

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam*

## PARSHAT PINCHAS

### DVAR TORAH: HONOURING ROSH CHODESH

Rabbi Simchah Zissel Ziv, 1898-1824) זצ"ל, one of the early leaders of the Mussar Movement known as the Alter of Kelm, wrote an essay entitled, "The Honor of Rosh Chodesh" (Chachmah Umussar Volume I, pp. 255-256) built on two selections from letters written on Rosh Chodesh itself.

The Torah grants to some eternal honor and others eternal shame.

In the beginning of our parshah Pinchas is praised, whereas Zimri and Kozbi are cited for eternal disgrace. The Torah (Bamidbar 25:15) makes a point of also telling us that Kozbi was the daughter of Tzur, the chief king of Midian. Chazal point out (Tanchuma Pinchas 2) that even though Tzur was the number one man in Midian, when he is listed among the Midianite kings killed in war he is demoted to the number three slot: "The kings of Midian were killed along with the rest of the dead – Evi, Rekem, Tzur, Chur, and Reva, the five kings of Midian ..." (Bamidbar 31:8). He disgraced himself by encouraging his own daughter to free herself for immorality; he is therefore disgraced by the Torah.

During his lifetime, says Rav Simcha Zissel, Tzur could have cared less what the Jews and the Torah think of him. Yet in the Other World this non-Jewish king is eternally humiliated by being downgraded in the Torah's list from Midianite King Number One to King Number Three.

Yet, says Rav Simchah Zissel, take a look at Rosh Chodesh! The Torah showers it with honor and importance, calling it the head of the month – "וּבְרֵאשֵׁי חֳדָשִׁיכֶם" (Bamidbar 28:11) and dedicating an entire passage to it and its sacrifices, immediately after Shabbat. [Rosh Chodesh is also paired together with Shabbat in the Tanach: As the Shunamite woman prepares to visit the prophet Elisha, her husband asks her why she is going, for "it is neither Rosh Chodesh nor Shabbat" (Melachim II 4:23); apparently people would visit the prophets on Rosh Chodesh and Shabbat. Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh also appear together in the prophet's description of the heights of the messianic vision. Once the entire world unites to serve Hashem, "Every Rosh Chodesh and every Shabbat all flesh will come to bow down before Me, says Hashem" (Yishayahu 66:23).]

If Tzur's position in the Torah diminishes his honor, Rosh Chodesh's lofty position certainly affirms its honor. The Torah refers to Rosh Chodesh as a "moed" (Shavuot 10a), considering it one of the holidays. It is also called a "yom kaparah," a day that brings atonement (Chullin 60b), and in Musaf we call it "yom teshu'ah miyad sonei," "a day of salvation from the hated enemy." How much we should likewise honor every Rosh Chodesh!

He writes, in a letter to his son written on Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av that fell out on a Friday (as it does this year): "I am very, very amazed at the gift that falls in our portion every month – a great holiday, with a sacrifice (when the Beit Hamikdash was standing) like Yom Tov itself, number one. [I am amazed at what we say] in Yaaleh Veyavo, that Rosh Chodesh evokes the memory of the People of Israel, Yerushalayim, and the Mashiach ... How fortunate we are and how great is our portion!"

## SOURCE GUIDE: AYIN TOVAH - THE GOOD EYE

Moshe Rabbeinu is described as having an “ayin tovah,” a “good eye.” What is an “ayin tovah” and how do we know Moshe had one? This source guide examines the seeming discrepancy between two verses in this week’s parshah that this is based on. Also, mostly based on the Maharal’s teachings, it explores what the concept of “ayin tovah” means.

### A. Moshe’s Ayin Tovah

Ayin tovah is usually translated as generosity. Moshe’s generosity is illustrated in this week’s parshah through how he related to Yehoshua. Chazal point out a discrepancy between two verses:

<p><b>1. Bamidbar 27:18</b> Hashem said to Moshe: Take Yehoshua son of Nun, a man with the spirit within him, and rest your <b>hand</b> upon him.</p>	<p><b>במדבר כז:יח</b> וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה קַח לְךָ אֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ בּוֹ וְסָמַכְתָּ אֶת יָדְךָ עָלָיו.</p>
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This was Hashem’s command. But see how the Torah records Moshe’s implementation:

<p><b>2. Bamidbar 27:23</b> He rested his <b>hands</b> upon him and commanded him according to the word of Hashem in the hands of Moshe.</p>	<p><b>במדבר כז:כג</b> וַיִּסְמַךְ אֶת יָדָיו עָלָיו וַיְצַוֵהוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה'</p>
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Moshe was only told to rest one hand upon Yehoshua, yet he rested both of his hands on Yehoshua. The Midrash explains the discrepancy:

