

Erev Shabbos Reflection: Re'eh, Hallel, and the Hasmonean Restoration

Originally written 7 August 2026 (24 Av 5786). Archive: Parsha Re'eh · Daily Learning.

Israel time, Friday morning into the ascent of Shabbos. The week's labors approach their close; the soul prepares to release the grasp of the weekday and enter the permanent dwelling of the day that is a taste of the World to Come.

The Sixth Aliyah of Parshat Re'eh

Devarim 15:1–15:18 centers on the *shemittah* release of debts at the end of the seven-year cycle, the command not to harden the heart or close the hand against a needy brother, the obligation to open the hand generously, and the laws of the Hebrew servant who serves six years and goes free in the seventh—with the option, if he loves his master and the household, to have his ear pierced and remain permanently.

The narrative moves from communal economic reset to personal generosity to the free choice of deeper attachment. True freedom is not the absence of obligation but the willing binding of the self to higher purpose and to the other. A closed hand toward the needy is a closed heart toward Hashem; the ear that chooses permanent service is the ear that has heard the deeper call.

Chassidus, drawing from the Rebbe's approach to *Re'eh*, reads “See” as both command and empowerment. Hashem places before us blessing and curse, life and death, and the capacity to choose. The *shemittah* and the free servant reveal that real *aliyah* comes through release and through conscious attachment. On Friday, as the week's labors conclude, this portion invites us to release the debts of the weekday self—worries, rigidities, withholdings—and to choose the permanent service of Shabbos consciousness. In a world of endless accumulation and transactional relationships, the Torah insists on periodic reset and on the dignity of free choice that leads to deeper covenant. Erev Shabbos is precisely this ascent: releasing the weekday grasp so the soul can enter the permanent dwelling of the day that is already a taste of redemption.

Daily Tehillim: Chapters 113–118

These chapters form the core of Hallel. From the exaltation of the humble and the raising of the needy from the dust (113), through the wonders of the Exodus and the trembling of nature before the presence of Hashem (114), the rejection of idols and the affirmation of trust (115), the personal vow of thanksgiving in the face of distress (116), the universal call for all nations to praise (117), to the great thanksgiving of the one who was surrounded and yet delivered, the stone that became the cornerstone (118).

They form a bridge of calm readiness. The soul moves from personal lowliness to cosmic praise, from memory of past redemption to present trust, from individual gratitude to communal and universal song. On Erev Shabbos they prepare the heart to leave the constrictions of the week and enter the expansive praise of the holy day.

Tanya: Iggeret HaKodesh, End of Epistle 7

Although the general illumination that comes through Torah and mitzvot is equal for every Jew (one Torah, one law), in the particular the radiance that shines through a given mitzvah is not the same for every *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*. It depends on the time and era of the soul's incarnation and descent into this world. Just as the limbs of the body each have a unique function, so each mitzvah channels a distinctive light from the *Ein Sof*. The heightened vigilance a person feels toward a particular mitzvah is a "lot" allotted from Above—transcending reason—so that this soul, in this generation, receives an extra measure of illumination through that specific channel.

Personal *avodah*: notice which mitzvah kindles a particular light this week; treat that extra *zehirut* as a gift of Divine lot rather than personal preference. Emotional refinement: release comparison and envy of another's "lot"; your portion is uniquely calibrated. *Geulah*-orientation: every soul's particular illumination contributes to the collective completion of the 613, preparing the vessels for the ultimate revelation. On Erev Shabbos this teaching invites us to enter the day with the awareness that Shabbos itself is the great equalizer and the great individualizer—universal rest that still shines through each soul's unique channel.

Rambam / Sefer HaMitzvot

The daily cycle continues. On this date the study often falls in the laws of *Kiddush HaChodesh* (Sanctification of the New Month) or related calendrical and festival foundations. Rambam's systematic clarity on how time itself is sanctified by the Jewish people—witnesses, calculation, declaration—reveals that holiness is not automatic; it requires human participation under Divine authority. The same precision that fixes the calendar prepares the soul for the fixed yet living rhythm of Shabbos. Before Shabbos, this clarity of law becomes the vessel that holds the light: we finish the weekday calculations so the day of rest can arrive without confusion.

