bet HaMikdash. Until the proper time comes, this aspiration remains our national dream and everlasting prayer. Nonetheless, the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem as our National Center – a city of Truth, Justice, and Sanctity, the unified capital of the Jewish people – is not only permitted but our duty. In our own generation, G-d has opened for us a historic opportunity. Reaching this goal has become our national responsibility.

So what do you want from me?



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

So Yemima, what does G-d want? I hear this question in a million variations, mostly in crisis situations when someone feels that she is “the righteous one who suffers” when something unexpected happens.

And only once it is mentioned that G-d wants something. It is not written that He wants us to be enlightened, it is not written that He wants us to be healed or even saved. That's what we have to ask for. We also ask for the prayer itself, “Please accept our prayer!” So what does He really want from me? G-d is “the One who wants repentance.” And though our mouths were full of song and our tongues sounded like a multitude of waves, we would not have been able to sing that combination of words, “The Lord wills.” Because if He only wills – then it becomes a reality. So how is it possible that there is something that only I can do to fulfill His desire?! Because no father and mother in the world will be able to bring home a child who does not want to return. They have given birth to him, raised him, and chosen educational institutions for him, but only he or she will decide whether they will return after they leave. We can only wish it.

And so I cry when I hear the sound of the first shofar of the year, on the first day of

the month of Elul. It is unlike any other shofar of the year. It does not resemble the shofar in the middle of the month of Elul, nor the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, nor even the final shofar.

The first shofar of the year is another shofar.

It has not come to frighten or to force forgiveness.

It simply wants it.

It is not the wonderful shofar of Matan Torah. The voice of this solemn shofar broke. According to Chazal, the first shofar of Elul came to say only one thing: “Has he gone? He will return!” When Moshe ascends for forty days, until Yom Kippur, the shofar is blown so that no one will be mistaken again in the number of days, as in the sin of the calf. The first shofar of Elul is the announcement that informs all those who leave: I know that every sin has its origin in fear. The fear of the passing of time and I was afraid to be left alone in the great, great and terrible desert. In Elul, the shofar wants to say: let a shofar be blown in the city so that people will not be terrified because fear and anxiety are the sources of all sins. He will come again, the one who appeared to you hesitantly and of whom you did not know what he had, and when he hears the

sound of the first shofar, he will suddenly want to return. He will suddenly understand that it is possible to calculate time differently, to calculate years differently, to choose life. To want.

“The darkneses of existence, entangled in false ropes, and they spread in the souls of individuals and the public, in a world under pressure... The owner of the answer is afraid that his misdeeds have already lost him and his hope is already zero, and we do not know that in his fear are already all the lights of his salvation! The earth was afraid and did not bring forth the tree in its entirety. Lavan was afraid of the competition of two kings serving in one crown. Mankind is afraid, this whole world is afraid of the next world. And excessive fear takes the life of man, and there is nothing evil and cruel in the world that resembles it. And even with all his will, man will not do that. And he will threaten man not to do anything for his salvation and not to lift a finger to save him...”

Rav Kook will be redeemed this week with great fanfare. He will profess the “little shofar” that seeks to rob us of our peace, but more than that, he will sound the voice of the “great shofar for our freedoms” in his writings. The shofar that whispers in our ears: G-d wants you so much.

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even a great man usually has some skeleton – a corpse – in his closet. That is why we need a Torah to guide us, and that is why the Torah asks of us to never stop working on ourselves, to challenge our conventions, to scrutinize our motives, to refine our behavior, to make amends of our mistakes. But why is that the only thing you manage to observe?

When you are pure and holy, you see innocence and purity in others. When

you are in touch with your own soul, you sense the soul in others. When you have a genuine relationship with G-d, and your appreciation of the G-dliness within every person far more palpable. When you don't suffer from an inflated ego, or from terrible insecurity, you will truly appreciate the goodness in others.

To be sure, there are corpses, skeletons, demons and ghosts in almost every human person; that is what makes them

human. Even the Holy Land has its share of carcasses – physical and psychological. But when that is the only thing you see, it means that you are a non-kosher person. You need your own cleansing.

At the end of the day, it is all a matter of perspective. Each of us has to choose what we are going to see – in ourselves and in the world around us.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
balashon.com

The word שַׁעַר appears frequently in Parshat Re'eh. It literally means "gate", and from there came to refer to "the public square near the city gate", and eventually represented the city itself. Here are a few examples (each time שַׁעַר is translated as "settlement"):

וְשִׂמְחֶתֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אַתֶּם ... וְהִלֹּוּי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם ...

"And you shall rejoice before the LORD your G-d ... along with the Levite in your settlements [בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם]..." (Devarim 12:12)

כִּי־יִרְחַק מִמֶּךָ הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה', אֲלֵהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם וְזָבַחְתָּ מִבְּקָרְךָ וּמִצֹּאֲנָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' לְךָ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתְךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ בְּכָל אוֹת נִפְשֶׁךָ:

"If the place where the LORD has chosen to establish His name is too far from you, you may slaughter any of the cattle or sheep that the LORD gives you, as I have instructed you; and you may eat to your heart's content in your settlements." (12:21)

מִקְצֵה שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים תּוֹצִיא אֶת־כָּל־מַעְשֶׂר תְּבוּאָתְךָ בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ:

"Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your yield of that year, but leave it within your settlements." (14:28)

The root שַׁעַר has another meaning - "to calculate, estimate, measure." This provides such words as הִשְׁעָרָה - "conjecture," and שְׁעוֹר - "measure." That sense is found in the Mishnaic phrase "אין להם שיעור" - things that have no measure. Later, שְׁעוֹר referred to a "set measure of learning," which gives us the popular meaning of שְׁעוֹר as "lesson, class."

Even שַׁעַר can mean "measure," as in the original mention of מִאָּה שְׁעָרִים:

וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא, וַיִּמְצָא בְּשָׁנָה הַהוּא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים...

"Yitzchak sowed in that land and in that same year found a hundred measures..." (Bereshit 26:12)

Are the two meanings connected? Some scholars say no, and point out that in the cognate Aramaic language, שַׁעַר as "measure, price" is spelled with a shin, and שַׁעַר as "gate" is spelled with a tav. This indicates that the two Hebrew words for שַׁעַר have different origins.

Others disagree. They claim that the original meaning of שַׁעַר was "gate," and as noted, the gate referred to the public square. That is where the markets were held, and the prices, and measures were set there, leading to the second meaning. One source could be this verse:

כָּעֵת מָחָר סֵאֶה-סֵלֶת בְּשֶׁקֶל וְסֵאֵתִים שְׁעָרִים בְּשֶׁקֶל-בְּשַׁעַר שְׁמוֹרֹן

"This time tomorrow, a seah of choice flour shall sell for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate (שַׁעַר) of Shomron" (Melachim II 7:1)

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
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Find a common theme in the following 3 topics that appear in Parshat Re'eh:

1. The Navi Sheker (false prophet)
2. The Meisit (one who incites others to do idolatry)
3. Maaser Sheni (the Second Tithe which had to be eaten in Yerushalayim)

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Whilst it is easy to understand how the execution of the Navi Sheker and the Meisit would lead to Yirat Hashem, it is more difficult to understand how the eating of Maaser Sheni would do so. The Ramban explains that having to eat the Maaser Sheni in Yerushalayim meant that the farmer and his family would be able to witness the Kohanim and the judges who stand there before Hashem. These teachers of the Torah would be equipped to teach the visitors the fear of Hashem and instruct in the Torah and the Mitzvot. The very sight of holiness in the city would imbue the visitors with Yirat Hashem.

Yirah - Fear (of Hashem) appears in all 3 topics. See verses 13:5 ; 13:12 ; 14:23



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