She Lifted Her Eyes and Saw:

Nasa Einayim and Its Pastoral Implications

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Introduction

"We're eye doctors."

"What's something about the eye that most people don't realize?"

"The eye doesn't see. The brain sees. The eye just transmits. So what we see isn't only determined by what comes through the eyes. What we see is affected by our memories, our feelings, and by what we've seen before."[1]

This thesis explores the phrase, *nasa einayim*, the lifting of the eyes, as it is used in Torah, analyzed in various commentaries, and applied to the field of pastoral care. *Nasa einayim* is one of the expressions used in biblical narrative that describes the way in which people see things differently at different times, depending on a variety of factors. In light of contemporary knowledge of vision and perception, this thesis explores the

[1] Photographer Brandon Stanton started the *Humans of New York* blog in 2010, and has also published a bestselling book of the same title. He creates portraits of New Yorkers and captions them with poignant quotations from the subjects themselves. This image of two eye doctors was posted on June 6th, 2014, and can be found here: http://www.humansofnewyork.com/post/88035814941/were-eye-doctors-whats-something-about-the

possibility that the authors of the Torah, the commentators, and midrashists had a sense of how the eyes and brain perceive the world and devised their own ways to express it. There are multiple biblical Hebrew idioms to convey seeing. This thesis focuses in particular on *nasa einayim*, because it denotes a physical action, and it also suggests a perceptual shift on a different level. Its presence draws the reader's attention to a special shift in seeing that indicates a significant turn in plot.

The very fact that lifting one's eyes is essential to a certain kind of seeing implies that in the usual mode of functioning, people operate with a limited perspective. This perspective changes when people lift their eyes. There is a connection between the ways that these stories are narrated, what commentators saw in them, and what the *midrashim* explore that can provide a better understanding of how people see, both individually and collectively. This information is not only helpful in understanding the language of the Hebrew Bible; it is also has import for providers of pastoral care. How can today's Jewish community learn from the ways its ancestors saw the world? Do people still lift their eyes and see things in transformative ways?

The phrase, *nasa einayim*, appears many times throughout the corpus of Jewish literature. For this exploration, the scope has been narrowed to the 18 instances mentioned in the Torah, and responses to them by classical commentators, and major collections of midrash. When examining these stories one wonders what caused people to lift their eyes and gain a new perspective. Sometimes a modern reader's assumptions and interpretations match what the rabbis wrote, and sometimes they do not. Through careful reading it becomes quite clear: even the perception of sight is in the eye of the beholder. Sometimes the phrase, *nasa einayim*, appears and the rabbis do not think it

worth a separate comment. But often the classical commentators and the writers of the midrash focus on the same phrase, and their ideas work together to explain this change in seeing. They draw connections between otherwise disparate texts, and provide insight into their own vision.

As the eye doctors in the photograph from the New York blog, *Humans of New York*, explain, what people see results more from the way that the brain functions, rather than the way that the eyes function. This reality points to the importance of contributions in the field of neuroscience that provide a more complex understanding of the way people see the world around them. This writer's modern outlook is shaped by an interest in the relationship between Torah, neuroscience, and the uniquely Jewish psychological insights that the Torah and classic Jewish texts provide. The recent emergence of the field of neuroscience makes visible the inner workings of the brain, and thus provides a different lens through which to see the *nasa einayim* stories. From a neurological perspective, what might cause an individual to lift his or her eyes and see something new? What allows human beings to be so selective with their attention in the first place? And how does an awareness of these neurological processes change the way people understand their own visual perception?

All of this information, both from the classical Jewish sources and the contemporary scientific lens, influences the way today's rabbis care for congregants. As pastoral caregivers, rabbis are not psychologists, and yet a basic understanding of neuroscience is valuable when helping people understand themselves and their lives. By studying the way people see things in Torah, pastoral caregivers gain a new understanding of the factors that contribute to perception, the impact of context and habit

in what we perceive, and the factors that contribute to a paradigm shift. The brain is capable of making new neural pathways and recognizing new sensory input as important, but a person needs to be open to this happening. When a person is in need of a new perspective, it might be helpful for an outsider (e.g., rabbi, or counselor) to introduce this idea. Certain pastoral caregivers in the field have demonstrated a way to do this within a scientifically aware, yet traditionally Jewish context.

The first chapter of this thesis presents an overview of all relevant background material on the topic of visual perception, and how lifting one's eyes might impact what a person sees. It begins with an exploration of what it means to see, and how the eyes and brain help people understand the world around them. The field of neuroscience helps explain how it is that sometimes people see things differently. This section of scientific and psychological material leads into a survey of literature written about the focal phrase, *nasa einayim*, followed by suggestions for how an interdisciplinary approach might provide the most insight into the way people see things when they lift up their eyes.

Once the scientific and linguistic bases have been established, the second chapter begins a more thorough analysis of specific instances of *nasa einayim* in the Torah. This chapter traces particular plotlines that hinge on *nasa einayim*, and the comments that the rabbis and writers of the midrash made on the type of seeing the phrase describes. Some connections between different instances are made explicit in the rabbis' comments, and other times they must be extrapolated by the reader. Either way, it is clear that the rabbis paid attention to characters who lift their eyes and they speculate on what they might have seen when doing so. Chapter two investigates two particular trends in lifting one's

eyes: the lustful gaze, and impact of God's guidance in determining what certain humans see.

The third chapter explores two other trends illuminated by rabbinic commentaries, both of which are related to relationships people have with God. It describes the use of *nasa einayim* as an act of looking up to God in prayer, a phenomenon so compelling to the rabbis that it is sometimes explicitly written into the midrash. This chapter also explores the relationship between God and some of people in the Torah with whom God nurtures a special connection. For a select few, God pays attention to their actions, and they merit seeing the future with God's guidance.

The fourth chapter reexamines some of the instances of *nasa einayim* in light of contemporary understandings about visual perception. It provides a modern look at what might have caused people to lift their eyes in the biblical narratives, by reading the stories through a lens of top-down and bottom-up visual processing, and psychological insights about visual reconciliation.

The fifth chapter extrapolates from information discussed in previous chapters from neuroscience, biblical commentary and midrash, and linguistics, and applies it to the field of pastoral care and counseling. It introduces the role of the rabbi as a pastoral caregiver, and suggests some ways in which *nasa einayim* and other biblical frameworks for seeing can help care receivers see their lives differently. Through custom-made prayers, various models of seeing and self-awareness, and the power of community, the themes of *nasa einayim* discussed in previous chapters return in a new context. The chapter concludes with suggestions for how Jewish communities can cultivate a sense of hope for their members.

Chapter 1

Seeing Is Believing

It often has been said that "seeing is believing." When someone offers a suspicious piece of information one responds, "I'll believe it when I see it." And that might be met with an incredulous: "It's true-- I saw it with my own eyes!" But is seeing really believing? Is sight the most reliable sense for finding one's way in the world? Some scientists might argue that people place too much credibility on their eyes when it comes to understanding the world around them. Sight is certainly a powerful way of perceiving our surroundings, but if people were to truly see every detail in their surroundings, sight also would be an incredibly inefficient activity. Processing all of that input would slow people down and confuse their priorities. For the sake of efficiency, the process of seeing has to cut some corners.

In reality, while the process of seeing begins with what the eyes take in, it occurs more in the brain than in the eyes themselves. And, according to Drs. Aamodt and Wang, co-authors of Welcome to Your Brain, brains "lie" to their owners. The brain, it turns out, prioritizes every bit of sensory input, and then jumps to plausible conclusions.[2]

This ability to jump to conclusions- the skill the brain possesses to intelligently fill in the gaps in visual perception- is unique to living creatures. In the book, Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief, authors Andrew B. Newberg, Eugene G. Aquili, and Vince Rause introduce a study that demonstrates this. An industrious group of robotics students at a prestigious university programmed a highly

[2] Sandra Aamodt, and Sam Wang. *Welcome to Your Brain: Why You Lose Your Car Keys but Never Forget How to Drive and Other Puzzles of Everyday Life*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2008. 2.

independent robot to cross a room and open a door. While it is impressive that the robot was able to navigate the task on its own, the process took an extremely long time because each time the robot inched forward it was as if it was "seeing" (through its camera) and recalculating (in its silicon-based computer components) the dimensions of an entirely new setting. They explain, "The robot depended on these visual images to orient itself to the surrounding world, but each time the robot inched forward these images subtly changed: angles and distances shifted, shadows seemed to drift, some objects seemed closer, while others seemed far away."[3] While "subtle differences [between the series of pictures] were enough to bring the brainy machine to a standstill," human brains are adept at processing such differences.[4] In fact, they often simply gloss over them. If brains were to focus on every detail of visual stimuli people would continuously be overwhelmed and over stimulated. So the brain "commits many lies of omission, as it discards most of the information in the world as soon as it is deemed to be unremarkable."[5]

How does this process work? First, visual information passes through the lens at the front of the eye, and is reflected on the retina in the back of the eye. This lens actually turns the image upside down, but people are not consciously aware of this part of the process. The brain later understands these images as right-side-up again. This happens nearly instantly, and people are none the wiser for it.[6] The reversed images are projected onto the retina, which detects light in varying degrees, with cone cells that

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[3] Andrew B. Newberg, Eugene G. Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2001. 13.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Aamodt and Wang, *Welcome to Your Brain, 2.*
[6] Ibid. 41.

perceive certain bright colors, and rod cells that detect the brightness of light. Rods and cones mix signals with other neurons in the retina, and then send the information to the brain. The visual cortex of the brain receives a map of the visual world, as the eyes perceive it. The brain determines how much light is in the scene, differentiates between the objects that comprise it, and analyzes depth by comparing the relative size of objects in the scene and the two very slightly different images seen by the two eyes. This all happens while other parts of the brain analyze motion, and people understand all the analysis as one packet of visual information.

Because they are unaware of all of the activity happening in the brain while they look around with their eyes, Aamodt and Wang explain that people are inclined to think that "our eyes [are] taking in a continuous scene, something like a movie playing on the retina, which is certainly what it feels like."[7] But this assumption is just further proof of the brain's tricks. Aamodt and Wang continue, "All the time you're awake, your eyes are jumping around the visual world in abrupt movements called saccades, which occur three to five times per second. […] Each eye movement gives the retina a 'snapshot' of some part of the visual scene, but the brain must put these still pictures back together to create the illusion of a continuous world."[8]

While brains are busy creating the illusion of a continuous world, people trust that they will convey all of the information that is essential for them to know, while skimming over any extraneous input. And they are not even aware that they are making such discerning judgments. Neuroscientists have divided the brain into different regions based on their primary functions in perception. The authors of Why God Won't Go Away

[7] Ibid. 46.
[8] Ibid. 47.

explain the neurological process of redundancy, which allows the mind to focus on important tasks: "Redundancy allows the brain to screen out superfluous sensory input and concentrate on its goal. It's what allows you to read a book in a noisy restaurant or daydream while walking down a crowded street."[9] It is possible to intentionally set goals that direct one's focus and tell the brain which stimuli need to be prioritized. This is often very helpful when people need to avoid distraction from the task at hand.

But redundancy is also responsible for the type of selective attention that leads people to make mistakes in perception. The extent of these visual mistakes is remarkable. In 2004 Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons received the Nobel Prize in Psychology for their studies that demonstrate just how much people can focus their brains.[10] In their most famous experiment, the two researchers at Harvard University asked subjects to watch a video of some people playing basketball. The video showed six people passing a ball. Three players wore white shirts, and three wore black. Subjects were asked to keep silent count of the number of passes among players on the white team. Although the instructions were simple, this task was challenging enough to fully occupy the subjects' ability to focus their brains.

The task required such focused visual processing that half of the subjects failed to notice a gorilla that walked out into the middle of the game, stood facing the camera, pounded his fists on his chest, and then walked away. This surprising finding gained the

[9] Newberg, Aquili, and Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away*, 29.
[10] "The Invisible Gorilla," last modified 2010, http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/biographies.html.

experiment its name: The Invisible Gorilla.[11] According to Chabris and Simons' website, "This experiment reveals two things: that we are missing a lot of what goes on around us, and that we have no idea that we are missing so much."[12]

Simons also conducted the "Door Study," in 1998, along with another colleague, Daniel Levin. In this study, an actor pretending to be a tourist asks a stranger for directions in the midst of a public park. He pulls out a map, and points to where he wants to go. While the local is giving directions, two more actors walk between them, carrying a door off its hinges. As the door passes between the actor and the local, the actor grabs onto the door and hands his map to one of the door carriers, who replaces him as the lost tourist. The door is carried away, and the local continues to give directions, completely unaware of the fact that he is now speaking to a different person he has never seen before.

Aamodt and Wang explain this phenomenon of "change blindness," which occurs when people fail to notice subtle changes in an object. This is just another way in which the brain "lies" for the sake of efficient functioning.[13] People have such strong visual memory that the brain sometimes saves time and energy by relying on what it remembers having seen, rather than processing a similar (but slightly different) image all over again. Often, subtle changes in detail are not worth our brains' attention, and glossing over these details is not detrimental to our understanding of the world around us. Much of the time visual memory stores sufficiently accurate images, and this system remains effective.

However, like many of the brain's shortcuts that are often so helpful, a strong

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[11] The Invisible Gorilla inspired a book by the same name, a host of other experiments on selective attention, and an essential component of the syllabus for many introductory psychology courses and professional development programs.

[12] http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/gorilla_experiment.html

[13] Aamodt and Wang, *Welcome to Your Brain,* 5.

reliance on visual memory can sometimes be misleading. One might imagine that the entry of a completely different person into a conversation would be a significant enough change for our brains to take notice. Surely, the eyes picked up on the differences between one actor and the next. But it remains true that the brain "…perceive[s] only a fraction of what's going on in the world." Sometimes this fact serves people well, and sometimes it leads to change blindness. Aamodt and Wang conclude, "We've established that your memory of the past is unreliable and your perception of the present is highly selective."[14]

The brain might not make consistently accurate decisions about what constitutes significant visual stimulus, but there are common patterns that determine how perception works. Neurobiologist and psychologist, Dr. Daniel Siegel, explains many of the previously overlooked activities that occur as the brain processes visual stimulus. He discusses these, among other neurobiological issues, in his book, Mindsight: the New Science of Personal Transformation. Siegel cleverly explains that "There is no 'immaculate perception'; perception is virtually always a blend of what we are sensing now and what we've learned previously."[15] What people perceive as "sensation," is stimulus that moves from the bottom of the cortical complex of the brain, upwards, through approximately six layers of neurons in the occipital lobe. Simultaneously, top-down information travels down these neurons. When these stimuli meet in the middle, the process of perception occurs, and "What we become aware of is not what we sense

[14] Ibid. 6.
[15] Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: the New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York: Bantam Books, 2010. 201.

but what emerges from this confluence."[16]

There are the two main types of perception that stimulate the brain to process visual input. Siegel explains the first, bottom-up perception, with the example of a toddler encountering a rose for the first time because she is drawn to it through the five senses. An adult also might be drawn to a rose, but that experience is more likely to be guided by the brain in a top-down manner, because the adult has already learned to notice and appreciate roses from past experience.[17] Through these processes, both unusual sights and familiar patterns can be deemed as important stimuli.

Siegel suggests that the difference between the adult's and toddler's visual processing (in the example of the rose) is due to neuroplasticity, the "capacity for creating new neural connections and growing new neurons in response to experience."[18] People can learn because the neurons in their brains are capable of creating new patterns. Siegel notes that "Mental activity stimulates brain firing as much as brain firing creates mental activity."[19] And "When neurons fire together, the genes in their nuclei- their master control centers- become activated and 'express' themselves. Gene expression means that certain proteins are produced. These proteins then enable the synaptic linkages to be constructed anew or to be strengthened."[20]

Most human beings live the entirety of their days completely unaware of the complex processes occurring in their brains. They see things when they look intentionally at them, and are not concerned with how or why that is possible. Siegel

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid. 200.
[18] Ibid. 5.
[19] Ibid. 39.
[20] Ibid. 42.

argues that such oblivion, while not terribly harmful, prevents people from reaching their fullest potential in life. In his book by the same name, he coins the term, "mindsight," which "is a kind of focused attention that allows us to see the internal workings of our own minds. … [it] enables us to get off the autopilot of ingrained behaviors and habitual responses, and moves us beyond the reactive emotional loops…"[21] Mindsight allows readers to gain a new level of understanding of what happens in their brains, and their lives.

The benefits of this degree of self-awareness include the skill to alter the physical functioning of the brain, and that is a good thing according to Siegel. He introduces the concept of integration: "Well-being emerges when we create connections in our lives-when we learn to use mindsight to help the brain achieve and maintain *integration*, a process by which separate elements are linked together into a working whole."[22] He explains that the opposite of mindsight might be "mindlessness," which can disrupt the regulatory processes that the brain is generally responsible for (including bodily regulation, attuned communication, emotional balance, response flexibility, fear modulation, empathy, insight, moral awareness, intuition).[23] Through mindsight, people can integrate all of those processes, and train themselves to be mindful of them.

Siegel's work exemplifies a bridge he is building between the growing field of neuroscience and the well-established field of psychotherapy. He embodies this connection in his own practices; the field of mental health in general is starting to follow suit. For example, Siegel explains that "Mindfulness is a form of mental activity that

[21] Ibid. x.
[22] Ibid. xii.
[23] Ibid. 26.

trains the mind to become aware of awareness itself and to pay attention to one's own intention…mindfulness often requires paying attention to the present moment from a stance that is nonjudgmental and nonreactive."[24] He intends to teach people about his findings in neuroscience so that they can learn to self-monitor their own brains' activities (with continued guidance from a mental health professional).

The benefits of such a practice are manifold. Through mindfulness, people can learn that their feelings do not need to define their identities; one can cultivate the ability "to look inward and then to change what was going on [emotionally]."[25] People might be able to see new things by looking inward, when they are newly mindful of the way the brain works. Siegel's work strengthens an understanding of the relationship between the brain and the body, the mind and physical well-being.