Hayom Yom: Menachem Av 24

A tradition handed down from Rebbe to Rebbe: during the conflict between chassidim and their opponents, the chassidim told the Alter Rebbe of the terrible abuse they suffered from ordinary misnagdic folk. The Rebbe replied that his "Grandfather" (the Baal Shem Tov) deeply loved simple folk. In his early days in Mezritch the Maggid related that the Baal Shem Tov frequently said: love of Israel is love of G-d. "You are children of Hashem your G-d"; when one loves the Father, one loves the children.

Practical *avodah* for Erev Shabbos: before lighting candles, consciously extend that love of the simple, the ordinary, the imperfect Jew—including the imperfect parts of yourself. Release any residual judgment accumulated during the week. The same love that the Baal Shem Tov modeled becomes the atmosphere in which Shabbos enters the home.

Today in Jewish History: Hasmonean Holiday (circa 100 BCE)

The Hasmoneans reinstated the rule of Jewish civil law, replacing Hellenist secular law, and declared this day a holiday. Under Hasmonean leadership in the Land of Israel, roughly a century after the Chanukah victories, Jewish courts and Torah law were reasserted as the governing system for the Jewish people, displacing the residual Hellenist legal framework. This was a restoration of sovereignty not only military and political but juridical and cultural—the reclaiming of the people's right to live by its own covenantal law.

The core event is the deliberate re-enthronement of Jewish law after a period of Hellenist overlay. Law is not merely regulation; it is the clothing of the Divine will in the public square. When Jewish civil law is restored, the *Shechinah* has a place to dwell in the everyday transactions of the people. *Megillat Ta'anit* records the day as the return “to our Law.”

Connection to *Re'eh*: the portion places before us the choice of blessing through fidelity to Torah; the Hasmonean act is a national “seeing” and choosing of that path. Connection to Tanya: the particular illumination of a generation’s mitzvah—here the mitzvah of establishing justice according to Torah. The Rebbe repeatedly taught that the ultimate redemption includes the restoration of Torah as the governing light of the Jewish people and, through them, of the world. The Hasmonean holiday anticipates that fuller *geulah*.

Every generation must reassert the priority of Torah over the prevailing cultural *nomos*. On this Erev Shabbos, examine where weekday residual thinking—purely utilitarian, status-driven, or fear-based—still governs decisions, and consciously reinstate the Torah standard before the candles are lit. The free citizen’s highest freedom is to bind himself to a law higher than the transient decrees of the age.

Around 100 BCE the Mediterranean world was in the late Hellenistic / early Roman transition. Greek cultural hegemony still shaped law, education, and civic life across the Near East even as Roman power rose. The Hasmonean insistence on Jewish civil law was a counter-cultural act of civilizational self-preservation. The Rebbe’s global perspective consistently framed such moments as part of the long *birur*—the sifting and elevation of sparks—preparing the world for the recognition of the one G-d.

Friday Theme Integration

The Hasmonean restoration of Jewish civil law, the *Re'eh* call to open the hand and choose life, the Tanya teaching on each soul’s unique lot of illumination, the Tehillim movement from lowliness to praise, the Rambam clarity of sanctified time, and the Hayom Yom insistence on love of every simple Jew—all converge on Erev Shabbos *aliyah*. The weekday is the arena of residual foreign standards; Shabbos is the day when Torah law and Torah love become the atmosphere itself. Personal *avodah* is to complete the Hasmonean work in the microcosm of the self: release the debts, open the hand, choose the permanent service, love the simple, and enter the day that is already a taste of the restored order. A community that practices this weekly reset becomes a living argument for covenantal freedom. The weekly ascent into Shabbos is the practical school of the virtue required for any enduring free society—self-mastery under higher law, generosity without calculation, and the courage to prefer one’s own constitutive norms to the pressure of the surrounding culture.

Expanded Friday Avodah

Mind: Shift deliberately from weekday calculation and anxiety into Shabbos consciousness—release the mental ledger of debts and deadlines.

Heart: Soften any residual hardness; practice the open hand of *Re'eh* and the Baal Shem Tov’s love of the simple.

Action: Finalize all physical Shabbos preparations so that the last moments before candle-lighting are free.

Speech: Speak only words that build peace and anticipation.

Time: Channel the remaining weekday hours as vessels that will hold Shabbos light.

Identity: Clarify that the deepest self is the one that chooses permanent service to the Master.

Community: Perform one concrete act of generosity or encouragement for another Jew.

World: Elevate the final tasks of the week by doing them with intention for the sake of Heaven.

Clear, focused ascent into Shabbos.

Expanded Shabbos Prep Materials

Halachic Prep: *Hadlakas Neiros* at the proper time; *Kabbalas Shabbos*; *Shnayim Mikra ve-Echad Targum* if not yet completed; food fully prepared; table set; clothing ready; review of *muktzah*; *Eruv* checked if relevant.

Chassidus on Shabbos: *Me'ein Olam HaBa*; the extra soul; the ascent of the worlds; Shabbos as weekly *geulah* preview; true *menuchah*; the pause in the weekday *birurim* so that higher light can rest.

Rebbe Teachings: Shabbos as the source of blessing for the entire week; rehearsal for the ultimate redemption; the day that forges family and communal unity; the anchor of Jewish identity and education; the weekly renewal of mission.

Emotional Prep: Release accumulated tension; cultivate joy and gratitude; seek unity and, where needed, forgiveness before the day begins.

Mental Prep: Set worries aside into the care of Providence; focus the mind on Torah; set clear intention for the holy day; visualize the home filled with light.

Practical Prep: Finish remaining tasks; clean and order the space; prepare candles, wine, challah; arrange the schedule of the day; prepare a short *dvar Torah*.

Table Prep: Beauty, flowers if possible, readiness for *niggunim*, a place for words of Torah, an atmosphere of peace.

Niggunim: *Keili Ata*, *Anim Zemiro*, the classic *Lecha Dodi* melodies, *Daled Bavos*, *Tzama Lecha Nafshi*.

History Prep: Remember Shabbos observed in every exile and every restoration; the courage it took; the identity it preserved; the Rebbe's vision of Shabbos as a global light.

Everything ordered so that the soul can rise without hindrance.

Unified Torah Commentary

Classical *meforshim* on the *shemittah* and the Hebrew servant emphasize both social justice and the deeper spiritual freedom that comes from willing attachment to the Master. Midrashim highlight the moral danger of a closed hand and the beauty of the servant who loves. Chassidus across the generations reads the permanent service as the soul's desire to remain in the King's house even when free to leave. Halachic sources (Rambam, *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*) give precise parameters while the inner dimension remains the love that chooses. Kabbalistic layers see the

ear-piercing as the opening of the vessel to continuous Divine speech. The text moves from communal economics to the most intimate choice of the individual will. Themes of exile and redemption, faith, unity, holiness, identity, and mission all surface.

Re'eh on this Erev Shabbos is the Torah's own preparation for the day of rest—see the choice, open the hand, choose the deeper service, and enter the day already tasting redemption.

May the ascent of this Erev Shabbos be complete, the candles burn with clarity, and the day of rest draw down blessing for the entire week and for the entire people.

Bibliography

- *Devarim* 15:1–18 with Rashi, Sifrei, and classical *meforshim* (standard editions; Sefaria).
- *Tehillim* 113–118 (Hallel).
- *Tanya*, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 7 (Kehot Publication Society; Chabad.org).
- Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, especially *Hilchot Kiddush HaChodesh* (daily cycle track).
- *Hayom Yom*, Menachem Av 24 (compiled by the Lubavitcher Rebbe; Kehot / Chabad.org).
- *Megillat Ta'anit*, entry for 24 Av (“we returned to our Law”).
- Chabad.org daily calendar entry for 24 Av 5786 / August 7, 2026 (Parsha, Tehillim, Tanya, Jewish history).
- Peninei Halakha and related discussions of Hasmonean festivals in *Megillat Ta'anit*.
- Selected Likkutei Sichos and teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Chanukah, *geulah*, and the restoration of Torah authority in Jewish public life.
- Classical sources on *eved Ivri* and *shemittah* (Rambam, *Sefer HaChinuch*, Talmudic discussions in *Kiddushin* and related tractates).

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI