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Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger
Deep Faith and Deep Love

"That we should now contemplate how to live with people whose ideas are distant from us, to engage them with love and brotherliness, even as we firmly distance our opinions and intuitions from their positions." [1]

That this quote comes from the correspondence of the one of the leading figures of the mussar tradition describing one of the goals of the annual Ellul spiritual journey came as a surprise to me. It was penned by none other than Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv z"tl (1824 - 1898), known as "the Alter of Kelm". He accepted this title, "the elder member of the group", because he felt unworthy of being known as a talmid of his rebbe, Rav Yisroel Salanter. Needless to say, he was one of the greatest students of Rav Yisroel and in turn shaped his own students, Rav Yerucham of the Mir, Rav Eliyahu Dessler, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, and Rav Elia Lopian, all of whom had impacted their generation immeasurably. His piety was otherworldly and his yiras Shomayim was apparently entirely all-embracing, mesmerizing, and frightening all at once.

Indeed, it is this profound and practical awareness of Hashem which produces a person who can be totally true to all the nuances of the truths that shape his life and at the same time love the brother who disagrees. According to Rav Wolbe z"tl, the influential and thought provoking mashgiach of the Mir, it is only the profound awareness of how much we all mean to our Creator that can produce the balance the Alter strived to achieve. That is why this balance has its place among the spiritual heights to be sought during Ellul.

As I was studying this quote and Rav Wolbe's interpretation that it speaks to the depth of one's emunah, it occurred to me that it also sheds light on the juxtapositions and flow of ideas in this week's parsha. We first study about the aggressive evangelical idolater who does not receive the routinely mandated judicial patience and assumptions of innocence. Then we learn the parsha of the ir hanidachas the theoretical parsha of the city in Israel that is

inundated by belligerent idolaters and is to be destroyed. Following all that we read, "You are Hashem's children - lo sisgodayu..." What a jarring non sequitur!

Now, the literal reading of "lo sisgodayu" (14:1) bans the early Semitic practice of cutting oneself and views that as an overreaction, or at least as a poorly directed reaction, to loss. According to Ibn Ezra this is the meaning of the introductory phrase of the pasuk, "You are children of Hashem", i.e. our belief in His concern for us should blunt the depth of our reaction to tragedy. However, the mesora teaches that "lo sisgodayu" also rules against establishing "agudos agudos", factions and walls within a community [2].

After reading about the obligation to confront and remove those who aggressively and programmatically seek to destroy the very core of our faith, we are forcefully reminded to see all who do not cross that line as Hashem's offspring. In turn, Hashem asks that we all subscribe to the unity of our people and subject ourselves to its requirements.

It is that attitude, "banim atem laShem - you are Hashem's children", that, according to Rav Wolbe, determines that one's deeply felt faith and religiosity will be empathetic and engaging, rather than fierce, threatening and self-righteous. He argues that the mitzvah of ahavas Shomayim - to love Hashem - assures that our beliefs must be accompanied with that love and that it spills over to all that Hashem loves, all of his children.

Studying the parsha of the cities and the well-planted spies that attempt to undermine our entire enterprise reminds us of how uncompromisingly protective we must be of the greatest gifts and challenges given to us. It is palpable faith naturally coupled with a robust ahavas Shomayim that in turn assures that we are as protective and as loving of Jews as we can possibly be.

[1] Quoted in rav wolbe's "be'emunosos yichye" page 93. Loosely translated [2] That means that whereas we are all encouraged to maintain authentic and well-based customs and practices, we must refrain from doing so within a community that has a decidedly different observance. Refraining from putting on tefillin on chol hamoed in a bais hamedrash in Yerushalayim, despite one's personal practice, is the classic modern illustration of the mesorah's principle. Clearly, maintaining one's practice of putting on tefillin on chol hamoed when it does not set one apart from the community is mandated. Yet even a firmly based communal legacy must be set aside if it would create the image of two groups distinguishing themselves in their observance.

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When Is Kiddush Levanah?

by R. Gil Student

Rosh Chodesh Elul marks the end of the Jewish summer and the beginning of the autumn holiday season. Throughout the month, we engage in customs that grow as we approach Rosh Hashanah, preparing us for the annual judgment day. In accordance with this mood, the Mateh Ephraim (582:1) writes that we should be particularly careful to recite Kiddush Levanah, the blessing on the renewal of the moon, at the best time. This poses a halakhic challenge to determine which time is best. There are at least three different opinions on the subject.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 41b) asks when the latest time is to say Kiddush Levanah. Rabbi Yochanan says until the moon's concavity is filled. One opinion in the Gemara is that this means until seven days, another opinion is until sixteen days. The Gemara does not say anything about the earliest time for Kiddush Levanah but Rashi (ad loc., sv. ad kamah) says that you can recite the blessing on the first day of the month. Similarly, Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Berachos 10:17) writes that if you do my recite Kiddush Levanah the first night, you can say it until the sixteenth. According to Rashi and Rambam, the best time to recite Kiddush Levanah is the first night of the month. Others disagree.

Masekhes Soferim (20:1) says: "We do not recite the blessing on the moon except on Saturday night, when he is happy (mevusam) and wearing nice clothes." Talmidei Rabbenu Yonah (Berakhos 21a in the Rif) but without the phrase "Motza'ei Shabbos, Saturday night," and offer two interpretations of the word "mevusam," which we just translated as happy. The first is that it refers to Saturday night, when we recite a blessing on spices (besamim) in Havdalah. Maybe the words "Motza'ei Shabbos" were written on the side of the text by a commentator and mistakenly added into the text by a copyist. The second explanation is that the moon, not the man, should be mevusam, like a canopy, which takes two to three days after the new moon. Rabbenu Yonah rejects the first interpretation, effectively requiring you to wait three days--until the fourth night--before reciting Kiddush Levanah, so the moon is large enough to make an impact with its light. Avudraham (Hilkhos Berakhos, ch. 8) suggests that "mevusam" means sweet, i.e. when a person can enjoy the light of the moon. Similarly, the Siddur Rav Sa'adyah Ga'on (p. 90) says to recite Kiddush Levanah from the fourth night through the fourteenth night.

We have seen three views about when you may first recite Kiddush Levanah: the first night of the month, the first Saturday night, the fourth night. Surprisingly, the Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 426:4) follows a fourth view. It quotes a responsum of Rav Yosef Jikatilla in which he rules, based on Kabbalah, that you may only recite Kiddush Levanah after the seventh day, i.e. beginning on the eighth night. The Bach (ad loc.) strongly opposes that view. He points out that the Gemara records a debate about the last day to recite Kiddush Levanah but not the first day, implying they all agree on that subject. But one opinion is that the last day is the seventh day, which is impossible according to Rav Yosef Jikatilla. The Bach adds that he has a tradition from his teachers that you only wait three full days before reciting Kiddush Levanah.

The Rama Mi-Fano (Responsa, no. 78) defends the Shulchan Arukh. He explains that the two opinions in the Gemara actually agree. One is saying the earliest day for the blessing (after seven days) and the other the last day for the blessing (sixteen). The Chasam Sofer (Responsa, Orach Chaim no. 102) praises this explanation and says that the custom is to wait seven days, if possible. However, the Yeshu'os Ya'akov (526:6) finds this explanation of the Gemara unlikely. (See Rav Ovadiah Yosef, Yechaveh Da'as 2:24 for more sources.)

Rav Eliezer Melamed (Peninei Halakhah, Zemanim 1:18) summarizes current practice as follows:

"The custom of Chassidim and Sephardim is not to recite the blessing before seven days in the month. The custom of Ashkenaz is to recite the blessing after three days. But in practice we recite Kiddush Levanah on Saturday night in order to say it with joy and nice clothes. So in practice, according to the custom of Ashkenaz and Morocco, we recite Kiddush Levanah on the Saturday night after three full days from the time of the molad (new moon). According to the custom of Sephardim and Chassidim, we recite Kiddush Levanah on the Saturday night after the seventh of the month."

However, the Arukh Ha-Shulchan (526:7), writing in Poland, writes that during the winter the practice is not to wait until Saturday night because of the frequency of cloudy nights. Instead, they would recite Kiddush Levanah the first night possible after three full days. Since Elul is less cloudy, it seems that Ashkenazim should recite Kiddush Levanah the first Saturday night possible. This year, the molad is on Friday so the next Saturday night is a good time for Kiddush Levanah for Ashkenazim, Sephardim and Chassidim.

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman – Parshas Re'eh Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul 5775
As we prepare for the season of the Yomim Noraim, the season where we take things a little more seriously and hopefully a lot more seriously in our Avodas Hashem. This week's Parsha has in it the **Mitzvah of Tzedakah** ...

1. Let me start with the Inyan of Tzedakah because I saw a beautiful Shaila in the Sefer V'harev Na. I would like to share it with you because it deals with a Yesodosdika Kler, a Chakira in Dinai Tzedaka. There is a Kler if Dinai Torah regarding Tzedakah are Choshen Mishpatdika Dinim. That is, that it is either ruled by the rules of Choshen Mishpat, Bain Adam L'chaveiro, between me and the Oni or whether they are Yore Daia' dika Dinim, Dinim that are judged as a Din Issur. The fact that the Halachos are found in Yore Dai'a would seem to indicate that. Well, let me tell you the case in V'harev Na Cheilek Bais on this week's Parsha. They bring that a man had a child that was not well in his house and he went to a Talmid Chochom and begged him to Daven for the child. He offered him money and the Talmid Chochom refused. The Talmid Chochom then said if my Tefillos will work and be Poel then I will take the money. To which the donor said if your Tefillos are Poel, and the child is healed I will give you 10,000 Shekel. Of course the story continues that the child was healed (otherwise there would be no story). Now he came for the 10,000 Shekel which was supposed to go to Tzedakah which would be distributed to Aniyim by this Talmid Chochom. He said Nu where is it? To which the person responded well you have to prove to me that it was your Tefillos that caused the child to be healed as that was the deal. If your Tefillos cause the child to be healed then I have to give you the money. I did other things too. I gave money to Kupas Ha'ir, I said Tehillim, who says that your Tefilla was Poel that I should owe you the money? This is the question that Rav Zilberstein brings in the Sefer. Rav Zilberstein points to Shailos Uteshuvos Chasam Sofer Yor'e Dai'a Siman 240 where he deals with exactly this question. What happens when you have a Safeik regarding Tzedakah, do we say Hamotzi Mai'chaveiro Alav Haraya, if that rule applies then in our case he doesn't have to give the money because after all Hamotzi Mai'chaveiro Alav Haraya you have to prove that your Tefilla was Poel. Or do we say Safeik D'oraissa L'chumra. It is an Issur, if you pledge money and you don't do it, it is a Neder. Safeik Issur L'chumra and then you have to be Machmir Mai'safeik.

The Chasam Sofer says and we find in Yor'e Dai'a 259:5 that if someone has money in his hand and he is M'supak if it belongs to Tzedakah he has to give it to Tzedakah. Says the Chasam Sofer it is a B'feirush Mechabeir in Shulchan Aruch that by a Safeik you have to be Machmir. Obviously it has a Din of Safeik Issur. Therefore, the Psak is that Mai'safeik a person has to be Machmir. Ad Kan is what it says there in the Sefer V'harev Na.

I would like to add that this is a perfect example of not Paskening Halachos from story books, from books that bring down stories even stories of Gedolim, even Piskei Halacha, because this is not complete. In the Sefer it brings the Shitta of the Mechabeir. They don't bring the Rema, the Shach, and GRA. The GRA argues straight out. The Rema makes sort of a Chiluk on this ruling. The Shach stays at a Tzorech Iyun. So there is much more there. I would like to share with you a second piece and that is in the Igras Moshe, Yor'e Dai'a Cheilek Aleph Teshuva Kuf Nun. He deals with this issue of Safeik by Tzedakah. He makes the following distinction. He says when there is a Safeik if Tzedaka is Chal, whether there is an obligation to give Tzedakah came and I don't know if I am obligated then it has Dinei Choshen Mishpat, it is not Chal. In a case where you know there is an obligation to give Tzedakah and the Safeik is where to give it, in that case the Shulchan Aruch is talking and says Safeik L'chumra. In other words the Chasam Sofer's Shaila is by someone who promised to give Tzedaka but he is not sure to whom, so the Chasam Sofer says to me Machmir. Why be Machmir? Because once there is a Chiyuv Tzedakah it becomes B'dinei Issur. What does Rav Moshe say? When there is a question if there is a Chiyuv Tzedakah then the Rama's ruling rules and then there is no obligation. If you accept this difference, if you go to the beginning of the story, in our case it is a Safeik if the obligation was Chal and therefore, the person would seem to be Pattur. And so we have an interesting Shaila, two ways of approaching it. In Yeshiva you remember we had differences between Aini Yodai'a Im Nischayavti and Aini Yodai'a Im Parati. Different rules and this is a great example of it. This is what it says in V'hareiv Na. ...

from: Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org>

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Ir HaNidachat

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Few Mitzvot in the Torah seem as violent as the rules set forth in Devarim Perek 13 regarding the Ir HaNidachat, a city in which a majority of the inhabitants serve Avodah Zarah (idolatry). The Torah demands that we kill all of the city's inhabitants (even the minority who did not serve Avodah Zarah) and burn all of their possessions.

The Challenge

While it is understood that morality requires good people to eliminate evil[1], the administration of the death penalty to an entire city seems brutal and incongruent with Sefer Mishlei's (3:17) characterization of the Torah: "Deracheha Darchei No'am VeChol Netivoteha Shalom," "its ways are pleasant and all its path are peaceful." Thus, we are challenged to find an explanation for why Hashem includes this rule in the Torah.

A Question that Might Unlock the Message

A clue to unlocking this mystery lies in the surprising phrase presented in Devarim 13:18 in the context of Ir HaNidachat, "VeNatan Lecha Rachamim," meaning that Hashem should bestow mercy upon us. This phrase's appearance after the Torah's describing a Mitzvah to kill all of the inhabitants of a city is astonishing. The concept of Rachamim appears to be starkly out of place when discussing the rules of an Ir HaNidachat. How do we explain the promise of mercy in the context of a Mitzvah that requires violent action?

Three Classic Answers

Ramban (Devarim 13:16) explains that the mercy element in the Ir HaNidachat teaches us to spare the children from punishment[2]. In a variation on this theme, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his Oznayim LaTorah, explains that mercy is required to adopt the orphaned children of an Ir HaNidachat[3].

The Netziv[4], in his HaAmeik Davar, explains that the Torah is concerned that engaging in violent activity, even when it is necessary to do so, will negatively transform people into violent individuals[5]. Thus, those who administered the death penalty to the residents of an Ir HaNidachat are in need of Hashem's gift of mercy so that their justified, yet violent, actions do not transform them into violent people.

A Different Approach, Based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 71b) presents an opinion that an Ir HaNidachat would never occur. The Gemara explains that since the Torah requires that everything in an Ir HaNidachat be burned, an Ir HaNidachat cannot be destroyed, so long as it contains even a single Mezuzah. Since a Mezuzah contains Hashem's name, it cannot be destroyed; its destruction would violate the prohibition of erasing Hashem's name (Devarim 12:4, with Rashi's comments)[6].

This idea has profound implications. One tiny Mezuzah can spare an entire city from the status of an Ir HaNidachat! This teaches that a drop of positive energy has the power and potential to counter much negativity. The Kabbalah expresses this idea in its statement that a little bit of light can dispel much darkness[7].

One may ask, though, what would happen if a city met the requirements of an Ir HaNidachat and contained not a single Mezuzah. How can the opinion presented by the Gemara claim that an Ir HaNidachat is an impossibility if there is a distinct possibility that the Jews in the city have strayed so far from Judaism to the extent that there remains not even a single Mezuzah?

We may answer based on Rashi (Devarim 31:21 s.v. Ki Lo Tishachach MiPi Zar'o), who states that "the Torah has promised that the Torah will never be completely forgotten by the Jewish People." Thus, asserting that an Ir HaNidachat is an impossibility affirms faith in the Jewish People and in the

belief that there will never be a city among our people where the inhabitants have strayed to the extent that there is not even one Mezuzah in the town[8].

Another answer is based on a story told about the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Lubavitcher Rebbe is reported to have remarked that if he heard that a city was about to be declared an Ir HaNidachat, he would arise at two in the morning and affix a Mezuzah to a home in that city. In other words, were a city to be devoid of any authentic Jewish influence and presence, the Lubavitcher Rebbe would create an authentic center of Jewish life. As is well known, this was not a passing sentiment of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, but rather a life's mission for himself and his followers. An examination of www.chabad.org leads one to marvel at the hundreds of centers of Jewish life established by followers of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in almost every corner of the globe, especially in areas which had a dearth of Jewish life. These efforts are part of the happy story of the resurgence and revitalization of Orthodox Judaism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The Challenge of the Ir HaNidachat

Thus, we argue that the Torah never intended for us to implement the rules of Ir HaNidachat. Rather, it is a call and challenge to the Jewish People to ensure that a Jewish community never becomes an Ir HaNidachat. For this reason, we suggest that the term "mercy" perfectly suits the idea of an Ir HaNidachat. The presence of this word in the Torah's presenting the rules of the Ir HaNidachat is a signal that an Ir HaNidachat should be interpreted and implemented in a merciful manner. The concept of an Ir HaNidachat is a call for us to take responsibility for each other's spiritual welfare and not a summons to violent action.

Support from Ramban Regarding a Kahal Shogeig

Support for this contention may be drawn from

Ramban's comments to BeMidbar 15:22. Ramban asserts that if an entire community does not observe the Torah, its members (not its leaders) are considered to be sinning BeShogeig, inadvertently, since they are merely swept up by the current of the time. Support for this surprising assertion of a Kahal Shogeig (the inadvertent community) may be drawn from a nearby Pasuk (15:26) that states, "VeNislach Lechol Adat Benei Yisrael...Ki LeChol HaAm BiShegagah," meaning that Hashem forgives the entire Jewish people since the communal sin is regarded as unintentional. The importance of this principle is evident from the fact that we recite this Pasuk no less than three times at the conclusion of Kol Nidrei, on the onset of Yom Kippur.

