



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

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

### 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.

### Values Through Reverence

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### Weekly Video: Accomplished on All Spheres To Assume Credibility

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### 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* & 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.

### The Inverse Relationship of Delayed Gratification and Ultimate Joy

## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Re'eh



### **Drawing from the Past to Process the Present**

“Perhaps you will say in your heart, ‘These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out?’ Do not fear them! You shall remember what *Hashem*, your G-d did to *Pharaoh* and to all of Egypt...”

*Sforno*: When you will notice that the nations of the world greatly outnumber you, do not be overwhelmed with fear, due to the impossibility of defeating these nations. Rather, you should recognize that although your number is small and power limited, and thus impossible to defeat them; nevertheless, you should not be fearful because you should recognize that you will defeat them because G-d is with you. Just as G-d defeated *Pharaoh* and Egypt although they were greater than you, so too will He defeat these nations.”

*Chazal*: It is not possible to come upon the truth of *Torah* unless one meets certain criteria. Only then he

will merit Divine Assistance that will allow him to come upon its truth.

One must understand and appreciate that one’s own limitation regarding coming upon the truth of *Torah* is not based on one’s intellect or ability but rather it rests solely on the degree of Divine Assistance that one merits. If one believes that he is able to comprehend the truth of *Torah* due to his unique intellectual ability, he is not only mistaken, but rather it is a position that touches upon heresy.

On the other hand, it is also incorrect to believe that it is impossible and beyond one’s grasp to come upon the truth of *Torah* because it is too vast and difficult. Everything in one’s life is purely determined by G-d. One’s success is unrelated to his initiative.

Just as it was humanly impossible for the Jewish people to defeat *Pharaoh* and his armies without G-d’s



intervention, so too it is not possible to succeed in any pursuit unless G-d wills it to be so.

*Gemara*: “One’s yearly allocation is designated from *Rosh Hashanah* to *Rosh Hashanah* (by G-d).” Although one needs to take initiative to attain one’s livelihood, G-d determines the degree of the effectiveness of that initiative from one *Rosh Hashanah* to the next.

Understanding this, that G-d dictates all aspects of one’s life, one must live his life in accordance with the *Torah* without compromise. Despite one’s material needs one cannot justify compromising on his obligation as a Jew.

*Rambam*: “Every Jew has the obligation to study *Torah* during the daytime period and nighttime period... (regardless of one’s predicament) if one is poor or wealthy, young or old, one who lives a life of suffering and one who does not, every Jew is obligated to set aside time to study *Torah*.”

If one is faced with great material challenges, how could he not be fearful and concerned about attaining a livelihood? How could he not dedicate himself completely to his material need?

G-d says, “Do not be fearful!” Since G-d is the one who determines and establishes to what degree one will succeed, one must only take a responsible level of initiative and not be fearful of the future outcome. Rather, one should have faith and trust in G-d. One should dedicate himself to a life that is in accordance with the *Torah* and be a beneficiary of G-d’s kindness.

## **G-d’s Unique Relationship with the Jewish people**

“*Moshe* said to the Jewish people, ‘You are the children of *Hashem*, your G-d. Just as a father disciplines his child, so too does G-d discipline the Jewish people.’”

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: If one sees the child of another misbehaving, although he sees inappropriate behavior, he will not discipline that child. It is only when one’s own child misbehaves that he will discipline him because he is bothered by it. A father has a special love and feeling for his own child that creates a mindset that does not allow him to tolerate the misbehavior of his own child. The father therefore responds immediately to the misbehavior with discipline because he wants his child to address his potential to its fullest. The father

will do whatever is necessary to facilitate that process, even if he must resort to disciplining the child.

Similarly, because of G-d’s special bond with the Jewish people, He punishes them (disciplines) even if they should deviate to a small degree. It is because they are His children.

In contrast, when the nations of the world transgress and violate all of the precepts of their obligation, G-d does not punish them immediately. It is only after they have exhausted all levels of mercy and tolerance does He punish them to destroy them.

“(*Moshe* said to the Jewish people) You are children to *Hashem*, your G-d – you shall not lacerate yourself and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person.”

*Rashi*: “One is forbidden to lacerate himself or pull out his hair as an expression of grief for the dead. Because you (the Jewish people) are G-d’s children you must appear in a pleasant and proper state. You should not be lacerated or be seen with bald spots.”

