



## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Re'eh

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**Remember the Nisyonos**

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**The Levels of Clarity**

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**Heeding the Word of Hashem**

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**A Composite of Physical & Spiritual**

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**Prophecy is a Tenet in Believing in G-d**

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### Modifying Physicality To Address The Intellectual Component

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1. Moshe ascended to Heaven for 40 days and nights to receive the first set of tablets.
2. After the Tablets were smashed due to the sin of the golden calf, the Jews needed to be forgiven.
3. Moshe ascended for another 40 days and nights to supplicate G-d for forgiveness.
4. They were forgiven.
5. Moshe ascended for another 40 days and nights to receive the second set of Tablets.
6. When Moshe recounts to the Jews at the end of 40 years, he said, "Bread I did not eat and water I did not drink."
7. Why was it important to inform the Jews that he did eat when he was in heaven to receive the Torah?
8. Midrash: Moshe said to the Jewish people: Just as I gave my blood and fat for the acquisition of Torah, you must do the same to minimize your physicality for its acquisition.
9. Pirkei Avos: This is the way of Torah: Bread in salt you shall eat, water in small measure you shall drink, on the ground you shall sleep, a life of deprivation you shall live.
10. The source of the Mishnah is Moshe's communication with the Jewish people regarding the acquisition of Torah.
11. Midrash: Moshe in Heaven was taught the Torah in its entirety every day for 40 days.
12. Every day he would forget what he was taught.
13. This would repeat itself for 40 days.
14. What was G-d teaching Moshe causing him to forget what he was taught?
15. As he retained it after 40 days he could have retained after the first day.
16. To understand Torah and retain Torah one needs special Divine assistance.
17. By minimizing one's physicality one has a greater capacity for the spiritual.

### Impenetrable to the Phenom that is the False Prophet

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1. A true prophet is established by performing a supernatural act and foretelling the future.
2. Should he say in the name of G-d that they engage in idolatry he is a false prophet.
3. Torah: "You should not heed the words of the prophet. G-d is testing you to see whether you love him with all your hearts and souls."
4. How is listening to the prophet a test of one's love of G-d if one believes he speaks in the name of G-d?
5. There is a mitzvah to love G-d with all your heart, soul & possessions.
6. Sifri: The Shma continues, you should put these words on your heart and teach them to your students.
7. One comes to love G-d through the study of Torah and its dissemination to students.
8. One is only imbued with love for G-d if one is spiritualized through Torah.
9. A physical being is affected by physical phenomena.
10. The false prophet is imposing due to his credentials as a prophet.
11. Rejecting the prophet is not simple due to his concern for his own wellbeing
12. Spiritualized through Torah, one internalizes his love for G-d and isn't intimidated.
13. Whether one succumbs to the false prophet is thus a test of one's love for G-d.



## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Re'eh



### Each Individual's Unique Share in Torah

*Torah*: "See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse." When *Moshe* addressed the Jewish people in this manner he did not say, "Understand what I present you today..." Rather, the *Torah* uses the term "See" to indicate that the blessings and curses should be understood and perceived in the most real and vivid manner – as one "sees" reality.

Commentators: The word "*Re'eh* – See" is written in the singular form while the verse is addressing the Jewish people (which is plural). They explain that each individual is able to comprehend and internalize reality on his own level. Thus, although *Moshe* is addressing the masses, each person will process his words on a personal/individual level.

We request of G-d in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) of the *Shabbos* and Festival prayer, "... (G-d) Give us our own portion in Your *Torah*..."