Ramban's "Kahal Shogeig principle," however, seems to run counter to the principle of an Ir HaNidachat, where the death penalty is administered to an entire community for worshipping Avodah Zarah. While inadvertent sinners are not absolved of guilt, they nonetheless hardly deserve the death penalty. According to Ramban, why should the members of an Ir HaNidachat deserve the death penalty?

We may answer that in practice, the death penalty is not administered to the residents of an Ir HaNidachat, since the Torah challenges us to make sure that a spiritually lacking city does not become an Ir HaNidachat. The Torah does not intend to punish the residents of an Ir HaNidachat, but it rather challenges the Jewish People to mercifully intervene and strengthen the Jewish identity of a wayward community.

Conclusion

"HaTzur Tamim Pa'olo Ki Chol Derachav Mishpat," "Hashem's work is perfect, for all his ways are just"; "Keil Emunah VeEin Avel, Tzaddik VeYashar Hu," "a trustworthy God without impropriety, righteous and fair is He" (Devarim 32:4). Far from being a brutal and unforgiving Halachah, the Ir HaNidachat is, in practice, a law of mercy and kind intervention. It constitutes a Torah mandate that has been fulfilled not only by members of the Lubavitch community, but by many other groups of Jews as well – ranging from the Orthodox Union's National Conference of Synagogue Youth and Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus, to the Aish HaTorah network of institutions, to the Torah Links organizations established in many

communities – that serve as beacons of Torah light in otherwise dark places, thereby becoming the solitary Mezuzah in an Ir HaNidachat.

What we have discovered regarding the Ir HaNidachat is true of everything in the Torah. What might appear to be unfair at first glance is, in reality, fair and just. We are challenged to take a deeper look at and properly analyze passages that we might find incompatible with our moral intuitions in order to discover the true meaning and implementation of the Torah's rules. With proper investigation and analysis, we can discover that all of the ways of the Torah are "Darchei No'am" and represent "Netivot Shalom" (Mishlei 3:17).

[1] This is why the Torah issues a death penalty for violations of severe transgressions. However, as is well known, Batei Din very rarely administered the death penalty (Makkot 7a).

[2] See, however, Rambam's comments in Hilchot Avodah Zarah (4:6).

[3] Be'eir Yosef (Parashat VaYishlach) similarly interprets Targum Yonatan ben Uzziel (Shemot 13:18) as teaching that each family that left Mitzrayim adopted the children of the many assimilated Jews that died (according to Chazal, cited by Rashi ad loc. s.v. VaChamushim) during Makkat Choshech.

[4] The Or HaChayim presents a similar approach.

[5] Therapists throughout the civilized world often endeavor to ensure that military veterans are not negatively impacted by their combat experiences, even after fighting a morally justified war. The Netziv similarly explains that Pinechas required a Berit Shalom (covenant of peace, BeMidbar 25:12) lest his necessary violent actions against Zimri ben Salu and Kozbi bat Tzur negatively impact his personality. The story presented in Sefer Yehoshua (Perek 22), in which Pinechas acts as a peacemaker, demonstrates that Pinechas successfully met this challenge.

[6] Torah Academy of Bergen County alumnus Avi Eserner ('04) pointed out (during our Shiur in 2003) that this rule would apply even if the solitary Mezuzah was Pesulah (invalid), since it still contains Hashem's name.

[7] This is one of the many rich themes expressed by our Chanukah candles. It is also expressed in Avraham Avinu's Tefillah that the presence of ten Tzaddikim could spare Sedom from destruction.

[8] Rav Soloveitchik, in a number of his Shiurim, emphasizes the importance of maintaining faith not only in Hashem, but in the Jewish People as well. For example, Rambam (Hilchot Teshuvah 7:5) rules in accordance with the opinion of Rabi Eli'ezer that the Jewish People will be redeemed only if they repent. Thus, Rambam's principle of faith that one must have belief in the arrival of the Mashiach includes a belief that the Jewish People will eventually repent, since Mashiach cannot come otherwise.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: Re'eh Rabbi Berel Wein

Thomas Jefferson wrote in the American Declaration of Independence that certain truths are self-evident. His inspiration for this idea came from our great teacher Moshe who points out clearly in this week's reading that one's choices in life are clearly evident. King Solomon in Kohelet points out that the Lord created human beings and imbued them with simple righteousness, but that they constantly search for devious means to fulfill unjust desires. The Torah, by using the verb re'eh, clearly implies that the choice between eternal life and death, between right and wrong, between good and evil is not that complicated. One can see and sense the correct path in life and follow it. As an aid to this self-evident truth, one need only review past history and contemplate what has gone before us, both personally and nationally. In all of its ritual complexities and technical rules, Judaism is, in its essence, a clear and simple faith. This point is hammered home over and over again by Moshe in his grand final oration to the Jewish people. What made the founders of the Jewish people and the protagonists of monotheism in the world so unique was their innate ability to recognize what is self-evident in this world. Namely, that the world was created, that there is a Creator and that human beings have the ability and necessity to connect somehow with

that Creator. Once these self-evident truths are acknowledged and firmly entrenched in our minds and hearts, then the laws and customs of Israel logically follow and complete the pattern of our service to the Creator and to those that He created. Swept along by the tide of events and the wearying details of everyday life, we are often unable to stop and think about these truths that form the basis of our existence and purpose here in the world. The great Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto begins his epic masterpiece Mesilat Yesharim, with the basic question of life: "What is our purpose and goal in life?" That question has haunted human beings throughout all of the ages and eras of human existence on this planet. This has been the issue that has been the driving force of human civilizations in all times and under all circumstances. Many have been the answers given to this question. Almost all of them have led humans away from the straight path and caused rational thinking people to deny the truths that daily remind us of who and why we are. The powers of greed, desire, physical pleasure and unrealistic and utopian do-goodness have overwhelmed our clear eyesight and instinctive rational thought processes. Having tasted forbidden fruit, it is extremely difficult to rid one's self of the aftertaste. Moshe attempts to forewarn us of the consequences of not seeing and thinking correctly and clearly. Therefore before discussing any of the commandments or ritual complexities of the Torah, he first demands from his listeners and students, down through the ages, that they harken to the truths that lie before them on a constant and everyday basis. This is really the key to Judaism and Jewish survival. Shabbat shalom

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**Torah Weekly :: Parshat Re'eh by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -
www.seasonsofthemoon.com For the week ending 3 September 2016 /
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Insights A Promise of Eternity

"...You are children to the L-rd, your G-d — you shall not cut yourselves and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person." (14:1-2)

The fact that the Jewish People are a holy people promises them eternity. It's axiomatic that G-d doesn't waste His time, so to speak. Why would He create a holy nation to then assign them to oblivion? What would be the point of infusing them with His own Holiness, and then have them evaporate like a mist after a few score years?

Thus, it is not fit to allow our mourning to break the bounds of reason, to cut and mutilate our bodies as was the way of other cultures, and even for the death of a child, G-d forbid. The fact that we are "children of G-d..." reveals our promise of eternity.

However, to cry and to mourn is only natural when taking our leave of a loved one, and thus our Sages prohibited only excessive mourning, but to mourn a loved one is only a proper and natural expression of our own loss, not the fate of the departed one who has returned to our Father. *Source: based on the Ramban © 2016 Ohr Somayach International*

http://www.ou.org/torah/author/Rabbi_Dr_Tzvi_Hersh_Weinreb

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

OU Torah Re'eh: Acquiring Faith Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

This week's Torah portion, Parshat Re'eh (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17), invariably is read near the beginning of the Hebrew month of Elul. Elul is the last month of the year before Rosh Hashanah. It has a special place in religious life because it is viewed as a time to prepare oneself for the process

of divine judgment, which begins on Rosh Hashanah and concludes on Yom Kippur.

Despite my excellent early Jewish education, I was fairly ignorant about the significance of Elul until the year I began my post-high school Jewish studies. It was then that a teacher introduced me to a spiritual approach known as the Mussar movement. This movement was inspired by a charismatic, scholarly, creative Lithuanian rabbi in the second half of the 19th century. His name was Israel Salanter. He found the religious condition of the Jews of his time to be deficient in several respects. For one thing, he was convinced that people were ignoring the ethical dimensions of our tradition. He insisted that one had to be very meticulous in his or her ethical behavior and devote extra caution to relationships with other people. He was also concerned with the lack of true faith, the absence of yir'at shamayim, fear of Heaven.

Thus, he developed a comprehensive methodology for achieving faith in the Almighty, true "fear of heaven." He also formulated a program through which individuals could attain greater sensitivity to their own ethical behavior with regard to their spouses, friends, employers and employees, and neighbors, Jewish or otherwise. He placed special emphasis upon the month of Elul, when Jews approach the impending days of judgment; he realized that these waning days of the Jewish year represent the optimal time to focus on what we would call faith in God and one's duties to his fellow man.