While work like Siegel's is relatively new in the field of neuroscience, many older fields also have looked into the process of seeing. In fact, an awareness of the complexities of visual perception seems to date back even to biblical times, as can be seen in the narrative text. A few different verbs denote seeing in the Bible, the most common of which is the root: *r-a-h*. According to the *Konkordantziah Chadashah*, the bulk of the nearly thirteen hundred occurrences of the root refer to perception through the eyes, but it is sometimes associated with overseeing an activity, paying attention to something, of giving one's opinion.[26]

While much has been written on these verbs, the focus of this thesis lies in a more particular expression of seeing, which involves a specific action: *nasa einayim*, lifting

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[24] Ibid. 86.
[25] Ibid. 100.
[26] Abraham Even-Shoshan, *Konkordantziah Chadashah*. Jerusalem: Sivan Press Ltd, 1983. 1041.

one's eyes. While at first glance this phrase might seem synonymous with any other way of describing sight, its uses range from observation, to prayer, to a lustful desire for a particular object. This phrase has caught the attention of biblical scholars who wish to understand how visual perception is conveyed in Torah. What people see, how they see it, and what that means, are eternal questions. And from this single biblical phrase spring some answers. Readers of the biblical text gain insight into both ways of seeing and different understandings of what seeing can mean.

As mentioned in the introduction, the phrase *nasa einayim* appears 18 times in the Torah. The phrase appears as a way of indicating sight, often (but not always) in conjunction with the common root, *r-a-h*. When this occurs, *nasa einayim* indicates a longer chain of action, in which the subject lifts up his or her eyes, and then sees something. This occurs ten times, indicating that the subject lifted his or her eyes, and then completed the action with a special kind of focused seeing. Of those instances, six sentences include the emphatic, *hineh*, to draw particular attention to the direct object. While it is generally understood that *nasa einayim* is a formula that denotes a certain kind of looking, regardless of the surrounding words, scholars also have paid particular attention to these differences.

Frank K. Polak wrote a chapter on "Linguistic and Stylistic Aspects of Epic Formulae in Ancient Semitic Poetry and Biblical Narrative" in which he refers to U. M. Cassuto's comparison of certain stereotypic expressions in biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic texts.[27] He notes that "The phrase *vayisa einav- vayar* occurs 25 times in Biblical prose,

[27] Frank H. Polak, "Linguistic and Stylistic Aspects of Epic Formulae in Ancient Semitic Poetry and Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz.

followed either by the presentative particle *hineh*, e.g. *vayisa einav vayar v'hineh sh'loshah anashim nitzavim alav* (Gen 18:2); or by the direct object, e.g. *vatisa rivka et einehah vatar et yitzchak* (Gen 24:64)."[28] In these cases, he explains, lifting one's eyes does mean "to see," but it might imply something more than the simple act of looking at an object. Polak notes that the phrase appears with such frequency because it is appropriate in many different contexts, "such as the perception of guests coming in a theophanic context, of the future husband, or of a messenger arriving to announce someone's death."[29]

He then focuses specifically on a type of grammatical construct in which the verb *nasa* appears in conjunction with a direct object and a main action, or as he diagrams it: inceptive, instrumental, and main action, in two clauselets. Polak presents a table of three such phrases, broken down in a certain way. For example, *vayisa kolo vayikra*, he lifted his voice and called out, is composed of an inceptive verb, *vayisa*, an instrumental word [the instrument involved in the main action], *kolo*, and a main action verb, which is calling out, *vayikra*. Next, is the phrase, *vayisa kolo vayeivk*, he lifted his voice and cried out, in which, the main action is *vayeivk*, and the entire phrase indicates weeping.

In Polak's analysis of *vayisa einav vayar*, he lifted his eyes and saw, the verb *vayar* indicates a main action of seeing, but the overall function implied by the phrase is that of perception.[30] Through these tables and his analysis, Polak demonstrates how the grammatical construction of these phrases intensifies their meanings. He shows how this

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Winona Lake, Indiana, U.S.A.: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, Jerusalem, and Eisenbrauns, 2006. 285.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. 286.

[30] Ibid. 291.

construct enhances the meaning that the simple verbs otherwise would have on their own. Whereas, *vayar* would mean "and he saw," Polak concludes that the entire phrase indicates the inception of an action and its completion. "He lifted up his eyes and saw," denotes more than simply looking; it describes perception.

Out of the 18 instances of *nasa einayim* in Torah, six instances include that key phrase, *vayar*, and the presentative, *hineh*.[31] R. S. Kawashima wrote about the significance of this little word in *Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode*, in which a chapter compares biblical literature to fiction and other forms of art in order to get a better understanding of the unique qualities of biblical narrative. He introduces the concept of represented consciousness, or "style indirect libre ('another linguistic realization of subjectivity'), as it appears in the Bible."[32] The discussion begins with an example from Numbers 13:33, when the twelve spies return from Canaan and report "We were like grasshoppers in our eyes, and so we were in their eyes." In a midrash from *Sh'mot Rabbah*[33] 16:11, God is angry at the Israelites for their audacity to assume that they know how they appear in the eyes of their enemy, and responds, "Do you know what I made you like in their eyes? Who can say that you were not like angels in their eyes?" Presumably, God is disturbed by the spies' subjective judgments, which reflect their self-doubt, and therefore, their implied doubt in God's help and protection.

Kawashima then explains how the biblical Hebrew presentative, *hineh*, conveys

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[31] These instances include: Gen 18:2, 22:13, 24:63, 37:25, 31:10, and 33:1.
[32] R. S. Kawashima, *Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004. 78.
[33] *Sh'mot Rabbah* is a collection of 52 sections of midrash, including a running commentary on much of the book of Exodus. Some older parts seem to draw on the expositional style of *Breishit Rabbah*, and it also includes some later excerpts of homiletical *midrashim*.

represented consciousness in literature. In both biblical narrative and dialogue, it is often *hineh* that exposes a character's inner consciousness to the reader. Interestingly, Kawashima asserts that some of British author Virginia Woolf's writing demonstrates "the exact equivalent of the Hebrew presentative."[34] Woolf believes that good writing conveys or represents the process through which stimuli enter the mind, and Kawashima is able to bring a number of examples from her work that comprise, "a species of represented consciousness that specifically represents visual perception."[35] This brings Kawashima's discussion back to the biblical prose, and the function of *hineh*, which "describes some circumstance present to a perceiving subject."[36]

Many have written about the art of biblical narrative. Victor Shklovsky has looked at theories of perception that have been applied to visual art, and Kawashima has applied these theories to the concept of perception in biblical narrative. Shklovsky argues that "The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged."[37] So it follows that "If we start to examine the general laws of perception we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic."[38] This resonates with Siegel's work that urges people to break out of the habitual flow of mindless perception.

Shklovsky uses an entry from Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy's diary to illustrate

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[34] Kawashima, *Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode*, 88.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid. 163.
[38] Ibid. 166.

his point, "I was cleaning a room and, meandering about, approached the divan and couldn't remember whether or not I had dusted it. Since these movements are habitual and unconscious, I could not remember…."[39] Have not all people had experiences like this one? It is no different from commuting to work on autopilot, and not being able to recall the trip later in the day. Kawashima argues that biblical literature falls into the category of "post-traditional" modes of art, and therefore "operates according to that other aesthetic principle, namely, *defamiliarization*."[40] Such a process causes a person to do a double-take, to look again at something he or she might have looked at, but not seen, or seen without being fully aware of what it is he or she saw.

Kawashima uses the *Akeidah* story to elaborate on a specific example of the power of represented consciousness in the Bible. He recounts the three instances of *hineh/hineini* that appear in the first few verses of the pericope, noting that they all offer some insight into "the emotions suppressed beneath the surface of the narrative."[41] Then, finally the verse in which Abraham lifts up his eyes and sees the ram that will be sacrificed in place of his beloved son: "*wehinneh*, a ram had been caught in the thicket by its horns."[42] Kawashima concludes that this poignant presentative, "recaptures this experience, opening, if only for a moment, a window into Abraham's soul, suggesting if not expressing in words his unspeakable relief."[43] His analysis combines the effect of mindful seeing that Siegel describes, and the linguistic characteristics of Polak's argument, and it provides another angle for examining the key phrase, *nasa einayim*.

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[39] Ibid. 167.
[40] Ibid. 168.
[41] Ibid. 112.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

These are some contemporary understandings of the biblical language that describes seeing. The discussion must now be rooted in its most authentic context, in order to discover what seeing meant to the rabbis who first commented on the Torah. Rachel Neis, an assistant professor in the Program for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, recently published a book that thoroughly explores this context. She agrees that a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to fully understand the implication of seeing. In the introduction to her book, The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture, she explains, "While vision is commonly understood to refer to the perceptual sense of sight, the premise of this study, shared by historians and art historians alike, is that there is more to seeing than the physiological, biological, and neurocognitive processes that constitute visual perception."[44] The field of rabbinic literature also explores how many different factors contribute to the process of seeing that allows human beings to understand visual input and make sense of the world.

Neis opens readers' eyes to what the rabbis might have seen when they first commented on the biblical text. What does *nasa einayim* mean for them, in their neoplatonic conception of the world? They, "like others in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world, understood sight to be loaded precisely because to see something was to be spiritually and physically affected by it."[45] Whether or not people are aware of their own perspectives, "Studies have shown that people of different cultural backgrounds perceive in radically different ways, upholding 'the proposition that culture affects

[44] Rachel Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 3.
[45] Ibid. 8.

perception at a deep level.'"[46] One cannot understand his or her own interpretation of text (let alone those of other people) without taking context and experience into account. In the end, Neis adds that it is clear that "the rabbis took seeing seriously. They were obviously living in a physical and spiritual world in which seeing could be precarious, dangerous even, and, as this book argues, they did not shy away from considering and shaping this sense in their deliberations."[47]

The following chapters will explore how different biblical stories that utilize the phrase, *nasa einayim*, inspired different readings for the rabbis who first studied them. It will trace the major trends the rabbis saw in these stories, acknowledge how context might have influenced their thinking, and offer alternative translations that allow the English translation to more accurately convey the nuance of the phrase. Finally, the notion that people can look at themselves and change themselves as a result, is essential to the application of this information in the field of pastoral care. Although clergy are not generally trained as psychologists or therapists with degrees in neuroscience, Siegel's work can positively influence the pastoral care they provide. His insight can shape the quality of teaching rabbis can do as part of counseling, just as the insight of biblical scholars can shape rabbis' understanding of the way we see perception through a Jewish lens.

[46] Ibid. 26. (Footnote 34)
[47] Ibid. 40.

Chapter 2

The Lustful Gaze and The Gaze from God

Biblical language can indicate the act of seeing in a variety of ways, so it is worthwhile to pay special attention to the verbs and phrases utilized in the text. Assuming that the use of *nasa einayim* is an intentional choice, one can conclude that it is meant to draw the reader's attention to the particular act of seeing being described. As previously explained, scholarship on the phrase indicates that it is used to convey specific information about seeing that cannot be captured in some of the more common simple verbs found throughout the Bible. But the particular information it provides varies.

The various nuances of *nasa einayim* become clear when the phrase is examined in context. Oftentimes, the commentators and midrashists comment on the phrase and explicate its significance in their eyes. Sometimes they notice trends in its usage in particular contexts, drawing connections between otherwise disparate narratives. Occasionally, these connections are explicitly stated. This can be seen especially in *midrashim* in which otherwise unrelated biblical citations might be grouped together as proof of a certain claim. Other times these trends are simply implied, when some commentators repeat the same observation each time the phrase appears. This chapter explores some of the trends in analysis of the key phrase, *nasa einayim*, that can be traced throughout the classical commentators and major collections of Midrash.

Sometimes *nasa einayim* is a reminder that people can covet things with their eyes. One glance at an object of desire can render a person green with envy. Sometimes this lustful gaze is explicitly stated in a narrative. Other times in biblical literature its

conveyance might be subtler. In Genesis there are two instances in which the lifting of one's eyes seems to imply a lustful longing.

The first instance of this phenomenon appears in Genesis 13:10. Abram and his nephew, Lot, have been living in close proximity to one another for a number of years. As both of their households increase in size, Abram and Lot's shepherds begin to argue over their allotted land. Abram proposes a solution to end their quarreling: the two households will split up and each will inhabit its own land. Lot gets to choose whichever portion of the territory is most appealing to him. It is easy to imagine the two men, uncle and nephew, standing side-by-side, gazing out over the land. In verse 10 it states, "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Eternal destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of the Eternal, like the land of Egypt, on the way to Zoar."[48]

Radak[49] first notices physical implications of Lot's action of lifting his eyes. He explains that Lot "lifted his eyes from the mountain that they were on, because they had been settled on the mountain [which was mentioned in the previous chapter]." Radak continues to comment on the vantage point from which Lot sees the land he surveys: "He lifted his eyes from there because it was a tall place and he could see the land before him and see all of the plain of the Jordan that was a land of much livestock."[50] From this comment it is clear that lifting one's eyes can suggest an actual physical action that

[48] All translations are by the writer unless otherwise noted. Hebrew text for *midrashim* was accessed through the Bar Ilan Responsa Project (the Global Jewish Database).
[49] Rabbi David Kimchi (1160–1235), a commentator from Provence.
[50] It is worth noting that with different vocalization, the word for cattle, *mikneh*, can also be rendered as *miknah*, thus referring to the land that Lot was about to acquire. It seems that the midrashist might have also been playing with this possible double meaning of this word.

changes one's vantage point or perspective. Such an action might not otherwise be implied by a more common verb for seeing.

Radak goes on to comment on the extensive irrigation of land, and other qualities that make it quite desirable. Rashi[51] first establishes this trope, and it is likely that Radak was familiar with his comments. When interpreting this verse, Rashi focuses more on what it was that Lot saw when he lifted his eyes, *vayar*. Lot notices that the land has many streams of water and many trees flourish on their banks. After following a similar description of how lush the land is, Ramban[52] draws on both of these earlier lines of interpretation and explains that "Lot chose this particular land for himself, because the land that is irrigated in this manner is unlikely to suffer from drought, and is good for grazing." This comment suggests that in Ramban's opinion, Lot looked at the land in a particular way, such that he took in all of its relevant qualities and evaluated them. From his evaluative visual examination of the land, Lot is even able to predict how the land will continue to be of service to him and his descendants in the future.

Something in the way Lot lifts his eyes allows him to subsequently see the land in a way he had not been able to take it in before. It seems that the chain of action that began with lifting his eyes and ended with seeing the land's positive qualities conveys a visual assessment of his potential new home. This particular way of seeing enables Lot to make an informed decision about his acquisition that he might not have been able to do had he simply taken a look at the land (*h-b-t*), or seen it (*r-a-h*). For Ramban, the act of seeing conveyed by this instance of *nasa einayim* is inseparable from the circumstances under which Lot is looking at the land. Abram has given him a generous offer to be the

[51] Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040-1105), a commentator from Provence.
[52] Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman Girondi (1194-1270), a commentator from Catalonia, Spain.

one to determine both of their geographic futures, and Lot looks at the land with purpose, gazing out at a sea of possibilities. Which area offers him the most potential?

These rabbis agree that the land Lot sees (and then chooses for his family) has positive qualities, and they seem to understand the logic behind his selection. They relay this reasoning without placing a value statement on it. After all, Abram gives his nephew the choice in a most open manner, saying in the previous verse, "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate yourself from me; if you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." (Genesis 13:9) Lot is presented with an offer and he makes a choice about which side of the land is ideal for habitation. He lifts his eyes, he sees all that the land has to offer, and he wants it.

But another, contrasting point of view emerges at this time. Not only does this line of thinking evaluate Lot's behavior, its evaluation is decidedly negative. No longer is Lot the informed consumer who acted reasonably in selecting his land.

B'chor Shor of Orleans,[53] sees Lot's actions in a negative light, because according to midrash, *nasa einayim* can carry a connotation of sexual covetousness. This claim is based on another use of the phrase later in Genesis, when Joseph is brought as a slave into Potifar's house. Potifar's unnamed wife notices him immediately and lifts her eyes in his direction. (Genesis 39:7) B'chor Shor comments on this action: "She placed her eyes and her heart upon him because Joseph was a good-looking man…."[54] This comment reveals his understanding that through this kind of seeing, Potifar's wife "casts her gaze" upon Joseph with her heart's intentions, as well as with her vision. In his era

[53] Rabbi Joseph ben Isaac B'chor Shor, a twelfth century tosafist in France.
[54] Nevo, Yehoshafat, ed. *Peirushei Rabbi Yoseif B'chor Shor Al HaTorah*. Jerusalem, Israel: Mossad Harav Kook, 1994. 72.

the heart was thought to be the seat of intellect, in contrast to today's association with the heart as the center of emotion.[55] In that light, B'chor Shor's comment might suggest that *nasa einayim* carries with it an intentional focus of one's efforts to obtain an object of desire, possibly in a sexual sense.

Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein[56] included his evaluation of Lot's actions in his work, *Torah Temimah,* in which he bolsters his understanding of biblical text by bringing rabbinical literature (oral law) for every verse of Torah (written law). He does not separate these two genres and their different lenses for understanding Torah text, but rather combines them and reads the old and new together. There is evidence that his comments on these uses of *nasa einayim* were likely influenced by those of B'chor Shor, and the connotations he draws on from midrash. Epstein writes similarly, "And the wife of his [Joseph's] master lifted up her eyes [to seduce him]."[57] (Genesis 39:7) According to Epstein's reading, Lot's character appears guilty of such a focus of his efforts to satiate his lust for the land. Epstein quotes Rabbi Yochanan[58] in the Mishnah, who says, "This entire verse bespeaks transgression."

Epstein further bolsters his argument for the lustful gaze with another example of a sexual drive conveyed through sight. He quotes Genesis 34:2, in which "Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her; and he took her, and lay with

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[55] "Aristotle argued that the heart was the center of sensation and movement. By contrast, his predecessors, such as Alcmaeon, and his contemporaries, such as the Hippocratic doctors, attributed these functions to the brain." [Charles G. Gross. "Aristotle on the Brain." *The Neuroscientist* 1, no. 4 (1995): 245-50. Accessed January 19, 2015. https://www.princeton.edu/~cggross/Neuroscientist_95-1.pdf. 245.]

[56] Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein (1860-1941) was a rabbi in Lithuania, and the son of Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, who composed the *Shulchan Aruch*.