*Chofetz Chaim*: Although the *Torah* was given to the entire Jewish people at Sinai, each individual has his own designated portion within it. When the *Torah* was given at Sinai, it was not only given to those who were present but also to all of the future generations that would come into existence. Their *neshamos* (souls) were present at Sinai. At the Sinai event, G-d gave each individual his own unique portion of *Torah*. Every Jew has his own spiritual potential, which has relevance to the dimension of *Torah* that he can attain/achieve. Therefore, we pray to G-d that He should give us the ability and opportunity to come upon our portion, which is rightfully ours, because it was the *Torah* that was designated at Sinai.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Nidah*: Before a child is born into existence he is taught the *Torah* in its entirety by an angel in utero. In the womb of the mother, the child's existence is equivalent to a spiritual setting in which he can see from one end of the world to the other. Nothing in existence is concealed from the child while

developing in the womb. It is at this time that he is taught his own unique portion of *Torah* that was designated for him at Sinai. We endeavor throughout our lives to recall/recoup that *Torah* which was taught to us by the angel. It is important to understand that one should not evaluate his own development and success on a relative scale. Meaning, he should not regard his level of spiritual development and advancement relative to others. Rather, each individual needs to develop and achieve his own unique potential in *Torah*.

## The Liability of an Idolatrous City

*Torah*: Regarding a city that has engaged in idolatry, "... You shall smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword; lay it waste and everything that is in it, and its animals, with the edge of the sword. You shall gather together all its booty to the midst of its open square, and you shall burn in fire completely the city...to Hashem, your G-d..." It is interesting to note that the *Torah* tells us that if one is engaged in idolatry and was forewarned of its liability, he is deserving of the most severe level of death penalty, which is by stoning (*skeelah*). However, when the majority of the inhabitants within a city has engaged in idol worship, the *Torah* states that they should be put to death by the sword.

*Mishna* in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: There are four levels of death penalty. The most severe is death by stoning, followed by death by fire, and then death by sword; the least of all is death by strangulation. One would think that if an individual idolater is subjected to the most stringent death penalty, because of the severity of the sin, then an entire city that engaged in idolatry, which is a public desecration of G-d's Name, should definitely be subjected to the most severe of the penalties, which is death by stoning. Why then does the *Torah* reduce the penalty to death by the sword?

*Torah*: Regarding those who are engaged in destroying the idolatrous city, "...G-d will give you mercy and be merciful to you and multiply you..."

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: If one were engaged in killing the inhabitants of a city and razing it, it would evoke within those individuals the most negative characteristic of cruelty (*achzorius*). Thus, the *Torah* tells us that despite the fact that one will be involved in such a destructive act, G-d will counter its negative effects with compassion so that the individual will not become cruel.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, *Moshe* descended from the mountain and smashed the first set of Tablets containing the Ten Commandments. He then announced to the Jewish people, "Whoever is for G-d should come with me..." Immediately the tribe of *Levy*, which was the smallest of the tribes, joined *Moshe* in killing all those who were engaged in the idolatrous act of the Golden Calf. Because of *Moshe's* call to action and the response of the *Levyim*, G-d's Attribute of Justice was mitigated by the Attribute of Mercy. Had it not been for this, the entire Jewish people would have been destroyed by His wrath. Those who were not involved in the idolatrous act remained silent as *Moshe* and the Levites killed the idolaters in their midst.

*Sforno*: By remaining silent and not interfering with *Moshe* and the Levites, the Jewish people merited the Mercy of G-d. When one transgresses, one brings about a degree of spiritual diminishment/destruction. The liability/punishment, which one receives after one transgresses, is purely for the sake of spiritual rehabilitation. The degree of rehabilitation that is needed is proportional to the degree of severity of the sin. When one commits an idolatrous act, because of its severity, he is in need of the most severe level of rehabilitation, which is death by stoning.

However, regarding a community that is classified as an "idolatrous city," despite the fact that idolatry was committed on a mass level and caused a public desecration of G-d's Name (*Chilul Hashem*), nevertheless the need for rehabilitation is to a lesser degree. The reason for this is that when the idolaters are killed and the community is destroyed, never again to be rebuilt, it is a public sanctification of G-d's Name (*Kiddush Hashem*).

