

בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
RE'EH

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FOCUSED BUT FAULTY

Parshas Re'eh refers to the spot of the *Beis HaMikdash* by stating, "The place Hashem will choose."¹ Quoting this, the Rambam² makes a startling observation — nowhere does the Torah specify where the *Beis HaMikdash* is to be built. Why doesn't the Torah explicitly tell us where this special spot is located?

Hashem, explains the Rambam, was concerned regarding the potential altercations that may arise had the future place of the *Beis HaMikdash* been known. Every *Shevet* would have vied for that portion of land, each one laying claim to that particular plot. Therefore, in order to avoid controversy, the Torah didn't specify the exact spot of the *Beis HaMikdash*, only hinting at its location to allow later generations to determine the designated area. At that point, after a king would be appointed as leader of *Klal Yisrael*, his leadership would quell any potential dissent, and this is indeed what happened.

To understand the importance of this Rambam, there are a few questions that must be addressed. The portions of each *Shevet* were assigned through a lottery system, but one that acted through Hashem's design.³ Furthermore, what sort of value would there have been in achieving ownership of the *Beis HaMikdash* through might? The Temple would have been an empty shell, a symbol of hypocrisy, built upon bloodshed and founded in tears. How can one even think that this House would serve as a place for *avodas Hashem*? To fight for this portion, one would have to deny Hashem's involvement in the apportioning of the land, and then be satisfied with a *Beis HaMikdash* devoid of meaning! How could anyone do this?

This Rambam sheds light on one aspect of the human psyche — the ability to 'tunnel-vision,' to block out all other reasoning, and focus solely on one goal or aspect of an idea. This can be used in the positive, to ignore detrimental thoughts. However, a person should be aware that they may be ignoring factors that may make a meaningful impact on their decision. This was the fear, that some of the *Shevatim* might latch on to a wonderful idea, but one that may spiral out of control.

'Tunnel-vision' is a powerful tool, and should be used wisely.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

The very nature of 'tunnel-vision' is that we are unaware of other factors that would affect our decision. If one is suffering from such an ailment, how would they even know to seek a cure?

One tried and true method is to speak to someone about the issue at hand. By discussing the matter with a friend or mentor, one will get clarity, and know how to move forward.¹

If one has no one to speak to, even verbally announcing one's plans, and speaking out the known pros and cons can give a person clarity. The very act of giving words to thoughts will refine the argument and can help a person recognize any particular weakness in the thought process.²

Another process one can engage in is to check all the potential factors that may be pushing them to make their decision.³ By thinking up theoreticals (maybe it's arrogance? Maybe it's kindness?) a person may find a component that they did not realize was there.

1 *Yalkut Shimoni*, 524

2 *Gittin* 83b, *Tosfos* s.v. כיון דפסקה

3 *Chovos HaLevovos*, Introduction

1 *Devarim* 12:5

2 *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:45

3 *Sanhedrin* 43b

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- *The Mashgiach*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l,
Sefer Igros U'chtavim vol.1 pg. 40

CONCENTRATE AND CONQUER

“Emotionally, it was probably the hardest thing I ever did in my life.” Zacharya* exhaled, as he paused in the telling of his story. He had grown up non-observant, but at this point in his life, after being a part of the Orthodox Jewish community for almost thirty years, there was little to differentiate him from the next fellow.

Every so often his life story would come up, and people would ask him about his journey. Zacharya had no problem indulging his audience. At this point he was discussing a specific weakness he had. He knew that whenever he passed by a particular area, he would be drawn in, and wasting hours of his time was the least of his problems. As he grew in his observance, though, he realized that he needed a new direction in his life. But it was difficult to leave his old vices.

Nevertheless, as best as he could, he would avoid particular areas, knowing that his spiritual growth would be threatened if he fell prey to his old habits. Yet, one day he found that he would have to travel through his old stomping grounds, and he wasn't sure what to do.

“So what did you do?” asked a younger listener.

“Well, I had to go, there was no way around it. I put on some headphones and listened to music. Not just any music, but music with inspirational lyrics, a moving tune, the works. And perhaps the most important part — I focused. I focused on what's important in my life, who I am, and what I'm trying to be.

“I have found that Hashem has given us an amazing gift, the ability to tune out information and distractions. Sometimes it's not used properly, and we make poor decisions, without all the information. But on the other hand, it can be the greatest blessing, the ability to focus on what we need to do, and not allow any other calculation or distraction to enter and confuse us.

“Long story short, I made it. I had tears in my eyes. Not just in my eyes, actually, they were streaming down my face. This was a battle of willpower, a sort that I've never faced before. But by focusing on my goals, I made it. I made it, and I'm very proud of this story, which is why you are hearing it today,” Zacharya finished with a smile.

“I wish I can tell you that this lesson has always stayed with me. The truth is, it hasn't. But every so often I remember this story, and I remind myself that my journey is far from over, it's time to put down the distractions, and focus on who I want to be.”

**Based on a true story, name has been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even the great Yehoshua bin Nun breached the boundaries of ‘tunnel-vision’ when he told *Moshe Rabbeinu* to discipline Eldad and Meidad.¹
- ‘Tunnel-vision’ can be used in the positive; the *Sanhedrin* devised a plan to save the House of David, even though they knew through *nevuah* that *Malchus Beis Dovid* will never cease.²

¹ *Eruvin* 63b, see *Rashi ibid.* s.v. כלאם

² *Vayikrah Rabbah* 19:6, see *Chiddushei HaLev* on *Vayikrah* 15:25

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