

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 173

Re'eh | Revealing the Depths of the Soul



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Re'eh

The Void Inside the Heart

The lights in the synagogue were turned off.

Only the flickering light of a small candle danced on the walls.

It was the solemn and mournful night of Tisha B'Av, and everyone present sat on the ground, lowering their heads in angst.

The voice of the cantor pierced the empty space:

"Today marks the 1956th year since the destruction of our Temple..."

The sounds of weeping were heard, but in the corner, leaning against the wall, Osat a dazed Motti, trying to join in the sense of mourning.

Gradually however, he too began to be drawn into the atmosphere.

Tisha B'Av is not a time for friendly conversations or leisurely travel; eating and drinking are

forbidden, as well as studying the usual Torah subjects.

Motti found himself alone, and in the silence, within the small confined space, he found himself feeling all alone for the first time in his life.

For the first time he felt that his inner character was deeply flawed, and the usual pursuit of his material needs and success seemed to be irrelevant and distant.

Motti closed his eyes and tried to interest himself in something, to think his own thoughts and to express his own desires, but found no facet of his identity to be of any interest or of any use.

Motti tried once more to find within himself some valuable trait or nugget of wisdom to connect and cling to, but no. Inside, he felt, there was a hollow, empty void, devoid of any vitality.

Parshat Re'eh - A Solemn Introspection

"What will become of me? Who am I anyway? Am I even truly alive?" Motti lifted his eyes to the heavens and pleaded, "Please G-d, reveal to me who I am? Grant me the ability to know myself."

Salty tears fell from his eyes and opened the way for the river of tears that followed.

"Am I crying over the destroyed Temple or, perhaps, my own personal destruction?"

The fast ended, and Motti, who broke his fast over a steaming

bowl of soup, suddenly felt no taste.

The enlightenment of his spiritual hollowness that he received on Tisha B'Av did not depart but rather tugged at his heartstrings and gave him no rest.

In the following days, he sought out quiet and serene places, and tried again and again, unsuccessfully, to discover himself better, but instead arrived again and again to the same conclusion - deep inside him, there was no one.

A Solemn Introspection

The days of vacation were drawing to a close, and Motti, flipping through the calendar,

noticed that Rosh Chodesh Elul and the solemn days of repentance were drawing near.¹

Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. The days of the month of Elul are days of goodwill and Divine mercy, days when heavenly assistance is given to a person to repair his soul.

Therefore, it is essential to utilize these days well.

My father, Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, of blessed memory, used to say that during these days of the month of Elul, the attribute of mercy awakens, and

therefore it is a golden opportunity to open many gates in Heaven.

A person might try all year to take upon themselves a certain resolution, to strengthen themselves in some way, to leave behind various foolishness and desires of this world, but doesn't succeed. They try and fail, and progress, but then retreat.

But in the month of Elul, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, creates an 'escape hatch'

Parshat Re'eh - A Solemn Introspection

for every Jew and grants every Jew who desires it, the strength to break free from the constraints and boundaries that imprison them.

Therefore, the days of Elul are called 'Days of Mercy' because, during these days, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, opens a very large entrance, allowing any Jew who wishes to start a new chapter to succeed.

In the month of Elul, one can achieve purity and holiness more easily.

To explain the inner meaning behind this:

It is explained in Chassidut that the reason that these are days of mercy is that during these days 'the King is in the field'.

This means that during these days, the Holy One, Blessed Be He, as it were, leaves His heavenly retinue and comes to dwell and reside among the lower earthly beings, and is, therefore, closer and more accessible than ever.

This is the advantage of the month of Elul, when the Holy One, Blessed Be He, is virtually right next to us, listening to every word we have to say, watching and observing every movement of ours.

Therefore, it is the best time to peel off as many layers from our souls and pour out our hearts before Him, Blessed Be He.

For this reason, it was established to increase prayers and supplications during this month.

The custom of Sephardic Jews is to recite Selichot from the second day of the month

of Elul until Yom Kippur, as ruled in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim, 581:1). In a gloss on this ruling, the Rema adds:

'The custom of the Ashkenazim is not like this, but rather from Rosh Chodesh and onward, they begin to blow the shofar after the Shacharit prayer, and stand in the early morning hours to say the Selichot beginning on the Sunday before Rosh Hashanah.'

On this matter, the story is told ('Sipuro Shel Chag', Rosh Hashanah - page 14):

It was the month of Elul.

Dozens of Jews filled Berl's tavern.

The evening darkness had already fallen on the city, but inside the tavern, the day was in full swing. Everyone was there: horse traders, cattle ranchers, butchers, fur traders, and every other conceivable trade.

These were the peak days of the annual fair, and everyone had gathered from the ends of the earth to negotiate, buy, and sell.

Many realized profits in these days that sustained them for an entire year.

All day, the merchants and buyers wandered around the fair, working for their livelihood, and in the evening, they found relief and rest in Berl's tavern.

Loud voices of laughter and nonsense filled the air.

One after another, pitchers of whiskey were poured and quickly emptied.

The room was filled with the vapors of alcohol mixed with thick pipe smoke.

Parshat Re'eh - A Solemn Introspection

However, none of them had given any thought that these were also the days of the revered month of Elul, a month of repentance and mercy, a month in which one could come closer to G-d, the King of Kings.

The righteous Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov entered the tavern, amidst the roaring commotion. He saw the coarse Jews, deeply immersed in the crude world of business, joking loudly.

Immediately, the tzaddik's compassion was aroused, and he entered into a conversation with them on the subject they were discussing:

"I have a question for you, dear Jews: can you explain to me the difference between a fine, fast horse and a flawed, lazy horse?"

Pinchas the coachman looked at him in astonishment: "Don't you know?" - he wondered amidst the roaring laughter of his friends.

"**The** difference is considerable. A good horse trained well in riding and galloping, can fetch you a hundred gold coins or more at the market, whereas a skinny, scrawny village mare barely suitable for a poor farmer's cart isn't worth even ten gold coins."

One after another, the horse experts added mocking comments about the ignorance of the stranger who interrupted their conversation.

"**Now** I will ask you an additional question," continued the Baal Shem Tov, "What benefit is there in the good horse, which is very valuable, running at such

a great speed? After all, if this horse were to stray off the path and deviate, it could get lost much farther off the correct path than the cheap horse!"

The expert villagers suddenly fell silent. Despite their coarseness, they felt that a significant insight was hidden within this question.

"**Well**, listen to me, my fellow Jews.

It is indeed true that it is of great disadvantage to the galloping horse that it very quickly strays off the straight and narrow path. However, this itself emphasizes its advantage, for immediately afterward, when the fine horse senses and discovers its error, it can quickly correct its mistake and most quickly of all return to the correct path."

"**Absolutely** true and certain," the farmer and tradespeople answered in unison, as they now all listened on with intent and concentration.

"**Now** you can understand the moral of the story," the Baal Shem Tov raised his voice with evident affection:

"**Dear** and beloved Jews, you are all descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Your lineage is significant, and your merits are great.

Do not despair, my fellow Jews.

Even if you have strayed from the correct path, do not lose heart. Even if you have already veered off and abandoned the Torah and commandments, the holy spark of the Divine soul is nonetheless hidden within you.

Parshat Re'eh - A Solemn Introspection

"I must visit a Jew who has some understanding of the human soul, as soon as I can," Motti thought to himself, and immediately recalled,

"Oh, I know where to go, to my mother's brother, Uncle Nachum."

On Friday, Motti arrived at Uncle Nachum's home.

Uncle Nachum welcomed him warmly, offered him drinks and some refreshments, and then offered to share with him a Torah insight he had just been reading.

"Sure, with pleasure. What are you studying?"

"I regularly study from 'Chelev Ha'aretz'," and Uncle Nachum opened the book and began to read (vol. 2, page 199):

"Our sages have greatly emphasized the importance of 'Cheshbon Hanefesh' - 'Introspection,' meaning one must set aside a fixed time to review and take account of their deeds.²

By regularly conducting introspection, one can uncover the mysteries of the soul, and this discovery allows for the recognition of one's faults and negative traits, to be able to later correct them.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

If you only turn back to the correct path and improve your ways, you can quickly and swiftly achieve everything.

This was the call of the prophet: 'Return, you wayward children' (Jeremiah 3:14), even when you are 'wayward' - you are children of G-d, Blessed Be He.

Return, Jews, return in repentance, for the path to repentance is wide open in this unique month of Elul."

2. Regarding this, the following story is told ('Elul - Tishrei', page 96):

A wealthy and esteemed man, who was a long-time follower of the tzaddik Rabbi

Elimelech of Lizhensk, author of 'Noam Elimelech', once came to his tzaddik on the eve of Yom Kippur and asked the tzaddik to allow him to see how he, the tzaddik, performed the kaparot ritual.

'For dozens of years, I have traveled here, yet I have never had the chance to see the Rabbi's kaparot ritual, and this time I greatly desire to see it.'

'And may I ask,' asked the tzaddik, 'how do you perform the kaparot?'

'Why would the Rabbi ask me?' the follower responded, 'What is there to see in my kaparot?'

Parshat Re'eh - A Solemn Introspection

'Nevertheless,' said the tzaddik, 'tell me how you do it.'

'I am a simple man,' said the follower, 'So I take the prayer book and simply say what is written there: "This is my exchange, this is my substitute, and this is my atonement".'

'Well,' said the tzaddik, 'I do very much the same. There may be one difference between you and me: while you most likely insist on finding a white rooster, I am not particular about it - white or black rooster, both are fine for me.'

Nonetheless, the follower implored the tzaddik, expressing his strong desire to be present during the Rabbi's kaparot ritual.

The tzaddik said to him: 'Being that this is the case, I will advise you:

Go to this and this village and enter the home of a particular Jew there. There you will witness a truly inspiring kaparot ritual.'

The follower agreed, ordered that his carriage be harnessed immediately, and traveled to that particular village.

When he arrived, he asked for the residence of that Jew, and they showed him a house at the edge of the village. He entered there about an hour before midnight, and behold, the house was none other than a tavern, with gentiles sitting inside drinking strong drinks as was their habit, and the room was filled with smoke from their pipes.

The guest sat down and waited to see what would happen.

When the Jewish landlord saw him, he approached and asked what he wanted.

'I am a traveler,' said the follower, 'and I wish to spend the night here.'

The landlord began to hesitate and stammer: 'There is no place in my house, and there are other houses in the village that are more spacious.'

The guest insisted on staying in the inn at least until dawn when he would continue on his way, to which the landlord agreed.

Close to midnight, the landlord began to send the gentile customers on their way, some with persuasion and yet others with scolding.

Once they all had left, he opened the windows to let the smoke out and to clear the air.

The landlord then turned to his wife and said:

'Dear wife, please bring me my 'notebook' that is on top of the cupboard in the other room.'

She brought him the 'notebook', from which he began to read all his sins of the past year that he had recorded in in this 'notebook' throughout the year:

"On such and such a day, I missed the fixed time for the recital of Shema; on another day, I did such and such," and so on. When he finished reading, he was filled with sorrow and sighed from the depths of his heart: "Oh, Master of the Universe. Last year I repented and promised to be good and upright and never to return to my foolish ways, but what has happened? I am full of sins and transgressions." Thus he cried and sighed for a long time from the bottom of his heart.

