



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHERS  
**SIGHTSEEING TOUR OF THE SOUL**

*Avos Perek 1 Mishna 1*  
*By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

Summer arrives with so much anticipation. Holidays beckon, schedules become relaxed and everyone looks forward to shared time with family. Suitcases are schlepped out of the garden shed, and discussions are held in earnest as to where and what will be done for the next few weeks. Youngsters dream of days filled with excitement. It's all so idyllic; one can almost smell the clean air of the country as they pack. Preparations can be difficult, depending on the destination. You might have to include dishes, sunscreen, food and so much more. Obviously a Torah Yied has even more in mind: tallis, tefillin and seforim occupy even more space but are essential. The minhag to learn Avos at this time of year is very much part of the summer experience, and it speaks about much that we need to have in mind during these special days. The very first Mishnah starts:

*Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples and make a fence for the Torah.*

We have a mesorah, a chain that reaches back directly to Mount Sinai. Each generation has had its challenges, yet this chain has stood the test of time. What is it that keeps this thriving? It is the unique nekudah, the essence that is the Jewish soul. The "fence for the Torah" has created necessary borders set by our Gedolim through the many years of Golus which keeps us on track. Each link of the chain is vital, and the fence created is to vouchsafe our purity. As the summer arrives we should speak about the particular tests that come with it.

The Tzaddik, Rebbe Yitzchok Radviler ztl, the son of the Zlotshiver Maggid ztl, says in his sefer Or Yitzchok that the eyes are the doorway to the neshoma. Lehavdil the English have a folk saying, "The eyes are the mirror to the soul", and they aren't far off the mark.

The Rebbe explains that the neshoma is the seat of our kedusha, and the eyes are their doorway to the outside world. It is for this reason we have to safeguard what we see, for that which isn't becoming can directly damage our soul. He points out that unlike any other part of our visible body, the eye is the most sensitive. One speck of dust, one grain of sand, can irritate the eye and cause irreparable damage. The Shulchan Aruch says that if an eye is infected it is considered sekonas nefoshos-a danger to life. On no other surface of the body can such small irritations do so much damage. This sensitivity indicates that the eye functions at a very vulnerable level. In spiritual terms it is the portal to what surrounds us in the physical world, and therefore sight is the most delicate of our senses. The neshoma of a Yied is directly connected to Hashem in a unique manner and what the eye sees is carried to that sensitive place. Our whole kedusha can be torn away if we see something untoward. Summer brings with it great tests in this realm, and each of us must create borders so as not to destroy our bond with Hashem. The Tiferes Shlomo explains that the main holiness of a Yied lies in shmiras einayim, safeguarding what one sees.

Today's culture has no sensitivity when it comes to such matters. There is a new religion in vogue and it is called secularism. This religion is aggressive; it preaches that there are no borders and that everyone is free to be who or what they please. To protest against such chaos is regarded as old-fashioned, uninformed, and dangerously reactionary. Secularists exclaim that any one not worshipping their new deities is guilty of being abusive, fostering a climate of dysfunction and malingering. There is no place for Hashem's words in this new world, and it is their goal to banish all sense of modesty and moderation into the museums of yesteryears' quaint yet foolish history. The streets are strewn with immodest billboards, and local authorities can't understand why parents seek to save their children from this pollution. We are held up to ridicule, even threatened if we endeavour to keep our homes safe from the excesses that are celebrated all around us. Yieden are born in purity, but the whole world seeks to destroy this with their drive to destroy all that is wholesome.

*"They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples."*

Our tikun in this world is to be deliberate in our decisions in life and raise up our young to be aware of their mesorah. Our yeshivos are filled with thousands of bochurim, the Beis Yaakov is thriving. All these neshomas are so very pure; they stand ready to create the next link in our golden chain. Gedolei Yisroel lead us with their kedusha, building appropriate borders. It is not easy, nor was it ever meant to be. The challenge of our generation has been tailor-made for our souls; we are here to overcome all these obstacles. Hashem seeks our connection; let us not allow our souls to become blurred with the sights that seek to bring us down.