The teacher who inspired me to learn more about Rabbi Israel Salanter and to follow his rigorous program of religious and ethical self-improvement was a man named Rabbi Zeidel Epstein, may he rest in peace. I will reserve a detailed description of this remarkable spiritual mentor for another venue. Suffice it to say that he was, for me and for my peers, a bridge to the lost world of the disciples and followers of Rabbi Salanter. Rabbi Epstein had a long and distinguished teaching career, which began at the yeshiva I attended in New York City and which culminated in the holy city of Jerusalem, where he passed away about ten years ago, at nearly one hundred years old.

I was intrigued by one of the central teachings of Rabbi Salanter. For, you see, about the time that I was attending Rabbi Epstein's lectures, I was also enrolled in a secular university and was taking a course in the philosophy of religion. One of the questions we explored in that class was how to obtain religious faith. We studied a wide range of techniques ranging from meditation and contemplation to the proofs of the existence of God, which were popular even among traditional Jewish philosophers during the Middle Ages. It was then that I was first exposed to William James' classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. We even experimented with methods of cultivating ecstatic mental states in order to directly apprehend the Divine. Rabbi Salanter suggested a very different approach, one which was nowhere to be found on the curriculum of the college course in which I was enrolled. Instead, he preached that the way to achieve emunah, faith, or to use the term he preferred, yir'at shamayim, fear of heaven, was to engage in moral behavior and character refinement. He emphatically maintained that only when we improve our relationships with others do we begin to connect with God.

Permit me to attempt to illuminate Rabbi Salanter's theory by referring to a passage from one of the literary works we studied in that class on the philosophy of religion. It was from the section entitled "The Grand Inquisitor" in Fyodor Dostoevsky's classic novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. In it, one of the brothers, Ivan, states that "if God is absent, then everything is permitted." In other words, the basis of ethics and morality is the existence of God. Without God, there is no reason to be ethical or moral, and anarchy reigns in human life.

Ironically, Rabbi Salanter and the famous Russian novelist were exact contemporaries of each other, although it is highly doubtful that either of them knew of the other's existence. But Ivan Karamazov's words, if inverted, express Rabbi Salanter's insight very well: Instead of "If God is absent then everything is permitted" invert the words to read "If everything is permitted, then God is absent." Meaning, God is absent in a society where

men behave as if everything is permitted and there is no distinction between right and wrong. In such a society, it is futile to search for God and try to gain religious faith.

On the other hand, if a society acts in accordance with principles of right and wrong, and realizes that not everything is permitted, possibilities of faith in the divine open up. Belief in God depends upon righteous behavior. Elul is the time to intensify and enhance righteous behavior in the individual and in society, thus creating an opening for emunah and yir'at shamayim. In the words of one of Rabbi Salanter's disciples, "Emunah (faith) can only be achieved through tikkun hamidot (character development)."

This insight, seemingly so simple and direct yet philosophically so profound, is expressed in the wording of one particular phrase in this week's Torah portion. The verse reads:

"Observe and understand (shamor v'shamata) all these matters that I command you; so that it will go well with you and with your descendants after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 12:28)

The commentator Ohr HaChaim wonders about the first part of this verse. Should it not read "understand and observe?" Why is the observation, the fulfillment, written before the need for understanding? Surely it would be preferable to first understand and only then to obey.

Rabbi Chaim Zaitchik, an ardent devotee of Rabbi Salanter's movement who survived the Holocaust, wrote an essay entitled "Flawed Character Traits Weaken Faith," which offers the following explanation of why we must first "do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord" and only then understand Him:

"From this we gain the following guidance: in order for a person to achieve the precious quality of faith in the Almighty in his life, he cannot do so through intellectual inquiry. He must first rectify his ethical and moral conduct, laying down a foundation of good deeds and charitable acts, and then thereby develop a complete and strong faith. Only then can he understand the meaning of yir'at shamayim, only then will faith be revealed to him."

As we advance from the advent of Elul to the High Holy Days, to the days of awe and judgment, we would do well to remember the teachings of the 19th century Rabbi Israel Salanter, and the teachings of those of his disciples, Rabbis Epstein and Zaitchik, who survived into the late 20th and even early 21st century. We would do well to focus on character development and self-improvement in our ethical and moral conduct; for to the extent that we grow in our behavior to other persons, we will be granted strengthened faith and a more profound appreciation of the Ribbono shel Olam, the Master of the Universe.

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GETTING BY GIVING Rav Yochanan Zweig

You shall truly tithe... (14:22)

The Gemara (Taanis 9a) records a fascinating conversation between R' Yochanan and his young nephew. R' Yochanan asked his nephew, 'Recite to me the Bible verse [you have learned today]. The latter replied, 'You shall surely tithe.' At the same time, his nephew asked, 'What are the meaning of these words?' R' Yochanan answered, 'Give tithes that you may be enriched.' The boy then asked, 'How do you know this?' R' Yochanan replied: 'Go test it [for yourself].' The boy thereupon asked, 'Is it permissible to test the Holy One, blessed be He? Do we not have a verse (Devarim 6:16) that says "You shall not try the Lord?"' R' Yochanan replied, "Thus said R' Oshaia: The case of tithe-giving is excepted [from the prohibition], as it is said (Malachi 3:10), "Bring the tithes unto the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and with this you may test me." In other words, a person can literally test Hashem's promise to enrich those that give tzedakah. Even though the

general rule is that one may not test the Almighty; the mitzvah of giving charity is exempted from this prohibition. Not only is it exempted but Hashem actually encourages us to test Him by giving charity. Additionally, the Gemara (Pesachim 8a) states that if a person says, "I am giving this money in order that my son shall live," he is a complete tzaddik. Meaning that even though he is giving the money with an ulterior motive, it is a proper act of tzedakah and he is considered righteous. Why is the mitzvah of tzedakah an exemption to the prohibition of testing Hashem? Furthermore, there is a general rule laid down in Pirkei Avos (1:3) which says, "Do not be as a servant serving his master in order to receive reward." So, why is the mitzvah of tzedakah different? Rashi (Vayikra 20:17) explains that the word chessed in Aramaic means shame. In prior editions of INSIGHTS we have explained that Aramaic is the language of understanding another person's perspective. While a person may feel good about sharing his good fortune with others by giving tzedakah, one has to also consider the receiver's perspective. In other words, when a person has to accept chessed from someone there is a devastating feeling of embarrassment that he cannot take care of his own needs. This is why we ask Hashem in bentsching: "Do not cause us to come to need to rely on gifts or loans from others." It is debilitating to one's psyche to have to rely on the largesse of others for survival. Yet, we know that giving tzedakah and doing chessed are key components of one's obligation to "follow in His ways." So how do we reconcile this obligation with the pain being caused to the recipient of tzedakah? This is the reason why Hashem created a system by which the person giving is monetarily enriched by his act of tzedakah. Just as a person would not be embarrassed to be paid for giving someone terrific investment advice, so too a person receiving tzedakah is providing the giver the opportunity to enrich themselves. In fact, it is better than ordinary investment advice; its success is actually guaranteed by the Almighty. Hashem, in his infinite wisdom, is removing the poor person's shame in receiving tzedakah by enabling him to give back to the person giving the tzedakah. Perhaps this is why the word "nassan - to give" in Hebrew is a palindrome - a word that reads the same backwards and forward; because the giving goes in both directions.

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The Deep Power of Joy Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Re'eh - Covenant & Conversation 5776 / 2016 on Spirituality

On 14 October 1663 the famous diarist Samuel Pepys paid a visit to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Creechurch Lane in the city of London. Jews had been exiled from England in 1290 but in 1656, following an intercession by Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam, Oliver Cromwell concluded that there was in fact no legal barrier to Jews living there. So for the first time since the thirteenth century Jews were able to worship openly.

The first synagogue, the one Pepys visited, was simply a private house belonging to a successful Portuguese Jewish merchant, Antonio Fernandez Carvajal, that had been extended to house the congregation. Pepys had been in the synagogue once before, at the memorial service for Carvajal who died in 1659. That occasion had been sombre and decorous. What he saw on his second visit was something else altogether, a scene of celebration that left him scandalised. This is what he wrote in his diary:

... after dinner my wife and I, by Mr. Rawlinson's conduct, to the Jewish Synagogue: where the men and boys in their vayles (i.e. tallitot), and the women behind a lattice out of sight; and some things stand up, which I believe is their Law, in a press (i.e. the Aron) to which all coming in do bow; and at the putting on their vayles do say something, to which others that hear him do cry Amen, and the party do kiss his vayle. Their service all in a singing way, and in Hebrew. And anon their Laws that they take out of the

press are carried by several men, four or five several burthens in all, and they do relieve one another; and whether it is that every one desires to have the carrying of it, I cannot tell, thus they carried it round about the room while such a service is singing ... But, Lord! to see the disorder, laughing, sporting, and no attention, but confusion in all their service, more like brutes than people knowing the true God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more and indeed I never did see so much, or could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this.

Poor Pepys. No one told him that the day he chose to come to the synagogue was Simchat Torah, nor had he ever seen in a house of worship anything like the exuberant joy of the day when we dance with the Torah scroll as if the world was a wedding and the book a bride, with the same abandon as King David when he brought the holy ark into Jerusalem.

Joy is not the first word that naturally comes to mind when we think of the severity of Judaism as a moral code or the tear-stained pages of Jewish history. As Jews we have degrees in misery, postgraduate qualifications in guilt, and gold-medal performances in wailing and lamentation. Someone once summed up the Jewish festivals in three sentences: "They tried to kill us. We survived. Let's eat." Yet in truth what shines through so many of the psalms is pure, radiant joy. And joy is one of the keywords of the book of Devarim. The root s-m-kh appears once each in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, but twelve times in Devarim, seven of them in our parsha.

What Moses says again and again is that joy is what we should feel in the land of Israel, the land given to us by God, the place to which the whole of Jewish life since the days of Abraham and Sarah has been a journey. The vast universe with its myriad galaxies and stars is God's work of art, but within it planet earth, and within that the land of Israel, and the sacred city of Jerusalem, is where He is closest, where His presence lingers in the air, where the sky is the blue of heaven and the stones are a golden throne. There, said Moses, in "the place the Lord your God will choose ... to place His Name there for His dwelling" (Deut. 12:5), you will celebrate the love between a small and otherwise insignificant people and the God who, taking them as His own, lifted them to greatness.

It will be there, said Moses, that the entire tangled narrative of Jewish history would become lucid, where a whole people – "you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no hereditary portion with you" – will sing together, worship together and celebrate the festivals together, knowing that history is not about empire or conquest, nor society about hierarchy and power, that commoner and king, Israelite and priest are all equal in the sight of God, all voices in his holy choir, all dancers in the circle at whose centre is the radiance of the Divine. This is what the covenant is about: the transformation of the human condition through what Wordsworth called "the deep power of joy."¹

Happiness (in Greek eudaemonia), Aristotle said, is the ultimate purpose of human existence. We desire many things, but usually as a means to something else. Only one thing is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else, namely happiness.²

There is such a sentiment in Judaism. The biblical word for happiness, Ashrei, is the first word of the book of Psalms and a key word of our daily prayers. But far more often, Tanakh speaks about simcha, joy – and they are different things. Happiness is something you can feel alone, but joy, in Tanakh, is something you share with others. For the first year of marriage, rules Devarim (24:5) a husband must "stay at home and bring joy to the wife he has married." Bringing first-fruits to the Temple, "You and the Levite and the stranger living among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household" (26:11). In one of the most extraordinary lines in the Torah, Moses says that curses will befall the nation not because they served idols or abandoned God but "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness out of the abundance of all things" (28:47). A failure to rejoice is the first sign of decadence and decay.

There are other differences. Happiness is about a lifetime but joy lives in the moment. Happiness tends to be a cool emotion, but joy makes you want to dance and sing. It's hard to feel happy in the midst of uncertainty. But you can still feel joy. King David in the Psalms spoke of danger, fear, dejection, sometimes even despair, but his songs usually end in the major key:

For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning ...

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever. (Psalm 30:6-13)

In Judaism joy is the supreme religious emotion. Here we are, in a world filled with beauty. Every breath we breathe is the spirit of God within us. Around us is the love that moves the sun and all the stars. We are here because someone wanted us to be. The soul that celebrates, sings.

And yes, life is full of grief and disappointments, problems and pains, but beneath it all is the wonder that we are here, in a universe filled with beauty, among people each of whom carries within them a trace of the face of God. Robert Louis Stevenson rightly said: "Find out where joy resides and give it a voice far beyond singing. For to miss the joy is to miss all."

In Judaism, faith is not a rival to science, an attempt to explain the universe. It's a sense of wonder, born in a feeling of gratitude. Judaism is about taking life in both hands and making a blessing over it. It is as if God had said to us: I made all this for you. This is my gift. Enjoy it and help others to enjoy it also. Wherever you can, heal some of the pain that people inflict on one another, or the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. Because pain, sadness, fear, anger, envy, resentment, these are things that cloud your vision and separate you from others and from Me.

Kierkegaard once wrote: "It takes moral courage to grieve. It takes religious courage to rejoice."³ I believe that with all my heart. So I am moved by the way Jews, who know what it is to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, still see joy as the supreme religious emotion. Every day we begin our morning prayers with a litany of thanks, that we are here, with a world to live in, family and friends to love and be loved by, about to start a day full of possibilities, in which, by acts of loving kindness, we allow God's presence to flow through us into the lives of others. Joy helps heal some of the wounds of our injured, troubled world.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Reeh Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky The Meat of the Matter

In this week's portion, the Torah allows us to partake in our material desires, but only according to Torah proscriptions. The Torah clearly allows the consumption of meat, albeit with a few caveats. The Torah states "If the place that Hashem, your God, will choose to place His Name will be far from you, you may slaughter from your cattle and your flocks that Hashem has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat in your cities according to your heart's entire desire. Even as the deer and the ayal are eaten, so may you eat it, the contaminated one and the pure one may eat it together: Only be strong not to eat the blood -- for the blood, it is the nefesh -- and you shall not eat the nefesh with the meat" (Deuteronomy 12:21-23). Nefesh has various meanings, simply stated it is the life force of the animal — perhaps what we would call "the soul of the matter." Clearly, the consumption of blood is a despicable act in the Torah view (a fact conveniently overlooked by the centuries of libelers who had us drinking, mixing, baking and cooking with it.) In addition, the process of extricating all blood from the animal is clearly and intricately defined through the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch. However, delineating the prohibition as one of combining the consumption of the nefesh with the meat surely goes beyond the prohibition of eating or drinking blood.

Surely there is a deeper connotation to the prohibition of the strange concoction of nefesh and meat.

Rav Yehuda Laib Chasman was considered to be one of the luminaries of the mussar movement. Before he immersed himself completely in the world of Torah and mussar, he had a business that sold flour to bakers. He would devote a portion of his day to his business and the remaining time he would spend at the famed Talmud Torah of Kelm under the tutelage of Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, the illustrious Alter of Kelm. One day on the way into the Yeshiva, Rav Ziv called Reb Yehuda Laib over to the side and pointed to the white powder that covered the sleeve of his jacket. Rabbi Chasman took this observation to be a clear moralistic evaluation.

"Rabbi Ziv is pointing out that the flour is becoming part of me. If it is already all over my garments, and it is still with me when I leave my store, then it has become too much a part of me."

With that, he made a personal decision that changed his life completely. He returned home, and figured out together with his wife that the amount of their current assets would more than cover any outstanding debts and allow them to sustain themselves. They sold the business, and Rabbi Chasman enrolled full-time at the Volozhiner Yeshiva, eventually emerging the great luminary whom we all revere.

Some of us like meat: whether it is the actual beef or the proverbial materialistic affairs in which we indulge. And that's OK to a point. After all, we are only human.

But the Torah tells us to be careful to separate the soul from the meat. The holy from the mundane. It wants us to understand that other than the quest for the prime rib, which we wish to consume, there are more noble pursuits that should consume us. Therefore, the Torah tells us to clearly delineate the difference and tells us that although we may indulge in worldly pleasure we should be careful not to allow the soul to become devoured with the meat. Thus, it clearly commands, "Do not eat the nefesh with the meat." A good meal is totally permissible. It even lifts the spirit. However, materialistic indulgences as such should surely never become our obsession or sole desire. For then, it will become part of our nefesh. It will become tantamount to our soul desire.

Good Shabbos Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Toras Chaim at South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables series.

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Peninim on the Torah Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Re'eh See! I present before you today a blessing and a curse. (11:26)

The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos offer a novel interpretation of the word reeh, see, focusing on what it was the nation was to look at. Moshe Rabbeinu said to Klal Yisrael: "See - look at me. I chose the derech tov, the path which leads to blessing. As a result, I look different." This is reference to the karnei or, rays of Divine light, which emanated from Moshe, causing his countenance to radiate.

Horav Elyahu Svei, zl, observes that, although Moshe presented the people with a choice of two divergent paths, one, which leads to blessing, and the other, which leads to curse, it was insufficient motivation to elicit a commitment. It was necessary for Moshe to concretize the necessity to make a clear choice with a statement: "Look at me!" The only way to achieve such radiance is by making the correct choice, the choice which leads to blessing. It was necessary for the people to see a manifestation of this blessing, to see the reality of Heavenly blessing and how it transforms a person. Awareness, however cogent, will not necessarily effect change. It does not always "do the trick." Seeing is believing. They must see blessing in action before they are ready to undertake to traverse the path that leads to it.

Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, Mashgiach of Yeshivas Kaminetz, Yerushalayim, was very close with his rebbe, the venerable Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl. Very often, he would converse with his rebbe after davening, discussing various questions and issues that arose in his daily life and endeavor. One Shabbos, following davening, the then young Rav Moshe Aharon Stern was speaking with Rav Elya, while his young children waited for him to go home. Seeing that their father was immersed in conversation, they began to play with some pebbles on the ground. These makeshift marbles provided a "game" for children with imagination. Seeing this, Rav Moshe Aharon told his children to stop playing with the pebbles, since they are muktzah on Shabbos (objects that are reserved for weekday use are not to be handled or moved on Shabbos). The children stopped momentarily, but soon returned to their play. Once again, they were exhorted to stop playing with the pebbles. They stopped for a few minutes, only to start up again shortly thereafter. Upon seeing this happen over and over again, Rav Elya said to his young protege, "They are young children and do not understand the concept of muktzah (especially when expressed in the context of quick admonishment without explanation). This is something that should be taught at home, by the Shabbos table, with the holiness of Shabbos as the backdrop for the conversation and the father in full Shabbos mode. When children see their father's personal Shabbos observance in full swing, then they will understand and accept the laws of muktzah (as they relate to Shabbos)."

We may add that this idea applies to everything that we teach to our children and expect them to accept. The meme of liberal hypocrisy: "Do as I say - not as I do" is a very difficult concept, hardly serving as a deterrent for the intelligent child. We cannot expect our children to do and act in a manner to which we personally do not ascribe. Instructing our children not to speak during davening - when we do not adhere to our own advice; admonishing our children to learn - when we do not seem to find the time to follow suit; and the list goes on. We must show them what it means, and what the advantages are of such living, if we expect them to listen and follow.

See! I place before you today a blessing and a curse. (11:26)

Noticeably, the Torah begins with the word Reeh, see, in the singular, and concludes with nosein lifneichem, "(I) give before you," in the plural. Why is this? The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, explains that each and every person has his own unique perspective and individual understanding of Torah which coincides with his spiritual level. Thus, it says, "See," to the individual. The Torah, however, was given to all Jews collectively, which is alluded to by the words lifneichem, before you, in the plural.

Horav Yitzchak, zl, m'Vorka, traveled together with Horav Avraham Moshe, zl, m'Peshischa to visit a certain tzaddik, holy, righteous, person, whose identity was covert and known only to a unique few. The Vorkever commented on the parsha of the week (Reeh), "Moshe presented Klal Yisrael with two paths: blessing and curse, prefixing his words with Reeh, "See!" When a young child refuses to go to cheder, he is "encouraged" with a reward of some sort, usually a sweet treat. When he has entered the classroom and then refuses to learn, the rebbe will point to the stick in the corner, which serves as the symbol (and often more than a symbol) of the corporal punishment that might be administered if the child will not take his lessons seriously. When the child has matured, he no longer requires a symbol of punishment to convey the message that school is a place of learning. It is neither a place to visit for a vacation, nor is it a place for fun and games. The student understands all of this, since with maturity comes a deeper understanding of life in general, thus negating the need for punishment/reminder.

Moshe Rabbeinu was telling the people: "See! What I placed before you today - reward/blessing and punishment/curse." Even after forty years of miracles and constant exposure to Divine guidance and protection, you still lack the spiritual maturity to understand on your own (without motivation and reminder) that you must choose the path of blessing. I should not have to encourage you to observe the mitzvos. By this time it should be a given. The

fact that it is not is the reason that I must reiterate the possibility of curse for non-observance.

Perhaps we suggest another reason for the use of Reeh, in the singular. Each and every Jew is exhorted to look at himself - first. We all want to save the world, to point out the faults of others, and to urge them to change their ways. Often we do so without first taking a close introspective view of ourselves. Are we perfect? Have we personally chosen the path of blessing? Do we have the right to admonish others before seeing to it that our lives are in order? Reeh - see yourself; then look at others.

"You are children to Hashem, your G-d; do not mutilate yourselves and do not make a bald patch between your eyes for the dead." (14:1)

Imagine the waiting line to see the king. Many people of all backgrounds and positions are each waiting for a moment of the king's time. The king's son, crown prince of the country, takes his place at the back of the line. A minister comes over and asks: "What is his royal highness doing at the back of the line? The king is your father! You can go in at any time! Why wait in a line with everybody else?" This is the meaning of, "You are children to Hashem, your G-d." He is our Heavenly Father, and, as such, we are privileged. We do not wait in line, nor do we require an appointment to meet with Him. Hashem is always available to us. If we do not realize this, it is our problem. We are lacking in understanding of our relationship with Hashem.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, would often inspire his students to realize how deeply obligated a Jew is to understand this verity. The more one realizes his profound relationship with Hashem, the greater is his inspiration to act in a manner becoming his noble "pedigree." Indeed, prior to carrying out any action, we must stop to think and ask ourselves, "Is this something that the king's son would do? Is this the manner in which the king's son would act?" Furthermore, the concept of being a "son" is singular. A father can have many children, but each one is a ben yachid, singular/individual child. There is a sense of uniqueness and exclusivity to the term "son." Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, writes: "The adam ha'maalah, prominent man (a man of virtue who acknowledges his qualities and potential, and who understands his extraordinary uniqueness as compared to the rest of the world), should be amazed by the knowledge that from all the world - everyone - he is unique; there is no other person like him! Indeed, from the beginning of Creation, from Adam Ha'Rishon, Primordial Man, until this very day - never has there been anyone like him - nor will there ever be anyone like him. His talents, qualities, potential, both positive and negative - are unique and exclusive to him alone. (No two children are the same.) This is the meaning of bishvili nivra ha'olam, "For me (alone) was the world created." Each and every one of us is uniquely endowed with our personal qualities, neither repeated nor emulated.

Horav Moshe Soloveitchik, zl, (Zurich) observes: "If the Torah refers to us as Hashem's children, it becomes incumbent upon us to act as His children. Thus, when a child requires something, or if the child is in pain or in a dire circumstance, he immediately turns to his father for help. Should we be any different? Things happen in life and we run for help - to doctors, holy men, counselors, social workers, etc. How many take the time to speak to their Father in Heaven? How many take the time to realize that this is what He wants? Imagine, one's father is a distinguished physician, educator, psychologist, etc. and one has a problem with a member of his family; how would his father feel to discover that his child went all over town to every professional, all of whom do not come close to him in competency - yet did not come to him? Is this not what we do? We turn to everyone, but only pay lip service to Hashem. Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, asks a straightforward question which should be on the mind of anyone who reads this pasuk cogently: How is it that we are referred to by Hashem as His children, yet, in our daily lives, we seldom (if ever) think about or sense this unique connection? We understand and agree that we are unique, but it is not something that plays a significant role in our lives. Why?

The Mashgiach cites an incident which occurred during the Spanish Inquisition. A Jewish child was forcibly taken from the shelter of his home by rabid members of the religion that preaches love and tolerance. The child was noticeably brilliant and had a potentially bright future. Raised by Catholics, he went on to become a judge of the High Court which determined the capital punishment fate of the Anussim, Jews who had been forced to abandon their religion, that had either been caught practicing in secret or had refused to convert. In any event, the punishment was execution. This child-turned-judge was the final signature on the execution papers.

One day, they brought a number of papers for the judge to sign, which he did - except for one. For some reason, he simply could not affix his signature to one of the execution papers. No matter what he did, or how hard he tried - nothing worked. It just did not go! Finally, he asked to interview the prisoner. When they brought the prisoner to him, his hands and legs manacled, the judge asked to be left alone with the prisoner. He wanted to ask him a few questions. After grilling the prisoner for a short while, the judge discovered what had been bothering him his whole life: He was a Jew, and the prisoner who stood before him was none other than his father. This is why he could not sign the execution decree. His subconscious did not permit him to murder his own father.

Rav Elya commented, "When I heard this story, I understood the meaning of Banim atem l'Hashem, "You are children to Hashem." We have an innate relationship with Hashem. Since our neshamah, soul, is a chelek Elokai miMaal, part of Heaven Above, there is a miniscule component derived from Hashem imbued within each and every one of us. Our physical being and the many nisyanos, trials, which we undergo throughout life, however, take their toll and often override or cloud this relationship to the point that we become disconnected. We just need to take some time to think, to consider who we are, from where we descend, and begin to work on "cleaning up our act," changing our middos, character traits, purifying our desires; in short - acting as a Jew is supposed to act. I would like to supplement this idea with the following well-known story recorded by the Sefer Chassidim and Levush. The following sheilah, halachic question, was posed to Rav Saadya Gaon. A wealthy man had left home together with his slave, leaving his wife and a young male infant at home. He took a large amount of money with him with which to purchase wares for his thriving business. While he was overseas, the man died and the slave furtively "assumed" the position of "son." A number of years went by, and the real son grew up to discover the outrage committed against him. He also wanted his yerushah, rightful inheritance. The slave, of course, disputed the son, claiming that he was the rightful son, and the son was nothing more than an opportunist and charlatan.

Rav Saadya was unsure how to rule in such a case. He came up with a brilliant proposal. Ruling that the corpse could be exhumed, he did so and had the bones of the deceased placed in a jar. He then took blood samples from the slave, who claimed to be the son, and from the true son. He then placed blood from each one on the bones of the corpse. Lo and behold, the bones of the corpse absorbed the blood of the real son, but rejected the blood of the slave. Rav Saadya ruled that the one whose blood was absorbed by the father's bones was the true son.

We see from here that the father/son relationship is much more than casual. They are of the same mold. A son is part and parcel, a direct component, of his father. Likewise, our relationship with Hashem is much more than a religious affiliation. We are part of Him. His kedushah, holiness, permeates us. This may come across as sounding elitist, but that is what we are. We are His children. We are suffused with His essence. It is what it is - and we are what we are.