The behavior of the community is seen as so reprehensible that the city must be turned into a wasteland – never again to be rebuilt. The cause of this sanctification of G-d's Name emanates from the original desecration of G-d's Name. The *Kiddush Hashem* is an aspect of the rehabilitative process that is needed by the members of the idolatrous community. Thus, their punishment is reduced from the most severe level to a lesser level.

*Gemara* in Tractate *Yomah*: If one repents out of love for G-d (*teshuvah m'ahava*), then even deliberate sins are transformed into *mitzvos*. When one realizes the severity of a deliberate violation, and is moved to have genuine remorse/regret, then the sin is transformed into



a *mitzvah*. The sin itself is the cause of the penitence. This is similar to the *Kiddush Hashem* of the destruction of the idolatrous city which is an outgrowth of the desecration of G-d's Name.

## Maintaining One's Clarity Despite the Distraction of Life

*Torah*: "See, I present before you today..." Is it not obvious that *Moshe* was addressing the people on that day? What is the significance of the "today?" The Jewish people did not enter into the Land immediately after leaving Egypt because of the sin of the spies. To atone for their sin, they needed to wander the desert for 40 years until that generation passed away. It was only after that time that they would be able to enter the Land.

During the 40-year period in the desert, the Jewish people lived within a supernatural context. G-d provided for their every need. They were nourished by the Manna – which is referred to as "the bread of heaven" and were protected by the Clouds of Glory. Every conceivable material amenity was provided for by G-d. The Jewish people were not distracted from their spiritual focus. They were thus able to mature and develop spiritually after the Sinai experience.

*Midrash*: If the Jewish people were to have entered the Land immediately and not wandered for 40 years in the desert, they would not matured spiritually sufficiently to attain their necessary spiritual level. They would not have been in the presence of *Moshe Rabbeinu* for an addition 39 years (*Moshe* was to pass away before they entered the Land). Had the Jewish people entered the Land immediately they would have been denied the spiritual maturing period of the supernatural environment of the desert. Although they had experienced Sinai, they would have entered into the Land and immediately been distracted as a result of their material responsibilities.

Therefore G-d caused them to be delayed in the desert in order to allow them to develop spiritually to internalize the Sinai event to such a degree that they would be able to withstand the distraction of the material responsibilities of life. Thus, when *Moshe* had said, "See, I present before you today..." he meant to communicate to them – "because we have not yet entered into the Promised Land, you still maintain that special clarity to be able to perceive spirituality as a reality."

In order to maintain a semblance of that original clarity, the Jewish people needed to be continuously engaged in *Torah* and *Mitzvos*. If one does not maintain the vividness of that spiritual reality, it will fade and one will lose the clarity that he once had. One must see/understand with absolute clarity that if he does the Will of G-d (*Torah/Mitzvos*) he will experience blessing. On the other hand, if one does not adhere to the principles of the *Torah*, he will experience curses on many levels. One can only fully appreciate the consequences of his actions if one maintains that understanding on a daily basis. A Jew is obliged to engage in *Torah* study during the daytime and in the nighttime period.

*Mishna* in Tractate *Menachos*: One can fill his minimal obligation with the recitation of the *Shema* in the morning and in the evening (the *Shema* is comprised of verses from the *Torah*).

*Joshua*: "The *Torah* should not be removed from your mouth," which indicates that one's engagement in *Torah* study should be on an ongoing basis. This is to ensure that despite the distraction of the material environment in which we live, we will be able to focus and advance on our spirituality.

## How One Must Perceive His Mitzvah Obligation

*Torah* in *Re'eh*: "*Moshe* said to the Jewish people, safeguard (*sh'mor*) and hearken to all these words that I command you..."

*Rashi*: The word "*sh'mor* (safeguard)" is referring to the continuous study of *Torah* because it is only through continuous study that one is able to retain what he has learned and thus safeguard the *Torah*. Additionally, "all these words that I command you..." means that one should adhere to all of the *mitzvos* "even the (seemingly) less severe *mitzvah* must be as *chaviv* (beloved/special) as the (seemingly) more severe one."