[57] Baruch HaLevi Epstein, and Shraga Silverstein. *The Essential Torah Temimah*. Vol. 1. Jerusalem/New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1989. 60.

[58] Yochanan HaSandlar was a third generation *tanna*, often quoted in the Mishnah.

her, and humbled her." Although the key phrase, *nasa einayim*, does not appear in this verse, Epstein draws a connection through the theme of sin rather than a grammatical construct. Shechem, too, is guilty of lusting after what he sees, and acquiring it for himself, regardless of consequences or the morality of his actions. Thus the rabbis forge a strong link between Lot as a symbol of selfish desire and Potifar's wife as a symbol of sexual lust.

This trope is rooted deep in the midrashic tradition, in which *Breishit Rabbah*[59] 51:7, says, "Anyone who lusts after forbidden sexual partners, in the end is fed on his own flesh." Such is the fate of those who pursue improper sexual urges. The midrash continues when Rabbi Yosi bar Hanina[60] states that all of this verse (Genesis 39:7) is the language of *ervah*, illicit sexual relations. He also brings an additional verse from Proverbs 6:26, "For on account of a harlot a man is brought to a loaf of bread, but the adulteress hunts for the precious life." After describing again how lush and well-watered was Lot's chosen land (Genesis 13:10), he adds another connection with lascivious water, "Because it was all well-watered, what is said? 'And he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness."' This verse refers to the bitter waters that are prepared for a suspected adulteress in Numbers 5:24. It is a fitting comparison because a suspected adulteress is one who might have pursued illicit sexual urges, and Lot not only lusts after the land but also impregnates his daughters.

[59] *Breishit Rabbah* is a collection of aggadic *midrashim* on the book of Genesis, probably compiled in the 4th and 5th centuries in Palestine.
[60] Rabbi Yosi bar Hanina was a second generation Palestinian *amora*.

Another midrashic compilation, *P'sikta Rabati*,[61] also offers a rather harsh judgment of the actions of both Lot and Potifar's wife. In this midrash Lot is labeled as "wicked," in comparison to Abraham's righteousness. It reads, "As soon as 'Lot lifted his eyes,' he had given his eyes to prostitution, as it is said, 'his master's wife lifted her eyes to Joseph.'" This suggests that Lot was looking to possess land that was not his to possess, just as Joseph was not available to Potifar's wife; these relationships were not sanctified by God's will.

Rachel Neis, author of The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity, contextualizes how the rabbis understood vision, and offers a possible explanation for how Lot might have "given his eyes to prostitution," as is suggested in *P'sikta Rabati*. For the rabbis, vision was so closely connected to the sense of touch and the fueling of an acquisitive desire that many of their thoughts regarding vision were for the purpose of containing it, and sometimes stimulating or directing sight and its power in appropriate ways.[62] It is clear that the rabbis who accuse Lot and Potifar's wife of inappropriate looking felt that they did not properly contain their urges, or their sight.

Vision, in their time, likely was understood as a combination of intromissive (effected by something entering the eye) and extramissive (effected by something coming out of the eye) processes. Neis cites a quote from ancient Greek thinker, Galen, explaining that, "A body that is seen does one of two things: either it sends something from itself to us and thereby gives an indication of its peculiar character, or it does not

[61] *P'sikta Rabati* is a collection of aggadic *midrashim*, composed around 845 CE.
[62] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture,* 31.

itself send something, it waits for some sensory power to come to it from us."[63]

It seems that this type of lifting of the eyes implies more of an extramissive action, a kind of seeing in which some aspect of a lustful gaze extends towards the object of desire. But there is danger for a mutual interchange of intro-and extramissive processes. Neis explains that because of this potential for visual exchange, "…a combination of extramissive and intromissive theories underpin what can effectively be considered ocular intercourse…" which might be precisely the effect that Potifar's wife hoped her gaze would have. She continues, "…It is precisely vision's adjacency to touch, and the slipperiness of vision, that allows it to stoke eros and desire in ancient eyes with such ease. Thus, biblical and ancient Mesopotamian protagonists often 'see' women (or men) and desire them simultaneously."[64]

These interpretations make it clear that sometimes people see things, lust after them, and think they deserve them. Other times, the rabbis teach, people merit seeing the things that are visible to them. They see that which they deserve to see, that which is due to them. There seem to be circumstances under which some people are able to lift their eyes and see things that other people are not privy to, or that they themselves might not have been able to see previously. The popular advice to look for the "silver lining" in a difficult situation is not entirely dissimilar from this trend that the midrash points out; it suggests that those who are optimistic can intentionally seek out and find more positive potential in their lives than can those who are not optimistic. Sometimes, if people earn it, it seems that God helps them find what they are looking for.

[63] Ibid. 28.
[64] Ibid. 30.

The first example of this trend is found in Genesis 22:2, when God instructs Abraham to go to the mountain "that I will tell you of," and to sacrifice his son, Isaac, there. But no subsequent description of the location is provided. How is Abraham to know which mountain God has intended as the site of the sacrifice? The text does not provide this information, and yet a few verses later it says that "Abraham lifted his eyes and he saw the place from afar." (Genesis 22:4) What did Abraham see that let him know he had found the proper place?

Sforno,[65] comments on this verse, saying that Abraham saw, "The location of the sacrifice on Mount Moriah." He was able to see it "from afar" because "he controlled his eyes to see the place from afar, according to the will of the blessed God." Sforno makes it clear that Abraham was able to use his eyes in a special way, because of both his relationship with God and God's will that he find the place on his own. Sforno then compares this incident to "the incident [when] 'The Eternal showed him [Moses] all the land' (Deuteronomy 34:1)," which is another example of God helping a worthy servant see things in a special way and fulfill his purpose as a leader. In the verse from Deuteronomy, God shows Moses all the land that his descendants will inhabit, and Moses is able to take it in all at once, from one vantage point atop Mount Nebo, because God intends for him to see the land in its entirety at that time. Sforno concludes that presumably, when Abraham noticed what he was able to see, "he understood that this place is the location for the sacrifice."

In his comments written more than two centuries earlier, Radak provides a similar teaching: "on the third day after he [Abraham] left his home [he] arrived there and was

[65] Rabbi Ovadiah ben Jacob Sforno (1475-1550), an Italian commentator, rabbi, physician, and philosopher.

close to it, and he lifted his eyes across from the place -that is Jerusalem- from when he entered into her borders and saw it from afar. But he did not know it was the mountain until God made it known to him." This highlights the next logical question: What is it exactly that Abraham saw that made it so clear to him that he had found the place? How was it that he trusted his eyes to identify this mysterious location? One possible explanation is that God decided that Abraham merited seeing the place, as expressed by the phrase, "God made it known to him."

A midrash from *Vayikra Rabbah*[66] 14:2 plays on a verse from Job to explain why good things (including special vision abilities) come to righteous people. The verse says, "I will fetch my knowledge from afar and will ascribe my righteousness to my Maker." (Job 36:3) Rabbi Meir[67] says, "This [language] uses two languages, of song and speech. The language of song is about the praising of righteous people, and the language of speech is about the failure of the wicked. Of distance it is said about the distanced ones who draw near, 'I will fetch my knowledge from afar and will ascribe my righteousness to my Maker.'" Rabbi Natan[68] continues the discussion and brings the topic back to Abraham, saying,

> We understand this to be about Abraham our father's name, that he came from afar, as it is written, "And Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place from afar." (Genesis 22:4) Rabbi Hanina bar Papa:[69] "We understand this to be about us and the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, that we were far away and we drew near to Him."

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[66] *Vayikra Rabbah* is a collection of homiletic *midrashim* on the book of Leviticus. Jacob Neusner dates it to the 5th century.
[67] Rabbi Meir was a third generation *tanna*, and a student of Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva.
[68] Rabbi Natan was a fourth generation *tanna*.
[69] Rabbi Hanina bar Papa was a third generation *amora* in Palestine.

The midrash proceeds in this manner and supports the connection to Job, where a few verses later it says, "He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but with kings upon the throne He sets them for ever, and they are exalted." (Job 36:7) God keeps the divine eyes with the righteous, and because Abraham is righteous, God watches over him and he has divine abilities to see.

Breishit Rabbah 56:1 demonstrates that timing was key in Abraham's ability to see the place. Abraham lifted his eyes after three days of travel. Three is an auspicious number. The midrash provides a whole string of examples of redemptive acts occurring on the third day:

> "On the third day Abraham lifted his eyes," (Genesis 22:4), as it is written, "After two days will God revive us, and on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence," (Hosea 2:6), on the third day of the tribes, "Joseph said to them on the third day, 'Do this and live,'" (Genesis 42:18), and on the third day of the scouts, as it is said, "hide yourselves there for three days," (Joshua 2:16), and on the third day was the giving of Torah, as it is said, "And it was on the third day," (Exodus 19:16), and on Jonah's third day, as it is written, "Jonah was in the bowels for the fish for three days and three nights," (Jonah 2:1), and on the third day of the return from Exile, "and we abode there for three days," (Ezra 8:32), and on the third day of the resurrection of the dead, as it is written, "After two days He will revive us, on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence." (Hosea 16:2), on the third day of Esther, "and on the third day Esther dressed in her queenly attire," (Esther 5:1) and she wore the royal garb of her father's house."

What is the background of this "on the third day" phenomenon? Why did these significant events occur on the third day? The midrash asks the question of what merited these events. "'On what merit?' Rabbis said, 'On the merit of the day on which the Torah was given, as it is said, 'and on the third day on the morning.'" Or, as Rabbi Levi claims next, it is due to Abraham's merit that these things have happened to Israel on the third day. He supports his claim with this example of Abraham lifting his eyes and

seeing the place from afar: "And Rabbi Levi said, 'On the merit of the third day of Abraham our father, as it is said, 'on the third day he saw the place from afar.' What did he see? He saw a cloud connected to the mountain, and he said, 'It is similar to the exact place that the Holy One, Blessed be He told me to sacrifice my son there.'"

Itturei Torah, a compilation of Chassidic Torah commentaries composed many centuries after the midrash, offers this teaching of the Kotzker Rebbe:[70] "Abraham's greatness in the sacrifice was that even on the third day he was as enthusiastic as he had been on the first. Momentary fervor is not that great a test; but on the third day, after a long, wearying journey, Abraham was still as enthusiastic as he had been at the beginning, and was able to lift up his eyes with the same intensity."[71] He teaches that righteous individuals can prove their worthiness to God through perseverance- sustained dedication to the cause, despite hardships along the way. Lifting one's eyes can be a sign of his resolve to fulfill God's commandment. It is easy to lose sight of the goal when it takes time to see the ultimate outcome, but Abraham did not give up. His dedication and perseverance merits Abraham an opportunity to see the place from afar, identify it correctly, and thereby fulfill God's commandment.

Not only did Abraham merit seeing and identifying the place from afar (and possibly establish a three-day precedent for miraculous occurrences), but according to this midrashic tradition, Abraham was able to see things that were not visible to other people who did not share his close relationship to God. *P'sikta Rabati* (*piska* 40) provides another interpretation. Maybe this discrepancy between what Abraham could

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[70] Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgensztern of Kotzk (1827-1859) was a Chasidic rabbi in Poland.

[71] Aharon Yaakov Greenberg, and Rabbi Dr. Shmuel Himelstein. *Torah Gems: Iturei Torah*. Vol. 1. Brooklyn, New York: Yavneh Publishing House, 1992. 174.

see and what other people could see was meant as a message to the other nations. Abraham and his son Isaac, who accompanied him on his mission from God, were presumably righteous enough to merit seeing a sign of the divine presence on the mountaintop. Thus they knew that they were on the right track in their journey. But the others accompanying them were not so lucky:

> Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place from afar" (Genesis 22:4), and why did he not see it on the first day? So that the other nations of the world would not say that he was rushing and he did not know how to prepare to walk, and so he did not see it on the first day and not on the second day, but rather on the third day, he saw from afar a cloud attached to the top of a mountain, and said to Isaac, "My son, Do you see anything on the mountain?" He said to him, "I see a cloud connected to it." And he asked his servants and said to them, "Do you see anything?" They said to him, "No." He said to them, "Since my donkey doesn't see it and you do not see it, stay here with the donkey." (22:5)

This trope of Abraham and Isaac being able to see some cloud of divine presence that is not visible to his servants (sometimes identified as Eliezer and Ishmael) also appears in many other *midrashim*.[72]

In the biblical text, Abraham sees the place from afar, climbs the mountain with Isaac, and is about to sacrifice his beloved son, when an angel of God stops him. Abraham passes the test and proves his loyalty and obedience. But he still has to sacrifice something upon the altar he has built. The text reads, **"**And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son." (Genesis 22:13) Just nine verses after Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place, he lifted up his eyes once more and found the solution to his dilemma, an

[72] Other similar citations include *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* (chapter 31), *P'Sikta d'rav Kahana* (26:3), *Tanhuma* (*parashat Veyeira* 46), and *Tehilim Rabbah* (40), among other sources.

alternative sacrifice. Was the ram there all along? What was it about Abraham's ability to see that ram at that moment that most caught the rabbis' attention? A few explanations emerge.

Radak again explains that Abraham sees the ram as a sign from God. Just as Abraham was able to see the place from afar when God made it known to him, Abraham is able to discern God's will about the sacrifice. Radak says, "He lifted his eyes to see whether there was any pure animal nearby or far way that would be worthwhile to sacrifice instead of his son…and that [the ram] was an invitation from God by way of a miracle, that the ram was caught in the brush, separated from his flock, and the shepherd was not concerned about [finding] him." All of these factors come together at the right time because it was God's will that Abraham find that exact ram and know what to do with it. God could count on Abraham's righteousness in preparing this sacrifice. Abraham would look for a fitting offering, a *b'heimah t'horah*, that was kosher and free of blemishes, and that he acquired properly. And Radak concludes with the hypothetical that, "If Abraham had found the shepherd, he would have given him payment for the ram, for he would not offer a sacrifice to God for free."

Ralbag[73] agrees that Abraham's seeing the ram was another way in which Abraham saw God's will, and "it was clear to him that this was God's will when He commanded him to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, that it was His will from the beginning of the episode that to offer him [the ram] up as a sacrifice."

In his comments on this verse, Rashi notes that there might have been something special not only about Abraham's vision on this day, but about the ram that he saw.

[73] Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (1288–1344), also known as Gersonides, was a scholar and Talmudist in France.

Rashi refers to a teaching from *Pirkei Avot*[74] that groups this ram with a selected cohort of artifacts and animals that were among the last acts of Creation, and that were destined for special function. The list from *Pirkei Avot* (5:6) is as follows: "Ten things were created the on eve of the [first] Sabbath at twilight; 1) the mouth of the earth, 2) the mouth of the well, 3) the mouth of the donkey, 4) the rainbow, 5) the manna, 6) the staff, 7) the *shamir*, 8) the written characters, 9) the writing, 10) the tablets of the Law. Others include the demons, the grave of Moses, the ram of our father Abraham. Others say also the tongs made by tongs." If it is the case that this ram was destined for the sacrifice since the time that it was created, then God had to ensure that Abraham would notice its presence at this very juncture and carry out its destiny. Perhaps Abraham lifted his eyes and looked around with a new focus, suddenly filled with divine inspiration to locate a special ram.

Ramban teaches about these items created at the very last minute before the first Shabbat that, "In most cases they would behave uniformly in accord with the Divine Law of nature but there would be instances when they could perform extraordinary acts." According to Ramban's understanding of this passage in *Pirkei Avot*, the time had come for this ram to perform an extraordinary act and ensure the fulfillment of its destiny. There is no way Abraham would overlook this significant animal, because the ram itself would not allow that to happen. A selection from midrash *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* meshes nicely with Ramban's comment, offering a possible explanation for the ram's extraordinary behavior.

Rabbi Zechariah said: That ram, which was created at the twilight, ran and came

[74] *Pirkei Avot*, the oft-quoted Ethics of the Fathers, is a collection of rabbinic teachings found in tractate *Avot* in the Mishnah.

> to be offered up instead of Isaac, but Sammael was standing by, and distracting it, in order to annul the offering of our father Abraham. And it was caught by its two horns in the trees, as it is said, "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by its horns." What did that ram do? It put forth its leg and took hold of the coat of our father Abraham, and Abraham looked, saw the ram, and he went and set it free. He offered it up instead of Isaac his son, as it is said, "And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."[75]

According to a different teaching in *P'sikta Rabati* (40), it was not the ram itself that drew Abraham's attention to its presence, but rather God who spoke to Abraham and explicitly commanded him with the key phrase: "Abraham said to Him, 'Why am I going without a sacrifice?' The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, 'Lift up your eyes and see the sacrifice behind you.' 'And Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw that there was a ram, and he sacrificed it in place of his son.'" This midrash is edited in such a way that it could be read seamlessly alongside the biblical text, suggesting that God used the phrase a third time, in a direct command regarding the ram. The incorporation of *nasa einayim* enhances its credibility in commenting on the biblical story because it utilizes linguistic tools original to the text.

In *Esther Rabbah*[76] (7:9) there is a different notion of how Abraham merited what he saw. This midrash suggests that it was thanks to Abraham's outlook on his situation that he was able to see particular aspects of it in a new way. The midrash begins by quoting Esther (3:5), "When Haman saw that Mordechai would not bow down or prostrate himself before him, and Haman filled with anger." This introduction sparks a

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[75] M. Friedlander. "Binding of Isaac on the Altar." In *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer*, 256-264. Skokie, Illinois: Varda Books, 2004. 262.

[76] *Esther Rabbah* is a collection of aggadic *midrashim* on the Book of Esther. It is difficult to date because it is thought to have been composed of sections from different time periods (from 500 CE and the 11th century).

line of argument that suggests that it was due to Haman's sinful outlook that he saw such aggravating events play out before him. The midrash continues with Rabbi Aibu[77] bringing a proof text from Psalms 69:24, saying, "'Let the eyes of the wicked grow darkened from seeing.' According to the eyesight of the wicked brings them down to *Gehinom*." More examples of wicked people seeing wicked things follow:

> This is what is written: "The sons of God saw the daughters of man," (Genesis 6:2), "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father," (Genesis 9:22), "Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan were evil," (Genesis 28:8), "Balak son of Tzipor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites," (Numbers 22:2), "Balaam saw that it was good in God's eyes to bless Israel," (Numbers 24:1).