Parshat Re'eh - A Solemn Introspection

These traits and flaws are the root of all sins and transgressions which create a barrier between a person and the Creator, as it says: 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your G-d' (Isaiah 59:2).

It is therefore required that a person set a time and place to detach from the hustle and bustle of life and enter into a deeper internal layer of themselves.

In order to achieve true introspection, one's mind must be clear and calm, free from any distraction, stress, fear, or worry. This is because to penetrate deep into the soul's depths, one must achieve complete relaxation, inner peace, and calmness.

For this reason, one must set aside a place for solitude, to truly uncover their faults and mistakes

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

Afterward, he turned again to his wife: "My wife, please bring me my other 'notebook' that is kept in such and such a cabinet."

She brought him the second 'notebook,' and he began to read:

"**On** such and such a day, when I went to the forest to gather wood, non-Jews attacked me and broke my bones. On another day, my plow broke, and on yet another day, another disaster befell me," he continued and read all the troubles and misfortunes that had befallen him throughout the year.

This time too, he cried and lamented: "Oh Master of the Universe. Last year, I explicitly asked You to grant me a year of blessing, life, and peace, and I trusted and believed that it would be so; what has happened?"

He composed himself and said at once: "After all, today is the eve of

Yom Kippur, and we must all make amends.

Let us make an agreement, Master of the Universe: You do not owe me anything, and You in return, please forgive me for everything."

The man took the two notebooks, tied them together, swung them over his head three times, and each time said the traditional kapparot prayer: "This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement," and threw the 'notebooks' into the burning fireplace in the adjacent room.

The Chassid had carefully observed all the actions of the Jewish peasant and was greatly impressed.

At dawn, he bid farewell to the landlord and returned quickly to Lizhensk. When he arrived, he went straight to the house of the tzaddik and excitedly told him what he had witnessed.

Parshat Re'eh - 'Just Another Person'

and correct them from their root to achieve complete rectification."

Motti looked at Uncle Nachum and said: "You know, for the first time in my life, on Tisha B'Av, I had this experience of inner silence and introspection, but instead of uncovering the depths of my soul,

I discovered that inside me was merely empty, dark and void."

Uncle Nachum listened intently and then asked: "Were you not able to find at least some positive point of merit in yourself?"

"No, not at all. I felt that I was just another person."

'Just Another Person'

"**You** know, Motti, your words that you felt like 'just another person', reminded me of a question asked by Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, of blessed memory:³

As is known, on Rosh Hashanah, G-d renews His kingship over the world, and this also allows the possibility for each person to renew themselves.⁴

Most certainly, to merit this renewal, we must prepare ourselves.

To understand what this preparation is, we would do well to study

closely the words of the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 18a):

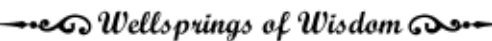
"On Rosh Hashanah, all human beings pass before G-d to be judged like 'Bnei Maron'.

The Talmud asks: What does 'Bnei Maron' mean?

The Talmud suggests three interpretations:

1. Here in Babylon, it is explained as follows:

A person tithing their animals, consecrating one from every ten sheep, makes a small opening



3. 'AleI Shur' (vol. 2, Page 413).

4. As the verse states (Psalms 81:4): "Blow the shofar on the new month" - 'BaChodesh' and it is interpreted in the

Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni - Numbers, 782): 'BaChodesh' - 'Chadshu Ma'aseichem' - renew your deeds in the seventh month.

Parshat Re'eh - 'Just Another Person'

through which only one sheep can pass at a time and thus counts each sheep that passes, marking every tenth sheep with dye.

This is the metaphor for Judgment Day. On Rosh Hashanah, the people of the world pass before G-d one by one, to be carefully examined and judged, just like those sheep who pass through the small opening.

2. Resh Lakish said, it is like the ascent of Beit Maron - like those narrow straits leading to Beit Maron.

The path there is narrow, because the valley is deep on both sides of the path, and two people cannot walk side by side, rather one after the other.

3. Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel, it is like the soldiers of the House of David,

who, when going out to war, were counted one by one.⁵

These examples illustrate the idea clearly:

In the course of judgment, a person stands before G-d completely alone, in absolute solitude - they have no advocate or supporter, and no one to blame for their failures.

Standing before the Creator in judgment, it is as if there is no one else in the world but them, and they alone are responsible for all that they have done or ignored.⁶

Now let us imagine the following:

A person comes before judgment and is asked why they did such and such, to which they answer that they did it 'just because.' They are then asked further, and they lamely explain that since everyone did so

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

5. The reason they are called 'like Bnei Maron' is because 'Maron' is a term of lordship and authority, thus 'like Bnei Maron' - means like the soldiers of a king.

6. As Rabbi Elazar HaKappar said (Avot 4:22):

'The born are destined to die, the dead to be revived, and the living to be judged.

[Regarding their obligations] To know, to inform, and to be informed that He is G-d, He is the Creator, He is the Maker, He is understanding, He is the Judge, He is the Witness, and He is the Plaintiff.

Parshat Re'eh - Jacob Remained Behind

and so, they did the same. If asked further, what did you think? They answer that they didn't think anything, there was no thought or intention in their actions.

The mitzvot they performed with no intention and out of habit alone.

Their mother dressed them in a tzitzit garment when they were small, and blessings they were taught in school, their father bought them tefillin, and they

were sent to learn Torah in school

When this individual stands as 'Bnei Maron', examined and judged for their choices and behavior, being 'just another person', or doing things 'just because', or 'everyone did so' won't be acceptable.

"That is indeed a great question. How can 'just another person' stand in judgment? But how does Rabbi Wolbe answer it?" asked Motti eagerly.