“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.”

*Sforno*: “It is not appropriate for one to show extreme worry and pain because of the loved one who passed away. This is because there is another relative who is of greater honor and stature who provides all hope of good. Regardless of the loss, you still have your Father, Who is the eternal G-d.”

Even if one were to lose the physical and material support of one’s parent or one’s closest relative, G-d as the eternal Father of the Jewish people will provide whatever is necessary.

*Sforno*: “As it states, ‘You are G-d’s Children.’ You have no reason to be pained exceedingly for concern for the loved one who died because ‘For you are a holy people to *Hashem*...’ destined for the world to come, in which one moment of that world has greater value than the entire pleasure and benefit of the physical world.”

*Pirkei Avos*: This world is only a corridor that leads to great banquet hall of the world to come. Jewish belief dictates that after one passes away the soul passes on to an eternal spiritual world, which is the ultimate

objective and value of physical life. One must believe that the one who has passed away has moved on to an eternal spiritual world in which is the ultimate location in which he is bound to G-d, our Father.

We refer to G-d in our prayers, "Our Father, our King." The essence of the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people is that of a father to his child. It is because of this special relationship that the one who remains alive must understand that he has not been abandoned, because G-d his eternal Father will support and secure him.

## Perceiving Life for What it Truly Is

"See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse." Why does the *Torah* state "today"?

"This day, Hashem your G-d, commands you to perform these decrees and the statutes, and you shall observe and perform them with all your heart and with all your soul."

*Rashi*: "When you perform the *mitzvos* and study the *Torah*, you should see them as being new in your eyes. It should be as if you were commanded to observe them on this day (by G-d)."

The *Torah* on several occasions emphasizes the point of needing to see the *mitzvos* as being "new." in the first paragraph of the *Shema* the *Torah* states, "Let these matters that I command you today be upon your heart."

*Chazal*: "Today" means that the *mitzvos* must remain "new" in one's eyes. This is because, a new proclamation is seen as special to the one who hears it, compared to a proclamation of the past, in which one loses interest.

If one regards the *mitzvos* as something that is not unique and special (because they are of the past), one's interest and focus will wane and eventually dissipate. He will feel as if his time is being infringed upon, and will perform them begrudgingly.

In order for one to be able to be worthy of the "blessing" and fully appreciate the detriment of transgression (the curse), one must see the commandments as if they were given "today."

"I have placed life and death before you, blessing and curse – choose life so that you will live..." *Moshe* presented the Jewish people with the choice "to

live" or "die" and to be "blessed" or "cursed." He then concludes "You should choose life."

Why did *Moshe* need to encourage the Jewish people to choose life? Is it not obvious that when one is presented with a choice between life and death, that he will choose life?

*Midrash*: It is analogous to an aged man who was sitting at a crossroad. The road on the right appeared to be nearly impossible to travel as far as the eye could see. The path was fraught with many obstacles and great difficulties. However, the road on the left, by contrast, appeared to be wide and beautifully paved with many esthetic details. The left road seemed ideal for traveling and the obvious choice to take.

A traveler came to the crossroad and after pondering which road to take, he decided to take the road to the left, which was the obvious choice. The aged wise man noticed this, and said to the traveler, "Before you start along the path which seems to be more attractive and inviting, you should know that this comfort and ease in travel is only for a three-day journey. After three days of travel, the path becomes disastrous and catastrophic. The suffering that you will endure beyond that point is unfathomable.

However, the road to the right, which appears to be difficult to travel, is only difficult for a three-day trek. In fact, after three days you will come upon beauty and splendor that is not imaginable. It will become wide, uplifting, and beautiful beyond your expectations."

The lifespan of man is limited. "The life of man is seventy years..." (Psalms) Even if one were to live a longer life, it remains infinitesimal compared to the eternity of life in the world to come. Understanding and appreciating this, one will invest and dedicate himself in the present for the sake of the future. Understanding the effort of the moment as compared to the fruits of one's labor in the world to come, it is considered no more than a three-day trek.