*Torah* at the beginning of *Eikev*: "This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances and you observe and perform them; *Hashem*, your G-d, will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers. He will love you, bless you and multiply you..." G-d says that if one meticulously observes even the *mitzvos* that one regards as less stringent and that are normally trampled upon, one merits the greatest

level of blessing. If one does not differentiate and evaluate *mitzvos* before performing them, this is an indication that he is doing them only for the sake of G-d Himself and not for self-gain. The moment one begins to distinguish between *mitzvos* (what is more or less important), it is clear that his motivation for fulfilling the *mitzvos* is related to self-interest (i.e. personal reward/punishment). The verses cited above from *Eikev* and *Re'eh* seem to be conveying the same concept that all *mitzvos* must be adhered to regardless of their value.

*Chazal* add another dimension of understanding to how a person must approach the service of G-d regarding his performance of *mitzvos*. *Chazal* cull from the passage "all these words that I command you ..." that it is not enough to value all *mitzvos* as equally important but one must see the seemingly less important *mitzvah* as *chaviv* (beloved/special) as the seemingly more important one. If one performs a *mitzvah* because he sees it as special, his involvement with it is at another level. Thus, if all the *mitzvos* of the *Torah* are perceived as *chaviv*, then one will be motivated to perform them in the most meticulous manner with the greatest level of devotion. Even if one adheres to the *Torah* for the sake of doing the Will of G-d, he nevertheless may be lacking in motivation if he does not see the *mitzvah* as special. Therefore if one sees the *mitzvah* as special, regardless of its value, he will never tire in its pursuit.

*Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato z'tl in Mesillas Yesharim (Path of the Just)*: G-d created the human being with a heart that must love. The heart will either be filled with self-love or the love of G-d. If one suppresses his love of self, it is replaced with the love for G-d. However, if one only serves G-d out of obligation, rather than as a privilege, he will ultimately regress to the mode of self-interest (self love) and perform *mitzvos* only to further himself.

This is the reason one must continuously study and review *Torah* in order to appreciate and value its precepts – and to see them as special (*chaviv*). One can only become inspired with *mitzvos* when one touches upon their spiritual value and thus is able to internalize them. This is only possible through continuous *Torah* study. If one's approach to *mitzvos* is not as a result of his involvement in *Torah* study and continuous review, then ultimately his adherence to *mitzvos* will become perfunctory.

Blessing which precedes the *Shema*: "For they (*mitzvos*) are our life and the length of our days and in them we will meditate day and night." Meaning, if one is continuously

involved in *Torah* study (day and night) he will come to understand that the *mitzvos* are truly the essence of our life. It is only when one studies the *Torah* that he will perceive all the *mitzvos* (both the less stringent and more stringent) as *chaviv* (beloved/special).

## **Why is the Uniqueness of Moshe's Prophecy Pertinent to the Immutability of Torah?**

*Yud-Gimel Ikrei Emunah (Thirteen Tenets of Jewish Belief)* outlines the fundamental principles of Jewish belief.

Sixth Tenet: "I believe with absolute faith that the words of the Prophets are true." One could think that believing in G-d would be sufficient; however, this is not the case. Believing in G-d as the Creator and Omnipotent Being has no relevance to our existence unless G-d had communicated His Will to Man. This is basis for the Sixth Tenet – that the words of the Prophets are true.

Seventh Tenet of Jewish belief: "I believe with absolute faith that the prophecy of *Moshe Rabbeinu* is true and that he is the father of all of Prophets – all the Prophets that preceded him as well as those who come after him." Why is it not sufficient to believe that the words of the Prophets are true? Why in addition to that Tenet must one believe that *Moshe* was the greatest of all the Prophets who had preceded him and who would follow him? If one accepts the Sixth Tenet and not the Seventh, he is considered a heretic. Why would it not be sufficient only to believe that the Prophecy of *Moshe* is true – thus establishing the authenticity of *Torah*? How does one establish himself as a prophet, as a person with whom G-d has communicated?

*Rambam*: The verification process to establish a prophet as G-d's spokesman is as follows: Firstly, he must perform a supernatural act. Secondly, he must forecast the future and that event must come to fruition. The source for this criterion is the *Torah*. If one performs a miracle and accurately predicts the future, then he has established himself as an authentic prophet of G-d.

*Torah*: "If there should stand up in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of a dream, and he will produce to you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes about, of which he spoke to you saying, "Let us follow gods of others that you did not know and we shall worship them!" Do not hearken to the words of that prophet or

to that dreamer of a dream, for *Hashem*, your G-d, is testing you to know whether you love *Hashem*, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Despite the fact that this person performed a miracle and predicted the future, if he tells the Jews (in the Name of G-d as a prophet) that they should serve idolatry, then he has established himself as a false prophet. He is definitely not speaking in the Name of G-d. The only reason the false prophet had the ability to perform the miracle and predict the future was because G-d endowed him with that ability in order to test the Jewish people.

The basis for identifying this person as a false prophet is that *Moshe Rabbeinu* (who is synonymous with the Word of G-d) had established this fact to be so. If this individual had already established himself as a true prophet (through performing the miracle and predicting the future) then why does *Moshe's* position supersede his in the claim that G-d communicated to him that the Jewish people should serve idolatry? How does one determine who is more correct?

*Rambam* in *Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah* (*The Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah*): The basis for *Moshe* being the prophet of G-d is because every Jew who was present at Sinai witnessed G-d's open communication with *Moshe*. “They had heard G-d saying to *Moshe* – Go tell them such and such.” The basis for *Moshe* being established as the prophet of G-d is factual (because we had witnessed His communication with *Moshe*). Whereas the validation and establishment of all other prophets is based on the criterion that is set forth by the *Torah*, which is the word of *Moshe*.

Therefore any prophet, who contradicts *Moshe's* position regarding the Word of G-d and claims that *Moshe's* communication is false and his own is authentic, he is a false prophet. The reason for this is because initially this individual was only established as a prophet based on the criteria set forth by the *Torah*, which is the prophecy of *Moshe*. Thus, if he contests the validity of *Moshe's* prophecy, there is no longer a basis to establish him as a prophet.

We can now understand the Seventh Tenet, which infers that it is not enough to believe in the authenticity of *Moshe's* prophecy but one must also believe that he was “the father of all Prophets - those who preceded him and those who follow him.” Only then is the authenticity of the *Torah* established and remains incontestable

and immutable. The *Torah* itself, which is the word of *Moshe* is not predicated on inference, presumption or extrapolation, but rather it is based on hard fact because our ancestors stood at Sinai and witnessed the open communication between G-d and *Moshe* – thus establishing him as His spokesman and prophet.

## How to Secure One's Spirituality

*Torah*: In order for the Jewish people to inherit the Land of Israel and dwell in it safely, they must first obliterate all the idolatry and its locations from the Land.

*Dovid HaMelech* (King David) in *Psalms*: “Remove yourself from evil and (then) do good.” Meaning, that succeeding in a spiritual endeavor is predicated on the removal of the wrong which is the antithesis of spirituality. One cannot grow spiritually when he is straddling both sides of the fence of good and evil. One must first remove himself from evil and only then can he move forward and do good. *Moshe* explains in the Name of G-d that in order for the Jews to inherit the Land, they must first eliminate all traces of idolatry and then establish themselves in the service of G-d.

*Kaddish* recited at the time of the completion (*Siyum*) of a Tractate (similar to a mourner's *Kaddish*): “We will reestablish the city of Jerusalem and establish His (G-d's) Sanctuary in it and we will uproot all false (idolatrous) worship from the Land and return the service of heaven to its location...” One cannot build a secure structure on a weak foundation. If the foundation is faulty and defective then ultimately the structure will not last. In order to establish a secure foundation, the *Torah* tells us that we must first eliminate the evil before we can build the good. One may enjoy and derive benefit from studying *Torah* and praying to G-d.