Jacob Remained Behind

Uncle Nachum continued. "Rabbi Wolbe does answer this question, but before we delve into his answer, we must begin with an introduction:

At the age of 36, our forefather Jacob left his parents' home and went to Haran.

On his way, he stopped at Beit El and lifted his eyes to Heaven:

'Master of the Universe, I am embarking on a dangerous journey; please protect me.'

As the verse states: 'And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If G-d will

be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go...' (Genesis 28:20).

G-d said to him: 'Do not worry, I am with you.'

Twenty years passed him by in Haran, and when the time came for him to return home to his father Isaac, Jacob turned to G-d and said: 'Master of the Universe, I left with Your permission, and I wish to return having Your permission.'

G-d granted him permission, and immediately, Jacob gathered all his possessions, assembled his children, wives, and servants, and set out on his way to the

Parshat Re'eh - Jacob Remained Behind

Holy Land – the Land of Israel.

Like wildfire, the rumor spread until the distant land of Seir: 'Jacob is on his way back to the Land of Israel.'

Esau burned with rage:

'What does my insolent brother think to himself? I must go out to confront him!'

Esau hurried to the military camp of Seir, gathered four hundred commando soldiers, and set out to fight Jacob.

Jacob heard about the approaching military camp and was frightened, and devised a three-part strategy:

Firstly, he poured out his soul before G-d in prayer, beseeching G-d's kindness and the fulfillment of His promise of security to Jacob.

Secondly, he divided his children, servants, and all his possessions into two camps, so that if Esau's camp attacked one

camp, the other camp could sneak away and be saved.

At the head of one camp, he appointed Damascus, the son of Eliezer, Abraham's servant, and at the head of the other camp, he placed Alinus, another son of Eliezer.⁷

Thirdly, Jacob gathered goats and kids, sheep and rams, camels, cows and bulls, and donkeys, and divided them into large herds, sending them to Esau as a gift, instructing his servants to tell Esau that his brother Jacob had sent all this as a present.

Later that night, Jacob got up and took his wives and children, and crossed the Yabbok River. He also took his sheep and cattle and all the other possessions he had.

When they had reached the other side of the river, Jacob remembered that some small vessels were left on the other side.

He thought to himself: I will go and fetch them, for my

Parshat Re'eh - Divine Singularity and Isolation

servants are too weary from the hard work all night.

Meanwhile, throughout all this time, the evil powers – Esau's guardian angels – circled the skies, looking for an opportunity to wreak havoc and destruction.

Jacob had crossed the river once again, found the remaining vessels, and was preparing to return.

Jacob stood there alone on the other side of the river, and the evil powers saw an opportunity and descended and began to wrestle with Jacob.

As the verse states: ‘And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn’ (Genesis 32:25).

Divine Singularity and Isolation

The life of Jacob had always been filled with struggles and challenges.

At first, he was cruelly pursued by Esau, leaving him no choice but to flee to the house of Laban the Aramean.

There, he found that he had fallen from one trouble to an even bigger predicament.

If at first, living in his parent's house, he could avoid Esau, he had to now live permanently near the wicked Laban, his father-in-law, with no way to escape.

Twenty years had passed in the shadow of Laban, twenty years of labor and toil.

Despite all this, however, he never ceased his devotion and longing for G-d.

Ultimately, he was redeemed from Laban's exile and began his journey towards the Land of Israel.

But precisely then and there, one dark night on the far side of the river, Jacob was left alone.

The evil powers, seeing that Jacob was left alone, sensed that now there was a chance to defeat Jacob, for a person left alone, isolated, and without friends – is of weakened spirit, empty, and without the will to fight.

The evil powers at once went to an all-out war.

However, Jacob prevailed while the evil powers lost and were defeated.

The evil powers had made a terrible mistake in their calculation.

Jacob's being 'alone' was actually the source of his strength.

Jacob, after all the troubles and tribulations that he had been through, reached a completeness, akin to the completeness of the days of the Redemption.

This idea is expressed in the concise interpretation of our sages:

"Rabbi Berachiah said in the name of Rabbi Shimon: "There is none like G-d, Yeshurun", "There is none like G-d", but who is akin to G-d? "Yeshurun", Israel the Elderly.⁸

Just as it is written about G-d: "And the L-rd alone shall be exalted" (Isaiah 2:11), so too it is written about Jacob: "And Jacob was left alone" (Genesis 32:25)."

Rabbi Wolbe explained this unique passage of our sages (ibid):

"Alone" in the positive sense, is related to the lofty revelation of G-d that will be revealed in the future when G-d's unity will be uncovered before the eyes of all living beings.

It was this understanding and comprehension that was attained by Jacob, our forefather, and with this power, he fought and prevailed over the angel.

To expand even further:

Being 'alone' in this sense is experiencing 'individuality' without needing anything and without being spiritually dependent upon anyone.

This means to be in a state where nothing in the entire creation exists before him, he is entirely individual.

In the words of the 'Kuzari' (beginning of the third essay):

"He will not be perturbed by solitude and loneliness, but rather it will serve as his company, and

Parshat Re'eh - Developing Individuality

in the company of many people, he will be detached and aloof, for all the matters of this lowly world

are absent from him, and he has gained insight and comprehends the kingdom of Heaven".

Developing Individuality

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe continued (ibid):

A method to test the uniqueness and true essence of a person is in a moment of loneliness:

An 'ordinary person,' is bored and restless when they are left alone.

However, someone who is truly a unique and singular individual, is to the contrary, quite happy and elated to be alone with themselves for a while.⁹

In the words of the Mishnah (Avot 3:4):

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

9. In this context, we bring the following story ('Hasaraf M'Brisk, Page 117):

During the tenure of Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Yehuda Leib Diskin as the rabbi of the city of Lomza, a rebellion broke out against the oppressive rule of the Russian Tsar's kingdom.

