



## WHICH WAY ARE YOU GETTING PULLED?

### WHY WAS RIVKA EXASPERATED?

In the Torah, we see statements or episodes that to the simple mind and eye might seem insignificant. The Torah tells us that Rivka, the wife of Yitzchak, finally becomes pregnant, and the Torah states, *ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה* - *and the children struggled in her womb* (Bereishis 25:22). Onkelos *teitches* (translates) this to mean *ודחקין בניה* - her children were *pushing* within her womb. Now, any mother who carries a child is familiar with the fact that children are usually not locked into child restraints in the mother's womb. They move around. They're active. And the Torah tells us here that the children were pushing. They were active. This appears to be totally insignificant and totally incongruous. Why would the Torah mention such a minor point?

Rashi dipped his pen in the ink and wrote as follows: *על כרחך*, you're forced to say, *המקרא הזה אומר דרשני*, this *passuk* says, take note and study me, because the Torah doesn't explain what exactly the pushing was about.<sup>1</sup> It does say, however, that it bothered Rivka to the point that she was so exasperated that she said, "*למה זה אנכי*," which means if so, if the kids are restless, what did I ever get pregnant for?

Now, try to imagine someone - you should never know from it - but try to imagine someone who is an *akarah*, a woman who cannot have children. The couple *davens* and *davens*, they *daven* special *tefilos*, her in one corner and him in another corner. And finally she becomes pregnant. Can you imagine how overwhelming the *simchah* is? You can't.

I thought I'd seen it all. A couple of weeks ago, I was in New York City and I met a fellow. Somebody told me this fellow works a lot on *emunah* and *bitachon*. I was very excited to meet him. He looked like a *yeshivah* man from Eretz Yisrael. I spoke to him and I said, "What is your push, what's the motivation, for your seeking *emunah* and *bitachon*?" Sadly, most people who seek *emunah* and *bitachon* today don't seek it because they just want to have a *keshet* with Hashem, and the way to do it is through *emunah* and *bitachon*. Most people have some kind of an issue. They need to get married. They need to have children. They need to get this. They need *parnasah*. That arouses them to *emunah* and *bitachon*. I asked that fellow, "What was the motivation?" He said, "I didn't have children." Ah, that's a powerful motivator. I said, "Nu. I'm assuming if you're still working on *emunah* and *bitachon* now, you have children." He said, "Yes, I do." I said how long was the wait? Try to guess what he said. 10 years? 20? 25? 35 years! I don't remember meeting somebody face to face who had a child after 35 years of waiting. And I said to him, "Were you *zocheh* to have one child?" He said, "No. I was *zocheh* to have two children. Not twins. I had two children." That was, like, mind blowing! I wanted to hug the man. I wanted to say, "I wish you could hang around me. You're like my *ra'ayah* to *emunah* and *bitachon*." This is it.

So if the babies do a little kicking in the stomach, the one thing you don't say is *למה זה אנכי*. You don't say, "I wish I never *davened* for kids." You know what you say? "I have no complaints. I'm so excited." I know a lady who didn't have kids for who knows how many years, and then the doctor put her on bedrest. She was so happy with this bedrest because she knew she was having a baby. And here Rivka says, "What did I ever get pregnant for?"

You know what we can deduce from this? You might think she has a low threshold of pain, and it was causing her a lot of pain. I doubt it. When you're having children from Yitzchak Avinu, there is no amount of kicking in the world that would get you to have regrets of getting pregnant. There's only one thing that could get a woman of Rivka's stature to have regrets. When the kicking was of such a nature that it revealed that the future of these children wasn't going to be good. The only thing that would make Rivka feel regret was if this kicking somehow showed that these were not the descendants she was looking to honor Hashem.

Today, I thought about this. What would be if a mother who is expecting would go to the doctor and the doctor would take an ultrasound. I've gotten the call many times in my life, a call from a person who got bad news after the ultrasound, of the child not being healthy, the child this, the child that. People say, "What can I do? Can I let the child go? I always think, what would be if the doctor would say after the ultrasound, "I could see after taking a test on him, on his genes and his DNA, that you're going to produce a *rasha*." How many parents do you think would say, "*Im kein*, if so, Rabbi could I abort this child?"