Then the text returns to the example from Esther.

The converse of this principle is also true. The midrash continues, "But the eyesight of the righteous elevates them to the highest level," and Abraham provides many examples of this phenomenon: "As it is written, 'He lifted his eyes and saw three men' (Genesis 18:2), 'And he saw a ram,' (22:4), 'And he saw a well in the field,' (29:2), 'And he saw the bush,' (Exodus 3:2), 'And he saw Pinchas.' (Numbers 25:7) According to this, they rejoice in what they see *(marit ayin*[78]*).* The upright will see and be glad. (Psalms 107:42)"

The phrase, *nasa einayim*, also appears in another part of the Abraham cycle. In Genesis 18:2 Abraham is recovering from his recent circumcision and sits outside his tent. Suddenly, he "Lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, three men stood next to him;

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[77] Rabbi Aibu was a fourth generation Palestinian *amora*.

[78] *Marit ayin*: In its traditional context, *marit ayin*, the way something "appears to the eye," (literally, the "appearance of the eye") refers to the principle that pious Jews would not publicly engage in any activity that could be misconstrued by an uneducated onlooker as breaking one of the commandments. The midrash in *Esther Rabbah* translates this phrase more as an "outlook," and uses it to justify what righteous versus wicked people see.

and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed down to the earth." Abraham proceeds to extend his famous hospitality. According to *Esther Rabbah*, Abraham is able to see these important guests because of his positive outlook. This suggests either that other men would have overlooked the men's auspicious arrival, whereas Abraham takes notice and sees them, or that Abraham is predisposed to see opportunities to obey God and perform *mitzvot*, and so he is already focused on seeing approaching strangers as potential guests.

Sforno and Radak both offer their own alternative readings that interpret the message of these men as a prophecy from God. Sforno comments on Genesis 18:2, saying that when Abraham "lifted his eyes," he was looking (suggesting the verb *l'histakel*), which indicates a not a chance encounter, but a prophetic vision. Radak interprets this action in a more mundane manner, explaining that Abraham had fallen asleep, and "lifted his eyes" upon waking, and it was at that point when he looked up that he first saw the vision of the three men standing opposite him.

A midrash in *Breishit Rabbah* (48:9) explains why Abraham merited such a vision at this particular point in time, and after waking up from this particular sleep. It is essential that this visit happened while Abraham was convalescing. The reader gets a glimpse into a conversation between Abraham and God: "Before I had circumcised myself were there passersby returning and coming to me?" and the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, "Before you had circumcised yourself there were uncircumcised human beings coming, and now I and those in My entourage are revealed to you."

It is clear from the biblical text that Abraham and God's relationship is solidified at the time of the circumcision, as the act of *brit milah* is Abraham's physical

embodiment of the covenant. It follows that Abraham is also more open to seeing God's hand in the subsequent events of his life, as he becomes closer to God and more tuned into seeing God's presence in his world.

Although it is not made explicit in midrash, there is a possible connection here to another story that uses *nasa einayim*, in Genesis 31. Jacob has been working for Laban, his father-in-law, and instead of monetary wages, he requests all of the speckled or dark rams from his flocks. Jacob is ready to increase his own herds and establish his property. Laban agrees, but tricks Jacob and gives those rams intended for him to his sons. Jacob tends the remaining (non-speckled) flocks and he devises a method of using striped sticks to encourage them to breed speckled sheep. Jacob is able to manipulate the flocks so that his sheep were hardy and Laban's were sickly.

In Genesis 31:10-12 *nasa einayim* appears twice:

> And it came to pass at the time that the flock conceived, that I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the he-goats which leaped upon the flock were streaked, speckled, and grizzled. And the angel of God said to me in the dream: "Jacob," and I said, "Here I am." And he said, "Please lift up your eyes, and see, all the he-goats which leap upon the flock are streaked, speckled, and grizzled; for I have seen all that Laban has done to you."

In this pericope we see two less common grammatical constructs of the *nasa einayim* phrase. The first is Jacob's first-person recollection that he lifted up his eyes in a dream, suggesting that even in his dream he became aware of seeing things differently. It could also be an indication that the dream had a divine quality, and similar to Radak's comment earlier that Abraham lifted his eyes to see a prophetic vision from God, that Jacob, too, was preparing to see God's hand at work in the success of his scheme.

The second grammatical construct here is the imperative of God's angel to Jacob, telling him to lift up his eyes and see what God has done for him in response to Laban's

mistreatment of his son-in-law. In his comment on this verse about the angel of God, B'chor Shor says that "*sa-na et einechah ur'eih*," indicates that the angel was instructing Jacob specifically, "And see that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is a prosecutor regarding your offense."[79] Jacob is meant to see more than just the goats. If he truly uses the vision God has given him, he will see his relationship with the divine, his place in the covenant, and hope for his future.

Throughout this chapter, *nasa einayim* has indicated a focused kind of seeing that is sometimes enhanced by God and sometimes scorned by commentators who judge biblical characters negatively for their lust. It explored how *nasa einayim* can indicate a special kind of seeing that one earns from God, or simply a misdirected human sense that must be reigned in and controlled. Perhaps in the most ideal circumstances one can use mindfulness to become aware of a lustful gaze, and then lift one's eyes with renewed intention to gain a more appropriate outlook that resembles Abraham's *marit ayin*. In this manner, people can follow Abraham and Jacob's examples and become more open to seeing God's role in the world.

[79] Nevo, Yehoshafat, ed. *Peirushei Rabbi Yoseif B'chor Shor Al HaTorah*. Jerusalem, Israel: Mossad Harav Kook, 1994. 54.

Chapter 3

Looking Up to God in Prayer; Seeing the Future with God's Guidance

When all other options fall short and there is no other place to turn, many people instinctively look up. One might argue that lifting the eyes in exasperation is a socially conditioned response to distress. Children grow up observing adults looking up plaintively when they are at their wit's end. What is the origin of this action? Perhaps people learn to silently beseech guidance from a "higher power." When people search for God they tend to lift their eyes. And it seems that this gesture can be traced back to biblical times. In Psalm 121 the psalmist exclaims, "*Esa einay el he-harim*, I lift my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come?" Or even more explicitly, in Psalm 123: "I lift up my eyes to You who are enthroned in the Heavens." The Psalmist's earnest pleas heavenwards capture the human inclination to direct our most sincere prayers upwards, towards some conception of a higher power.

Although a detailed analysis of the Psalms is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is noteworthy that the two instances of *nasa einayim* in that body of literature might speak to a later usage of the phrase that clearly connects the human speaker to the divine.[80] Earlier examples of *nasa einayim* from the Torah do not, for the most part, make this "prayerful gaze" explicit, but the rabbis have suggested that such a conclusion might be implied. Perhaps there is something inherently prayerful about lifting one's eyes.

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[80] According to Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler's introduction to Psalms in the JPS Jewish Study Bible, "Dating the psalms is notoriously difficult…. While many modern scholars believe that at least some, perhaps even many of the psalms are from the preexilic period (before 586 BCE), none can be dated on linguistic grounds to the tenth century BCE, the period of David." 1282.

One creative example of the midrashists utilizing *nasa einayim* to suggest prayer can be found in an aggadic story woven from the *Akeidah* narrative. Previous chapters explored the two key instances of Abraham lifting his eyes during this dramatic episode (both when Abraham first sees the mountain from afar, and later when he sees the ram that becomes the sacrifice in Isaac's stead), and there is another midrash in which God specifically instructs Abraham to lift his eyes in order to find the ram which is destined to fill this need. In this rendition of the unfolding action, the characters lift their eyes, but no longer for the purpose of finding something they have merited seeing. Rather, this vision seems to be more poetic. They look up to God.

In *Sefer Ha-Aggadah*, editors Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky prepare a compilation of midrashim on Genesis 22.[81] In one part of the midrashic narrative, Satan has made himself into a stream that disrupts Abraham's travels to Mount Moriah. Abraham is determined to continue on his journey to the place that God will tell him, and he attempts to traverse the stream. Halfway through his crossing the water level climbs dangerously high and finally reaches his neck. And,

> In that instant, Abraham lifted[82] his eyes heavenward and said, "Master of the universe, You chose me. You appeared to me, saying, 'I am unique and you are unique. Through you shall My Name become known in My world—so bring your son Isaac before Me as a burnt offering.' And I did not hold back. As You see, I am occupied with your bidding. But now 'I am in deep waters' (Ps 69:3). If

[81] Tanhuma, *Va-yera*, S §22-23; Tanhuma B, *Va-yera*, S §46; B. Sanh 89b; PRE 31; P. Ta 2:4, 65d; Yalkut, *Va-yera*, S §101; *Va-Yosha* (BhM 1:37-38); PR 40:6 (YJS 2:713-21).
[82] It is worth noting that while the English translation, "he lifted his eyes," matches that of the key phrase, *nasa einayim*, a different verb is used here. *T-l-h*, which often indicates hanging or depending upon something, can also convey a raising motion. The midrashist's vocabulary might not have matched the biblical text exactly, but the sentiment is the same. It is so similar, in fact, that the editors of *Sefer Aggadah* (the Hebrew edition, p 31.) included in a footnote that here the verb, *t-l-a*, is meant to be understood as *n-s-a*. Thus it conveys the same meaning of the focal phrase and is relevant to this discussion.

> either I or Isaac were to drown, who will fulfill Your commands, and by whom would the uniqueness of your name be proclaimed?"[83]

In this retelling, Abraham lifts his eyes and prays. The two actions are interrelated, sequential stages in the same process. In his moment of fear and vulnerability Abraham literally and figuratively looks to God for salvation. He does so physically with his eyes and spiritually through his words of spontaneous prayer. Abraham quotes from Psalm 69, drawing on a poignant metaphor that for him has become literally realized. He not only feels that he is in deep waters, but he is actually in danger of drowning. The only place he can look for help is up.

Later in the same midrash, Isaac performs this action of lifting his eyes in prayer. While bound on the altar, awaiting his fate, "…His [Isaac's] eyes were blinking frantically and looking toward the *Shechinah*."[84] Isaac, who has been placed in a position usually reserved for an animal, indeed resembles the classic image of a deer caught in headlights. In his fear, he looks to the manifestation of God's presence, and prays out loud: "'I lift up my eyes to the Heavens, from where does my help come?' And at that same moment the Holy One, Blessed be He, appeared above the angels and threw open the firmament, and Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw the chambers of the chariot." Isaac lifts his eyes heavenwards and he sees an image of salvation that answers his prayers. In

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[83] Braude, William G. *The Book of Legends (Sefer Ha-Aggadah): Legends from The Talmud and Midrash*. Edited by Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky. New York: Schocken Books, 1992. 40.

[84] According to Dr. Joseph Dan, a professor of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, "In origin *Shekhinah* was used to refer to a divine manifestation, particularly to indicate God's presence at a given place." (Dan, Joseph. "Shekhinah." In *Encyclopedia Judaica CD-ROM Edition*. Judaica Multimedia (Israel), 1996.) Isaac seeks direct communication with God by looking up to God's presence. Dan notes that in Shabbat 12b it says that Shechinah also watches over the sick. Perhaps this reading is applicable here, as Isaac is faint with fear and physically compromised.

his prayer, Isaac also echoes the Psalms nearly verbatim, playing on the strong association in Psalms 121 and 123 of lifting one's eyes in prayer.

While this framing of *nasa einayim* as an alternative idiom for a type of prayer lacks Kawashima's keyword, *hineh*, it still fits into his description of inner consciousness. Even without the *hineh*, this use of *nasa einayim* opens a space in the narrative for readers to glimpse the characters' inner consciousness. These intense moments of looking towards God reveal Abraham's and Isaac's innermost thoughts. While emotions and thoughts are often left to the imagination in the biblical text, the midrash makes them explicit. The very title of the midrashic genre of *aggadah* (narrative midrash) aims to draw the reader in. Dr. Norman J. Cohen teaches that the root of the genre, *n-g-d*, means not just "to tell," but also to attract (the heart).[85]

As Israeli scholar Isaak Heinemann notes in his study of aggadic midrash, "Where details seem missing from the biblical text, the Aggadah fills them in."[86] It is the rabbis' goal to find and nurture a personal connection with the biblical text, and so their writing seeks to fill them in. Heinemann concludes, "In order to understand the Bible profoundly, the Rabbis identified personally, with its characters and events."[87] This midrash is a strong example of their success in drawing those personal connections from the biblical narrative.

Not only does this midrash add depth to the biblical text, it is edited to do so in a way that seamlessly utilizes thematic language original to the biblical text. The midrash

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[85] According to midrash scholar, Rabbi Norman J. Cohen, Ph.D., this teaching on *n-g-d* is found in a number of sources on *Midrash Aggadah*. He teaches it regularly, including in a lecture on *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* at HUC-JIR New York, in the spring semester, 2014.
[86] Isaak Heinemann's Classic Study of Aggadah and Midrash, in particular, Sefer Rishon: Historiographia ha-Yotzeret. Quoted from an unpublished translation by Marc Bregman.
[87] Ibid.

could have been effective had it simply included Isaac's prayer. It is all the more powerful because of the lifting of his eyes, and explicit repetition of motifs found in the biblical narrative. It also includes a creative application of Psalm 121, in which the psalmist asks for help. These rabbis were familiar with Psalms and the Jewish tradition to recite them in times of distress; they wrote their own experiences into the midrash in order to further identify with its characters. This midrash, therefore, is a glimpse into the rabbis' psyche, and how they might have felt in prayer, just as a much as it adds depth to Isaac's character.

Later in Genesis, Jacob and Esau are preparing for an emotionally charged reunion. The twins parted ways years prior, in a haze of murderous rage. They have grown independently since then, spending years creating their own families and amassing their fortunes. When Jacob departs from his many years working for his father-in-law, Laban, he sends word to Esau by way of messengers. He informs Esau that he has accrued great wealth, suggesting that he is satisfied with his lot and does not intend to cause trouble by continuing to take from his brother's portion.[88] Jacob gives Esau fair warning of his approach, and claims that he seeks to "find favor" in his eyes. (Genesis 32:6) But the messengers return with a report that Esau is approaching with an army of four hundred men, an action that conveys not peaceful reconciliation, but a threat. Tension mounts as the brothers prepare to see each other once again. It is not clear what they should expect. Which intention will prevail?

In the meantime, Jacob reorganizes his camp in a frantic attempt to protect his clan from an oncoming attack. Then he wrestles with a mysterious man all night,

[88] This is a poignant message to Esau, since the brothers' first major dispute erupted when Jacob gave Esau a meal in exchange for his birthright.

receives a new name, and calls the place "Peniel, for I have seen the face of God." (Genesis 32:31) Meanwhile, he is still preparing himself to meet Esau. Finally, a new chapter begins, and the moment of reunion draws near. And Jacob "lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming with four hundred men." (Genesis 33:1) The moment of encounter has arrived, and Jacob stares from a distance, prepared to take in the scene before him.

Breishit Rabbah 75:13 contains a midrash in which Jacob's lifting of his eyes is interpreted as a prayerful moment. In the midst of an already somewhat emotional biblical text, this midrash adds another insight into Jacob's feelings about his current situation. The reader views Jacob's inner consciousness through the way he expresses himself to God:

> Jacob said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Master of the universe, if there will be troubles coming to my children, do not bring them one to the other, rather keep them apart from their troubles," and at that same moment Jacob lifted his eyes and saw Esau from afar, and his eyes hung on the Heavens, and he wept and beseeched mercy from the Holy One, Blessed be He, and [God] heard his prayer, and [God] promised to rescue him from all his troubles by Jacob's merit, as it is said, "The Eternal will answer you on the day of your trouble, the name of the God of Jacob set you on high." (Psalms 20:2)

This midrash plays on the biblical narrative by repeating both the *nasa einayim* phrase from the text, and the *t-l-h* verb mentioned earlier (see footnote 3). Depending on the translation of this key verb, the reader can understand Jacob to be lifting his eyes to God, or even hanging desperately onto God's domain in the Heavens, as he beseeches God's mercy and waits to see the outcome of his prayer. This midrash also hearkens back to Jacob's prayer to God in the previous chapter, as Jacob began his nervous preparations for the encounter and prayed that God will deliver him from his brother. (Genesis 32:12)

Again, Psalms (20:2) is brought into the narrative to emphasize the dimension of human emotion and faith in the story.

As Hebrew scholars, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, state in their introduction to Psalms in the JPS *Jewish Study Bible*, the "relationship between God and humans, [is] another important dimension of Psalms. […] If there is one primary underlying assumption of the book of Psalms, it is the potential efficacy of prayer."[89] This particular quote reflects an image of the God of Jacob, an intimately relatable God, who listens to prayer and who has indeed promised to protect Jacob.

Just four verses later in the biblical narrative, *nasa einayim* is repeated. This time it is from Esau's perspective. It is as if the camera shifts from Jacob to Esau, and the reader sees the story unfolding from the other brother's perspective. Although there is no particular verb telling the reader what Esau sees, it is clear that Jacob approaches, bowing seven times before him. In response, Esau rushes forward, separating himself from his army of men. Esau embraces his brother, falls upon his neck, kisses him, and weeps.[90] It is possible to imagine the intense emotion of this moment of reunion. Esau is completely absorbed by his brother's presence, and focused entirely on the embrace and weeping. After some moments pass, Esau slowly straightens. Is it only at this point in the narrative that Esau also "lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children" that have become a

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[89] Adele Berlin, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 1284.

[90] Rashi comments on possible alternative understandings of the verb, *vayishakeihu*: "There are dots over the word. […] Some interpret the dots to mean that he did not kiss him wholeheartedly. Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai said, 'It is a well known tradition that Esau hated Jacob, but his compassion was moved at that time, and he kissed him wholeheartedly.'" For the purpose of this discussion, Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai's comment is a compelling analysis of the verb; the dots are meant to draw our attention to the transformative potential of this act.

part of Jacob's growing family. (Genesis 33:5) It is as if he only then becomes aware of the fact that he and his brother are not alone. He lifts up his eyes and sees Jacob's entourage as if for the first time.

