



# THANK YOU HASHEM

## For Shabbos Kodesh!

### Parshas Re'eh

#### HaMeor Shebah

#### A Short Burst of Relevance

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה...

See, I have placed before you, today, a curse and a blessing...

COMMENTING ON THIS pasuk, the Midrash paraphrases Hashem as saying, "Not only have I presented two paths before you, I have entered with you beyond the letter of the law by saying, 'and choose life!' he Kozhnutzer Maggid explains that the two paths presented by Hashem - the "curse" and the "blessing" - refer to two different modes of living in this world. One path, the path of the curse, is the path of the yetzer hara - a life lived for one's own materialistic gain and oblivion to the divine mission for which the soul was sent down to the world. The other path, the path of the blessing, is the path of the yetzer tov - a life founded upon constant striving to align with the Will of the Creator, to set one's own ego and personal gratification aside in attempt to transform his life into a dwelling place for the divine Presence. Because of the enormous power of the yetzer hara, it isn't so simple to open one's heart to the

path of the blessing. In fact, living perfectly aligned with Hashem's desire is near-impossible. As Chazal teach, "Every day, a person's yetzer hara grows stronger and stronger. Were it not for Hashem's assistance, it would be impossible to overcome." Based on this statement, the tzaddik teaches that every time a Jew succeeds in surmounting the spiritual obstacles set in his way and emerges victorious in the heat of the battle with the yetzer hara, this is a direct revelation of Hashem's Presence in one's life. This is what the Midrash is referring to. The presentation of "blessing" in contrast to "curse" would not be enough to enable the Jewish nation to choose properly. However, when Hashem proclaimed, "Uv'charta b'chayim" - "And choose life!", these words encapsulated the special assistance from Hashem that allows us to overcome all obstacles and walk the path of the blessing. The more we open our ears to hear the eternal echo of these holy words, "Uv'charta bachayim", the more we will be able to perceive the strength with which Hashem is filling our hearts to be able to forsake the accursed path of the yetzer hara and bind ourselves to the yetzer tov. 🤴

#### Parsha Roundup

#### A 60-second Review

- 🤴 Moshe presents the blessings that will come when am Yisrael fulfills the Torah and the curses that will materialize should they abandon them. These blessings and curses are to be proclaimed on Har Grizim and Har Eival upon entry to the Holy Land.
- 🤴 A Beis HaMikdash should be established where the people will bring their sacrifices to Hashem. It is forbidden to make offerings to G♫d in any other place. It is permitted to slaughter animals elsewhere to eat their meat, but the blood may not be eaten.
- 🤴 A false prophet as well as one who entices others to worship idols should be put to death. An idolatrous city must be destroyed. The Torah repeats the signs for kosher animals and fish and the list of non-kosher birds.
- 🤴 A tenth of all produce is to be eaten in Yerushalayim, or exchanged for money used to purchase food there. In certain years, this ma'aser is given to the poor instead. Firstborn cattle and sheep are to be offered in the Beis HaMikdash, and their meat eaten by the kohanim.
- 🤴 The mitzvah of Tzedakah obligates a Jew to aid a needy fellow with a gift or loan. All loans are to be remitted each Shemitta year. All indentured servants are to be set free after six years of service.
- 🤴 The parsha concludes with the halachos of Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos, when all should go to "see and be seen" before Hashem in the Beis HaMikdash.

#### A Quick Mayseh

#### A Story to Warm the Heart

A MAN ONCE came to the holy Baal Shem Tov and poured out his heart. "Rebbe!" he cried. "I need your help! A few weeks ago, I began to serve Hashem with great devotion and immediately found that a sense of spiritual warmth and connection enveloped my life. Those weeks of Torah study, prayer, and mitzvah observance were saturated with joy and excitement. I felt Hashem's presence in my deeds and was committed to maintaining this level of ecstasy forever. But then, soon after, I lost it all. My prayers are dry, I have no interest in Torah study, and my mitzvos have become mechanical, devoid of meaning. Rebbe, please help me understand. What happened here?"

The Baal Shem Tov smiled and said, "Let me tell you a little story. A man once entered a shop in which all types of delicacies were displayed. Noticing that people were partaking of the food free of charge and with the encouragement of the shopkeeper, he decided to take advantage of the shopkeeper's generosity as well. After sampling each dish on the counter, he served himself a generous helping of a particularly appealing food.

"My friend," the shopkeeper's voice rang out, "That'll be fifty rubles."

"I don't understand!" said the customer, surprised at this dramatic change of heart. "Why are you suddenly demanding payment? Until now, you allowed me to eat for free!"

"I only allow people to sample my delicacies so that they may experience how delightful they taste. But you have already tasted them and appreciated their worth. Now it's time to start paying for your pleasure."

"Nothing worthwhile," concluded the Baal Shem Tov, "is free of charge - particularly when it comes to avodas Hashem. The pleasures of a conscious relationship with the Master of the world can only be acquired only with perseverance and ceaseless toil. Initially, Hashem offers a free "taste" of His closeness to those who seek Him with a true heart. But once one has sampled these spiritual delicacies, it's time to get to work."