<sup>1</sup> *ויתרוצצו*. ע"פ המקרא הזה אומר דרשני, שסתם מה היא רציצה זו וכתב אם כן למה זה אנכי? רבותינו דרשוהו לשון ריצה; כשהיתה עוברת על פתחי תורה של שם נעבר יעקב כך ומפרנס לצאת, עוברת על פתח עבודת אלהים, עשו מפרנס לצאת. דבר אחר מתרועעץ זה עם זה ומריבים בנחלת שני עולמות.

But Rivka knew the *emes*, and Rivka said **למה זה אנכי**. Therefore **רבותינו דרשוהו**, our *Chazal* (Bereishis Rabbah 63:6, as quoted by Rashi) *darshened* this *passuk* and they tell us that this *ritzah*, this pushing, was as follows. **כשהיתה עוברת על פתחי תורה**, when she passed the doorways that lead to *batei medrashos* of the famous *yeshivos* of Shem and Eiver - it seems that Shem and Eiver had a number of *yeshivos*. They had different satellite branches like in Lakewood, *baruch Hashem*. It's not one building. There's Beis this, Beis that. There are a lot of *batei medrashim*, *ken yirbu*, unbelievable! So Shem and Eiver also had a lot of *batei medrashos*. Whenever she walked past one of the *batei medrashos*, **יעקב רץ ומפרכס**. First he was *ratz*, he ran, and then **ומפרכס**, he started to shake. He started to push. **פִּירְכּוֹס** is an unconscious reflex or action. **וכשהיתה עוברת על פתח עבודת אלילים**, and when she passed the doors of an idol worshiper, **עשו מפרכס לצאת**.

It's interesting it doesn't say *ratz*, he ran. Yosef from Ludwigshafen, Germany, (may Hakadosh Baruch Hu be with him) called me yesterday with two questions. He said number one, how come by Yaakov it says **רץ ומפרכס**, and not by Eisav? And two, why did Rivka walk past the houses of idol worshipers? Wouldn't she stay away from those places? *Gevaldig*. I didn't have the answers handy. I said, "They're very good questions. Good *diyukim*."

I thought about it now, and I think the answer is that she didn't knowingly pass by places of idol worship. They were ordinary homes. From the outside they looked like storefronts. It said, "Over here we speak Espanol. Here we speak French. Here we speak Spanish." But really, inside the homes there was idol worship, for which Eisav had a *shmeck*. Rivka didn't *chap* it was a house of idol worship. You didn't see anything outside like a sign saying: "Welcome all sinners." So therefore, she didn't know. And from the fact that it doesn't say *ratz*, it seems that Yaakov's attachment to Torah was greater than Eisav's attachment to *avodah zarah*. (Thank you Yosef for the questions.)

This is what she was saying: "If I have a child who is going to serve *avodah zarah*, I don't want that. **למה זה אנכי**. I don't want a child that will bring a *chillul Hashem*."

But the question is, what was bothering Rivka so much? Did she not know that they were twins? At least she would have one *tzaddik*.

So my Rebbi (Rav Meir Halevi Soloveichik, zt"l) gave two *teirutzim*. Either she thought it was one child and to have a child that *tantzes af alle chasunos*, that dances by all weddings, that's *treif*. She doesn't want a child who feels at home in the *batei medrashos*, and who feels at home also in the *batei avodah zarah*. (There are many people who pride themselves on this fact, that 'I'm good everywhere. Wherever I go, I'm comfortable.') The other *pshat* he said was: the world says she knew that if Eisav would be together with Yaakov, he would have bad *hashpa'ah* on Yaakov, and if Yaakov will be *mushpa* from Eisav, she wasn't interested in that. He spoke about it at length, but that's not today's discussion.

## REFLEX PULLS THEM TO THEIR NETIYOS

Today, we want to discuss and understand, the concept that a child in a mother's womb can have a **פִּירְכּוֹס**, which is an unconscious act. You know where the *gemara* says we find the concept of **פִּירְכּוֹס**? By an animal. If you cut a chicken's head off and you let it go, it's **מפרכסת**, it runs around the place headless, and to the naked eye it appears as if it's alive. It's not. There's no brain anymore. There's no head anymore. It's just a reflexive action. Muscle twitching, that's all. That's what **מפרכסת** means. How in the world is a child in a mother's stomach **מפרכס**? It wasn't that Yaakov said **הנני מוכן ומוזמן** - "I am ready and prepared to go to the *beis hamedrash*." It wasn't that Eisav said **הנני מוכן ומוזמן** - "I am ready to go to the *beis avodah zarah*." It was a **פרכס**. It was a subconscious action. How did that happen?

Rav Yerucham Levovitz, the Mirrer *mashgiach* zt"l explained (Daas Torah, Toldos), that we have to understand that *ruchniyus*, spirituality, is much more real than any *inyanei gashmiyus*.<sup>2</sup> We can't imagine taking something of *gashmiyus* down the street, like a physical object, and having the thing jump out of my hand and go into this place or that place. If a guy is carrying a ball, *l'mashal*, and he walks past a bat store, there's no way the ball is going to jump into the bat store. So how was it possible for a child in the mother's stomach to be jumping towards *avodah zarah* or *batei medrashos*?

But he says there's one area in *gashmiyus* where we find this concept. You know where? With a compass. If you're traveling in a place where there are no charted routes and you don't have a GPS - you want to go through deserts, or you want to go through oceans - how do you travel? So there's a compass, a little *keili*, that has north, south, east and west and there's a little dial on the thing. What do you do? You hold it, and where does the compass always face? It always points to the north. My grandfather used to always give them as presents. I guess it was a cheap present in the Dollar Store so he gave them out. The arrow always points to the north. As a kid you turned around this way, you tried to go fast and get it to go this way. It never gets fooled. Whichever way you turn, the compass always points to the north. It's amazing. It's a *metzius*. It's a scientific fact which is mind boggling. It always goes this way.

<sup>2</sup> ויתרוצצו הבנים בקרבה (כה, כב). וברש"י: רבותינו דרשוהו לשון ריצה, כשהיתה עוברת על פתחי תורה של שם ועבר יעקב רץ ומפרכס לצאת, עוברת על פתחי ע"ז עשו מפרכס לצאת. בעינינו הרי זו עובדה תמונה לכאורה, וכל זה מחמת שאין אנו נותנים ממש בעינינו רוחניות, האדם צריך להבין כי עינינו רוחניות הם מציאותם, ממשם, הרבה הרבה יותר מאשר עינינו גשמיים. הנה עוברי ימים ומדברות יש אתם תמיד כלי המצפן (קאמפאס), אשר בלעדו אינם זזים ממקומם, זה המצפן מורה להם הדרך בה ילכו, טבע הכלי הזה הוא כי תמיד הוא נוטה דוקא לצד הצפון, וזוהי יודע האדם תמיד מקומו איפה הוא, טבע זו המתכת נפלא ונורא מאוד, כי לא תוכל לסבבו בשום אופן לצד אחר, ובאיוזה צד שהוא שתעמידו, הנה תיכף יתהפך ויפנה דוקא לצד הצפון. כן ודאי הם העיניים ברוחניות. קדושה מצד עצם טבעה הנה סגולתה היא שתמיד היא נוטה ונמשכת לצד הקדושה, "יעקב רץ" זהו כח רוחני טבעי חזק הרבה יותר מטבע של הקאמפאס, וכן "עשו מפרכס לצאת" זהו כח נטיה לצד צפון" מצד עצם טבע כחות הטומאה. אדם ההולך בשוק יראה וייוכח איך שהוא אסור בחבלים, הוא רואה ומביט פעם לצד זה ופעם לצד זה, דומה האדם כי זה רק הבט בעלמא, בלי מכוון כלל, כאלו שאין לו שום חפץ בפעולותיו אלה, אמנם הוא אינו יודע כלום, אבל "נטיות" הם, הן הם הפרכוסים שבאדם, משיכה לפה ומשיכה לשם, ממש אופן של כף הקלע.

You know what the compass teaches me? This lesson. Everybody has in himself an internal compass, where a “magnetic” force always points you to and pulls you in the direction where you’re going. A person who has a *neshamah kedoshah* that’s not messed up, the nature of *kedushah* is that it draws you toward *kedushah*. Yaakov was *רץ ומפרכס*. It had such a reaction in Yaakov. It appeared to the ultrasound that he was running and jumping. He was having something like a seizure. That’s what it looked like. But only when he went past the *beis hamedrash*. That was his *netiyah*. And Eisav *nebach* lacked that element of *kedushah*, and he was *מפרכס* to the *avodah zarah*.

### POWERFUL MAGNET TO TUMAH

This is such a tremendous lesson for every one of us. This lesson here is *mavhil al hara’ayon*! You want to know where you’re ‘holding’ in this world, my friend? You want to know where you stand? You want to know if you have any *shaychus* to *kedushah*? You want to know how much of an Eisav you are or how much of a Yaakov you are? I’ll tell you. Sit yourself down in a *beis hamedrash* and ask yourself if you can sit or all of a sudden you get ‘ants in your pants’ and you feel the *netiyah*, you feel the drag’ that *pashut* drags you out *bal korchecha*. It doesn’t make any sense. I tell the guy, “Sit here and sleep.” “I’ve got to get out. I’ve got to get out!” It’s amazing. Put that same ‘Eisav’ in the street, and the guy loves it! The guy could drive. He could walk. He could ride. He could be on that street, rain, cold, heat. Ah! The outside, the place of the *ish hasadeh*. My friend, that is such a telling sign!

Rav Yerucham says, a guy goes in the street and he becomes aware of the fact that he’s dragged, and he’s drawn to things that are garbage. He can’t even control himself.

Have you ever watched people in a car? People drive on the highway. You know what they always do? Like this rubbernecking and looking out of the window. You think, “Are you out of your mind? You want to get into an accident? What are you looking over there for? What’s in that car? What do you think is in that car?” No, the guy is thinking, *ulai efshar* that there’s going to be in the car next to me, something that’s going to be attracted to my *tumah*. Maybe they’re going to put a piece of paper up to the window and say “Call me.” Maybe they’ll smash into you, you’ll have a crash and you’ll ‘live happily ever after.’ This is what people are thinking. They go non stop, every single car, they’re turning their heads back and forth. They think they’re windshield wipers. Back and forth, back and forth. You can’t turn yourself off, *pashut*.

Did you ever talk to a friend in the street and all of a sudden that guy becomes Mr. Bobblehead? You know what you know right away? It’s not that he’s scared by someone suddenly popping up in the back and he’s now afraid of him. You tell the guy, “Buddy, can’t you just look at me right now? We’re having a *shmooze*. Can’t you keep your eyes focussed on me for a minute?” “Sure no problem.” It’s like they have a kind of syndrome, the “loose neck” syndrome. That is such a telling thing!

I once had a fellow I was working with who was deep into *tumah*. I suggested that he should go somewhere in the *midbaros*. Go find some place. He said, “Rebbi, if you put me in the desert, I would find the *tumah*.” I said, “But there’s no *tumah* in the desert.” He said, “I would take a spoon. I would dig down to China, and I would get the *tumah* somehow.” He said, “Seriously. You don’t know how sick I am.” I said, “There are a lot of them like you, too.”

People don’t realize this. Today, there are people, that if there’s a television available it is a real temptation because they are automatically drawn to entertainment, the *פרכוס*. I once went into a room, a hotel room where there was an *adam gadol*, and I noticed that the TV was wrapped in a blanket. I asked him, “*Mai hai*.” He said, “I’m *choshesh*. I don’t want to be attracted to it.” An *adam gadol*. *פרכוס*, he’s afraid of *פרכוס*.

People are attracted to news, attracted to sports, etc. Have you ever seen people drawn by magnetic force to sports? It’s *mavhil al hara’ayon*. They wake up early in the morning. They call numbers. They call friends. It’s such a silly thing. It happened yesterday. Some men in pajamas were playing with a piece of cloth and a stick. They knocked it about. This is what you do in sports. The second they wake up *modeh ani lefanecha*, this is before *modeh ani*. It’s *מפרכס לצאת*. It’s in the *kishkes*.

I told a guy, “If only you could see how sick you are!” I remember, I had a roommate once way back. The guy was a smoker. Before he said *modeh ani*, he stuck his hand out and fumbled for a cigarette, and put it in his lips. Li it up. In bed. I told him, “You’re not supposed to smoke in bed. You’re going to make a fire and burn us all here. And you’re half asleep.” That’s a *מפרכס*.

### CHECK YOUR OWN COMPASS

My friend, you want to know your compass? See what *shtus* attracts you. I used to go with a fellow in a car. I used to go to a *shiur*, and he used to come with me. Every time we passed a car, he used to say something under his breath. I said, “What are you saying every time we pass a car?” He said, “I’m reminding myself what size engine that car has.” I said, “What?!” He said, “This car has this engine. This one has that engine. This has a unique engine.” I said, “We’re not in that car even. If you’re driving that car or you’re buying the car, I would understand.” It was an automatic *פרכוס*. He couldn’t control it. That’s how people are.

When a person sees something - it could be that he didn’t even want to see it and he would rather go without seeing it.

But if you are automatically *nimshach* to a *davar shel tumah*, and you can't save yourself and you can't flee from it - if this is the case, that should frighten you.

Now there are *eitzos* for it. Dovid Hamelech said, "Every day I get up and I go out to take care of my business, but my feet take me to the *beis medrash*." You know what that is? He had magnetic feet. He had magnetic feet that were magnetized to the *beis hamedrash*. He was a king. He was a massive king. He wasn't some little *shtetl* king. He was the king of the world. Dovid Hamelech! He couldn't help himself. And he didn't go to *yeshivah* when he was a kid. At 28 years old he became a king. He never went to *yeshivah*. But when he became a king and he finally had the chance, his *raglayim* just pulled him to the *beis medrash*. He didn't force himself. He didn't have to pressure himself.

There are people who are vulnerable, and when they get vulnerable, their *פרכוסים* come out. They run to bad places. Some people are attracted to movies. They can't help themselves. And then comes the season of the big ball games. Oh, yes! I'll never forget, over the years, watching *bachurim*, *yungeleit* on the day of the big games. I found out there were *bachurim* and *yungeleit* who would rent rooms in a hotel down there to watch the game. I went over to a *yungerman* and I said, "It doesn't bother me that you like to watch them? Do you realize how sick you are? You would rent a room with three other guys so you can watch the game?! You know it's embarrassing. It's shameful that you would do this! What is the *pshat* with you?! Aren't you embarrassed?! He said, "A little bit. A little bit. Next year I'll probably do it again too." I told him, "It's *פרכוס*. You don't realize what it is."

You have to realize that this is an indication of who you are.

### THE DEFINITION OF A RASHA

There's an amazing *Sha'arei Teshuvah* from Rabeinu Yonah. Rabeinu Yonah says, how can a person know if he's a *rasha*? We like to think that there are not too many *reshaim* around. You know why? Because we don't want to be one of them. So if we say there aren't too many around, then I'm probably also not one of them. But if you start looking around and seeing *reshaim* around you, you start thinking, "Maybe, uh-oh, who knows where I'm standing. I'm no *tzaddik*."

What is a *rasha*? Now there's a legal definition of a *rasha* and then there is the soul of the *rasha*. The legal definition of a *rasha* is determined by a person's behavior, such as when a person knowingly does an *aveirah* that he knows is forbidden in the Torah. He does an *aveirah*, he's a *rasha*. He does *teshuvah*, he's not a *rasha*. But what is the *nefesh* of a *rasha*? What does the soul of a *rasha* look like? Are there a lot of black spots on it? No.

*Zugt* Rabeinu Yonah, the *nefesh* of a *rasha* is an individual whose whole focus and desire is for satisfaction of his physical pleasure. He wants a nice car. He wants a nice house, nice clothes, nice trips, nice garbage cans, nice food. His entire *metzius* is *cheftzei haguf* (bodily desires).

I remember I was once being *mekarev* a fellow, a very educated fellow, with a very prestigious job in the wider world. I asked him, "When you wake up in the morning, do you say good morning to your wife?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What's the first thing you say to your wife when you wake up?" He said, "I say, 'Sweetie, where are we eating tonight?' That's what I say to her. I then call her lunch time. 'Honey, did you decide?'" Every day. The guy lived for *achilah*. His two kids also had the same conversations. They would call Dad and Mom. "Mom, what did you decide? Italian?" As a matter of fact, he was so locked in and so bound by the food, that when he was becoming *frum* he could not become *frum* because of his *kesher* and *chibur* to *achilah*. To him detaching himself from the *treife* food was unimaginable. I finally asked him, "Can you boil it down for me? What is the *mechitzah*?" He thought about it and got back to me. He came back and said, "I thought about it." I said, "Steak? There's kosher steak. You like the white meat? Turkey? We'll get you smoked turkey. We'll get you chicken. We'll find something. You like the taste? We'll get you kosher 'bacon bits'." Steak and butter - that was the killer for him! And wine as well. He liked good wine. The guy would not sit down to a meal without at least one *bakbuk* for himself, minimum.

That's called a *nefesh harasha*. That's all the guy wants. You know how many *reshaim* there are around here?! You know how scary it is?! Eisav at least was an intellectual. He only jumped by the *avodah zarah*. It doesn't say that when she passed somebody cooking *treifus*, he jumped out. It doesn't say when Rivka passed by somebody playing baseball, he jumped out. It doesn't say when somebody was playing soccer, he jumped out. It doesn't say when she passed people *hocking* the news, he jumped out. "Ah, let me get a piece of that news." It doesn't say that. It doesn't say that he was *kulo cheftzei haguf*. *Avodah zarah* was his attraction. But a *rasha* is somebody who's just overrun by his wants. You know how many individuals are like that? How many people do you know? Actually, even if they *daven*, even if they learn, even if they do *mitzvos*. They go to these places, but is their desire driven by anything else other than physical pleasure?

### A REASON FOR LIVING

I asked a guy what do you live for? He said, "*Tachlis*." I said, "Wow." I was so impressed. I said, "What does *tachlis* mean?" He said, "*Ich mach a parnasah*." That was *tachlis* for him. I started talking about a certain person we both knew, and I mentioned something about him. "I'm amazed by that person," he told me, "because he learns half a day a day, and he works half a day, and he makes a very nice *parnasah*." I said, "He figured out how to make a good *parnasah* by working



half a day. He hired a lot of people, and salesmen to work for him, and he learns half a day.” I told him, “*Ehr chapped arein lernen.*” You know what he tells me? He says, “He’s a *meshugene.*” I said, “A *meshugene*? Why?” He said, “He’s *nisht a hin un nisht a heir*, he’s neither here nor there. If he wants to be a *rav*, let him become a *rav*. If he wants to be a *balebus*, let him become a *balebus.*” I’m telling you the guy was a very *erliche* man! I consider him a very *chashuve* person. There’s one thing he lived for. *Tachlis*. And that *tachlis* was *parnasah*. *Cheftzei haguf*. He didn’t miss *davening*. He was *mechabed rabbanim*. He was a *mokir rabbanan*, *be’emes* he was. He stood up for a lot of *rabbanim* to whom people gave trouble. He was a very special person but his outlook was limited to what he perceived as *tachlis*.

A person has to know that the *nefesh* of a *rasha* has no place in the next world and has no place in this world. It’s out of place in this world. A person has to start to work on himself. The first thing to do is to avoid going past the *batei avodah zarah*. The first thing you do is you minimize your strong attachments to today’s technology, and to many people who you see married to their cell phones.

### MARRIED TO A CELL (SOUL) MATE

A guy called me up recently. He said, “I’m looking for a *shidduch.*” I said, “You’re not married?” He said, “I’m not married.” I said, “Yes you are.” He paused and said, “What do you mean?” I said, “You’re married.” He said, “Who am I married to?!” I said, “Your cell phone.” He said, “How do you know?” I said, “Because every other *tipeshe* I meet in the street is married to their cell phone, so why shouldn’t you be married to your cell phone?”

Do you know what that means, marriage to a cell phone? How many times a day do you pull it out? How many times a day do you want to pull it out? If the phone would break, do you know how many people would go get a new one that very day? If your car breaks, you give it to the mechanic. If your head breaks, you go to a doctor to try to fix it. Your phone breaks? You go buy a new one immediately. A person’s attachment to his phone should scare him. Where are you headed? How sick are you?

A phone is a vehicle of communication. But people sleep with their phones. They go to sleep in their bed with their phone all night long. They text even though they’re sleeping. They’re getting *clapped* all night long, “Bing bing bing.” All night long. What are you doing?

Rav Abba Grossbard, a big *mashgiach* in Eretz Yisrael, said over one time how he was once giving a *shmooze*, and there were showers for *bachurim* near the room where he was saying the *shmooze*. There was some *bachur* taking a shower at the time, and he was singing at the top of his lungs in the shower. Rav Abba said, “One *bachur* goes into the *beis medrash* and he gets involved in a *shtickel gemara*, and before long you see him singing when he’s learning. Another *bachur* goes into the shower and all of a sudden he goes nuts! He found his *olam haba*. It touched his nerves. And that’s where he starts to sing.” I never saw a person singing in the bathroom when they go to the washroom. I don’t think people do that. When they take a shower, you hear them singing?! *Goyim* sing in the shower because they feel like they’re in heaven. They’re getting a little clean, so they’re excited.

### HATZLACHA WITH YOUR SELF-ANALYSIS

But a person has to understand himself at least a little bit, Rabosai. It is so important to understand yourself and your *פרוכסים*. Where are your reflexes? Do you have healthy reflexes? Check your reflexes and correct them. You need spiritual therapy, just like when the physical reflexes don’t work, and you’ve got to get occupational therapy to start to move the muscles in the right way. The first step is to realize where your alignment is going off the rails and then to control yourself from following your reflexes, whether it’s regarding music, sports, smart phones, etc. And then when dealing with something positive, try to force yourself to focus on it and appreciate it.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help us refine our reflexes to get it right, so that we should be *מפרכס* for the right things.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Rav Yerucham taught us a tremendous lesson regarding the episode of Rivka Imeinu's struggle with her "pushing" children. Each person has an internal "compass" that guides (and pulls) them - depending how pure their *neshama* is - either towards *kedushah* or the opposite, r"l. An easy litmus test to see where a person is "holding" is to ask yourself where are we generally being drawn to? Are we drawn to sit down and enjoy a *blatt gemora*, a *sefer*, a few *perakim* of *Tehillim*, to run do some *chesed*, or are we innately drawn to the daily news cycle, political podcasts, sports and entertainment, or, even worse - to fulfill our base physical desires by violating either the letter or the spirit of the Torah? In short, what attracts our inner "compass" is what allows us to determine our standing and our *פִּירְכּוּס* - our reflexive drive in this world. This coming week, I will identify a few areas where my inner reflexes, or my compass, are pushing me away from "running" to and embracing *Avodas Hashem*. To minimize my attachment to technology and the news cycle in the morning, I will leave my cell phone in the car or shut it down for the duration of my learning and davening. Furthermore, if I will go on a vacation this winter with my family, to a place with an abundance of kosher restaurants, I won't waste a disproportionate amount of time (like I used to), researching various menus and planning out my entire week of cuisine (before I even get there), but instead will focus on planning my morning seder in a local shul and will quickly decide our lunch and dinner plans. And in the *zechus* of making these changes in where I focus my inner *פִּירְכּוּס*, I will, IY"H, reorient my inner compass more towards *ruchniyus* and *Avodas Hashem* in coming weeks.