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Acharei Mot | Repentance and Rectification Through Torah

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Acharei Mot

Do What You're Told!

One of the disciples of Rabbi Asher Freund, of blessed memory, related the following:¹

As a young man, after being in the matchmaking process for a long time, the woman who later became my wife was suggested to me and we met once, and then again.

Rabbi Asher guided me on what to discuss and what to inquire.

After the second meeting, I came to him. He lay weak in bed, resting, and in this way spoke to me, and told me: 'This woman is your destined match.'

I returned home, and on the way, suddenly my thoughts changed entirely: 'I don't want to pursue this match.'

It was the 21st of Av, the yearzeit of Rabbi Aharon of Belz, of blessed memory.

After a long and exhausting bus ride, I arrived at my parents' house in Bnei Brak, entered, and sat on a chair.

My head ached, and a feeling of bitterness filled my heart. 'I don't want, under any circumstances, to continue with this match!' I thought.

I got up, left the house, and went to the bus station, where I boarded the 54 bus line to the central station in Tel Aviv, and from there boarded 405 bus line to Jerusalem, from where I walked over to Rabbi Asher's house.

I arrived at his house, but was told that he was at the 'Midrash Avraham' yeshiva of Rabbi Eliphant.

I went there, approached him, and told him: Rabbi, I've

changed my mind, I don't want this match.'

Rabbi Asher looked at me with his kind eyes and said to me: 'I already told you, this match is yours, this is your destined match!'

'**No!**' I objected. 'I decided it's not good, it's not suitable for me.'

'**Nothing** will help you anymore, it's yours!' Rabbi Asher said firmly and emphatically.

'**But** Rabbi Asher, a match isn't like a bottle of milk; we're talking about a woman I will need to share my entire life with, and it just doesn't feel suitable for me.'

Rabbi Asher replied calmly: 'It's your fate, and you won't be able to escape it.'

Today is the 21st of Av, go up to the tomb of Rabbi Aharon of Belz and say Psalms chapter 1 through 51, and on Saturday night, go as planned to the bride's parents' house and finalize the match.'

I wasn't rebellious, and I obediently listened to his directives.

I traveled to Har Menuchot and prayed at the tomb of Rabbi Aharon of Belz, and from there traveled to my parents' house in Bnei Brak.

That night I met her very briefly again as planned, to convey our family's decision that we would finalize the match following Shabbat on Saturday night.

My father felt that something 'was not right.' I didn't seem satisfied, was upset, and was not being realistic with the situation. He told me several times: 'I never forced any of my sons into a marriage, and I'm not going to force you either. If you don't want to proceed, we'll leave it!'

I didn't tell him that Rabbi Asher was forcing the match on me, I just answered that I'm not leaving this match.

That Shabbat, I behaved as usual, and I even studied the Noam Elimelech and other Chassidic books that Rabbi Asher instructed me to learn every Shabbat.

On Saturday night, we traveled to Tel Aviv to the bride's parents' house, and my father

once again noticed my visible lack of enthusiasm, and before boarding the bus told me again 'If you don't want to, you don't have to do this, we simply won't go ahead with the match.'

But I had received my instructions from Rabbi Asher.

We continued to travel and arrived in Tel Aviv. Before we went up to the bride's parents' house, my father told me for the last time 'Yossel, you're not obligated to go through with a match if you don't want,' but I remained steadfast.

We went to the in-laws' house, finalized the match, and raised a glass in congratulation.

The next day, the thoughts that had lingered all this time against the match disappeared. The dark cloud had vanished and the sun had come out again to shine in my soul.

I came to Rabbi Asher and told him that I got engaged and

was delighted with the match.

Rabbi Yehuda Perush was present. He had been involved in the details of the match, and on Friday when I still had objected to the match, and had called Rabbi Asher to convince him to agree with me, he mediated between me and Rabbi Asher through the telephone.

After everything had ended well, he asked Rabbi Asher: What exactly happened here ?