It is completely normal to feel a lull in connection after the initial thrill of a renewed commitment to avodas Hashem wears off. But it is at that point that we are gifted with the opportunity to truly become "customers" of the Torah, when we put in the effort necessary to become true servants of Hashem. 🤴

## Tohameha

### Tasting the Depth of Shabbos Kodesh

OVER THE PAST few weeks, we have been discussing the *mizmor*, “*Hallelu es Hashem min hashomayim*” and the difference in intention between saying this *mizmor* during the week and on Shabbos. Now, the Chernovitzer turns to another one of the *mizmorim* in *pesukei d'zimra*, “*Shiru la'Shem shir chadash, tehillaso b'kahal chassidim*.” The tzaddik begins by outlining the intention that we are to have when saying this *mizmor* during the days of the week. One of the foundational ideas in Chassidic thought is the concept of “*Mituk hadinim b'shorasham*” - sweetening the harsh forces of judgement by elevating them to their source. The Chernovitzer explains that the true source of any heavenly judgement is the deepest kindness. Hashem never intends to utilize the retributive forces of darkness and negativity that exist in the world. Their only purpose is to serve as a deterrent to Jews drawn after walking in an improper way so they can receive the greatest gift of a relationship with Hashem and experience eternal spiritual bliss. These forces exist solely to aid Jews in accessing the greatest divine kindness. When a person understands that all “punishments” are rooted in Hashem’s infinite love and benevolence, this elevates the forces of judgment and severity to their source in goodness where they are sweetened and transformed. The Arizal teaches that there are five forces of kindness and five forces of severity (represented by the fingers on the right and left hands, respectively). The five forces of kindness are associated with the *Shem Havaya*, Hashem’s essential Name, which is gematria 26. Five times 26 is 130. Therefore, the intention when saying the words, “*Shiru la'Shem shir chadash, tehillaso b'kahal chassidim*” during the weekday Shacharis should be to sweeten the five forces of *Gevurah* by elevating them to their root in the five forces of *Chessed*. This process is hinted to in the word “*Kahal*”. While the “*hei*” represents the five respective forces of *Chessed* and *Gevurah*, the “*kuf*” and the “*lamed*” - which are together *gematria 130* - represent the tremendous kindness hinted to in five times Hashem’s Name within which the forces of *Gevurah* are rooted and where they are sweetened. The word “*Kahal*”, which connotes a gathering, refers to the gathering together of the forces of *Chessed* together with the forces of *Gevurah* so the latter will be sweetened in the light of the former. When this happens, it produces “*Kahal chassidim*” - a word associated with *Chessed* in its plural form - alluding to the transformation of *Gevurah* to *Chessed* as well. 🕎

*This section is adapted from the sefer “Sidduro Shel Shabbos” by R' Chaim of Chernowitz zy”a (1760-1816)*

## P'nimiyus Ha'Halacha

### The Inner Dimension of Jewish Law

WHILE THERE ARE five *berachos* made on different kinds of smells - ***Boreh Atzei Besamim*** on plants above ground that have a hard stalk, leaves, and last from year to year, ***Boreh Isbei Besamim*** on plants that have a soft stalk or do not last from year to year, ***Boreh Minei Besamim*** on non-plant or fruit products, or for items whose proper *beracha* is a subject of dispute in the *poskim*, ***HaNosen Reyach Tov BaPeiros*** on edible fruits that give off a strong smell (from the fruit and not from the peel. Additionally, the *beracha* is made only if the fruit is taken to smell and not to eat), and ***Borei Shemen Areiv*** on a persimmon grown in Eretz Yisrael - no *beracha achronah* is recited after one has smelled the item. There are two reasons cited by the *Mishna Berurah* (in the primary text - 217:4 - and in *Sha'ar HaTziyun* there) for why there is no *beracha achronah* on enjoyable smells. The first reason, attributed to Rashi, is that smell is a “*hana'ah mu'etes*”, a lesser pleasure than eating and drinking and therefore does not require a *beracha achronah*. The second reason, attributed to the *Kol Bo*, is that when one is finished smelling an item, the pleasure of the smell has completely departed. Therefore, making a *beracha achronah* on a good smell would be comparable to making a *beracha achronah* on bread after 72 minutes and one is hungry again - a *beracha l'vatalah*!

In the following teaching from *Likutei Halachos*, Reb Nosson reveals a third reason - the inner dimension. Reb Nosson is elaborating on Rebbe Nachman’s teaching in *Likutei Moharan Tinyana* 1:9, where the tzaddik writes that medicine derives from plants and other natural organisms that depend on a chain of stars and *mazalos* - each of which relies on the force that preceded it- for its life-force.

The loftiest star draws vitality from the divine Source - the aspect of “*devar Hashem*” which grants life to all. However, there is an extremely elevated kind of prayer which is able to draw directly from the “*devar Hashem*” itself, enabling the healing properties ordinarily found in plants and other natural organisms to become infused into regular food and drink.

Reb Nosson explains that a *beracha rishonah* - which proclaims the items rootedness in the creative speech of Hashem - serves the purpose of elevating the physical food to that place of “*devar Hashem*” so it may take on healing properties. The *beracha achronah* is to subjugate the lower forces within the human body that seek to steal away the sustenance to power negative impulses. This is why we no longer make a *beracha achronah* after the food has been completely digested and one is hungry again, because the function of *beracha achronah* is no longer applicable. In addition, the *beracha achronah* - in which we say, “*l'hachayos bahem nefesh kol chai*”, to bring life to the living - serves the purpose of apportioning the healing power of the food to the places in the body which require healing.

Chazal teach us that smell is primarily pleasurable to the soul as opposed to the body. Smell is not processed by the body at all - it goes straight to the mind, which houses the *neschama*. Since the *neschama*, as a portion of Hashem, is undifferentiated and absolutely one, there is no need for apportioning the healing properties infused in the smell to its various parts. This, explains Reb Nosson, is the deeper reason why we do not make a *beracha achronah* on *reyach*.