<p><b>3. Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar 21:15</b> The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “Take Yehoshua son of Nun...” Moshe acted with generosity, as it says, “The one with the good eye will be blessed.” This can be compared to a king who told one of the people in his household, “Give so and so a se’ah measure of wheat.” He went and gave him two se’ah, and said, “One se’ah is from the king and the other se’ah is from me.” Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moshe, “Rest your hand on him” – one hand. What did Moshe do? He rested both hands on him and commanded him. This fulfills what is written, “One who is good of eye (generous) – he will be blessed” (Mishlei 22:9).</p>	<p><b>מדרש רבה במדבר פרשה כא פסקה טו</b> א"ל הקב"ה קח לך את יהושע בן נון, ועשה משה בטוב עין, שנאמר (משלי כב): "טוב עין הוא יברך." משל למלך שאמר לבן ביתו תן לפלוני סאה של חטים הלך ונתן לו סאתים אמר לו הרי סאה משל מלך וסאה משלי. כך אמר הקב"ה למשה וסמכת את ידך עליו יד אחת. מה עשה ויסמך את ידיו ויצוהו לקיים מה שנאמר טוב עין הוא יברך.</p>
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This is the verse the Midrash refers to:

<p><b>4. Mishlei 22:9</b> The generous one (the one with a good eye) will be blessed, for he gave of his bread to the poor.</p>	<p><b>משלי כב:ט</b> טוב עין הוא יברך כי נתן מלחמו לרעל.</p>
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### Two additional sources:

See the Brisker Rov’s commentary on Bamidbar 27:23, where he points out and resolves a seeming contradiction between this midrash and an aggadic comment on Bava Kamma 92b. Another aggadic passage (Nedarim 38a) quotes the same verse when it speaks of Moshe’s generosity. Deep conceptual analysis of the Torah, פלפולא דאורייתא, was first given only to Moshe and his own descendants as a personal gift from G-d, but Moshe passed it on to Israel out of his own generosity. Moshe’s approach is expressed in yet another verse, when he heard that Eldad and Meidad were prophesying in the camp (that Moshe would die and Yehoshua bring the nation into Israel! – Rashi):

<p><b>5. Bamidbar 11:29</b> ... If only the entire nation of Hashem were prophets, that Hashem would place His Spirit upon them.</p>	<p><b>במדבר יא:כט</b> ... ומי יתן כל עם ה' נביאים כי יתן ה' את רוחו עליהם.</p>
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Moshe’s spiritual generosity derives from his humility. Moshe, Israel’s humblest man and greatest prophet, was so devoid of ego that he was the person most open to G-d’s revelation. But he was also the one most aware that Divine revelation is not a limited resource. G-d Himself tells Moshe to rest one hand on Yehoshua, leaving Moshe open to share even more spiritual abundance with Yehoshua. G-d gives Moshe the special ability to understand the conceptual depths of the Torah, and he shares it with Israel.

## B. What Is Ayin Tovah?

The Maharal contrasts עין טובה, a good eye, with לב טוב, a good heart (see Pirkei Avot 2:9):

<p><b>6. Netivot Olam, Netiv Ayin Tov</b></p> <p>The difference between a good heart and a good eye is as follows: A good heart refers to the desire to extend goodness towards another, and a bad heart refers to not wanting to extend goodness towards another. But a good eye refers to when one wills and desires that his friend should be in a state of completion and good. The opposite of this is an evil eye, referring to when his eye is constricted (stingy) towards another.</p>	<p><b>נתיבות עולם נתיב עין טוב</b></p> <p>וההפרש שיש בין לב טוב ובין עין טוב, כי לב טוב נקרא כאשר הוא חפץ להוציא טוב אל אחר, ולב רע נקרא כאשר אינו רוצה להוציא טוב אל אחר, ועין טוב נקרא כאשר הוא רוצה וחפץ שיהיה חבירו בשלימות ובטוב, והפך זה עין רע נקרא כאשר עינו צר בשל אחר.</p>
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A person with a good eye is especially open to blessing (source 4 above). Why is that?

<p><b>7. Netivot Olam, Netiv Ayin Tov</b></p> <p>This is why [King Solomon in Mishlei] said “The one with a good eye will be blessed,” because the nature of the eye is to be constricted, not desiring [another’s] perfection and completion. Therefore it is distant from blessing (by nature). One who gives generously, with a good eye, indicates that he is clinging to an excessive blessing. If not, he would not have given so generously. Therefore it says that one who has a good eye is blessed because he gives of his bread to the poor – because one who has a good eye clings to blessing, as we said, and is therefore also blessed himself.</p>	<p><b>נתיבות עולם נתיב עין טוב</b></p> <p>ומפני כך אמר טוב עין הוא יבורך כי העין מדרכו שיהיה צר ואינו חפץ בשלימות לכך הוא רחוק מן הברכה, וזה שהוא נותן בעין טובה מורה שהוא דבק בברכה יתירה ואל”כ לא היה נותן בטוב עין, לכך כתיב טוב עין הוא יבורך כי מלחמו נתן לדל, שמפני שהוא בעל עין טוב הוא דבק בברכה כמו שאמרנו ולכך יבורך ג”כ.</p>
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“Ayin tovah” goes beyond simple giving; it even goes beyond simple generosity. It means wanting the best for others - looking at others and wanting them to be the best they can. The following Mishnah illustrates this:

<p><b>8. Pirkei Avot 5:13</b></p> <p>There are four types of contributors to charity. One who wants that he should give but others should not is begrudging of others (literally, ‘has an evil eye toward others’). One who wants others to give but that he should not give is stingy with his own [money] (literally, ‘he has an evil eye about his own’). One who wants that both he and others should give is a chasid (pious). One who wants that neither he nor others should give is evil.</p>	<p><b>אבות פרק ה:יג</b></p> <p>אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּנוֹתְנֵי צְדָקָה. הַרוֹצֵה שְׂיִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, עֵינּוֹ רָעָה בְּשַׁל אֲחֵרִים. יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים וְהוּא לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינּוֹ רָעָה בְּשַׁלּוֹ. יִתֵּן וְיִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, תְּסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, רָשָׁע.</p>
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Even someone who is himself generous – “he wants that he should give” – but doesn’t want others to give still has an ayin ra’ah, an “evil eye,” for he does not want the best for others. A “good eye,” in line with the Maharal’s definition, demands that a person want that others should be the best they possibly can.

There are clusters of good midot (character traits) that work well together and strengthen each other (for instance – humility and patience strengthen each other, as do chesed and love). Ayin tovah is also part of such a cluster; it is one component of Avraham Avinu’s triad of good midot:

<p><b>9. Pirkei Avot 5:19</b></p> <p>One who has a good eye (generosity), a lowly spirit (humility), and a lowly being (living modestly, not chasing desires) is a student of Avraham our father ...</p>	<p><b>אבות פרק ה:יט</b></p> <p>... עֵינַי טוֹבָה, רוּחַ נְמוּכָה, וְנַפְשִׁי שְׂפֹלָה, מִתְּלַמְּדוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ ...</p>
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These three traits work together. Avraham cultivated his generosity – with both his physical and spiritual resources – in a character devoid of ego, arrogance, and the self-centered pursuit of desires. Avraham wanted the best and the most for others (ayin tovah) because he didn’t feel the need to be called the best and have the most himself. If one lives, as Avraham and Moshe did, with a consciousness that Hashem is in the center, His resources are boundless, and He wants the best for all – ayin tovah becomes realistic.

## THE PINCHAS PARADOX BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

Pinchas does an act of violence and is rewarded with peace; he reacts with cruelty to the sin of Zimri and is rewarded with Kehunah. He is anointed to the priesthood which represents *מדת ההסד*, the attribute of lovingkindness in this world. Pinchas's rewards indeed constitute a paradox.

Based on the teachings of Rav Tzadok Hakohen, Rav Gedalyah Shor in Or Gedalyahu helps place this paradox in perspective. The Torah is full of such paradoxes. *עשר כדי שתתעשר* – tithe your wealth and income so that you may become wealthy (Shabbat 119a). The Gemara (Shabbat 119a) teaches that honoring the Shabbat with rich food and distinguished clothing brings wealth, not poverty. In the parshah relating to the *עיר הנדחת*, the city which was destroyed and razed to the foundation and its idol-worshipping inhabitants put to death, the Torah promises that God will bless you with mercy, that we will be filled with an abundance of mercy toward our fellow man. Paradoxes abound.

And in our personal avodah, our own service of God – Rav Tzadok says that the joy that we feel after our personal prayer is the sign that our prayers were answered. This, despite the fact that a successful prayer comes from a *לב נשבר*, an intense sense of need and dependence, a heart broken for the struggle of physical and spiritual survival.

All these examples lead us to understand the principle at work, the transformative power of the mitzvah. An act done as a mitzvah has the exactly opposite effect of that same act done outside the context of a mitzvah. Acts of mitzvah exist in a different spiritual dimension. An act of giving brings us closer to the source of blessing. The broken-hearted sigh opens one's heart up to the presence of Hashem. An act of vengeance in order to make the world pure opens the door to the Divine blessings of *חסד ושלום*, lovingkindness and peace.

This issue is dedicated in memory of  
Yaakov ben Michah, ז"ל

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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