The city of Lomza was situated within the historic borders of Poland, but was at that time under Russian occupation.

Occasionally, the Poles would rebel, but the uprising would be crushed with an iron fist.

The Polish rebels viewed the Jewish leadership as collaborators with the Russian occupiers, and therefore incited the masses against the 'foreign occupiers and their Jewish enablers'.

(This had a kernel of truth, being that we are commanded to be loyal to the ruling authority in exile, as it is stated: "Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to G-d on its behalf, for through its welfare you will find your good welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7)).

During these uprisings, which often devolved into brutal riots, the rabbis would personally come before the rebels and assure them of their cooperation, plead for their community, and ask them to restrain their fellow rioters.

Additionally, they would ask that the rebels release the wealthy members of the community whom they had imprisoned on false charges to extort ransom money to fund the uprising.

It thus would often occur that the rabbis were forced to declare allegiance to the rebels.

Parshat Re'eh - Developing Individuality

However, before long, the Russian Cossacks, headed by General Gneitska, well-trained and fearless, came and quelled the rebellious organization and scattered them about in all directions, suppressing their uprising with brutal rivers of blood.

The rebellion leaders who were captured were sentenced to horrific punishments as a deterrent, and all those who assisted them were imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and fined exorbitant amounts at the whim of the merciless tyrant Gneitska, who moved from city to city, meting out punishments with ruthless fury.

The city of Lomza also fell before the Cossack troops, and the marauding authorities immediately ordered that all the cities' community leaders, including Rabbi Diskin, the town rabbi, as well as the minister of all the various religious and lay leaders, appear before General Gneitska the following day at nine o'clock in the morning at the courtyard of the governor's palace.

The general, whose name alone instilled great terror and dread, was expected to arrive then in Lomza at that time and would conduct a swift show trial of all those who had assisted in the rebellion, the various religious leaders at the fore, deciding their fate as he saw fit, instantly on the spot, whether to death or to imprisonment.

Fear gripped the residents of Lomza, the rabbi's students, and his household.

There however was one person who remained unperturbed by the great commotion and the looming ordeal: the town's revered rabbi.

The rabbi neither feared nor trembled, instead continuing his daily routine as usual.

One of Rabbi Diskin's top students, who would come to his residence every night to study with him until dawn, reported that not even a single moment of anxiety or distraction was visible upon him.

The rabbi, as he had always done, shared with him that day deep insights and he weaved before him intricate Torah novelties.

The following morning, he prayed with devotion and calmness as usual, and continued by delving into Torah study until the attendant reminded him nervously that it was already half-past eight.

The rabbi rose from his seat, donned his formal coat, and went with the attendant to the courtyard of the governor's palace, where the city leaders and priests were already standing, pale and tense, waiting for the general's arrival.

The tension and fear intensified with every passing minute.

Suddenly, the sound of hoofbeats, the clattering of wheels, and the ringing of bells were heard. The general's carriage appeared, escorted by a guard of horsemen.

The carriage stopped, the palace guard saluted, the carriage door opened, and General Gneitska disembarked, resplendent in his decorated uniform.

He stood at the foot of the carriage and cast a haughty glance at the assembled row. The tension was palpable.

An eyewitness account from that harrowing event was printed in the

Parshat Re'eh - Developing Individuality

"He who is awake at night and travels alone on the way and turns his heart to idleness, endangers his life". In such an opportune time when one is alone and without distractions, how can he turn his heart to idleness?

Such behavior indeed proves that the person has no inner world of content.

This indeed is unfortunately the case with many yeshiva students who are educated for many years

among the many, without a single moment with themselves alone.

They are in this way likely to completely lose their individuality and entirely neglect to develop into independent individuals.

How pitiful it is to see precious Torah students who have no uniqueness, they may seem like people without a background, since others have dictated every step of their lives for many years.

~*Wellsprings of Wisdom*~

newspaper 'HaModia' of 1910 (Year 2, Issue 1 - Front Page):

'**All** those gathered there, especially the heads of the different ethnic communities and the priests, stood there in great fear. Their faces showed their inner turmoil, and all their bones quivered from dread and fear. Only the great rabbi stood there in complete calmness, just as one might stand during the monthly Kiddush Levana prayer, waiting for the clouds to pass by.'

The tyrant quickly passed by them, ignoring their bows and murmured greetings.

In a sudden change of heart - through some Divine miracle - he suddenly told the local governor who greeted him meekly: 'Send them all away and let them go free.'

With a sigh of relief, those assembled dispersed.

On the way, the attendant could not contain himself:

'**Rabbi,**' he asked, 'how could you maintain such a calm? Your freedom and life were hanging by a thread, how did you not fear or tremble?!'

'**A** mitzvah,' explained the rabbi, 'must be fulfilled completely, each and every mitzvah.'

Since we have the mitzvah to "Fear the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 6:13) - we must fear Him completely, with all of our heart, and consequently, there is no room in the heart to fear anything else.

There is no place for dread and fear of flesh and blood to enter, there is no room for these feelings to reside'.

Emotions - One's True Identity

“So according to this it turns out that the reason I found a gaping void inside me is because I have not developed to be an independent person.”

“Very true.”

“But what am I supposed to do? How can one attain the tremendous level of being ‘alone’ - unique and independent?”

“I will do my best to explain”, replied Uncle Nachum.

“The first thing we need to do is understand what our core identity is.

Our identity is in the emotional part of us, and therefore investing in any other facet of ourselves does not bring us closer to the desired development.”

To explain further:

A person is composed of two parts: body and soul.

The physical part is visible, while the part of the soul is hidden.

As such, many people are not aware or conscious of their souls.

Moreover, they believe that their persona is best expressed in their physical aspects.

They believe that the stronger and more muscular a person they are, the more they speak passionately and charismatically, and the more wealth and assets they possess, the more perfect and blissful they will be.

Some therefore wish for their children solely physical and material success.

This, however, is undoubtedly a mistaken outlook, since there is no connection between the physical virtues and true happiness.

A person can be completely perfect in their physical virtues, but inside their heart and soul, be decayed and wasted, Miserable and desolate, with no past and a bleak future.

A person is truly and solely represented by their inner self.

The inner self in turn is dependent on the refinement of one's emotions.

Parshat Re'eh - Connecting the Mouth and the Mind

The more pure and refined one's emotions are, the more faith in G-d and a sense of vitality and life will be revealed in their heart.

Understanding what is the true meaning and composition of the soul is only the first step...

Connecting the Mouth and the Mind

“The second stage in discovering our true identity” - Uncle Nachum continued - “is comprised of two distinct stages:

The first is to set a fixed time for studying ethics (Mussar) and Chassidut, both of which need to be studied.

The second stage is to understand and apply that which one learns to oneself.

For example, if one studies 'Shemirat HaLashon' by the Chafetz Chaim, one must recognize that these teachings apply to oneself and be careful with all forms of speech and hatred.

In this way of study, over time, one's inner self will become

purified, and one will be able to experience their inner world, one's true identity.

To quote Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe:¹⁰

"Behold, the work before us is great:

True Torah study, without deceiving ourselves, studying Mussar and Chassidut to awaken our soul, and not merely learning like 'just another person' out of rote, this as well as secluded introspection for an hour each week, to take account of our soul.

It is then that we will merit the highest level, to be complete 'individuals' and an 'entire spiritual world.'"¹¹

Wellsprings of Wisdom

10. 'AleI Shur' (Vol. 2, Page 415).

11. Once my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel said the following in a lecture:

There is an invaluable lesson to be learned from the produce of the earth.

Parshat Re'eh - Generosity is Reciprocal

"That's it," ended off Uncle Nachum, "This concludes our study today in 'Chelev Ha'aretz',

now we will turn to discuss the weekly Torah portion, Re'eh"

Generosity is Reciprocal

Uncle Nachum opened 'Imrei Noam', Parshat Re'eh and began to read:¹²

"In our Torah portion, the Torah deals with the commandment of charity, as it says: 'If there be among you a poor man, one of your brothers within any of your gates in your land which the L-rd your G-d gives you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from

your poor brother, but rather open you shall open your hand wide to him' (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

Regarding why the Torah uses a double expression in these verses - 'Open, you shall open,' and later in the verses, it says: 'Give, you shall surely give' (Deuteronomy 15:10), and 'Lend, you shall surely lend him' (Deuteronomy 15:14) - Rashi explains on the simple level to mean, that

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

If one wants to grow lush and juicy vegetables, they must fertilize the fields.

How do you fertilize ?

You spread a large quantity of cow or sheep manure on the ground, then turn the soil and plant seeds.

A person goes to the store and buys tomatoes, cucumbers, and vegetables, and fails to realize that all these vegetables initially grew from cow and sheep manure.

Similarly, as G-d decreed to be the nature of the world, a person grows when they have 'manure' thrown on them, meaning when they are slandered, insulted, and disparaged.

However, the truth is that this 'manure' doesn't have to be from others; one can have the same effect on themselves through performing true introspection and recognizing the good within them, as well as all that they still need to correct, and refine their traits and break their unwanted desires.

Their heart then breaks within them due to their feeling distant from the light of G-d's presence, which resides on those worthy of it.

Following these experiences, one receives the strength to continue growing.

12. Of my father Rabbi Yoram (Parshat Re'eh - Maamar 4).

Parshat Re'eh - The Work of Generosity

the Torah here teaches us to give repeatedly and generously, 'many times', 'even a hundred times.'

However, in addition to the simple meaning, this can be explained based on the words of our master the Baal Shem Tov, who explained the verse: 'The L-rd is your shade' (Psalms 121:5) - that just as a person's shadow moves precisely according to their movements, so too, G-d acts with a person precisely as the person acts with others.

As the Sages said (Shabbat 151b): 'Whoever is merciful to others, mercy is shown to him from Heaven'.

It was common among the elder Chassidim of previous generations to say: 'Love a Jew - and G-d will love you. Do a favor to a Jew - and G-d will do a favor to you. Draw a Jew close - and G-d will draw you close' (HaYom Yom - 27 Cheshvan).

Similarly, when the Torah uses the expressions 'open you shall

open,' 'give you shall give,' and 'lend you shall lend,' it is to hint that when one opens their heart and hand, and gives and lends generously to their poor brethren, G-d immediately opens all the gates of Heaven for them - the gates of health, good livelihood, success, and more.

The Torah repeats each of these terms to emphasize that when one 'opens' for others, they also 'open' for themselves, when one 'gives' to others, they also 'give' to themselves, when one 'lends' to others, they essentially are 'lending' to themselves.

Moreover, the Torah uses three terms for generosity: open, give, and lend - to hint that whoever grasps the attribute of generosity with all their might will merit to connect to G-d with a strong and unbreakable bond, like a cord woven from three strands that does not easily break, as the verse states: 'A threefold cord is not quickly broken' (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

The Work of Generosity

These verses can be interpreted in an additional manner

based on the words of Rabbi Meir in the Midrash (Kohelet Rabbah,

Parshat Re'eh - The Work of Generosity

5:21): 'When a person comes into the world, their fist is clenched, as if to say, the whole world is mine, I will inherit it all. When one departs this world, their hands are open, as if to say, I have not inherited anything of this world.'

The Torah thus warns that if your poor brother comes to you and asks for your help: 'do not shut your hand,' meaning do not remain in the same state as you were when you were born, with clenched hands thinking the whole world is yours, but 'open' your heart and hand to your brother and share with him from the wealth that G-d has given you.

This is because ultimately, at the end of your life, your hands will be open like all those who have passed, and you will take nothing with you from this world.

Therefore it is better to open your hand in generosity while still alive and earn the wonderful merit of the mitzvah of charity.

This is a central task of a person on Earth, to break their attribute of stinginess which is

ingrained from birth, and to acquire the attribute of giving.

The Zohar (Tikkunei Zohar - Introduction, 2a), is very critical of the attribute of stinginess, stating that the Shechinah is most angered by a person who is stingy with their money and does not give a significant amount to charity.

It testifies that such a person is not of the seed of our forefathers, who were extremely generous and kind beyond measure, as it is said: 'The charitable among the peoples are gathered, the people of the G-d of Abraham' (Psalms 47:9).

This recalls the story recorded in the Prophets (I Samuel 25), that when David was fleeing from Saul, he sent his servants to ask Nabal the Carmelite for some food to sustain them, and Nabal answered with extreme stinginess:

'Shall I then take my bread, my water, and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whom I do not know where they are from?' (1 Samuel 25:11). Because he acted with such stinginess, it is said about him: 'A degenerate man, as his name is, so

Parshat Re'eh - Charity – The Gateway to the Inner World

is he; Nabal is his name, and evil is with him' (1 Samuel 25:25).

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, of saintly memory, wrote (Noam Elimelech, Miketz):

'A person must be very cautious from the attribute of stinginess and tight-fistedness, as stated in Sefer HaYashar by Rabbeinu Tam (Gate 6 - The Fourteenth Attribute):

'If a person is stingy, not only do they possess this bad attribute, but many others as well, and this one outweighs them all... Therefore, a stingy person cannot be a servant of G-d'. No person completely escapes this attribute, if not all of them have a bit of it, and there are those who have nearly none of it, and they all must remove this undesirable trait from themselves.'

From his words we understand that the attribute of stinginess is the root of many other bad attributes, and therefore, one must invest great effort to break

this attribute and acquire the traits of kindness and generosity.

The purpose of the entire Torah is to instill in a person the attribute of kindness and giving, as the Sages said (Sotah 14a):

'The Torah begins with an act of kindness and ends with an act of kindness.

It begins with an act of kindness, as it is written: "And the L-rd G-d made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21), and it ends with an act of kindness, as it is written: "And He buried him [Moses] in the valley" (Deuteronomy 34:6).

Similarly, the Oral Torah begins with Tractate Berachot and ends with Tractate Uktzin, and the initial letters of each spell Ayin and Bet, which together have the numerical value of 72, the numerical value of 'Chesed' (kindness).

Thus, a person lacks this attribute, misses the critical lesson the Torah teaches.

Charity – The Gateway to the Inner World

Uncle Nachum concluded, "You know, Motti, what we

learned from the Parsha about generosity in 'Imrei Noam'

connects wonderfully to the topic of Identity that we are discussing.

Let me preface with quoting the righteous Rabbi Aharon Roth:¹³

“When a Jew gives charity and engages in acts of kindness without limits and with a joyous heart, G-d bestows upon them a supreme light called 'supernal kindness' and 'abundant kindness.'"

This light illuminates and spreads throughout all the upper and lower worlds, rectifying all the flaws and deficiencies that were caused in the higher holier worlds, and renews their light and goodness with greater strength and intensity.

This all due to the charity given beyond one's capacity. This merit awakens the supreme mercies upon one's wretched soul, that it emerges from darkness and coarseness of heart.

Particularly, if one gives charity before prayer, and especially if they give beyond their means, it draws upon them a light from the Infinite One, blessed be He, so that their prayer will be accepted, and the coarseness and darkness of the heart will be removed. The mitzvah of charity transforms all bitterness into sweetness, and the rectification and salvation of the soul depends on the mitzvah of charity and acts of kindness.

Many great sinners have merited tremendous elevations in Gan Eden due to this, and many simple people have merited righteous children because of it.

Most of the great souls were drawn down by their parents through the mitzvah of charity and acts of kindness.¹⁴

Uncle Nachum closed the book and said to Motti:

...*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*...

13. 'Taharat HaKodesh', Maamar HaTzedakah - Chapter 1.

14. It is mentioned in the holy books that most of the great and righteous people of the world and the leaders of the generation

were born due to the charity and acts of kindness done by their parents.

Many simple people merited great children who illuminated the world because of their charity.

Parshat Re'eh - Nourish the Hungry Soul

“From these words, it is quite evident that in addition to self-reckoning and studying and applying the works of Mussar and Chassidut, it is through the mitzvah

of charity that a person merits to emerge from the coarseness and darkness of the heart to merit the opening of their inner world.

We will add one final point.

Nourish the Hungry Soul

There is a widespread misconception that charity and kindness are solely monetary donations.

However, if we look at the Torah, we will understand that charity and kindness encompass all times and situations in life.

As we find in the words of the prophet Isaiah, after commanding financial support of the poor and unfortunate, he continued to say: "And if you extend your soul to

the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul" (Isaiah 58:10), meaning that one must extend his soul as well in the performance of acts of charity, giving of their very essence for the sake of others.

The Sages explained that this is fulfilled by giving love and respect to another person. Listening to someone in distress, feeling their heart, and truly hearing them out can sometimes be a greater gift than any monetary sum.¹⁵

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

It is known that even the Baal Shem Tov descended to this world due to the righteousness of his father, who performed many acts of kindness, and the same is true for the two holy brothers, Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusha, and many other great and holy righteous men. ('Taharat HaKodesh, Maamar HaTzedakah'

Chapter 1:64).

15. To quote Avot D'Rabbi Natan (Chapter 13, Mishna 4):

"Greet every person with a cheerful countenance', how so?

This teaches that if a person gives his fellow all the most precious gifts in the world but his face is downcast, it is as if he has given him nothing.

If he, however, greets his fellow with a cheerful countenance, even if he gave him nothing, it is as if he gave him all the most precious gifts in the world."

Parshat Re'eh - Nourish the Hungry Soul

Sometimes giving the right advice at the right time can be a real salvation.

Similarly, teaching someone Torah that they did not know is a most sublime form of giving, and it carries with it significant reward.

The Sages expounded on the verse: "The poor and the wizened man meet together; G-d enlightens the eyes of both" (Proverbs 29:13) - when a student goes to their teacher and says, 'Teach me Torah.' If the teacher teaches them, G-d illuminates the eyes of both.

But if not, the teacher who refused to help them becomes themselves foolish, while the one who was ignorant gains wisdom.

The Talmud explains that when a student goes to their teacher, the student is considered poor because they lack knowledge of the subject being studied. If the teacher explains patiently and makes every effort for the student to understand, G-d rewards measure for measure: You gave wisdom to the student, I will give wisdom to you - "The L-rd lightens the eyes of both."

But if the teacher dismisses the student without a valid reason, the Talmud states that G-d reverses the situation: the one who was wise becomes foolish, and the one who was foolish becomes wise.

This person who was a great scholar will gradually lose their wisdom, their mind will become blocked, they will forget their learning, and they will fall from their level due to their many sins.

Meanwhile, the 'poor' student will grow in knowledge, gaining such a vast understanding, and in a few years, will become a great scholar, to the surprise of everyone.

This happens often with young scholars who, after a few years in kollel, become great Torah scholars, knowledgeable in many areas.

They receive this divine gift very often in the merit of helping others as much as they can, whether in learning or through encouraging others, or in other forms of assistance. G-d does not remain indebted.

Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. Our sages greatly emphasized the importance of 'self-examination,' meaning that a person needs to set aside a fixed time to review their actions. Through regular self-examination, one can discover the hidden recesses of their soul and more fully recognize their shortcomings and undesirable traits that are the root cause of one's sins and transgressions, and which create a barrier between a person and their Creator.

2. It is therefore required of a person to set time to completely step away from the hum of life and reach a true internal calm, which is central to achieving a precise self-examination that will yield maximum benefit.

3. To achieve true self-examination, a person's mind must be very clear and settled, free from any distraction, pressure, fear, worry, or anything that causes a diversion of attention.

4. For this reason, it is very important to designate a specific place for isolation, so that one

can truly discover and correct his faults and mistakes from their root and foundation until he reaches complete correction.

5. Through this, one can reach the high level - of the individual who is not dependent on anyone for their completion and correction, but rather within them shines a complete inner world of light and truth.

6. After conducting proper self-examination, a person should set aside time to study ethics and Chassidut and one should apply these teachings to themselves.

For example, if he studies the book 'Shemirat HaLashon' by the Chafetz Chaim, he should understand that these teachings about all forms of gossip and avoid baseless hatred apply to him and that he needs to be careful.

Studying in this manner increases the likelihood that over time, one's inner self will be refined, and he too will merit to enter deeply into his inner world.

Parshat Re'eh - Summary and Practical Conclusions

7. Another way for a person to enter into his inner world, is through giving charity and performing acts of kindness without limits and with a joyful heart.

When a person does this, the Holy One, blessed be He, bestows upon him a supreme light called 'Chesed Ila'ah' (Supernal Kindness) and 'Rav Chesed' (Abundant Kindness).

These lights illuminate and spread throughout the upper and lower worlds, rectifying all the flaws and defects one caused, and sanctifying them with great strength and might.

One then also merits to arouse supreme mercy upon his soul and, through this, emerges from the darkness and the dullness of the heart.

Shabbat Shalom!



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”
When praying from a
Siddur,
all foreign thoughts
and distractions are
removed from the mind ”
(Betzur Yarum).



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”A person must rejoice when the time for
prayer

as the author of the Tanya says that:

every Jew, wherever he is, receives from G-d at the time of prayer a gift called **"Mochin D'Gadlut,"** meaning that the understanding of everything is expansive before him, as is written

"Open wide your mouth and I will fill it" ”



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Shabbat Times Re'eh

27th of Av, 5784



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:12 pm	8:11 pm	8:41 pm
Miami	7:23 pm	8:15 pm	8:52 pm
Los Angeles	7:03 pm	7:58 pm	8:32 pm
Montreal	7:17 pm	8:18 pm	8:45 pm
Toronto	7:37 pm	8:38 pm	9:06 pm
London	7:32 pm	8:40 pm	9:00 pm
Jerusalem	6:50 pm	7:38 pm	8:26 pm
Tel Aviv	6:47 pm	7:36 pm	8:23 pm
Haifa	6:47 pm	7:35 pm	8:22 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:46 pm	7:35 pm	8:22 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

A young child has a hard time sitting in place throughout the prayers quietly, and loses their patience, making it hard for the congregants to focus on their prayers. Thus, the detriment of bringing them to synagogue outweighs the benefit of doing so.

When a child grows a bit older and can sit calmly, especially when they can read, it is incumbent upon their father to bring them to synagogue and seat them for the prayers.

If the child then exhibits impatience, they should be told 'It's unbecoming for you to behave this way, you came here to pray, I will give you a treat, but I expect you to pray', for at this age a child can already read and concentrate.



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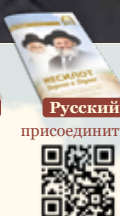
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