Where did this young man's zigzag come from? Why did he have such an opposition beforehand, and yet was perfectly satisfied and content after closing the match ?

Rabbi Asher answered him: 'This young man has been around here for a year and a half. Sometimes disciples need to be tested to know if they are genuine and serious. Well, the young man passed the test with flying colors'.

What's in the Box ?

There are two layers of life in a person.

The evil inclination operates on the superficial layer of life, filling

the body, desiring and craving things, and pushing the person to fulfill these desires and cravings.

Those who live such shallow lives feel falsely active, and their temporary satisfaction deceives them into thinking they are living meaningful lives.

But the truth is that such lives are superficial, and the very simplest of lives.

Those who wish to live an authentic life following the Torah's path must turn to the inner aspects of life, to the essence of life.²

The first thing one must know when embarking on the inward path:

A person's real life is not primarily in the external world visible to our eyes, but solely in his internal world, where a person resides, is found, and lives.

His internal world is a complete world. A world with its

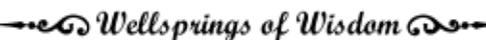
own atmosphere, with landscapes and places, and with figures and people.

The air one breathes is the air found within the space of his inner world, the landscapes he sees are the landscapes of his world, and his relationship with the figures and the people around him are as they are depicted in the perception of his inner world.

Since one lives constantly within his internal world, he becomes accustomed to it, and often doesn't know how to define his inner world.

'What is my internal world made of? What good things are in it, and what things still need correction'?

Often it is only when a person is tested and goes through trials that he recognizes what is his internal world, and the greater the test, the greater the resulting recognition.



2. See in detail in "Be'ein Yehudit" (Part 3 - Page 243) by Rabbi Yochanan David Solomon.

The disciple - in the story above - saw himself as a disciple of Rabbi Asher, and that's how he truly felt in his internal world.

Rabbi Asher checked if this was really the case? Was he also a steadfast disciple in his internal world, or perhaps their connection was only external ?

Therefore, he put him through a test, and despite the great inner turmoil and emotional storm of emotions, the disciple stood strong! It was now completely clear that the connection was a real and internal one !

The disciple had proven that in his internal world there was faith in the words of the sages !

Such a Family !

The dark and opaque night covers the universe, and as the clock advances, the darkness thickens. Then, suddenly, a thin ray of light appears, testimony to the sun's existence.

At first stubbornly, the rays of light strengthen, and the darkness

Here we stop for a moment and ask:

What would have happened if that disciple had refused to listen to Rabbi Asher and canceled the match? It would have proved that their connection was not an internal one.

Of course, it would have also been to his detriment, he would've lost the match that was destined for him, and would be heartbroken, for the greater the failure, the more intense the pain.

The question that begs itself: Does the Torah address failures and unpassed trials? Does the Torah have advice on how to deal with the feeling of inner defeat ?

About this and more, ahead, in our ensuing conversation.

'is offended' - who asked you to come? Eventually, the rays of light are so powerful and mighty that the darkness of night simply flees; A new day has dawned upon the world and appeared.

The same happened in the history of the world.

Parshat Acharei Mot - Such a Family !

A spiritual darkness covered all of existence for 20 generations from Adam to Terah.

It seemed that no one among the people living in those generations ever lifted their head beyond the physical boundaries that surrounded them.

Eating and drinking, work (and sometimes a trip abroad), and sleep, was their entire existence and all they knew.

Until in the year 1948 to the creation of the world, the soul of Abraham our Patriarch descended to the world.

Initially, the light that shone through from him and illuminated the world was thin and miniscule, but gradually, the light strengthened, and people were drawn to it like moths to a flame.

Raging rivers of love flowed from Abraham's heart to all people and mankind, springs of compassion exuded from his pure eyes. His mind and heart, aroused compassion for them all, sweetening their judgments, and caring for their

physical and spiritual well-being.

Even after his passing, the immense light of his son Isaac shone, and after him, Jacob's.

