

דרכים בפרשה ראה

R' Mordechai Appel,
an alumnus of the
Telzer Yeshiva, is the
author of Derachim
Beparsha.



ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה

"See, I place before you today blessing and curse."

As Moshe Rabbeinu stands before Klal Yisrael in the final days of his life, he presents them with two possible paths: blessing and curse. Yet the first word of the pasuk immediately catches our attention. Why does the Torah use the word **ראה**, see, rather than the more familiar **שמע**, listen?

Perhaps the Torah is teaching us that there is a difference between hearing something and truly seeing it. A person can know that Hashem exists and believe that everything that happens comes from Shamayim. But there is a higher level, when a person actually sees Hashem's Hand guiding every moment of life.

The chassidishe sefarim explain that **ראה** is not merely a command to the physical eyes, but a command to the neshamah. A Yid is asked to look beyond the external appearance of events and recognize the hidden presence of Hashem within every situation. (*Based on the Sfias Emes and the Nesivos Shalom.*)

A person can look at life and only see what is happening on the surface. But the avodah of a Yid is to recognize that even when things appear difficult or unclear, Hashem is still guiding every moment.

A door closes. A plan falls apart. Someone disappoints us.

The natural reaction is to ask, "Why did this happen?"

But the Yid with eyes of emunah asks, "What is Hashem showing me through this?"

The first question searches for an explanation. The second searches for meaning.

The Gemara in Berachos (54a) teaches: **חייב אדם לברך על הטובה** - A person is obligated to bless Hashem for what appears to be bad just as he blesses Him for what is good.

Chazal are teaching us that even in moments of difficulty, a Yid can recognize that Hashem is present and that there is a deeper story being written.

The Gemara illustrates this idea through the famous story of Rabbi Akiva. Chazal teach: **לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד** A person should always accustom himself to say: Everything that Hashem does is for the good.

Rabbi Akiva was traveling on the road and was refused lodging in a city. He simply said, **כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד**. He went and slept in the field with his rooster, donkey, and candle. Then: **אתא זיקא כבייה לשרגא** the wind came and

extinguished the candle. **אתא שונרא אכליה לתרנגולא** A cat came and ate the rooster. **אתא אריה אכליה לחמרא** A lion came and ate the donkey.

After each loss, Rabbi Akiva repeated the same words:

כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד

That night, soldiers came and captured the entire city. Only then did Rabbi Akiva understand that the very things that appeared to be setbacks had actually protected him.

The Gemara concludes: **לאו אמרי לנו כל מה שעושה הקדוש ברוך הוא הכל לטובה** "Did I not tell you that everything that Hakadosh Boruch Hu does is for the good?"

Perhaps the greatness of Rabbi Akiva was not only that he understood afterward why everything had happened. The greatness was that he never lost sight of Hashem even when the situation seemed confusing.

He did not understand the reason, but he understood that there was a reason. That is true emunah.

The ability to see beyond the surface also affects the way we look at others.

This was one of the great qualities of the Kedushas Levi, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. He was known as the sanegor shel Yisrael, the defender of Klal Yisrael. His greatness was that he looked beyond the external actions of a person and searched for the hidden goodness within every Yid.

Perhaps this is another dimension of **ראה**. True vision is not only seeing Hashem's Hand in our own lives. It is also learning to see the hidden greatness within the people around us.

The same idea applies when looking at ourselves. A person who only sees his failures eventually loses hope. A person who learns to see the good that remains within him finds the strength to continue growing.

When we only see what is missing, we become bitter. When we learn to see the Hand of Hashem, we become grateful.

Perhaps this is why the Torah begins this message with **ראה**. Hashem is not first asking us to change our actions. He is asking us to change our vision.

As we approach Elul, many of us look honestly at ourselves and immediately notice everything that needs fixing. Our mistakes. Our shortcomings. The places where we have fallen. But Hashem begins with another message: **ראה**.

Look again. See the good that is still alive within you. See the kindness Hashem has surrounded you with. See the opportunities hidden inside your struggles. See the countless ways Hashem has been guiding you even when you did not recognize Him.

Maybe just maybe, the greatest brachah is not that life becomes easier. Perhaps the greatest brachah is that a Yid learns how to see.

מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos