



Adapted from the sefer *במוצאי שבת* a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Re'eh 5765

The *Tana D'vei Eliyahu* lists ten things that must be present in a town, before *Talmidei Chachomim* can live there. The tenth precondition is the availability of fruit. R. Akiva adds that many, different types of fruit must be available, for multiple species of fruit, enlighten the eyes.

Special *Hashgacha* has guided us to learn a portion of *Tana D'vei Eliyahu* that discusses eyesight, on *Motzaei Shabbos* of the *Parsha* that is called "Re'eh. The *Parsha* begins, ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה. The *Rashba*, in his *tshuvos*, ("חלק ד", סימן ל"), writes that the name of a person or an item, expresses its true nature. In our case, the name ראה teaches us that the concept of sight is a central theme of the parsha.

The first word of the *parsha*, ראה, seems to be superfluous. If the *posuk* simply read, אנכי נותן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה, what information would be missing? *Rabeinu Bechayei* addresses this, by explaining that ראה, in this *posuk*, refers to "intellectual sight", as *Shlomo Hamelech* says in *Koheles*, "ולבי ראה הרבה חכמה ודעת", (My heart has seen much wisdom and understanding).

With the opening word, ראה, the Torah instructs all Jews, in every time and place, to see the blessing, the curse, and everything described in this parsha, with their minds eye. This deeper form of sight, will enable them to choose

The ability to see with the "mind's eye", begins with the information we gather with our physical eyes. The Torah considers sight to be the most powerful of the five senses. A witness can only testify in *Beis Din* about



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something that he saw, not about something that he heard, touched, smelled or tasted. Only sight can truly and clearly define something. As ל"ל state in the *Mechilta*, (יתרו ט.), "אינה דומה שמיעה לראיה", (Hearing cannot compare to seeing). This *Parsha* begins with the word ראה, to teach us that an item or situation can be classified as ברכה, or קללה, only after seeing it in our mind.

Let's return to R. Akiva's statement, that a town fit for a *Talmid Chochom* must have כל מיני פירות, many different fruits, for they enlighten the eyes. The phrase כל מיני implies the presence of a great variety of fruits. It seems that R. Akiva is teaching us, that the more species of fruit available in a town, the more the *Talmid Chochom* will benefit from dwelling there. Multiple fruits will increase the "light" of the *Talmid Chochom's* eyes, enhancing his ability to "see" the Torah that he learns.

From R. Akiva, we learn that a person who wants to develop עיני השכל, intellectual sight, must experience variety. In *Avodas Hashem*, we cannot spend our entire day exclusively in *Tefila*, or in *Gemilus Chasodim*. We must do both. In Torah study, we shouldn't learn only *Halacha* or only *Gemara*. Our "intellectual eyes" need to experience the rich variety of *Halacha*, *Agada*, *Drush*, *Nigleh* (the revealed Torah), *Nistar*, (the hidden Torah), *Chasidus* and *Mussar*. Chazal describe multiple ways of understating Torah, *Pshat*, *Remez*, *Drash*, *Sod*, (known by the acronym פרד"ס), and refer to the seventy facets of Torah, (שבעים פנים לתורה).

Variety enlightens the mind, and leads to fruitful *Avodas Hashem*. This is why R. Akiva illustrates the importance of variety with the image of fruit. *Talmidei Chachomim* are meant to be fruitful, and variety is key to their development

Chazal taught us, חכמה בגויים תאמין, (we can believe that wisdom exists among the nations). I once heard from a housepainter, that the health authorities in a certain country wanted to paint hospital walls in colors that would comfort the patients and lift their spirits. They wanted to identify the color that would provide the most benefit. They consulted



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experts, but couldn't come up with a clear answer. Eventually, they decided to paint the walls of each hospital with a different color. However, they also decided to paint one hospital, not with one uniform color, but with a variety of colors. A follow up investigation revealed that patients in the hospital with different colored walls, reported vastly greater improvement in mood than those in the other hospitals. Seeing variety, rather than monotony, satisfies, enlightens, and brings joy to our souls.

We also need to see a variety of approaches to *Avodas Hashem*. The unique "color" of each path in *Avodas Hashem*, finds favor in the eyes of Hashem. Many people quote a clever interpretation of a *posuk* in our *Parsha*. לא תעשון כן לה' אלוקיך - Don't declare "כן" - (like this), in *Avodas Hashem*, meaning don't decide that only your way of serving Hashem is legitimate. It should be obvious that the various approaches of the different communities of יראי השם, all play an important role in our service of *Hashem*. Each is like a different spice that exudes a unique, sweet smell bringing pleasure to *Hashem*.

R. Akiva was inspired to learn by something that he saw, not only with his eyes, but with his "mind's eye". The *Midrash Tanchuma*, describes the observation that led R. Akiva to learn Torah. "What were the beginnings of R. Akiva? At age forty, he had not learned any Torah. One day, he was standing by a well, and wondered who carved the stone that formed the well. They told him that it was formed by the water that constantly dripped on the stone. R. Akiva immediately applied a "*kal va'chomer*". If the soft water could carve the hard stone, shouldn't *Divrei Torah* which are hard as iron, be able to penetrate my heart which is made of flesh and blood?"

Many people pass by stones that have been worn down by water, without noticing or thinking about it. R. Akiva's eyes were open, and he sought to observe and understand everything he encountered. The phenomenon observed by his physical eyes, led to introspection and to the realization that he was on the wrong path in life. He then opened his eyes to



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examine and evaluate other ways of life. He chose the path of *Avodas Hashem*, even though it was so different from his previous lifestyle. In order to understand the contrast, we need only look to R. Akiva's statement in *Maseches Pesachim*. "When I was an *Am Ha'aretz*, I would say, 'who can bring me a *Talmid Chochom* so that I can bite him like a donkey, whose bite breaks bones'."

R. Akiva went on to learn Torah with *mesirus nefesh*, ascending to levels that no one else had reached. Chazal tell us that his eyes saw even what *Moshe Rabeinu* didn't see. Only because R. Akiva noticed the ways of the world around him, and learned from them, did he become R. Akiva. The average person who notices the ability of running water to penetrate stone, will, at most, enjoy the natural wonder, and continue on his way. R. Akiva thought deeply about what he saw, and internalized the lessons he discovered.

We have to implement the concept of multiple colors in our schools, especially for younger children. Veteran teachers who teach the same material year after year, often repeat their classes with no change or innovation. Over time, they may teach their classes robotically, with no "*chiyus*" or "*hislahavus*".

Teachers must refresh and innovate, whether by varying the material taught, or the way the lessons are taught. A teacher can present the same *sugya* in so many different ways. He can also devote some class time to broadening his student's Torah knowledge by teaching topics that aren't part of the standard curriculum. He can tell them stories from our history, or take them out to see the wonders of Hashem's creation. This multi-colored approach will light up the eyes of *talmidim*, enabling them to learn and understand so much more.

I have worked with so many young men and women who have unfortunately left Torah observance. So many times, it became clear to me, that if only they had been exposed to the variety and vitality of Torah and *Avodas Hashem*, they wouldn't have descended to such



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depths. The fiery *yetzer* of youth, combined with experiences of Yiddishkeit that had no *taam* or *chiyus*, led them to seek *chiyus* and *hislahavus* in other places, *rachmana litzlan*.

The *Sfas Emes* learned from his father, the *Imrei Emes zy" a*, that seeing things in the right way, is essential to the *avoda of Rosh Hashona*. "א"ז מו"ר ז"ל אמר כי בראש השנה צריכין להיות טוב עין אפילו לאומות. ואמר רמז לזה. "בגמרא, (ר"ה כ"ה). זיל לעין טב ולקדשיה לירחא. (My Grandfather, *mori v' rabi z" l*, said that on *Rosh Hashana*, we must be *tov ayin, even to the other nations*. He said that the Gemara (ראש השנה כ"ה) hints to this with the instruction, זיל לעין טב ולקדשיה לירחא. (Go to one with a good eye, and let him sanctify the new moon)."

This is the time to wake up and model our Torah and Tefila on R. Akiva's image of varied fruits. This approach of multiple fruits and colors, will awaken *chiyus* and *hislahavus* in the hearts of our youth, and enable us to receive the *shefa* of fruitfulness in all ways, ברוחניות ובגשמיות אכי"ר.



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