You are children to Hashem, your G-d, do not mutilate yourselves and do not make a bald patch between your eyes for the dead. (14:1)

The Baalei Tosfos comment, "You are children to Hashem, your G-d; therefore, if your father of flesh and blood dies, do not mutilate yourselves, for you are not orphans, since you have a living father." Every Jew should sense such a closeness with Hashem. Quoting this commentary, a gadol

wrote the following to a woman who had sustained the tragic loss of her husband:

"True, you and your children have suffered a terrible blow, but, at the same time, you have received a Redeemer Who is closer to you than any other (being that she is now a widow and her children are orphans, they enter into a unique relationship with Hashem Who always listens to the cries of widows and orphans). You have a living Father Who is Omnipotent - everything comes from Him. Furthermore, He has promised you that, from this day onwards, you will lack nothing. Just call out, and He will answer. From Him, you will receive everlasting salvation."

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, offers a similar commentary with a somewhat different slant. One who grieves excessively demonstrates by his actions that life without the deceased is unbearable. It is for this reason the nusach, textual version, of the blessing we give to a mourner is HaMakom (applying to Hashem Who is Mekomo shel Olam, the Place of the world. The world is within Hashem - not the other way around. He is the Place - the only Place). The concept of "place" is something stationary, immovable, concrete, stable. Hashem is the basis, foundation, upon which everything in the world rests. Thus, we say to the mourner: "You are children to Hashem. Nothing has changed. He is still here for you. He is the Makom, Place, which never changes - never forsakes - never leaves. Those around us may be taken and leave, but our connection to the Place, Hashem, has not changed - and never will.

In an attempt to explain the unique relationship that a son has with his father, and how this bond plays itself out in our relationship with Hashem, to the point that it precludes our excessive grieving over the loss of a loved one, I came upon the following story. I feel that the father/son relationship is underscored in this story. It illuminates for us why, when confronted with a circumstance of grief, we refrain from letting go of our emotions. We understand that what has occurred has Divine implication, thus, our unabiding faith in Hashem kicks in. How and why does this occur? Well, that is where the story plays its role.

Charles Blondin (real name Jean Francois Gravelot) was a famous mid-nineteenth century French tightrope walker, a fearless daredevil who captivated audiences throughout the world. His feats of daring were, at the time, the talk of the day, having established for himself a following bordering on hero worship. His most notable undertaking, which earned him a special place in history books, took place on September 14, 1860, when he became the first person to stretch a tightrope 1300 feet long, two inches in diameter and constructed entirely of hemp, across the Niagara River connecting the American and Canadian sides. This young daredevil understood the appeal of the morbid to the masses (sadly, as society becomes more obsessed with the physical, having long rejected the spiritual dimension, this preoccupation with the aberrant and irascible has only become stronger and more overwhelming) and reveled when gamblers took bets on whether he would plunge to a watery death. On that bright, sunny morning, 25,000 people arrived by train and steamer and dispersed themselves on both sides of the Falls.

Blondin began his first walk across the rope slung 160 feet above the Falls. He walked across several times, each time accompanied with different acts of daring. Once, he walked in a sack; another time on stilts, a bicycle, in the dark and even blindfolded. One time, he even carried a small stove and cooked an omelet in middle of the rope!

A large crowd had gathered and watched with excitement how time and time again Blondin amazed the crowd with his daring. It was almost as if his feet were glued to the rope. They "oohed" and "aahed," as he carefully took one dangerous step after another. One last time, he pushed a wheelbarrow filled with a sack of potatoes across the rope. The crowd let out a chant: "You are the greatest - the absolute greatest!" Blondin stopped, looked at the crowd and asked for a volunteer; "Who is willing to ride in the wheelbarrow while I push him (or her) across the rope?" Suddenly, there was silence. No one said a word. Then the crowd began to clap and roar with enthusiasm. Nonetheless

- no one was prepared to be the guinea pig, to sit in the wheelbarrow and be pushed across the Falls.

"Do you believe that I can push a person safely across the Falls?" he called out. "Yes!" was the resounding response. "Yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. We believe!"

"So, if you truly believe, let me have a volunteer to sit in the wheelbarrow as I push him across the rope." Once again, there was silence. All the big talkers were nothing more than that - big talkers. The story goes that no one came forward. Oh yes - there was someone who volunteered. Above the din, they heard a young voice call out, "Yes, Daddy, I will go with you across the rope." Charles Blondin's son volunteered to accompany his father across the Falls. He trusted him, because, after all, he was his father.

It is a great story, which illustrates a real-life picture of what faith actually is (or at least what it should be). There are those who "talk the talk" but are not willing to "walk the walk". A son is different. He has an innate trust in his father. Thus, when a "son" loses someone that is close to him, he trusts that his Father in Heaven has His reasons for this decision. The pain is still there - and it will always be there, but the questions of "why?" and "how?" will be tempered. His grief will not be abated. It will, however, not be excessive, because it was his Father's decision.

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Rav Kook Torah Re'eih: A Rabbi's Public Conduct

Despite his prominence as the chief judge in Babylonia and head of the famed yeshiva of Nehardea, Rav Nachman came under attack from Rabbi Ammi of Tiberius. Or more accurately - Rav Nachman was attacked precisely due to his rabbinical prominence.

On two occasions, Rav Nachman instructed his servant to follow the accepted lenient opinion in Halakhah. The first concerned hatmanah - insulating food on Shabbat. The scholar requested that his food be insulated on Shabbat to keep it cold. This is in accordance with the accepted ruling that hatmanah is only prohibited when keeping food hot.

The second incident took place on a weekday, when Rav Nachman requested that a non-Jewish chef boil him some hot water to drink. The accepted opinion is that Bishul Akum (the rabbinic prohibition to eat foods cooked by non-Jews) does not apply to foods which may be eaten also uncooked, such as water (Shabbat 51a).

So why did Rabbi Ammi object?

Two Models of Personal Example

While we learn from great scholars through their lectures and classes, an even more powerful method is by way of personal example. There are, however, two different models for the way a scholar serves as an example and influences others. These two models are often contradictory. Acting according to one paradigm will frequently be misleading or incorrect in terms of the second.

The first model is for the rabbi to be seen as a practical example of normative Halakhah. People are drawn to the scholar's nobility of character and great esteem. They see him literally as a living Torah. All of his actions are precisely measured by the Torah's standards of holiness and Halakhah. People scrutinize his conduct in order to emulate his lifestyle of Torah and mitzvot.

In this situation, the scholar should take care to always follow accepted Halachic rulings. Then it will be clear that his actions are Torah practices applicable to all. If he were to publicly take on special acts of piety, others could no longer learn from him.

This principle is true even if the scholar is naturally drawn to higher religious observance beyond the Halachic norm - middat hassidut - due to deep inner aspirations to be close to God. Nonetheless, he must subdue this desire, so that the people will know that his actions are relevant for all to emulate and follow.

There is, however, a second model of spiritual influence. This is an inspirational influence, when the people see a great scholar as a giant of spirit and intellect. His breadth of knowledge and depth of piety is clearly on a plane far beyond the common man. The people recognize this distance and revere the saintly scholar. His punctilious observance of mitzvot, even in the smallest details, is clearly not a lifestyle to be emulated, but an inspiring expression of a sublime love of God and Torah.

In this model of influence, it is proper for the scholar to act according to middat hassidut, observing extra stringencies when fulfilling mitzvot, consistent with his exceptional spiritual stature.

Guard against Extremism

The two areas in which Rav Nachman followed the accepted lenient opinion - the laws of Shabbat and Bishul Akum - relate to two fundamental themes in Judaism. Shabbat is an expression of Israel's spiritual greatness. The Sabbath is "a sign between Me and you" (Ex. 31:13). And the laws of Bishul Akum are designed to emphasize the distinction of the Jewish people, so that the people will be aware and guard over the lofty segulah nature of Israel.

In both of these areas - the greatness of Israel and its separation from the nations - a zealous, unbalanced individual could distort the Torah's intent, adding extraneous, disturbing, even xenophobic elements. It is necessary to prevent such excesses with qualifying parameters in order to maintain the proper balance. This is rooted in the Torah's command,

"Carefully observe everything that I am commanding you. Do not add to it and do not subtract from it." (Deut. 13:1) For this reason, Rabbi Nachman publicly ordered that his cold food be insulated on Shabbat, limiting the extent of the Sabbath rest. And he requested that a non-Jew heat up his water, so that the divide between Jew and non-Jew not be exaggerated.

But the perfected individual - who fully grasps the wisdom and intent of the Torah - does not need such restrictions. There is no limit to the heights of elevated thought. Going beyond the norms of Halakhah and observing middat hassidut is thus appropriate - and even expected, as Rabbi Ammi forcefully noted - for a great scholar. (*Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 13-14, on Shabbat 51a*)

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

What if I goofed and said Tikanta Shabbos by Mistake? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since this coming Shabbos is also Rosh Chodesh, this question may become very germane.

Question: In the middle of davening Musaf on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, I realized that I was reciting the Musaf for a regular Shabbos rather than the special Musaf for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh. What should I have done?

Answer: This Shabbos is also Rosh Chodesh, requiring the recital of a special text for the middle bracha of Musaf. This special Musaf includes elements of the usual Shabbos Musaf, the usual Rosh Chodesh Musaf, and a special introductory passage. This passage, beginning with the words Atah Yatzarta, actually bears closer resemblance to the introductory part of the Yom Tov Musaf than it does to Musaf of either Shabbos or Rosh Chodesh. The rest of the middle bracha of Musaf combines elements of both Shabbos Musaf and Rosh Chodesh Musaf.

I once edited an article in which the author quoted several anthologies, each of which ruled that someone who realizes he is saying Tikanta Shabbos on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh should immediately stop where he is, and go to the beginning of Atah Yatzarta, and recite the entire bracha. However, I believe that this ruling is in error. I will explain shortly why I believe that this answer is erroneous. But first...

I attempted to trace the sources quoted in the article to see if perhaps I was missing some logic or information that I would clarify in the course of my research.

What I did discover was that each source was simply quoting a previous one, and that they all traced to one obscure 19th century work, which did not explain at all the reason for the ruling. Classic group-think.

I will now explain why I believe this ruling is in error, and what one should do. My major concern is that the approach that these works advocate results in repeating many parts of the shemoneh esrei, and that this repetition constitutes a forbidden interruption in the tefillah. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, there is no essential requirement to recite this middle bracha of the shemoneh esrei precisely in order. Obviously, one should maintain the order as is, but there is ample evidence from major halachic authorities that, in general, mistakenly rearranging the order of a bracha is not calamitous (see, for example, Rosh, Taanis 1:1; Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 4:18 and 4:70:14). Thus, when left with the choice of rearranging the order of a bracha to avoid repetition, or repeating parts of the bracha and ignoring what was already said, one should follow the first approach.

Subsequently, I realized that the position I have followed, is indeed that of Rav Moshe Feinstein. However, it appears that, in general, there are other halachic authorities who feel that the text of a bracha should indeed be kept intact even when repetition will result (see, for example, Mateh Efrayim 582:10; Mishnah Berurah 582:16; Biur Halacha 127:2 s.v. Aval).

Notwithstanding the disputing opinion, I still think that the approach I am suggesting is correct, but I recognize that others may disagree with me. Therefore, I am going to present my approach, as confusing as it may appear.

Based on my opinion, it appears that someone who discovers that he/she began reciting Tikanta Shabbos rather than Atah Yatzarta should mention only those parts of the bracha that he/she has as yet not recited, but not repeat any theme or part of the bracha that one has already said. Although fulfilling this may be confusing to someone unfamiliar with the bracha, this should provide us with a valid reason to pay more attention to the details of this bracha and understand its different parts.

In order to explain how one does this correctly, brachos of Atah Yatzarta and Tikanta Shabbos into their constituent parts, so that we can identify which parts we should not repeat. We can divide these brachos into the following seven sections (the sections for a regular Shabbos have been numbered in a way that parallels the list for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh:

Shabbos Rosh Chodesh	Regular Shabbos
1. The introduction – from the words Atah Yatzarta until and including the words shenishtalcha (some recite the text hashelucha) bemikdashhecha.	1. The introduction – from the words Tikanta Shabbos until and including the word kara'ui.
2. The prayer for our return – beginning with the words Yehi Ratzon – until (and including) the word kehilchasam.	2. The prayer for our return – beginning with the words Yehi Ratzon – until (and including) the word kehilchasam.
3. The sentence that introduces the mention of the pesukim of the Musaf – Ve'es Musafei Yom HaShabbos Hazeh veyom Rosh Hachodesh... until (and including) the word ka'amur.	3. The sentence that introduces the mention of the pesukim of the Musaf – Ve'es Musaf Yom HaShabbos Hazeh... until (and including) the word ka'amur.
4. Mention of the pesukim of the korban Musaf of Shabbos.	4. Mention of the pesukim of the korban Musaf of Shabbos.
5. Mention of the pasuk of the korban Musaf of Rosh Chodesh and the passage Uminchasam... until (and including) the word kehilchasam.	
6. The paragraph Yismechu Vemalchusecha that concludes with the words zeicher lemaasei vereishis.	6. The paragraph Yismechu Vemalchusecha that concludes with the words zeicher lemaasei vereishis.
7. The closing of the bracha -- Elokeinu Veilokei Avoseinu.	7. The closing of the bracha -- Elokeinu Veilokei Avoseinu.

We should note that the closings of these middle brachos of Musaf shemoneh esrei are very different. On Shabbos Rosh Chodesh we recite a version that is almost identical to what we recite on a weekday Rosh Chodesh, but we insert three passages to include Shabbos.

Parts 2, 4 and 6 of the two brachos are identical, whether it is Shabbos or Shabbos Rosh Chodesh. Therefore, one should not repeat these sections if one has said them already.

Part 1 on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, Atah Yatzarta, is very different from what we usually recite on a regular Shabbos. Therefore, someone still in the middle of this bracha should recite this passage again.

If someone missed part 5, mention of the pesukim of Rosh Chodesh, and is still in the middle of this bracha, he/she should recite it and introduce it with the section 3 above, which introduces the korbanos of the Musaf. However, if he/she already recited the pesukim of Shabbos korban Musaf (#4) above, he should omit the reference to Shabbos in this piece and only mention Rosh Chodesh. In the latter case, one should change the plural Musafei to a singular Musaf since he/she now is only mentioning the Rosh Chodesh Musaf.

Having explained the rules governing these halachos, I will now present the conclusions in a hopefully clearer way, depending on when you discover your mistake:

A. If you were still reciting the beginning of Tikanta Shabbos, and had not yet reached Yehi Ratzon: Return to Atah Yatzarta and recite it in order without any changes.

B. If you had already begun the Yehi Ratzon, but are before Ve'es Musaf Yom HaShabbos Hazeh: Complete the Yehi Ratzon until Ve'es Musaf; then recite Atah Yatzarta until the words Yehi Ratzon, then resume from the words Ve'es Musafei Yom HaShabbos Hazeh Veyom Rosh Hachodesh from the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Musaf and continue through the rest of the tefillah.

C. If you had just begun Ve'es Musaf Yom HaShabbos Hazeh: Add the words Ve'es Musaf Yom Rosh Hachodesh Hazeh, and then continue in the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Musaf until Yismechu Vemalchusecha. Immediately prior to saying Yismechu Vemalchusecha insert the words from Atah Yatzarta until the words shenishtalcha bemikdashhecha. Then return to Yismechu Vemalchusecha and recite the rest of the tefillah in order.

D. If you are already in the middle of Ve'es Musaf Yom HaShabbos Hazeh: Recite Uveyom Hashabbas... until Veniskah. Then insert the words from Atah Yatzarta until the words shenishtalcha bemikdashhecha. Then return to the words Ve'es Musaf but say the following: Ve'es Musaf Yom Rosh Hachodesh Hazeh until the word ka'amur. Then say Uverashei Chadshchem in the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh section and continue in order.

E. If you are in the middle of Yismechu Vemalchusecha, complete it until Zeicher lemaasei vereishis, and then insert the words from Atah Yatzarta until the words shenishtalcha bemikdashhecha. Then return to the words Ve'es Musaf but say the following: Ve'es Musaf Yom Rosh Hachodesh Hazeh until the word ka'amur. Then say Uverashei Chadshchem in the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh section. Then go to Elokeinu Veilokei Avoseinu (after Yismechu Vemalchusecha) and finish the end of the bracha and the davening.

F. If you are already in the middle of the closing part of the bracha (Elokeinu Veilokei Avoseinu) complete the clause that you are saying, and then insert the words from Atah Yatzarta until the words shenishtalcha bemikdashhecha. Then return to the words Ve'es Musaf but say Ve'es Musaf Yom Rosh Hachodesh Hazeh until the word ka'amur. Then say Uverashei Chadshchem in the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh section. Then return to chadeish aleinu beyom hashabbos hazeh es hachodesh hazeh and finish the end of the bracha in the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh section.

If you completed the entire bracha of Tikanta Shabbos, but mentioned in the middle of the bracha some reference to the korban Musaf of Rosh Chodesh, you have fulfilled the requirements of this prayer and you should continue Retzei (see Mishnah Berurah 423:6). If you completed the bracha of Tikanta Shabbos but did not yet begin Retzeih, you should say "vena'aseh lefanecha korban Rosh Chodesh hazeh" – "and we shall do before You this Rosh Chodesh offering" and then continue with Retzei (ibid.).

Conclusion Although all this may sound very confusing, if we spend a few seconds familiarizing ourselves with the divisions of this bracha that I have made, we will easily realize why the halachos are as I have outlined, and will be ready to make the necessary adjustments should we find that we have erred. This readiness has of course a tremendous value on its own: It familiarizes us with the shemoneh esrei, something we always should do, but, unfortunately, often do not pay sufficient attention.

Understanding how much concern Chazal placed in the relatively minor aspects of davening should make us even more aware of the fact that davening is our attempt at building a relationship with Hashem. As the Kuzari notes, every day should have three high points -- the three times that we daven. Certainly, one should do whatever one can to make sure to pay attention to the meaning of the words of one's Tefillah. We should gain our strength and inspiration for the rest of the day from these three prayers. Let us hope that Hashem will accept our tefillos together with those of Klal Yisrael!