The emotional baggage of the brothers' combative past is still present, but they lift their eyes to see each other, and gain a new perspective. Each brother approaches the reunion in his own way: Jacob, through careful preparation, sending messengers, rearranging his camp, and beseeching God for protection, and Esau by acting on his feelings, aggressively assembling an army, and then spontaneously abandoning it and embracing his brother. But after these preparations, each brother is able to see his twin in a new way. Gunther Plaut, editor of *The Torah: a Modern Commentary*, explains that this new way of seeing each other is possible because the brothers have actually changed: "The reconciliation occurs because it is Israel, not Jacob, who Esau meets, and Jacob is a new man who asks for forgiveness, if not in word then in manner, who limps toward him with repentant air and not deceitful arrogance."[91]

Esau has also been transformed over time. Plaut continues, "Uncomplicated Esau, who himself has matured, senses this at once and runs to kiss his newly found brother."[92] They decide to part ways again, but it is a very different parting from the one that separated them two decades prior. After this reconciliatory embrace, it seems they take leave in a spirit of peaceful coexistence. "The two are now at peace; and Jacob-

[91] Gunther Plaut. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Rev. ed. New York: Union for Reform Judaism, 2005. 234.
[92] Ibid.

Israel, who has no further need to flee from Esau's wrath, settles down and builds a house."[93]

Another prayerful gaze towards God appears in the midst of the Exodus narrative. The Children of Israel, descendants of Jacob, finally believe in Moses the deliverer. They leave Egypt after the final plague, and finally get their first taste of freedom. Then God hardens Pharaoh's heart, and the Egyptian king and his army pursue the newly freed slaves. The text reads that Pharaoh and his army drew near, and "the children of Israel lifted their eyes and saw the Egyptians were marching after them, and they were very afraid, and they cried out to God." (Exodus 14:10)

The Israelites stare straight ahead in determination as they follow their new path to freedom. Perhaps they feel vibrations through the sand, announcing the arrival of their pursuers. Something causes them to lift their eyes. Then they glance backwards, they see the Egyptians, and they cry out. The text in Exodus says that they cried out to God, which implies a type of anguished prayer. But the words of their prayer to God are not specified. What did they say?

A midrash on this text from *Shir HaShirim Rabbah*[94] (*parashah* 2,) avoids presenting what the Israelites prayed. In this case, it seems that their prayer is embodied more in action (lifting the eyes) than in word. This midrash comments on the verb used to describe Pharaoh's action in the beginning of the verse: *hikriv*. While the *p'shat*, the simple meaning of this phrase, is that Pharaoh was approaching the escaping Israelites, the midrash offers an alternative interpretation of Pharaoh's action. It renders the verb

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[93] Ibid.

[94] *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* is an exegetical midrashic work commenting on Song of Songs, composed by the Palestinian *amoraim*. It was redacted during the middle of the sixth century CE.

hikriv in the causative form. Instead of Pharaoh drawing near to the Israelites, the biblical narrative suggests that Pharaoh drew the Israelites near.

But to what would Pharaoh be causing Israel to draw near? The midrash is still trying to understand the nature of the Israelites' prayer at this moment. It suggests that the object in the biblical text is implied, "That he [Pharaoh] drew Israel near to *teshuvah*." Pharaoh caused them to repent and come closer to God. The midrash reverses the order of the original verse, changing its meaning, so that Pharaoh's approach threatens the Israelites and causes them to repent: "When they [the Israelites] saw them [the Egyptians], they raised their eyes[95] to the Holy One, Blessed be He: 'The children of Israel lifted their eyes and there was Egypt coming after them, and they were very much afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.' This was in the same way that they had cried out in Egypt."[96]

According to this midrash, the Israelites have to do *teshuvah*, perhaps to atone for their lack of faith in God, or for other sins that might have led to their prolonged slavery. Ironically, it is their oppressor in the end who causes them to draw near to God. Perhaps the first taste of freedom reignites their faith in God, while at the same time reminding the former slaves of their own potential for autonomy. They realize that they can play a role in determining their own futures. This example offers the possibility that the Israelites' prayer is embodied in their actions; primarily in the action of lifting their eyes to God, and secondarily in their efforts to draw closer to God in *teshuvah*.

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[95] "*Talu*:" Neusner translates their action in this description as "raised," in contrast to the verb used in the biblical text, *nasa*, which he renders as "lifted." See footnote 82.
[96] Neusner, Jacob, ed. *Song of Songs Rabbah: An Analytical Translation*. Vol. 1. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989. 194.

The instance of *nasa einayim* in Deuteronomy 4:19 stands out as a unique example both in terms of grammar and usage. Grammatically, there are only three instances in Torah in which God commands people to lift their eyes. This example, in particular, involves a command about lifting the eyes that is directly connected to prayerful acts. Moses reminds the Israelites that since you "*saw* no shape" when the Eternal spoke to you at Horeb, you must not make any images of God. (Deuteronomy 4:15) And the phrase, *nasa einayim*, appears in the midst of the instructions for proper worship: "And when you lift your eyes to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them…." Other peoples can worship the heavenly bodies, but not the Israelites.

Rashi comments on God's warning, "Lest you lift your eyes," stating that it implies looking "at the thing and paying attention [to it], and erring after it." If the simple act of lifting one's eyes to celestial bodies is dangerous enough for God to warn the Israelites against it, there is an implication that such an act is prayerful, and therefore idolatrous. The people are similarly warned in Numbers 15:39 not to follow after their eyes and go astray, which reinforces the notion of how powerful the gaze can be. Paying attention to the image of a particular object, especially one that is worshipped by other nations, might be more tempting than people would like to admit. God warns the Israelites to lift their eyes with caution and intention, commanding that they should only direct their prayerful intentions to God.

Sometimes in the Bible human beings look to God in prayer, asking for help, support, or guidance in times of need. Moments of threat or struggle are liminal times in which the future is not always clear. But sometimes in the biblical narrative God

intervenes in these moments and shows people what is to come. God commands people to lift up their eyes and see what will be. In the Bible the Israelites' future is often intimately connected to the Land, and God relies on this vision as proof of the promise. There are two instances in which God commands Abraham and Moses to lift their eyes and look towards the Land, and be reassured of their fates.

The first time God tells someone to lift up his eyes and look into the future of the land is when Abraham and Lot part ways. Lot lifts up his eyes and chooses his portion of lush territory; he looks out and sees the land that his descendants will inhabit.[97] But where does that leave Abraham? Four verses later God reminds Abraham of what is due to him. It is as if Abraham's generous offer to his nephew causes him to doubt the validity of God's covenant. How can Abraham count on inheriting this land for his descendants if Lot just chose a sizeable portion of it for himself?

In Genesis 13:14-16 God speaks to Abram "after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift up your eyes, and see from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and your seed forever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth….'" This is a powerful reminder of the eternality of God's promise. Today there is an expression that "seeing is believing," and when Abram asks for proof of what is due to him in the future, God

[97] In the JSP commentary on Genesis Nahum M. Sarna offers an additional interpretation of Abraham's actions: "It is possible that Abram's [or Lot's] surveying of the land has quasi-legal implications. Ancient Roman legal thought recognized a mode of acquisition of property rights 'by sight and intention.' Transfer of ownership could be effected by a ceremony in which one party pointed out the boundaries of the land and the other party saw them. It is uncertain, though, whether such an institution also excited in the ancient Near East." 100.

provides a most compelling piece of visual evidence. Everything that Abram can see will be his, and nothing that Lot can take diminishes the promise in any way.

Hizkuni[98] comments on this verse: "And the Eternal said… 'You did not properly indicate [to him] if you meant that there is enough for you from what you divided with Lot because all the land you see- even the Plain of the Jordan- that you gave to Lot, I will give it to you and your descendants.'" According to Hizkuni's reading, it is unclear whether Abram fully understands at the time of their separation that Lot's land would not affect his covenant with God. This is why God reminds Abram that he can look confidently into the future and see that land that will be his. God reminds Abram to keep his eye on the prize, as it were. And with God's help, Abram can see the broader picture, both in terms of geography and time. Biblical scholar Nahum Sarna agrees with this assessment, saying, "The same Hebrew expression is behind Lot's action in verse 10. Lot 'raised his eyes' but saw only the region of Sodom; Abram 'raised his eyes' and viewed the entire land."[99]

The midrashic tradition links God's instruction for Abram to see the land to a much later point in the Torah in which God tells Moses to do the same. Both Abram and Moses embody God's promise to give the land of Canaan to Abram's descendants, but neither of them sees that promise to its full fruition. Abram looks out and sees the land, and eventually he purchases the Cave of Machpelah for a burial plot. Abram thus acquires some portion of the land for himself and his family, but he does not live to see it filled with his progeny. Moses' journey to the Promised Land comes many generations

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[98] Rabbi Hezekiah ben Manoah was a 13th century French commentator.
[99] Nahum M. Sarna, ed. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*. Vol. 1. New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989. 100.

later, when the Israelites are still yearning to see the promise fulfilled. His purpose as a prophet and as a leader is to lead the Israelites from slavery into freedom: from Egypt into their own land. And yet Moses himself is not able to enter it with them. He can only see it from a distance. The great leaders of the ancient Jewish people must rely on their eyes to sustain their faith and to continue believing that God will one day give them the land that is due to them.

In *Mechilta*[100] (*masechet Amalek*) Rabbi Hananiah ben Akabia[101] compares what Abram saw to what Moses saw when they both lifted their eyes to the land at God's instruction. He claims that,

> The view [of the Land of Israel] given to Abraham our father was more accommodating than the view accorded to Moses. For as to Abraham, he was not put to any trouble, while Moses was put to trouble. In the case of Abraham: "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are located, northward, southward, eastward, and westward." (Genesis 13:15) In the case of Moses: "Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward, northward, southward, and eastward, and look with your eyes." (Deuteronomy 3:27) "Go up there, look around, and only then will you see."[102]

Why is Abram's view better than that of Moses? The two men behold the land from different mountaintops, but they presumably see the same land. They are even given nearly identical instructions to lift their eyes and gaze out in all directions to get a full picture. But Abram is not "put to trouble" in the same way that Moses is. He is the start of it all; it is his seed to whom all of the land is promised. When Abram first hears the promise he does not yet have any children. But he has no reason to assume that he

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[100] *Mechilta* is an exegetical midrash on Exodus, dated to the third or fourth centuries, in Palestine.
[101] Rabbi Hananiah ben Akabia was a third generation *tanna*.
[102] Jacob Neusner, ed. *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael: An Analytical Translation.* Vol. 2. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988. 15.

would never have them. God comes to Abram, makes the offer, and reassures him that it will come to pass.

In contrast, Moses has inherited leadership of a people who was enslaved for centuries. Moses himself goes through much hardship to lead them, and suffers both personally and as a leader. He is a loyal prophet whom our sages revered. According to Torah, no one has had as intimate a relationship with God as did Moses.[103] And yet Moses seems an empathetic character. One can imagine what it felt like to stand at the top of the mountain, knowing that he can lead his people out of slavery, but not into the Promised Land. It seems that Rashi felt for Moses at this moment, and depicts God, too, turning towards him with compassion. God reminds Moses that it is a good land: "'And see with your eyes:' you requested of Me: 'Let me…see the good Land.' (3:25) I show you all of it, as it is said: 'And the Lord showed him all the Land.'" (Deuteronomy 34:1)

In Jeffrey Tigay's commentary on Deuteronomy, he too picks up on God's compassion for Moses. He writes, "God tempers the severity of His decree by acceding to part of Moses' request: he may not cross into the land, but he may see it." Both the specificity of Moses' request to see the Land, as well as God's having acceded to it, suggest that there is something significant in the act of lifting one's eyes and perceiving an important object with the eyes. It is not quite the same as inheriting the land immediately. Nor is it the same as setting foot on the land and settling there with one's

[103] Exodus 33:11 specifies that God spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaks to his fellow," and Deuteronomy 34:10 concludes that "There has not since arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Eternal knew face to face."

descendants. But God understands the power of looking ahead and beholding the site of future growth, security, and independence.[104]

When God tells Abram and Moses to lift their eyes and see the land God is reminding them to pay attention to their vision, and perceive what they see with a new perspective. They do not get to settle the land themselves, and they might worry about the well being of their people. But they do see a guarantee of the future, promised by their God. And sometimes that has to be enough. This chapter explores the use of *nasa einayim* to convey prayer, suggesting that sometimes people express their prayers to God by looking up. Perhaps when God told Abram and Moses to look out at the land, God was responding likewise to God's people: answering the prayers they express through their raised eyes, by telling them to look up again, with faith in the covenant.

[104] Jeffrey H. Tigay, ed. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy*. Vol. 6. New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. 39.

Chapter 4

Imagining Modern Commentaries on *Nasa Eynaim* in Light of Contemporary Understandings About Perception

Rachel Neis offers a beautiful survey of the wide scope of seeing presented in rabbinic literature: "[Vision] can be studied across a range of arenas from the everyday (what is understood as visible/invisible, how people are recognized and categorized, how landscapes are navigated, how empirical observations are made, how the physical and social world is organized) to the sublime (how to see gods, view spectacles, observe bacteria, escape the evil eye, fall in love 'at first sight')."[105] The rabbis who first commented on the Torah took note of some of the ways biblical characters saw the world around them, and they paid attention to the language used to convey these ideas. The phrase, *nasa einayim*, exemplifies many of these ways of seeing as it appears throughout the Torah. When reading these stories through the lens of contemporary understandings of visual perception, new trends emerge that the Rabbis might not have been aware of in their time. Neuroscience can help explain how the physical act of lifting one's eyes relates to the cognitive consequences of seeing something new, or in a new way.

In order to understand one example of this trend, it is worthwhile to review the concept of top-down versus bottom-up cognitive processing and how it relates to sight. As discussed in Chapter 1, Siegel explains that there is no such thing as "immaculate perception"; "perception is virtually always a blend of what we are sensing now and what we've learned previously."[106] In other words, many factors influence visual perception.

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[105] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic in Rabbinic Culture,* 4.
[106] Siegel, *Mindsight,* 201.

Some of what people see has to do with what their eyes take in, and how the brain processes these stimuli. This is an example of bottom-up processing. But Siegel reminds readers that the brain also influences what is visually worth focusing on, and so it might screen out some stimuli that the brain has learned to gloss over, and it will focus on others that have previously been deemed important. That is the influence of top-down processing.

Siegel explains that "Openness implies that we are receptive to whatever comes to our awareness and don't cling to preconceived ideas about how things 'should' be."[107] When operating in a primarily top-down processing manner, it might be harder to remain open to new sights. People see what their brains are expecting to see, which is based on what has already been deemed important. But when people notice a new object it can break the rhythm of visual complacency, and people can perceive in new ways. This is why people are able to find a new solution to a problem, a new option for a course of action, or a new angle to a current situation.

It is helpful to examine some of the instances of *nasa einayim* as quintessential moments of bottom-up processing, in which one encounters a stimulus that catches the eye unexpectedly, and causes one to pay a special kind of attention to what is being seen. When something unusual catches a person's attention in this manner, it stimulates the brain in a new way and might even make someone more open to perceiving what his or her eyes see. There are at least three instances of *nasa einayim* that make even more sense when examined with an eye to the neuroscience of bottom-up processing, one of which does not fit well into the categories previously discussed.

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[107] Ibid. 32.

Genesis 37:25 is located towards the beginning of the Joseph cycle. Joseph's arrogance has alienated his brothers for long enough, and they take action against him. The dreamer lies in a pit as his brothers debate his fate. They have spared his life so far, but what is to happen next? According to the Torah text, "And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and they saw, and behold, there was a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spices and balm and ladanum, going to carry it down to Egypt." (Genesis 37:25)

What causes the brothers to suddenly look up? Perhaps they feel the distant vibrations of camel hooves in the sand. Maybe they see out of the corners of their eyes plumes of desert dust rising up from land, tracking the caravan's progress through the wilderness. Presumably, the brothers were focused on the task at hand, deciding what to do with Joseph after Reuben suggested throwing him into the pit instead of killing him straightaway. It seems that their eyes would at that time be focused on the bread they were eating and the conversation they were having with each other to plan their next move. Yet something causes them to look up and notice something new.

When the brothers do lift up their eyes, they find an answer to their dilemma. Judah rallies his brothers around his new idea: "Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh.' And his brethren hearkened unto him." (Genesis 37:27) With this arrangement the brothers spare Joseph's life, and benefit financially from the transaction. They free themselves from their brother's boasting without bearing the guilt of ending his life. This new solution never would have become apparent to them if there had not been an external stimulus

causing them to lift their eyes and reevaluate their situation in light of the new information they were then open to processing.

Ramban's comment on this process focuses more on the details of what it was that the brothers saw when they lifted up their eyes. His analysis suggests that there was something specific about the Ishmaelites that the brothers had to process in order to recognize the new possibility approaching from the distance. The reader of the text might wonder how the brothers knew so much about the travelers just by looking at them from a distance. How did they know who they were, where they were coming from, and where they were headed? In other words, how did they know that these Ishmaelites could be instrumental in their new plan? Ramban explains: "When they lifted up their eyes and saw at a distance that men were coming from the road to Gilead, they recognized that it was a band of Ishmaelite travelers by their camels, and they knew that they were going to Egypt because balsam and spices are brought from Gilead, and they were going on their way to Egypt."[108]

There is something significant about the way the brothers' eyes were drawn to the Ishmaelites, and the way they perceived their arrival. They saw the Ishmaelites, and saw in them a new way to take care of bothersome Joseph. The brothers were open to a new idea, and so their minds might have been more open to processing new visual stimulus that was not already part of a given schema in their minds.

A midrash on a different story in Genesis presents another example of what might be seen as bottom-up visual processing. The midrashist uses the *Akeidah* narrative to present his philosophy of why people might notice things they see at certain times more

[108] Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds. *The Torah: With Ramban's Commentary*. Vol. II. Brooklyn, New York: Mesorah Publications, 2005. 308.

than others. There are many possible interpretations of how it is that Abraham noticed the ram behind him so that it could become the sacrifice in Isaac's stead. But one of the most creative explanations, found in *Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, seems to display an explicit bottom-up angle to the story:

> Rabbi Zechariah said: That ram, which was created at the twilight, ran and came to be offered up instead of Isaac, but Sammael was standing by, and distracting it, in order to annul the offering of our father Abraham. And it was caught by its two horns in the trees, as it is said, "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by its horns." What did that ram do? It put forth its leg and took hold of the coat of our father Abraham, and Abraham looked, saw the ram, and he went and set it free. He offered it up instead of Isaac his son, as it is said, "And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."[109]

In this rendition it is not only that something caught Abraham's eye, but the ram actually took the initiative and reached out and tugged on Abraham's garment.[110] There was no chance that Abraham could possibly miss the ram. Even Sammael's distraction could not keep this ram from fulfilling its purpose. Abraham needed something else to sacrifice after the angel had told him not to lay his hand on Isaac. Abraham was focused on the task of the *akeidah*, and then consumed with confusion and relief when he passed the test. His emotional energy was entirely devoted to his son, and the ram's tug interrupted his focus and snapped him out of it. The ram reached out and jolted Abraham out of his narrow field of vision. He lifted his eyes in the direction of the tug, saw a new option, and took it.

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[109] Friedlander, *Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer*, 262.

[110] This midrash stands in stark contrast to Radak's interpretation that Abraham was searching specifically for a kosher sacrifice to offer to God in place of Isaac, which suggests a top-down process in which Abraham's mind was already focused on a particular goal. In Radak's interpretation, Abraham's brain is predisposed to notice a potential sacrifice.

Other times in the text, seemingly irrelevant external stimuli can cause someone to lift his or her eyes to another person, and it leads to reconciliation. Perhaps such bottom-up processing is disruptive enough to counteract old grudges and cause people to be open to seeing former adversaries in new ways. This could be another way to understand Genesis 33, when Jacob and Esau see each other for the first time in many years. Jacob has rearranged his whole family and their possessions in nervous anticipation of the encounter, and Esau approaches with an army assembled behind him. The messengers run up to Jacob and warn him of what is coming. Jacob lifts his eyes and looks up in confusion and anxiety. He might have wondered what bad news his messenger is bearing that causes him to rush towards his master with such urgency.

Then in verses 1 and 5 of this chapter, both Jacob and Esau lift their eyes, and seem to see one another in a new way. They hug and kiss, and are open to seeing the ways in which time has softened their rivalry. In the end of the interaction, they neither kill each other nor fight, as one might have anticipated based on their prior interactions. As discussed in Chapter 3, the brothers still part ways at the end of this episode, but they have achieved a degree of reconciliation. Jacob and Esau repair their relationship to the point of mutual coexistence, a possibility they might not have been able to see before. Perhaps they never would have, had they not reacted to the commotion of the approaching parties and been motivated to look up and take in a new scene.

Neis writes about the phenomenon of "homovisuality," "a type of viewing that is *homos*, in the sense of 'same' or 'like.' This refers to seeing that takes place between like entities, or that produces like visual content, or that has the effect of engendering sameness (and thus mirroring) whether in terms of the viewers or the visual object. In the

act of viewing itself there is a mimetic effect."[111] What was it that Jacob and Esau really saw in each other when they both lifted their eyes? Perhaps their eyes reminded them about their similarities. Although most of the Jacob and Esau narrative is devoted to exposing their differences, Jacob and Esau are twins, intimately connected to one another since conception. Neis explains in a footnote, "This visual 'sameness' could be along the lines of gender, bodily appearance, ethnicity, etc., in which like sees like, or in which the seeing has a mimetic, mirroring effect."[112]

In their homovisual gaze they might have lifted their eyes and seen their shared childhood or their parents. They might even have seen a bit of themselves in the other. Or, as Jacob mentions just verses later, maybe they glimpse something divine in their mutual gaze. He stares in wonder and comments, "Seeing your face is like seeing the face of God." (Genesis 33:10) In this schema, their ability to see the other in a new way made their similarities more apparent and compelling, made the sacredness of the brotherly relationship more apparent, and Jacob and Esau saw new potential for their relationship.

When Isaac and Rebecca see each other for the first time in Genesis 24:63-64, they both lift up their eyes and see the other. Unlike in Jacob and Esau's reunion, when they lift up their eyes, Isaac and Rebecca's *nasa einayim* moments are separated by merely three words. It is possible to imagine the two locking eyes for an instant, holding onto one another's gaze, and truly seeing each other. This instance of homovisuality seems to be an even more reciprocal gaze than that of Jacob and Esau, separated by four verses. Isaac and Rebecca do not necessarily see how similar they are to one another, but

[111] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture,* 54.
[112] Ibid.

they see how intimately connected they become by the simple act of looking. They both lift up their eyes to a new future in which their lives are entwined, and even though they are still separated by some distance in the field, they are united in the vision of each other that they share. This mutual seeing brings them together, and three verses later Rebecca becomes Isaac's wife.

Later, in Genesis 43:29, Joseph lifts up his eyes and sees his brother, Benjamin, the other son of his mother, for the first time in many years. He had already seen his other brothers when they made the journey into Egypt to beg him for food during the famine. Now they have returned for more rations. They bring Benjamin with them, knowing that the Egyptian leader had required it of them, but not knowing quite why. In verse 16 of the chapter, Joseph sees Benjamin in the crowd with the simple *r-a-h* verb. This seeing seems to be nothing more than an acknowledgement that the brothers have listened to his orders and brought their youngest brother along. Joseph will receive them, and he makes arrangements for the reception. During the next few verses, Joseph is busy with the preparations, and seemingly does not let himself focus on the emotional implications of this impending reunion.

Then Joseph addresses his brothers in his house and inquires again after their father. It is only after this preliminary exchange that Joseph "lifted up his eyes and saw Benjamin his brother, his mother's son." (Genesis 43:29) Why specify that Joseph sees Benjamin now, when he already noticed his arrival thirteen verses ago? Here the *nasa einayim* phrase is key. Joseph might have been cognitively aware of Benjamin's presence earlier, but not to the full extent that Benjamin's presence becomes real to him now. He lifts up his eyes and sees Benjamin from a whole new perspective. Perhaps

Joseph had been keeping his eyes focused on the floor of his home prior to this moment, aware of the emotional onslaught that seeing his close kin might bring. Perhaps he shied away from the intense experience of homovisuality. He might have wanted to delay that moment and maintain his composure, since his true identity was still concealed from his brothers. Joseph might have looked at Benjamin earlier, but he had not let himself truly see him until now. What makes Joseph lift up his eyes at this moment?

Joseph was aware that his brothers brought Benjamin on their journey, so his eyes would have been more likely to find him in the crowd. Joseph's brain would have been predisposed to notice his close brother's presence, but it seems that up until this moment, Joseph suppressed this top-down process. In the end, Radak suggests that bottom-up stimulus jolts him out of his intentional unawareness. He comments that Joseph "lifted his eyes because there was chaos before him, and he lifted his eyes to Benjamin." Maybe it was the noise and movement of eleven brothers assembling in his midst and bowing low to the ground before him, or the sound of their answer about their father's welfare that finally catches Joseph's full attention. He looks up reflexively, and sees Benjamin in his entirety, perhaps allowing himself to accept the reality of this reunion for the first time.

Maybe Joseph had never imagined that his brothers would actually return with Benjamin in tow. He might have assumed that he would never see his closest sibling again. But suddenly, Benjamin, the brother who shares his father and mother, is standing before him. Now Joseph must face all of the implications of this reunion- first and foremost, he has to cope with the emotions brought on by seeing Benjamin again. He blesses Benjamin, saying, "God be gracious to you, my son," and then he rushed out of

the room to weep in privacy, because "his heart yearned towards his brother." (Genesis 43:29-30) This reaction is no longer surprising because the phrase, *nasa einayim*, clues in the reader to the significance of Joseph's vision at this time. *Nasa einayim* always introduces a certain kind of seeing, but this time in particular it stands in stark contrast with the regular *r-a-h* verb used earlier to convey his very first glimpse of Benjamin. Had it not been for the bottom-up processing inside his mind, he might never have looked up and experienced that vision.

After lifting his eyes to see Benjamin, Joseph must deal with the reality of once again interacting with the brothers who sold him into servitude and told their father he was dead. It is at this point in the narrative that Joseph develops his extensive plan for testing his brothers that eventually compels him to reveal his true identity to them, and reconcile the differences that kept them separated for so long.

As opposed to the examples discussed above, some of the other stories involving *nasa einayim* can be seen as examples of top-down processing. Siegel explains that, in contrast to a toddler being attracted to a rose for the first time from bottom-up stimulation, an adult is more likely to be drawn to a rose because the adult has already learned to notice and appreciate them from past experience.[113] The adult does not have to smell the rose's aroma from a distance, and wander closer to further examine this mysterious flower, encountering each one as if for the first time. Instead, adults have already learned the many appealing aspects of roses, and are more likely to notice them as a result.

[113] Siegel, *Mindsight*, 200.

One biblical example of this type of top-down processing might be found in Genesis 13:10, when Lot lifts up his eyes and chooses the land that he would like to inhabit. Abraham presents Lot with the opportunity to pick whichever side he wants, and Lot is already armed with that information when he lifts up his eyes to take a look. His mind is preconditioned to pay attention to the details of the land that his eyes take in, because he must evaluate the land's quality in order to make this very important decision. He notices how fertile and well watered is the land to the east, along the plain of the Jordan. Had Lot not been approaching this decision with such a top-down format, he might have been distracted by other things his eyes saw, and not been so focused on making an evaluative decision about the land itself.

Numbers 24, which includes among other things the origin story of the prayer, *Mah Tovu*, provides an intricate example of both bottom-up and top-down visual processing working together. In Numbers 24 Bilam is faced with a dilemma. Balak hires him to curse the Israelites, but God tells Bilam that he cannot curse what God has blessed. So what is Bilam to do? Balak takes him up to the peak of Peor so he can have a good view of the Israelite camp to curse them. The second verse of chapter 24 is deceptively simple: "Bilam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel dwelling tribe by tribe, and the spirit of God was upon him." Rashi makes three separate comments on this verse, explaining the significance of each separate step in Bilam's actions.

He first notes that Bilam's action of lifting up his eyes was full of malicious intent; he did not simply look up to get a better view, but rather "he sought to cast an evil eye upon them, so here you have his three attributes: an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and

greed mentioned above."[114] The next part of the verse describes exactly what Bilam saw when he lifted his eyes. Rashi says he saw "each tribe dwelling by itself, not intermingling [with other tribes], and he saw that the openings of their tents did not face each other, so that they should not peer into each other's tents." According to the Talmud (*Bava Batra* 60a), this is a desirable arrangement, and because of it the *Shechinah* dwelt upon them. Just as Bilam noticed the *Shechinah* dwelling upon the peaceful Israelites, so too did God's presence come upon him. Finally, Rashi explains that as God's presence came upon Bilam, it also came upon his heart not to curse the Israelites after all.

According to Rashi's reading, this single verse summarizes the first of many steps that brought Bilam to his final decision to bless the Israelites. The use of *nasa einayim* here is key to breaking down the many processes that comprise seeing. Bilam lifts his eyes with one intention of how to look out at the camp, but what Bilam sees is unexpected, and different from his original expectation. This story encompasses a combination of both top-down and bottom-up processing.

Bilam was prepared (top-down), perhaps, to see something terrible that merits a curse. But what he actually sees (the bottom-up stimulus that his eyes took in) is an organized camp of different tribes dwelling together, in God's presence, each respectful of his neighbor's privacy. Maybe his brain was preconditioned to see something worth cursing, and perhaps had already composed an appropriate curse for his victims. Yet, he also has received conflicting instructions that he could not possibly curse a blessed

[114] This comment refers back to Rashi's previous glosses on Numbers 22:13 and 18, thus linking all three of Bilam's actions to his essence as an immoral character. Rashi feels compelled to point out Bilam's threefold faults to prove how Bilam is cohesive in his malintent; no moral, God-fearing man would otherwise attempt to curse God's beloved people.

people. The top-down processing thus becomes problematic and unreliable for Bilam, so he has to rely on what his senses perceive in a bottom-up manner.

It is necessary for this entire visual process to unfold in order for Bilam to make his decision. Indeed, in the next verse, Bilam starts speaking the blessing that results from his vision: "He said, 'The word of Bilam the son of Beor and the word of the man with an open eye. The word of the one who hears God's sayings, who sees the vision of the Almighty, fallen yet with open eyes. How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!'" (Numbers 24:3-5) Rashi notes that "Some say that the phrase means 'of the open eye,' [of clear sight], as Onkelos renders."[115] Bilam had to lift up his eyes and see, and process what he had seen. Only after that point does he have a clear image of these people who are supposedly worthy of being cursed.

A midrash in *Tanhuma*[116] (*parashat Bamidbar* 11) elaborates on the process of Bilam seeing the Israelites: "…thus, even Bilam the wicked gazed upon them and his eyes went out against them, because he was not able to touch them, as it is said, 'Bilam lifted his eyes and saw Israel dwelling tribe by tribe.'" (Numbers 24:2) Bilam seems to wonder, "whoever could touch these human beings, that each one dwells under his banner?" This unusual turn of phrase, *vayatz'u einav k'negdam*, his eyes went out against them, adds a layer of interpretive possibilities to this midrash. The closest comparable idiom is found in Psalm 73:7, "Their eyes stood out from fatness," seems

[115] Rashi is citing *Sanhedrin* 105a, which he explains also includes the possible understanding that Bilam was blind in one eye (and had one clear or open eye).
[116] *Tanhuma* is a collection of *midrashim* of different styles, commenting on the books of Torah. It is named after Rabbi Tanhuma, the first named character to appear in it, and Zunz dates it to the first half of the ninth century. *Tanhuma* A (or the Buber edition) is the name of the main extant edition, published by Solomon Buber in Vilnius in 1885, and is the source of this text.

unrelated, since it is commenting on the people's excessive gluttony and lack of morals.

This particular use of the phrase in Tanhuma seems to be more of a spatial midrash, since it is followed by a description of how far away Bilam is from the people: "because he was not able to touch them." This seems to imply that Bilam could not touch the people directly, but he could somehow reach them with his eyes. In this case, it might be effective to recall some of the early scientific understandings of vision that Neis brings in her book. Neis writes about extramissive seeing, the concept that one component of the visual process involves something coming out of the eye.[117] She states the common fifth century BCE understanding taught by Plato, "A 'visual current' issues from the eye, coalesces with the light, and strikes the object of vision."[118] Whether or not this Platonic concept was what the midrashist had in mind, it is clear that something in Bilam's gaze was intended to convey his curse (or his eventual blessing). Bilam's vision brought him closer to the Israelite camp and gave him a clearer view of his intended victims. This is all conveyed in the Torah text through *nasa einayim*, when he lifts his eyes.

All of the examples discussed in this chapter are the subject of rabbinic interpretation and midrashic writing. Rabbis of each generation receive the tradition and mold it through their own understandings, shaped by their place in history, their social context, and sometimes even their developing scientific awareness. Readers of the text today also engage in this unfolding tradition. Contemporary knowledge of the neurological processing of stimuli as perceived by the senses shapes a modern understanding of *nasa einayim*. Today's readers analyze the rabbis' responses in context,

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[117] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture,* 28.
[118] Ibid.

and through their own eyes. They have the benefit of applying modern knowledge of neuroscience to the Torah and can glean even more lessons from the timeless text.

Chapter 5

Nasa Einayim and Its Pastoral Applications

As pastoral caregivers, rabbis have a unique perspective. In contrast to psychologists or other mental health professionals, rabbinic caregivers can lift up their eyes and see pastoral care in a broader context. They also can focus on prayer and spiritual ideas, help care receivers gain a more holistic image of themselves, and can sometimes see things that are not yet visible to the care receivers. Rabbis have the tools to help care receivers get the care they need, and find their place in the Jewish community. This chapter outlines some guidelines for the initial assessment process, and then explores several pastoral applications of the phrase *nasa einyaim*, and how different ways of seeing can play a role in pastoral care.

Nasa Einayim for Seeing the Self: Awareness, Integration, and Homovisuality

One way a rabbi can teach care receivers about self-perception is to apply *nasa einayim* as a model for self-reflection. How does one lift one's eyes and look inwards, towards self-awareness? How can one find and integrate parts of the self that have not yet been revealed?

With increased self-awareness one can learn about the mind and its habitual responses, and become more open to receiving care.[119] Just as pastoral caregivers can be

[119] In their book, Why God Won't Go Away, Newberg, Aquili, and Rause, discuss the importance of the self from a neurological perspective: "We have come to think of this self, with all its emotions, sensations, and cognitions, as the phenomenon of the *mind*." 32.

unbiased listeners who are open to hearing care receivers' stories, they can teach care receivers to be open to seeing more of themselves. Siegel explains that "Openness implies that we are receptive to whatever comes to our awareness and don't cling to preconceived ideas about how things 'should' be."[120]

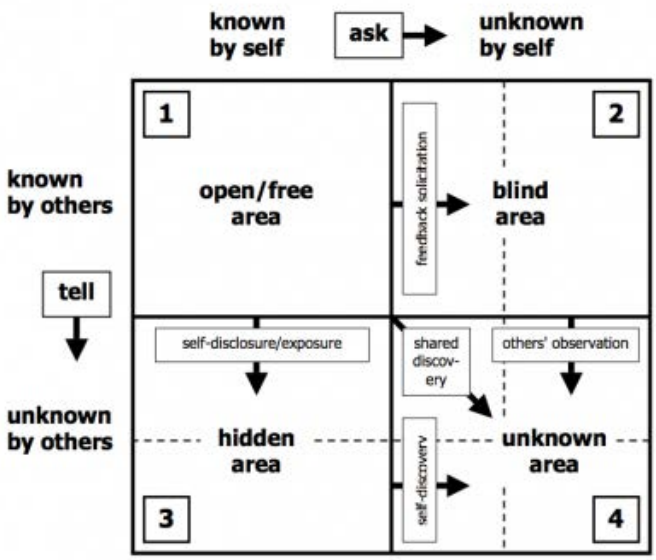
Siegel's concept of mindsight captures this type of meta-self-awareness of how the mind works, and what it can teach us. Pastoral caregivers can teach mindsight to congregants seeking a new perspective. Siegel explains that "The good news is that whatever our early history, it is never too late to stimulate the growth of the neural fibers that enable mindsight to flourish."[121] Care receivers can become aware of this capacity for mindsight through "Observation…the ability to perceive the self even as we are experiencing an event."[122] When caregivers and care receivers debrief about how a given story was comprised and told, they can start to see certain truths about how the mind functions.