*Pirkei Avos*: A passing moment of the world to come, regarding its degree of pleasure and goodness, would dwarf an entire lifetime of pleasure in the physical world. If one is able to internalize the value of physical existence as only something that is to facilitate one's spiritual accomplishments, which is unending and unfathomable, one will perceive every moment of life as the ultimate opportunity. He will never feel infringed

upon. Even if one would suffer, he would understand it within the context of spiritual value and be able to meet the challenge.

Therefore *Moshe* tells the Jewish people to “choose life.” Regardless of perception of difficulty that makes it seem that the path to the left is a better choice, *Moshe* is encouraging the Jewish people to understand that one’s superficial glance is deceiving.

One should choose the road to the right, regardless of the initial difficulties because it will bring to unlimited success and blessing.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: The word “today” in the verse means that the challenges of life as compared to eternity are the equivalent of one day. Therefore, the Jew should dedicate himself to his spirituality so that he should reap eternal blessing in the world to come.

## The True Gift of Torah

“See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. (*Es ha’beracha*) The blessing: that you hearken to the commandments of *Hashem*...”

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: The word “es” seems to be superfluous. It is an adjunct which is coming to include something that is not explicitly mentioned in the verse.

There is a Positive Commandment, “You shall fear (revere) G-d. “*Es Hashem Elokecha Tirah*.”

*Gemara*: The word “es,” which in its own right has no interpretation, indicates an adjunct to the subject matter being discussed (which is the reverence of G-d in this case), is coming to include *Torah* Sages. The *Torah* requires one to revere the *Torah* Sage no less than one must revere G-d Himself.

In the Portion of *Re’eh*, what is the word “es” coming to include, regarding the blessing that one will receive if one adheres to the *Torah*?

*Ohr HaChaim*: “In addition to the blessing that one will receive if he follows the ways of G-d, one will merit another benefit. What is this additional benefit?”

When one engages in *Torah* study, he will experience a degree of pleasure and joy that is extraordinary and overwhelmingly positive. This unique pleasure and joy will bring life to his spirit. ‘When you hear it (*Torah*) your spirit will be enlivened.’ (*Yeshaya*)

Just as one is able to sense things with his physical senses, the Jew is able to sense the exquisite taste of *Torah*. Rather than one seeking reward for studying *Torah*, one who truly senses its delight will feel obligated to his benefactor (G-d) for giving him such an overwhelming degree of pleasure and joy.”

The word “es” regarding the blessing for adhering to the *Torah*, is coming to include not only the knowledge and wisdom of its truth, but also the unlimited degree of pleasure and joy that one will experience. This is the additional benefit that the Jew will receive by adhering to the *Torah*.

*Gemara*: “I (G-d) have created the evil inclination, and the *Torah* as its antidote.” It seems from the *Gemara* that if one engages in *Torah* study, he will naturally incapacitate his evil inclination.

*Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*: It is only when the *Torah* is studied for its own sake (*l’shmah*), that it has the capacity to act as an antidote against the evil inclination and protect the individual from its influence. However, the *Torah* that is studied not for its own sake (*shelo l’shmah*) will not bring about this effect. It will not be an antidote against the evil inclination.

One would think that engaging in *Torah* study is sufficient to counter the evil inclination, regardless of one’s intent.

*Chazal*: “G-d said, ‘I wish that the Jewish people would have abandoned Me, rather than abandoning My *Torah*. Had they engaged in *Torah* study, they would have been able to return to the path of good, because the enlightenment of *Torah* would have brought them back to the good.”

We see from this that G-d said it would have been better for the Jewish people to have engaged in idolatry than to have abandoned the *Torah* because the study of *Torah* would have provided them with a sense of clarity and enlightenment that would have allowed them to return. There is a unique holiness and sanctity in the *Torah* that has the ability to touch upon the soul of the Jew who engages in it.

If so, how do we understand the position of *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* who explains that it is only *Torah* (*l’shmah*) that is studied with a pure intent that has the ability to affect the individual regarding his evil inclination?

In order for a Jew to be able to repent and return to the path of good, engaging in *Torah* study even without the purest intent will be effective. However, in order for the Jew to be affected and impacted to the greatest extent by his *Torah* study, it must be for its own sake.

In order for one to be affected by the holiness of *Torah*, one must be at the level where he senses the pleasure and joy of engaging in its study. This is the individual who understands and appreciates that G-d is not indebted to him for adhering to His will, but rather he is indebted to G-d for bestowing upon him the gift of *Torah*.

It is only possible to achieve this level of understanding and feeling regarding the *Torah* if one is sufficiently spiritualized. Since the *Torah* is a spiritual entity, one can only have a sense of its pleasure and joy if he is spiritualized. If one is immersed in the physical, at best he will experience the study of *Torah* as intellectual joy, but it will not impact significantly upon his soul.

One of the closest students of *Rav Shach zt"l* wrote about him that when he was a young student in Europe, he studied *Tractate Bava Basra* (which is one of the largest Tractates of the *Talmud*) in the winter session and he reviewed it 300 times. When *Rav Shach* studied *Tractate Zvachim* he also reviewed it hundreds of times.

The student wrote that when *Rav Shach* would come into the study hall of the *Ponovitch Yeshivah*, he would review as much as fifty folios of the *Talmud* in a matter of an hour. It was as if he was "devouring the *Gemara*."

*Rav Shach's* level of immersion in *Torah* was something not to be fathomed. He is an example of one who truly experienced the unlimited pleasure and joy of *Torah* study because he totally invested and dedicated every moment of his life to *Torah*. This was because he was sufficiently spiritualized due to his dedication to the will of G-d.

## The Actualization of Mitzvos

*Moshe* recounted the events of the past forty years in the desert: "You shall remember the entire road on which *Hashem*, your G-d led you these forty years in the desert so as to afflict you, to test you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would observe His commandments or not."

*Sforno*: "What is the test that G-d presents? It is not when G-d denies the Jew that He tests him, but rather when He provides the Jew with everything without experiencing any suffering that G-d wants to see how that individual will behave. G-d wants that it should be revealed and seen that what is in one's mind and heart should be actualized. Every angel should know that the level of distinction of the Jew is greater than the most exalted angel..."

The purpose of actualizing one's intent is so that the angel should understand and appreciate the distinction of the Jew. Why is it important that the angel should understand and appreciate the uniqueness of the Jew's spiritual dimension?

*Gemara*: "Tzaddikim are greater than the ministering angels..."

*Nefesh HaChaim*: The *tzaddik* is greater than the most advanced angel because his classification of devoutly righteous only came about through his own initiative and choice, whereas the spiritual dimension of the angel is created and endowed by G-d. Since the *tzaddik* became devoutly righteous due to his own choice and initiative, his accomplishments are accredited to himself, which is not so regarding even the most exalted angel.

*Gemara*: Before the conception of a child, an angel brings the droplet of semen before G-d for a pronouncement of the child's destiny. G-d pronounces upon it, "rich or poor, strong or weak, wise or foolish, healthy or sickly.... However, G-d does not pronounce upon it: righteous or evil."

"From here we see that everything is predestined by heaven, except one's fear of heaven." One's status as devoutly righteous or evil is determined only by one's own initiative and choice.

Although the level of understanding and grasp of holiness of the angel is more advanced than even the greatest *tzaddik*, the degree of spiritual achievement of the *tzaddik* surpasses that of the angel. Why is it important for the angels to understand and appreciate that the spiritual distinction of the Jew is due to his own spiritual initiative to actualize what is in his mind and heart?

*Gemara*: When G-d was going to give the *Torah* to the Jewish people, the angels in heaven came to Him with



a claim, “What is this (unformed) man that is not even worth mentioning? Leave Your splendor in heaven.”

The angels did not want G-d to give the *Torah* to the Jewish people because man is fickle and has a propensity to sin. They wanted the *Torah* to remain in heaven. The angels could not understand why G-d would give the most precious commodity in existence to such an insignificant and flawed being.

G-d told *Moshe* to answer the angels because they did not grasp or understand the important fact that this fickle and insignificant being has greater value than the greatest angel because of his ability to exercise his free choice. Through his own choices and initiatives, man could choose to be devoutly righteous or evil. It is because of this that the Jewish people, regardless of their limitations and propensity to sin, are worthy of receiving the *Torah*.

G-d giving the *Torah* to the Jewish people is the ultimate gift only if man chooses to actualize its commandments. However, if man chooses to neglect or ignore G-d’s will and thus reject the *Torah*, then the outcome will be tragic. G-d wants the Jew to actualize what is in his heart and mind so that the angels will recognize the good that came about through the Jewish people receiving the *Torah* at *Sinai*.



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