

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Re'eh, 5781

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה

Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Re'eh

SEEING ALLUSIONS

The month of Elul emphasizes the spiritual concept “from below to Above” – man’s efforts eliciting a Divine response. The Torah portion of Re’eh – both its name and opening verse – emphasizes the spiritual concept “from Above to below.” Indeed, each word of the opening verse alludes to this approach. The name Elul, on the other hand, is an acronym for “I am for my Beloved and My beloved is for me,” indicating that that which is below (creation) initiates the interaction. These two approaches appear to be contradictory. In truth, both appear in the acronym for Elul. In fact, the name Elul alludes to five areas of human interaction with the Divine, each with its own acronym. The most important of these is Redemption. The practical lesson is to see today, which means to see clearly, not through acronyms or allusions, the reality of Moshiach.

The Torah portion of *Re'eh* is always read close to the beginning of the month of Elul. Most years it is the Shabbos before Rosh *Chodesh* Elul – the Shabbos before the new month begins. In that case, the Shabbos of *Re'eh* is also Shabbos *Mevarchim* – the Shabbos on which is recited the blessing for the new month. In many years, however, the first day of Rosh *Chodesh* Elul – the first day of the new month of Elul – falls on Shabbos. Thus, the Shabbos of *Re'eh* is either right before the month of Elul or actually Rosh *Chodesh* Elul itself. Either way, the beginning of the month of Elul is closely connected with the Torah reading of *Re'eh*. What is the nature of that connection? Why are the month of Elul and the Torah reading of *Re'eh* so inter-related?

Indeed, at first glance the spiritual concepts underlying the month of Elul and those found within the portion of *Re'eh* seem

contradictory. The spiritual concept emphasized in Elul is man's Divine service, a movement from below to Above. In Elul – the month in which one prepares for Rosh Hashanah – first man bestirs himself to approach G-d, which in turn elicits a revelation from G-d to man. There is a well-known acronym of Elul that alludes to this approach. (See the previous essay, on *Ekev*.)

But the Torah reading of *Re'eh* indicates just the opposite type of spiritual movement. It emphasizes the revelation of G-dliness that comes first, after which follows the Divine service of man. This is a movement from Above to below, from G-d's inspiration to man's activity. In fact, each word of the opening phrase of the Torah reading implies that spirituality is drawn from Above to below.

The phrase is: "*Re'eh Anochi Nosain Lifnaychem Hayom Berochah* – See, I place before you today blessing." Let's look at each of these words:

Re'eh – See: One of the differences between seeing and hearing is that hearing goes from particular to general, building an understanding of the whole by adding detail to detail. A story unfolds in the telling, bit by bit, and not until it's all told is there a general understanding. This is bottom-up understanding, from below to above. Seeing, on the other hand, goes from the general to the particular. First one sees the whole scene, without distinguishing details or individual elements. Only after there is a general understanding and overall sense of the picture does one focus on the details. This is top-down understanding, from above to below.

Anochi – I: There are actually two words in Hebrew for the first person singular pronoun. Both "*Ani*" and "*Anochi*" mean "I" and both identify the speaker. The difference is that "*Anochi*" also identifies the exalted, elevated status of the speaker. For example, the prophet Samuel uses the term "*Anochi*" in identifying himself

as a seer. Here again, there is the implication of spirituality flowing from above to below – from the prophet down to the people.

Nosain – Give: Giving obviously is a process of ‘from above to below’ – from giver to receiver.

Lifnaychem – Before you: This further emphasizes a drawing down from Above to below, for the word “*Lifnaychem*” literally means “within you.” The blessing is placed within the Jewish people, within the essence of each individual, and from there extends outward – and downward.

Hayom – Today: This word indicates the eternal present. This is the day, the moment in which one lives. In this sense, every day is always “today.” The cliché, ‘today is the first day of the rest of your life’ derives from the concept that one’s life is drawn from today – from the present which is ‘above,’ down below into the days that follow. And in this sense, each tomorrow becomes a “today.”

Berochah – Blessing: To bless something means to draw down spirituality from above to below. The word “*berochah*” is related to the word for bending, a movement from above to below.

Yet, as we mentioned, the acronym of Elul seems to indicate the exact opposite type of spiritual movement – from below to Above. The best-known acronym for Elul is: *Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li* – “I am for my Beloved, and My beloved is for me.” (The phrase, from Song of Songs, is a metaphor of the mutual love between G-d and the Jewish people.) Each of the four Hebrew words of this phrase begins with one of the four letters of the word “Elul.” This phrase, “I am for my Beloved, and my Beloved is for me,” begins with man’s Divine service (“I am for my Beloved”) and concludes with G-d’s response (“My beloved is for me.”) First we pray to G-d, after which He responds.

Actually, the month of Elul combines both concepts – a Divine service from below to Above, and one from Above to below. The

advantage of *Ani L'dodi* – I am for my Beloved, the Divine service from below to Above, is that the spiritual insight and effect on one's life is achieved primarily through individual effort. On the other hand, the level of spirituality that can be reached by individual effort – and thus the degree of holiness that can be incorporated into one's conduct – is limited by the finite nature of human beings. But when there is a flow of spirituality from Above to below – *V'dodi li* – My Beloved is for me – the potential revelation of G-dliness is unlimited.

Thus, both possibilities are united and combined in the acronym of Elul.

In fact, this concept of unifying *Ani L'dodi* – self-motivated effort – and *V'dodi li* – effort Divinely motivated – applies to no less than five areas of human endeavor, each indicated by an acronym of Elul. (Briefly, the five areas alluded to in the five acronyms are study of Torah, prayer, Acts of Lovingkindness, *teshuvah* or repentance, and preparing for Redemption.) The most famous acronym, the one we've been discussing, *Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li*, alludes to prayer. Three of the acronyms – those for prayer, Torah and *tzedekah* allude to the concept of individual effort – from below to Above; the other two – those for *teshuvah* (which is self-transcendence) and Redemption (the ultimate in transcendence) – allude to a giving of blessing – from Above to below.

What is the practical implication of all this? How do we translate this spiritual insight into action, since “action is the main thing?” First, we have to awaken within ourselves the Divine service connected with the five acronyms of Elul. We have to publicize the inner meaning of Elul – we have to increase our efforts in the “five acronyms,” so to speak. We must add – and help others to add – in Torah, prayer, Acts of Lovingkindness, *teshuvah* and redemption. Particular emphasis must be placed on the last one – the aspect

of Redemption within Elul, for that penetrates all other aspects of one's Divine service.

And even if one claims to not yet understand this concept, how Redemption will occur, nevertheless, since every Jew has complete faith that G-d will bring Moshiach, and that Redemption can – and will – come any day – the blessing is given today – therefore one's obligation to publicize and study about the coming Redemption does not depend on one's comprehension of how it will happen.

In simple terms, we have to announce and publicize everywhere, in an appropriate manner, with words that “go from the heart,” that G-d tells each and every Jew, through His servants the prophets, that “*Re'eh Anochi Nosain Lifnaychem Hayom Berochah*” – “See, I give to you today blessing,” and that this blessing means that we will actually see – today – with our own eyes – the blessing of the true and complete Redemption.

(Based on Sefer HaSichos 5751 Vol. II, pp. 767-779)

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Mrs. Chana (Carrie) bas Reb Meir ע"ה Greenberg
Passed away on 9 Sivan, 5781
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