Care receivers can learn this kind of nonjudgmental observation by noticing the behaviors that pastoral caregivers model. Nonjudgmental observation allows them to "…disengage from automatic behaviors and habitual responses; we can sense our role in these patterns and begin to find ways to alter them."[123] And once care receivers learn the skill of observation, the caregiver can help facilitate integration, the next step in Siegel's process that he identifies as "…the key mechanism beneath both the absence of illness and the presence of well-being. Integration- the linkage of differentiated elements of a

[120] Siegel, *Mindsight*, 32.
[121] Ibid. xv.
[122] Ibid. 32.
[123] Ibid.

system- illuminates a direct pathway toward health."[124]

A caregiver can frame this conversation using one particularly accessible conception of the way people see themselves and each other: the Johari Window.[125]



The Johari Window is a visual representation of which parts of a person are visible to the self and which are visible to others, and where those areas of awareness intersect. The upper left hand quadrant is a section of readily apparent information called the "open/free area," that contains everything known by the self and others. The upper right quadrant is a person's "blind area" because its contents are known to others, but not to the self. The lower left quadrant is the "hidden area" of information known to the self, but hidden from the view of others. The lower right quadrant is called the "unknown area," containing information that is unknown to all. Rabbis can keep this model in mind

[124] Ibid. 64.
[125] Ina Meyer-Stoll and Achim Ecker. ZEGG-Forum and the Johari Window. Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 16. http://www.geo.coop/sites/default/files/styles/inline/public/johari.png

when helping care receivers engage in self-reflection and gain a better view of their integrated selves, and how they interact with other people. Some care receivers may even benefit from being taught about the Johari Window explicitly, and rabbis can encourage them to fill in the Window themselves.

As Jamison J. Manion, author of "The Workforce Engagement Equation: A Practitioner's Guide to Creating and Sustaining High Performance," explains, "The power of the Johari Window comes from understanding the shifting dynamics in a relationship."[126] Manion's analysis of the way relationships between people develop applies to the relationship between the pastoral care receiver and the caregiver. At the first meeting, the free activity quadrant between two individuals is fairly small, and their interactions are contained within it. Conversation is restricted to topics known by all parties, out of fear of seeming too intimate too soon. Eventually, as people get to know each other, trust develops, more of the self is revealed, and the area of free activity comfortably expands. In unhealthy relationships, the free activity quadrant remains overpowered by blind spots, hidden, or unknown areas.

Manion suggests that, through a combination of asking and telling, a person can become more open to receiving feedback and disclosing personal information. By engaging with others, a person can explore his or her blind spots, or areas that were previously unknown. Manion offers the following humorous example of how one might reveal a new part of the self: "This may come into play when you have a strong emotional reaction to something that is said or done. The others involved say, 'Wow, we

[126] Manion, Jamison Jay. *The Workforce Engagement Equation: A Practitioner's Guide to Creating and Sustaining High Performance*. Boca Raton, Florida: Taylor & Francis, 2012. 44.

had no idea you felt so strongly about that.' And you, somewhat embarrassed, respond, 'Me neither, but from now on, let's never order sushi from Jose's Dog Stand ever again.'"[127]

A successful counseling conversation can lead to many moments of revelation, in which the caregiver can help the care receiver see more clearly his or her self or situation. It is fitting that Joe and Harry (together, "Johari"), co-creators of this diagram, chose to represent their findings about self-awareness as a window, which invites language of visibility and sight to describe the extent to which one knows one's self. This model for self-awareness and self-disclosure also offers ways in which *nasa einayim* might be applied to the field of pastoral care. It suggests a lifting of the eyes inward, to encourage introspection with new intention. It also represents the importance of those in relationship to lift up their eyes to see what is in the other's blind spots, and help the other see them as well. As mentioned earlier, this action is essential both for the care receiver and the caregiver.

The Johari window operates under the same key concept that Siegel identifies in his book: humans are wired for interpersonal neurobiology. Siegel bases this theory on the belief that the mind is inherently relational, and functions at its best when stimulated and nurtured by human interaction.[128] Throughout his writing, Siegel uses visual metaphors to discuss perception and awareness. Much of his theory focuses on the way people see themselves, and how they are seen in relationships. Rabbinic pastoral caregivers can help care receivers integrate more parts of themselves so that they can tell coherent, healthy stories. One can only integrate into a community once he or she has

[127] Ibid. 54.
[128] Siegel, *Mindsight*, 55.

attained a certain degree of self-awareness and understands how to relate in a group setting. In other words, one must see the self clearly before one can see the self in relationship to others.

He notes that, in general, "…we tend to see ourselves as separate from one another…the effective strategy seems to be to help one another see the mind clearly."[129] But with the goal of integration in mind, one is capable of "seeing the mind clearly," and it, "not only catalyzes the various dimensions of integration as it promotes physical, psychological, and interpersonal well-being, it also helps us dissolve the optical delusion of our separateness."[130] He plays on the classic term, "optical *illusion*," and strongly emphasizes his beliefs by calling the experience of social isolation an optical *delusion*. One of the goals of integration is to shatter this delusion and illuminate a new self-image that is based on connectedness. Siegel concludes that, "With integration we see ourselves with an expanded identity…[and] being considerate and concerned with the larger world becomes a fundamental shift in our way of living."[131]

Rabbis are well equipped to teach the importance of interpersonal connections and to follow through with this teaching by helping congregants see themselves in the context of the Jewish community. While rabbinic pastoral caregivers certainly need not explain the neurobiology of this phenomenon, they can teach and model the value of communal living. Judaism, after all, promotes a way of life that encourages adherents not to live in isolation. *Pirkei Avot* 2:4 cautions "Do not separate yourself from the community." Extensive commentaries on this verse delineate all of the Jewish practices,

[129] Ibid. 260.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

obligations, and rituals that require communal participation. For example, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch[132] comments, "It is not to the individual, but rather to the community…that God entrusted His Torah as an inheritance for all future generations. For this reason every individual is duty-bound to join with his community in thought and deed and to share its tasks and obligations."[133] This collective obligation allows communities to tackle huge projects, like *tikun olam*, repairing the world, which is one of the central obligations in liberal Judaism. Engagement in *tikkun olam* allows individuals to express their sense of being connected to a larger whole or, as Siegel expresses it, to have a sense of integration. When people work together for the benefit of the whole, they are reminded that their lives hold meaning; they inhabit an essential piece of the puzzle.

Neis' concept of homovisuality (described in Chapter 4) might also explain how people come to find pieces of themselves in the greater puzzle. She explains that homovisuality "refers to seeing that takes place between like entities, or that produces like visual content, or that has the effect of engendering sameness (and thus mirroring) whether in terms of the viewers or the visual object. In the act of viewing itself there is a mimetic effect."[134] This powerful visual connection enables people to see parts of themselves reflected in other people. They can see what they share, what binds them together. As seen in Torah, the homovisual gaze can lead to stronger familial bonds and reconciliation.

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[132] Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) was a German rabbi whose thinking is largely responsible for shaping modern Orthodoxy.
[133] Avrohom Davis, ed. *Pirkei Avos: The Wisdom of the Fathers, a New Translation and Anthology of Its Classical Commentaries*. 10th ed. New York: Metsudah Publications, 1986. 49.
[134] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 54.

Jacob and Esau were able to see each other in a new way when they lifted their eyes and each viewed the other from a different perspective. Perhaps they were reminded of their shared childhood, their time developing (and wrestling) together in the womb, their shared genetic inheritance from their parents, all of which makes them more similar than different, even after all these years. Isaac and Rebecca see each other and fall in love, each seeing something deeply resonant in the other, through the others' eyes, the windows to the soul. Joseph eventually lifts his eyes and sees Benjamin, the brother who shares his mother. This vision is the turning point in the twelve brothers' fraught relationships. Perhaps it was a lack of seeing the self in the other, a homovisual blindness, which caused them so much grief before.

Strong communities are built on the fact that their members see themselves as bound together, rooted in a shared history, and headed towards a shared future. Rabbis can open care receivers' eyes to this new way of seeing their own connections to other people. They can move people towards a shared, mutual vision of a community that not only has space for all, but a need for the unique gifts that each member brings.

Nasa Einayim as a Paradigm for Pastoral Prayer

Contemporary rabbis can use *nasa enayim* to help care receivers get a glimpse of their innermost thoughts and also see prayer as a mode for expressing them. This technique of using the transformative power of prayer is modeled in some of the stories in Torah that utilize *nasa einayim,* as was discussed in Chapter 3. Powerful midrashim that elaborate on the *Akeidah* narrative include examples of both Abraham and Isaac

lifting their eyes in a gesture that directly precedes supplication to God. In *Sefer Ha-Aggadah*, Abraham lifts his eyes heavenward, not just looking up in a general direction, but specifically towards the realm of the divine. Isaac looks directly at the *Shechinah*, the manifestation of God's most immediate presence. *Breishit Rabbah* 75:13 presents Jacob lifting his eyes in prayer before his reunion with Esau. He speaks earnestly to God and expresses his fears. Their prayers give voice to the innermost emotions that the biblical text leaves to the imagination.

A prayer can function similarly to a person's story, providing insight into how that person sees his or her life. The way people see things can determine their actions in life and shape their beliefs, and their beliefs also can shape what they see. For this reason, prayers both reflect the way people see things in their lives, and perhaps how they can come to see things differently. If people believe that God plays a role in their lives, then they are likely to look to God for guidance and support in times of trouble. A prayer can reveal a person's perception of God's presence, of the possibilities for change and growth in his or her life (or lack thereof), or of his or her own capacity to find happiness. Rabbis functioning in the role of pastoral caregiver or counselor can help facilitate this transformative process and offer troubled care seekers new perspectives.

Brenner writes about the important role of prayer in the counseling setting in her chapter, "Prayer in Presence," in Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources. She identifies prayer as one of the key distinguishing factors of pastoral care. How can prayer be of service for a care receiver? Brenner points out that "*Ha-makom*," literally, "the place," is the name for God used by those who are suffering. She recounts that "If, as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel asserts,

Shabbat creates a cathedral in time, prayer creates a cathedral in the soul."[135] Maybe within that space, a new broader perspective can take shape.

If a rabbi can help a care receiver create more spiritual space, that person might be more likely to see new aspects of his or her story, and new glimpses of God within it. Such thinking can help facilitate a mental shift: "This move from what the kabbalists call *mochin de katnut* (the contracted mind) to *mochin de gadlut* (the expanded mind) represents an expanded understanding of healing that might enable them to find peace while simultaneously acknowledging life's paradoxes."[136] Through *nasa einayim*, the Torah seems to hint that people are capable of such a mental shift, that allows them to see things differently when they are open to it. When caregivers can help clear away preconceived notions or habitual patterns of seeing, they create more room for broader vision.

Prayer can help facilitate that process. In her chapter in the same book, "Wresting Blessings: A Pastoral Response to Suffering," Rabbi Myriam Klotz provides an extended example of the transformative power of prayer in her experience. Based on her own experiences, she shares an anecdote about a man named "Joe," who was suffering from a painful and incurable disease. Joe sent Rabbi Klotz an email that flowed like an intimate, heartfelt prayer. In the end, she writes, "Joe thanked me for witnessing his prayer, which he mused might be the first e-mail to God ever written."[137] While Rabbi Klotz believes

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[135] Anne Brenner. "Prayer in Presence." In *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources*, edited by Dayle A. Friedman, 125-149. 2nd ed. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005. 126.
[136] Ibid. 129.
[137] Myriam Klotz. "Wresting Blessings: A Pastoral Response to Suffering." In *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources*,

other people likely also have taken advantage of familiar technologies to voice their thoughts and prayers to God (she points out that the Psalmist did the same), this exchange demonstrates a significant role pastoral caregivers can play. Perhaps gentle use of God language can help care receivers lift their eyes to see a different perspective of prayer.

This experience did not make Joe see his suffering differently, but it did help him see his relationship with God in a new way. He was able to reconnect with God and prayer. Klotz explains that, this process, "also validated Joe's hunch that *tefilah* could be deeply personal and transformative when life was uncertain, whereby previously, *tefilah* had been relatively predictable, communal, and externally focused."[138] It can be comforting to see prayer in a new way, and to find in it a new venue for communicating with God. Caregivers can model prayers, and also leave plenty of space for care receivers to explore ways of constructing their own, in whatever nontraditional mode is most comfortable for them. The midrashist thought that lifting one's eyes in prayer was an effective expression for Abraham, Isaac, and the Children of Israel; perhaps it can also be a helpful outlet for someone today who is searching for a new way to look to God and give voice to his or her suffering.

Joe's story demonstrates that, in many instances, the traditional prayer formulas might not have as much of a pastoral impact as custom-made prayers might. Rabbi Bonita Taylor writes on the "The Power of Custom-Made Prayers," and the role that pastoral caregivers can have in facilitating such a customized prayer experience. She uses the example of Hagar praying on behalf of Ishmael when her son's death seems

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edited by Dayle A. Friedman, 19-27. 2nd ed. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005. 20.

[138] Ibid.

imminent: “She lends her voice to his unspoken prayer.”[139] Taylor suggests, “those of us who accompany suffering people can do this as well.”[140] Incidentally, the text explains that God opens Hagar’s eyes. She then sees the well that will save her son’s life. Her prayer ultimately helps her see things in a new way. Similarly, the counseling relationship is not an opportunity for the caregiver to impose his or her own theology, but rather to facilitate the opening of another’s eyes, to gain a new perspective like Hagar. It offers a chance to help a care receiver explore a new view of a usable theology.

Custom-made prayers can take many different forms, and can draw on traditional liturgical language to varying degrees. While emails like Joe’s can be free-flowing prayers to God in colloquial language, rabbis can play helpful roles in co-constructing prayers along with care receivers, because they can contribute their own liturgical knowledge to lend authenticity. Here is one example of a prayer that weaves together some phraseology from traditional liturgy, Bible, and vision imagery: “O God, *pokeach ivrim*, I lift up my eyes to you at this time. From where will my help come? Guide me through your sight, toward a more balanced, peaceful vision. Help me to see Your truth, not my fears/illness/old grudges/etc. Just as you remove slumber from our eyelids, awaken me to a new perspective. *Hashiveini v’ashuva*, return me and I shall return. Lift my eyes, and behold, I will see.”[141]

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[139] Bonita Taylor. "The Power of Custom-Made Prayers.” In *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources*, edited by Dayle A. Friedman, 150-160. 2nd ed. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005. 151.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Composed by the author.

Lo Taturu, do not stray after your eyes: Confronting the Danger of the Lustful Gaze

Lifting one's eyes can be a powerful way of connecting with God. This action can give voice to thoughts and concerns that might not otherwise be expressed to the Divine, but it can also lead to less-sacred, or even dangerous consequences. As Chapter 3 discusses, the Torah suggests that people can lift their eyes in prayer to entities other than God. In Deuteronomy 4:19, God warns, "And when you lift your eyes to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them…." It seems that a heavenward gaze is so powerful that it might be difficult to reign in and hard to predict. This same logic is implied in the warning of Numbers 15:39, "*lo taturu acharei eineichem*," "do not follow after your eyes." Sometimes people are sufficiently strong-willed and able to resist the temptation of enticing sights. But these careful warnings in the Torah acknowledge that human beings are not always able to control what they see, or how they respond to what they have seen.

Chapter 2 provides another model of how the eyes can lead one astray, not only in prayer relationships *bein adam la'Makom*, between people and God, but also *bein adam l'chaveiro*, in interpersonal relationships. The midrash pairs together Potifar's wife and Abraham's nephew, Lot, and the way they both lifted their eyes in lustful, lascivious gazes. Their stories are examples of what might happen when someone lifts their eyes in greed towards something that is not intended for them. Potifar's wife exemplifies the classic misdirection of sexual desire outside of a marriage, while Lot lusts after the better portion of land, leaving his elder, Abraham, with an inferior territory.

Rabbis can help care receivers who are struggling with challenges of lust and misplaced sexual desire and trying to resist the urge to follow their eyes. First, they can help normalize these issues and remind care receivers that they are neither abnormal nor alone. In her chapter in The Sacred Encounter, called "Jewish Views on Sexual Fantasy and Desire," Rabbi Edythe Held Mencher writes about the use of "*lo taturu*" in the context of sexual behavior.[142] Not only does one need to guard against inappropriate behavior, but Rashi says it is even more difficult to contain thoughts of sexual transgression than an actual sexual deed. (*Yoma* 29a)[143] The Rabbis blame the ubiquitous *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, for sexual desire. But as much as they fear the power of a lustful thought or glance, they also recognize its necessary role in ensuring procreation, something they value highly. In fact, Mencher notes that, "God calls *yetzer hara* 'very good' in creating it (*T'hillim Rabbah* on Ps. 9:2). We both honor our base instincts and seek to limit them, acknowledging our sexual drive and holding it back with our desire to do good."[144]

Therein lies the possibility of balance between the two extremes of controlling one's sexual desires and being controlled by them. In light of Mencher's perspective, one might lift one's eyes and cast a lustful gaze, but that gaze need not overpower a person, and it need not lead to transgression. If the lustful gaze can be redirected towards an appropriate object of desire, then the entire corpus of Jewish law supports it being pursued in a consensual union. Perhaps there is a bit of goodness in the *yetzer hara* that can be overlooked in inappropriate sexual situations, and uncovered in others. Mencher

[142] Eythe Held Mencher. "Jewish Views on Sexual Fantasy and Desire." In *The Sacred Encounter*, edited by Lisa J. Grushcow, 703-709. New York: CCAR Press, 2014. 703.
[143] Ibid. 704.
[144] Ibid.

concludes by summarizing this balance of control of inappropriate urges, and appropriate sexual activity: "Our Rabbis teach us, 'If you want, you can control it,' (*Sifrei D'varim* 45) and the Song of Songs gives us a model of this desire as mutual rather than controlling."[145] Pastoral caregivers can teach care receivers about this sense of balance when they struggle with these two extremes.