However, if he simultaneously behaves in a manner that is not consistent with the *Torah* that he has studied, it will ultimately undermine the effect of all his spiritual involvements. Consequently, the value of his *mitzvah* observance is reduced. In order to be fully affected by involvement in *Torah* observance, one must abide by its dictates and continuously strive to advance his spirituality by doing more good. Therefore, for us to derive the maximum benefit from our *Torah* observance we must continuously, qualitatively, upgrade our spirituality through the elimination of the wrong – thus adhering to the words

of *Dovid HaMelech* in *Psalms*, "Remove yourself from evil and then do good."

## A Jew Must Never Despair Because He is Truly Never Alone

*Torah*: "You are children to *Hashem*, your G-d – you shall not cut yourself and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person. For you are a holy people to *Hashem*, your G-d, and *Hashem* has chosen you for Himself to be a treasured people, from among all the peoples on the face of the earth." In some societies, people lacerate themselves and pull the hair out of their heads when grieving for their dead. The *Torah* prohibits this type of behavior for a Jew. The *Torah* explains that the reason the Jew is not permitted to behave in this manner is because the Jewish people are a "holy people to *Hashem*..."

*Sforno*: "It is not appropriate for one to show extreme worry and pain for a loved one who passes away because there is another relative who is of greater importance and value - and who is the basis of all good (G-d)." Thus *Moshe* says to the Jewish people, "You are G-d's Children" to indicate that since He is our eternal Father there is no basis for worry. Grieving at an extreme level for the deceased would be contradictory to this fact. Regardless of one's loss, G-d never abandons a Jew. Just as a parent loves his child more than the child could ever love his parent, the *Torah* is teaching us that G-d values us as His Children.

If a Jew were to lacerate himself or pull the hair from his head to express his grief for a beloved relative, this behavior would indicate that he is in a hopeless state with nowhere to turn. This would be considered a denial of the special relationship between G-d and himself. One's expression of extreme grief in the form of laceration etc. is a rejection of a basic tenet of Jewish belief that when a person passes away, his spirituality,

which is his essence, is eternal. Therefore a person who grieves in this extreme manner not only denies G-d's special relationship with the Jew, but also denies the eternity of the soul. Thus, it is a Negative Commandment to express one's grief in this manner.

*Torah*: *Sarah*, our Matriarch, gave her maidservant *Hagar* (the daughter of Pharaoh) to *Avraham* (her husband) to beget him children. Many years after the birth of *Ishmael*, *Sarah* asked *Avraham* to drive *Hagar* and her son from their home. G-d said to *Avraham*, "Whatever *Sarah* tells you – heed her word." After they were driven into the desert, the *Torah* tells us that *Hagar* "strayed on the way."

*Rashi* citing the *Midrash*: "Straying" is referring to the fact that *Hagar* had returned to the idolatry of her father's home. A great *Torah* Sage once asked "How do *Chazal* see from the words 'strayed on the way' that *Hagar* returned to the idolatry of her father's home?" Seemingly the *Torah* is only telling us that *Hagar* was wandering in the desert and she had lost her way.

The *Torah* Sage answered that *Chazal* understand that "straying" could only mean returning to idolatry because a Jew who is connected to G-d is never lost. A Jew never "strays" aimlessly because he always has G-d to whom he can turn, just as a son turns to a father. If the *Torah* uses this term it is a clear indication that *Hagar* returned to idolatry and thus severed her relationship with G-d. If a Jew understands and internalizes that all that he has is given to him (including his own existence) by G-d, regardless of his sense of being alone, he is not alone.

When G-d took the Jewish people as His kingly, priestly and holy Nation, he communicated to us how special we truly are to Him. Therefore we must always understand and appreciate that we are the Children of G-d. As a parent loves a child so too does G-d loves us – His people. Regardless of what we experience in life, G-d is always providing for us.



**Yad Avraham Institute**