Even when people act with the best intentions, they sometimes make mistakes. Rabbi Stephen J. Einstein writes a chapter in The Sacred Encounter about the role of *t'shuvah* in sexual transgressions.[146] The very topic of his chapter, connecting repentance and sex, acknowledges the ubiquity of sexual desire, and the many transgressions people commit in its name. Perhaps this suggests that all people have the potential to be like Potifar's wife. Such a statement normalizes the human struggle with lust, but does not condone acting upon inappropriate urges. This too represents a balance that pastoral caregivers can help care receivers try to attain.[147] Just as Einstein comments on the prevalence of sexual sins, he acknowledges that truly repentant individuals always can transform themselves through a process of *t'shuvah*: "*T'shuvah* is possible. Indeed it is

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[145] Ibid. 708.

[146] Stephen J. Einstein. "The Role of T'shuvah in Sexual Transgressions." In *The Sacred Encounter*, edited by Lisa J. Grushcow, 583-586. New York: CCAR Press, 2014. 583.

[147] It is not only lay people who need help achieving this balance. Rabbi Einstein served as the chair of the Ethics Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and this chapter is largely about the way the Ethics Committee helped rabbis achieve *t'shuvah* after being reported for sexual misconduct. A "guidance team of rabbinic *t'shuvah*-rehabilitation counselors" is assembled for each case. This practice acknowledges both that individuals can and should have help throughout the process of *t'shvuvah*, and that guiding an individual through repentance from a major transgression is often more work than one rabbinic counselor can handle. Rabbis can model their own care for others after this pattern, and feel free to get help from colleagues and also make referrals, when necessary.

necessary if we are to become the people we are meant to be."[148] The Rabbis teach that "the people we are meant to be" are more like Joseph, who resists forbidden sexual advances, than like Potifar's wife, who strays after her eyes.

Rabbi David Dunn Bauer's chapter in The Sacred Encounter, "Choose Life (and Be Not a Skunk!)," offers a most practical set of instructions for coping with these "*lo taturu*" moments.[149] Bauer believes that Numbers 15:39 "teaches us about the limits of our heart and eyes, what we can expect of them or ask of them, and why we need to be careful."[150]

Bauer sees the wisdom of the Torah embodied in the ever-romantic cartoon skunk, Pepé Le Pew: "When suddenly enamored, Pepé's eyes stretch forward out of their sockets, his heart beats visibly out of his chest."[151] So too, can it feel that way when a person inevitably finds his or her self in the throws of a lustful gaze. The warning not to follow after the eyes or heart takes on a new meaning in this cartoon rendition. Although Bauer suggests that "Our hearts and eyes do not know when to stop," the mind can teach them.[152]

To do so, Bauer guides the reader through a fully embodied reading of Numbers 15:39:

> Stop. Physically stop moving, where you are. Close your eyes. Breathe. As you gently breathe in and out, *pull your eyes back inside your head. Firmly reset your heart high but enclosed within your rib cage*. I mean those instructions literally. Pull them back inside the internal musculature of your body in your head and chest. Bring them home. Then place one hand over your heart, another over your

[148] Ibid. 586.
[149] David Dunn Bauer. "Choose Life (and Be Not a Skunk!)." In *The Sacred Encounter*, edited by Lisa J. Grushcow, 735-739. New York: CCAR Press, 2014. 736.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

eyes. Breathe and feel grounded again.[153]

It is sometimes necessary to physically tame the physically manifested urges in one's body. This is not easy to do, but Bauer's tone is compassionate and respectful. His guidelines for conduct are practical and accessible. Through mindsight, people can become aware of their bodies' responses, and learn to exert more control over them. This can be particularly relevant in conversations with individuals who are struggling with adultery, or who believe they are not strong enough to resist other types of temptation. With a rabbinic caregiver's help, most people are likely to find such an approach to be a realistic and effective course of action.

Rabbis can help care receivers learn preventative measures as well. The concept of *marit ayin* can be understood as one's outlook, and it can help people shape the way they see things. As discussed in Chapter 2, *Esther Rabbah* 7:9 teaches that one's eyes can lead to potential danger or to goodness, depending on how intentionally they are controlled. Psalm 69:24 explains the consequences of one who looks out into the world with wicked intentions: "Let the eyes of the wicked grow darkened from seeing." And, according to the midrash, they do. The wicked Ham saw his father's nakedness, and the wicked Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan were evil, and so on. This verse seems to suggest that after seeing so much evil in the world, a wicked person's eyes would be weakened and grow dark. But the Psalm also says the "eyesight of the righteous elevates them to the highest level." In other words, righteous people will not be bogged down by seeing wickedness in the world, rather their piety allows them to see goodness in the world.

[153] Ibid. 739.

So too can pastoral caregivers remind care receivers of the power of their minds to determine what they actually see in the world. If a person becomes more aware of his or her tendency to become distracted by attractive people, they can learn to intentionally direct their attention elsewhere and create new neural pathways. They can try to become more aware of beauty in the natural world, for example, and train themselves to notice it more readily.

Pastoral caregivers can also help reframe these conversations about lust by using *nasa einayim* as a paradigm. How can one lift up one's eyes and gain a new perspective on one's own feelings? How can those feelings be acknowledged and also contained? In what ways might it be helpful to read narratives in Torah in which others also struggled with the powerful drive to pursue the objects of their lust? How can care receivers learn to lift their eyes and look inward, to normalize these feelings that might otherwise engender shame? And how can care receivers lift their eyes up to God when they need more strength in their efforts to prevail over their desire? Caregivers can help people who struggle with coveting and lustful longing by reminding them what our tradition teaches in *Pirkei Avot* 4:1, "Who is rich? The one who is happy with his lot."

But it is not always easy to feel satisfied in life, and in the rush to succeed, people often misalign their priorities and set their sights on the wrong goals. Rabbi Harold Kushner addresses this quintessential human struggle in his book, When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough. He uses Ecclesiastes as the archetype for one who is frustrated in his search for "the good life."[154] Kushner calls Ecclesiastes a dangerous book, because its long list of doubts and questions is so unlike the other books in the Bible, and readers

[154] Harold S. Kushner. *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*. New York: Summit Books, 1986. 33.

can discover in it a key to unlocking their own personal Pandora's boxes of spiritual and existential qualms. Has not everyone questioned the futility of life at least once?

While they seem appealing on the surface, Kushner explains that making money and acquiring wealth and fame are not the right goals for the pursuit of a successful life. When people lift their eyes and set their lustful gazes upon material wealth, status, and superficial fulfillment, they are often left feeling disappointed. If Kushner were operating within a *nasa einayim* framework, he would caution people who are feeling lost to lift their eyes again, setting their sights on even higher goals that transcend the shiny prizes that are revered in the rat race down below. It is good to take joy in material comforts from time to time, but as Ecclesiastes himself learns, nothing lasts.

Kushner traces the arc of Ecclesiastes' life, as he imagines it unfolding throughout the book, and he highlights these quandaries. Eventually, hedonistic Ecclesiastes stops chasing after wealth and women, and good food and drink. Pastoral caregivers can remind care receivers that although it took Ecclesiastes a long time to make this paradigm shift, one need not wait. Perhaps it is not possible to avoid lifting one's eyes in lust altogether, but people can learn to reframe that way of seeing and redirect their energy in a new way.

According to Kushner, Ecclesiastes identifies three keys to ensure that life is lived in a meaningful way: "Belong to people. Accept pain as part of your life. Know that you have made a difference."[155] And if one is concerned that these are not enough, the Talmud teaches three ways to guarantee a lasting impact: "have a child, plant a tree, and

[155] Ibid. 162.

write a book."[156] Ecclesiastes' book teaches these enduring truths, and opens readers' eyes to the gratifying reality that "Moments in our lives can be eternal without being everlasting."[157] People always will lust after the wrong things from time to time, but pastoral caregivers can use Ecclesiastes as a model and help care receivers learn to readjust their gaze. They can lift their eyes again, look around, and feel satisfied with what they have in this one, precious life.

Meriting a Good "Marit Ayin:" Lifting the Eyes Toward a Hopeful Outlook

Chapter 2 discusses examples of God helping people merit seeing certain things, but pastoral caregivers can help people learn to earn a positive outlook themselves. They can model their own visual perception after Abraham's seeing in the *Akeidah* narrative. There are examples of God helping Abraham to see when Abraham takes the initiative and lifts up his eyes. Another perspective implies that Abraham needs no external assistance to see; rather it is his own outlook that merits him such vision. As mentioned earlier, *Esther Rabbah* (7:9) groups Abraham with other righteous characters who merited seeing good things because of their righteousness.

Esther Rabbah seems ahead of its time in recognizing the power of a positive outlook. This insight rings true in light of current understandings of neuroscience. People train their minds by thinking, which in turn creates new neural connections that influence a person's patterns of attention when looking at the world. Through mindsight, people can learn to think more positively. Then, when they lift their eyes and look about with

[156] Ibid. 172.
[157] Ibid. 141.

intention, they are more likely to see positive things in the world.

Optimism and hope are essential components of pastoral care as well. As pastoral caregiver Andrew D. Lester writes in his book, Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling, a person's outlook can have a tremendous impact on his or her daily functioning. It is an essential component for pastoral caregivers to address, and although it has scientific grounding, this concept resides safely within a religious and spiritual realm as well. Thus, it can provide a helpful framework for rabbinic pastoral caregivers.

Lester notes that while the stories people tell about themselves are often grounded in the past, they are "going somewhere" as well. "Because human beings are 'future-tensed,'" he explains, "we imagine answers to this what-happens-next question by projecting our core narratives into the future."[158] The projected portion of the story is essential and must be examined, even though it has not yet occurred and cannot be empirically analyzed. This is the drive that keeps people moving forward in their lives. Caregivers know that "Since the future dimension of time-consciousness provides the content and the energy for hope," they can create "a ministry that identifies the nurture of hope as a primary function..."[159]

Lester says that without hope a person cannot move forward into the future. When people are stuck in a dark place in their lives, "Hopelessness has blinded them to the possibilities inherent in the situation," but informed caregivers can help them lift up their eyes and see more possibilities, more reasons to be hopeful again.[160] Lester reminds caregivers of the impact they can have on those seeking care, because "We

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[158] Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. 35.
[159] Ibid. 41.
[160] Ibid. 93.

[pastoral caregivers] represent the reality of hope in the face of suffering. Because of hope, we can affirm and empathize with the pain."[161]

Hope is a concept both simple enough for clergy pastoral caregivers to model for those who seek help, and spiritual enough to fall safely within the realm of their religious expertise. Lester uses the character of Abraham to teach another aspect of hope, because he sees Abraham as the paradigm for one who was able to set out even when he did not know where he was going. Lester asserts that the power of hope sustained Abraham on the journey.[162] He utilizes the Abraham narrative to describe this particular brand of hope-filled theology: "When used theologically, the word *hope* describes a person's trusting anticipation of the future based on an understanding of a God who is trustworthy and who calls us into an open-ended future. This God promised deliverance, liberation, and salvation."[163] If rabbis can help care receivers see this part of God's promise with a new set of eyes, they are likely to help people cope with a presenting problem of immediate concern and also arm them for future challenges.

Together, members of the Jewish community can strengthen each other and provide sources of hope. Rabbis can be effective pastoral caregivers when they look at a situation through the perspective of *nasa einayim*. Through mindsight, people can clear their minds and find more room for connection with each other and with God. They can lift up their eyes in hope towards future growth, security and independence.

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[161] Ibid. 88.
[162] Ibid. 70.
[163] Ibid. 62.

Conclusion

The uses of the phrase *nasa einayim* in the Torah are varied, and they offer a basis for creative interpretations for pastoral care. Rabbinic commentary and the *midrashim* flesh out possible meanings for this phrase, and add a layer of human emotion that serves to enhance the stories' pastoral value. From lifting one's eyes in a lustful gaze, to lifting one's eyes in prayer, to lifting one's eyes and seeing the self in the other, it seems that nearly all of the meanings of this action can help people to better understand themselves and develop a sense of self-awareness, or mindsight. The field of neuroscience corroborates these findings from the biblical and post-biblical literature and strengthens the suggested therapeutic applications of the phrase.

Rabbinic caregivers can ground their practice by drawing on instances in which *nasa einayim* appears in the Torah and midrash. They can take inspiration from the text and remember that when they as caregivers lift their eyes, they might be able to see aspects of the care receiver's situation that are not yet visible to them. Like the model of the Johari window, caregivers can maintain an awareness of what is visible to both parties, and what is yet to be uncovered. This awareness can enhance the caregiver's work, as he or she need not be confined by the same narrow vision as is the care receiver.

Caregivers recognize that especially in times of crisis, people are more likely to focus on their own lives and immediate surroundings, but one can always lift one's eyes and see something differently. An effective caregiver seeks to discern what exactly is visible to the care receiver at the time of counseling, attempts to explore the bigger picture, and also carefully determines the proper moment for sharing the possibility of a

broader vision. The caregiver should not shatter the care receiver's vision. Rather, the process of discovering a new perspective must be slow and gentle.

The paradigm of lifting one's eyes as prayer can influence a pastoral caregiver's framework, both in theory and in practice. Keeping in mind the images of Abraham, Isaac, and the Children of Israel praying to God by looking up, the caregiver can be attuned especially to the care receiver's body language during counseling. Perhaps an unconscious glance heavenwards can help the caregiver listen to what a care receiver is hoping for, or concerned about. Body language might give voice to the unspoken questions that lie at the heart of a care receiver's struggle.

Nasa einayim also can help a caregiver structure an extemporaneous prayer when engaging with a care receiver. Caregivers can recall the way prayers, through the lifting of one's eyes in Torah and midrash, seem to give voice to thoughts and feelings that have not yet been expressed through words. They can explicitly acknowledge the difficulty of articulating sensitive issues. Caregivers can try to help care receivers explore and express their concerns in a safe context by framing the conversation in terms of prayer to God.

While caregivers might not teach the concept of homovisuality in a counseling context, the concept can strengthen their awareness of the care receiver's desires to connect to other people and understand how they fit into the Jewish community. Caregivers also should be aware of their own desire to see parts of themselves in other people and their instincts to nurture the human desire to connect. This can serve as a reminder of the role of empathy in providing pastoral care. Caregivers should nurture their sense of empathy when engaging with a care receiver, but also be mindful of projecting too much of their own experiences onto others.

The Johari window is helpful for caregivers to remain aware of their own blind spots that emerge in a counseling setting. Not only must the caregiver try to help the care receiver reveal his or her own unknowns, but it is helpful for caregivers, too, to seek external help to uncover what is unknown to them. This discovery might unfold naturally from the interpersonal interactions inherent in a counseling relationship, but in counseling the focus must remain on the care receiver.

The centrality of mindsight pervades this entire thesis. Siegel's idea, that people can live richer lives if they gain a deeper understanding of the inner workings of their minds, can serve as a foundation in pastoral care. In addition to lifting their eyes and becoming more aware of the world around them, people can lift their eyes and look inward, becoming more aware of their internal selves. Through awareness of the way the brain works, caregivers can remind care receivers that their feelings do not define their identities, that they can train their brains to be more optimistic, or that they can reinterpret the significance of traumatic experiences. Mindsight is about discovering what people can see in their lives when they learn what to look for. This is an essential tool for pastoral caregivers trying to get a broad vision of a counseling situation, and to care receivers learning how to see themselves and their struggles in a new way.

For the care receiver, *nasa einayim* can serve as a paradigm for how to gain a new perspective on a difficult situation. It can act as a touchstone for care receivers to connect to Jewish tradition by learning that others have had similar experiences, even dating back to biblical times. If care receivers can see their own struggles in the text and in fellow human beings, they will feel more supported and understood in their times of need. Like Jacob, a care receiver could learn to lift his or her eyes in a new way and

become more open to seeing God's hand at work. Or like Jacob and Esau, a care receiver can lift up his or her eyes and take another look at an estranged family member or friend. Like Abraham in the *Akeidah*, a care receiver might feel overwhelmed by seemingly impossible tasks, and might lift his or her eyes to find a new path forward. How comforting it could be for care receivers to learn that Lot and Potifar's wife also struggled with lust and desired things that were not theirs to obtain. *Nasa einayim* can help care receivers lift their eyes again and refocus on what is meaningful, safe, and appropriate.

Nasa einayim can help care receivers build increased self-awareness, integration, and strengthened interpersonal connections. Care receivers can learn about mindsight, and with guidance from caregivers, they can start to create new neural pathways that lead to a more positive outlook or a calmer perspective.

Nasa einayim certainly is a helpful tool for increasing self-awareness, but further research could be done on the application of *nasa einayim* to communal awareness. *Nasa einayim* helps explain how people can lift their eyes and see how homovisuality helps bind people together in community. More research could be done in this area, for example, to apply this phrase to the field of community organizing. It is always helpful to learn a paradigm for teaching how one's perspective can change. How can groups of people lift their eyes and see their communities in a new way?

The classroom is another often-overlooked setting that also offers pastoral opportunities. *Nasa einayim* is a common phrase, but it is not commonly studied as a separate entity. Learners of many ages could benefit from a new angle for understanding many of the narratives in Torah. Reading stories in Torah with a special focus on *nasa*

einayim makes Torah study more of a sensory experience. It takes skill to understand the way the sparse biblical language conveys nuanced emotions and physiological experiences, and this phrase is one way to begin. Rabbis could teach about the grammar of *nasa einayim* and explain the basic principles of neuroscience that also contribute to an understanding of the way people perceive things in the world. Once people start paying more attention to the way characters in the Torah see things differently at different times, it likely will enhance their own awareness of the way they see themselves in their own lives, and help them develop a sense of Daniel Siegel's concept of mindsight.

Nasa einayim elegantly encompasses both a physical and psychological or spiritual paradigm shift in two simple words. When used in a pastoral care setting, *nasa einayim* provides caregivers with an integrated approach to giving care. It offers another way of using the text to ground pastoral practice, and also can infuse neuroscience with Jewish resonance. *Nasa einayim* can assist care receivers seeking a new outlook or a deeper understanding of themselves as human beings. It even has the power to enrich interpersonal connections in a community that wishes to envision its mission or its health through a new lens.

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