Jacob, our patriarch had twelve sons, and all of them were majestic figures, holy and awe-inspiring, whose hearts were open to all and who, following the family tradition beginning with their great grandfather Abraham, took upon themselves the pain of others.

From these sons of Jacob thousands of descendants were born.

All these descendants were raised on stories of righteousness, from father to son, they recounted the holiness and purity, the goodness and kindness, that manifested in the holy Patriarchs.

By word of mouth, they narrated tales of miracles and wonders that happened to their holy ancestors, and their hearts leaped with joy "fortunate are we to belong to such a great family."

And, what do you think happened next ?

The Events of the War in Egypt

The pure, spiritual, and clear air that constantly was felt in the neighborhood of the Jews - Goshen in Egypt - created immense pressure on the dwelling places of the forces of impurity.

They wandered restlessly, 'What shall we do with them? Their air is causing a dangerous imbalance of air pressure!' and they hurried to their armories and stores of spiritual weapons of war.

A stormy wind began to blow, and it stirred hearts and set bodies aflame.

Around the minds of the Jewish men and women, destructive angels of impurity, responsible for thoughts of lewdness and abomination, and impure and defiled thoughts organized for conquest.

The Jewish nation quickly understood that the war against them was on all fronts, and quickly armed themselves with

the reliable weapons of prayers and supplications, and with the awesome powers of the study of Torah.

The battle was intricate and complex, and casualties 'fell' on both sides.

The spiritual energy that the nation of Israel dedicated destroyed tens of thousands of the forces of impurity, yet, they did not give up yet.

The thoughts of impurity attacked the mind again and again, tempting, pleading, and whispering seductions: 'It's worth it for you, there's an incredible special flavor in committing transgressions'.

The minds were weakened and had no strength left to think holy thoughts, and the battle was sadly decided in favor of the forces of impurity.

Thus, the nation of Israel became slaves.

Seven Complete Days

For many long years, the Jewish nation suffered under the

Egyptian boot, years filled with suffering and agonizing terror.

Years so lengthy that every moment was acutely felt, the backs ached from the labor, the bones throbbed from the beatings and blows and all eyes weeped from sorrow and fear.

Yet, the main pain that was felt was the spiritual pain: We are lost, our sins disconnected us from the Creator of the World, and tore apart the chain of generations.

No one was there to comfort them, or to speak to their hearts.

116 years passed over them like this. For 116 years, they walked about with the feeling that they were of no interest to anyone.

Finally, the time of redemption arrived:

On the 15th of Nissan in the year 2448 to the creation of the world, Moses walked in the Sinai desert, and suddenly, saw a bush burning with fire up to Heaven, yet the bush remained intact.

Moses approached to see.

G-d revealed Himself and said: "Moses! I wish to make you a messenger to redeem My

children, the people of Israel."

Moses lowered his eyes and said: L-rd of the Universe, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the Jewish nation out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11), L-rd of the Universe, I am not worthy. I have not yet finished purifying myself, and have not yet finished sanctifying and hallowing myself. L-rd of the Universe, I am so far from You, I am not worthy.

G-d did not intend to give up on him, and for seven complete days persuaded him.

Ultimately - on the 21st of Nissan - Moses was convinced.

G-d commanded him: "Go and gather the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The L-rd, the G-d of your fathers, appeared to me - the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - saying: I have surely remembered you and seen what has been done to you in Egypt'" (Exodus 3:16).

On the following day of the 22nd of Nissan, Moses left his father-in-law Jethro's house in Midian and set out for Egypt.

Early Signs of Affection

A man, covered in dust and sweat, stood before Moses and Aaron and announced: 'I have completed the mission and informed all the elders of Israel to come today to the assembly.'

One by one, the elders entered the illuminated house, and they sat down to listen.

Moses began and said: "Thus the L-rd commanded me to say to you: "I have surely remembered you and seen what has been done to you in Egypt"
(Exodus 3:16).

At the moment when Moses uttered these words, an immense, great, and sublime light, the light of redemption, was revealed in the hearts of all Israel, a light that suddenly elevated their souls

from nameless dark places to the heights of virtue.

This was a first revelation of divine affection that the Jewish people experienced.

These revelations of affection only grew and intensified, until the bondage and servitude ceased entirely. G-d invited the Jewish nation to witness the spectacle He was staging in the land of Egypt.

G-d inflicted ten plagues upon Pharaoh and his people, which revealed His immense love for the Jewish nation.³

The plagues were unleashed upon Egypt in order, respectively affecting the sea, the land, and the air.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

3. The great difficulty of the bondage was the feeling that we are not important, that nobody loves us.

At the time of the redemption, it was revealed that this was not the case, at the time of the redemption it was revealed that everything stemmed from G-d's infinite love.

Every Jew must know this: G-d loves me, as I am, and how I am! G-d loves me, a true love that does not depend on anything!

In the words of the Zohar (Exodus 5b): Rabbi Judah said: If people knew the great love that G-d loves Israel, they would roar like lions and chase after G-d to cling to Him.

Parshat Acharei Mot - Revelations at Sea

Each plague struck throughout all the borders of Egypt, hitting all the Egyptians.

While not a single Israelite was harmed by the plagues, not by the blood, nor by the frogs, and not even by the darkness !

An Israelite who was among a group of Egyptians at the time

they were harmed, was not harmed himself !

What a revelation of love did they feel at this time. There is someone who thinks of us, someone who cares for and protects us !⁴

The inner world of the Jewish people was then illuminated, and a pleasant and sweet feeling of closeness to G-d was revealed.

Revelations at Sea

The peak of the divine revelations of affection came with the splitting of the Sea.

This event elevated the Jewish nation to new heights and enlivened their inner world with true vitality.

Eye to eye, they saw how G-d took vengeance on those who had tormented them so much. Eye to

eye, they saw the hand of the L-rd striking their enslavers.

Their spirit was so elevated that they became capable of prophecy! Not just any prophecy, but such a high level of prophecy that even the early prophets did not merit.⁵

Spontaneously, the Jewish nation began to sing a song.

~*Wellsprings of Wisdom*~

4. Even though the People of Israel were sunk at that time in the forty-nine gates of impurity, amidst the waves of darkness, this did not bother G-d, and rather He constantly conveyed to them: know that I love you as you are, without any conditions and demands, I truly love you !

5. **Thus** is brought in the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 23:15):

Rabbi Berechiah said - Come and see how great were those who witnessed the splitting of the sea.

Moses argued and pleaded before G-d until he saw His spiritual emanating

A lofty and awe-inspiring song.

In a discourse delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, of blessed memory, he said (Imrei Noam, Parshat Beshalach - Essay 9):

Seven days had passed since the exodus from Egypt, and on Thursday morning, the 21st of Nissan in the year 2448, the Sea was split in two.

The Jewish nation saw with their own eyes the power and might of the Creator. Their

emotions surged and overflowed, and they began to sing a song.

Thus it is written: "Then Moses and the Jewish nation sang this song to the L-rd, saying, I will sing to G-d, for He has triumphed gloriously" (Exodus 15:1), and at that very moment when Israel sang their song - G-d sat upon His throne of glory.

To quote the Midrash (Exodus Rabbah 23:1):

"Your throne is established from time ago; You are from

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

form as it is said: "Please, show me Your glory" (Exodus 33:18).

G-d said to him: 'You cannot see My countenance', but ultimately, allowed him a glimpse as it is said: "And it shall be while My glory passes by, and you will see the back of My countenance" (ibid, verse 22).

The angels who carry the divine throne also do not recognize the divine form, and when they sing their songs, they say: We do not know 'where' the divine presence is, so to speak, but wherever He is - "Blessed be the glory of G-d from His place" (Ezekiel 3:12).

However, when it came to the sea-goers, they each pointed with their finger and said: "This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him" (Exodus 15:2).

The people of Israel began with song, and sang the Song of the Sea in a pleasant voice and with a heart full of feelings of gratitude.

The women began to sing as well, as it is said: "And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dance: Miriam chanted with them - Sing to the L-rd, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15:20-21).

everlasting" (Psalms 93:2). Rabbi Berechiah in the name of Rabbi Abbahu said: Even though You are from everlasting, Your throne was not established, nor were You recognized in Your world until Your children sang a song. Therefore, it is said: 'Your throne is established from time ago'.

Thus, the Jewish nation said to G-d: 'You are from everlasting' - You were the King before You created the world, and You remain the King even after You created the world, but nonetheless, for many years, You did not - as it were - sit on Your throne of kingship, because Your kingship was not yet known in the world.

Only now, after we sang the 'Song of the Sea' to You, has your throne been established, and You sat upon it. From the day G-d created His world until the Jewish nation stood by the sea, there was no one who sang a song to G-d!

G-d created Adam, and yet he did not sing a song to Him.

G-d saved Abraham from the furnace and from the four kings

in battle, yet he did not sing a song to Him.

G-d saved Isaac at the Binding, yet he did not sing a song to Him.

G-d had saved Jacob from the angel and from Esau and from the men of Shechem, yet he did not sing a song to Him.

Only when the Jewish nation came to the Sea and it split for them - did they immediately sing a song to G-d. about this G-d said: 'For these, I have been waiting!'

That is to say: There is immense significance in a person acknowledging the abundant kindness and the wondrous miracles that G-d performs with him, to the point of being aroused to sing a song of gratitude to G-d. G-d, as it were, truly waits for a person to sing to Him.

When a person sings a song of thanks to G-d for a miraculous deed done with him, he thereby announces and publicizes G-d's kingship in the world, and by his merit, G-d sits, so to speak, upon His throne of glory.

Since the 'Song of the Sea' was the first song in the world, it is, therefore, the supreme song, that is above all other songs and praises in the world.

As stated in the Zohar (Parshat Terumah 131b):

The praise of the 'Song of the Sea' is higher than all other songs and praises in the world, and the Divine Presence is not praised by

any song in the world as much as it is praised by the 'Song of the Sea.'

Since it was only after the Jewish nation sang the 'Song of the Sea' that G-d sat upon His throne of kingship, therefore, our sages ordained to recite the 'Song of the Sea' in the morning prayers before the recitation of Shema and its blessings.

The Inner World of the Jewish Nation

The Jewish nation felt completeness. They felt that their inner world was illuminated with divine light.

As is known, the sensation of completeness is most dangerous ! For when it is felt, a person gets stuck in their place and doesn't advance.

G-d, who had mercy on them, wanted to reveal to them that there is still where to advance, and there is still what to correct in their inner world, and so He put them through a test.

The day after the splitting of the Sea, the Jewish nation left the

shore and continued walking. For three days (22-24th of Nissan) they walked in the desert, and throughout all these days, they had no water !

On the fourth day (the 25th of Nissan), they arrived at Marah, and "they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter, and the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried unto G-d; and G-d showed him a tree, which he cast into the waters, and the waters were made sweet: there He made them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them".

They had been put to the test, and did not withstand it.⁶

It became quite clear to them that their inner world was not sufficiently rectified.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

6. In a discourse by Rabbi David Povarsky, he said ('Mussar V'Daat', Vol. 3, page 73):

In the Torah portion of Beshalach it is said (Exodus 15: 22):

"**And** Moses led the people of Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they wandered three days in the wilderness and found no water."

We must contemplate and visualize the situation of the people of Israel at that time - six hundred thousand men from twenty years old to sixty years old, who numbered millions of people, women, and children, as well as livestock in great numbers.

This vast multitude walked for three days in the desert and found no water.

It is known that on a fast day, often the greatest hardship is the thirst for water, and here, an entire nation walked in the desert for three days without water, and were silent and didn't complain at all!

Is this not virtually an angelic state?

Later it says (ibid. verse 23-25) "They came to Marah, and could not drink from the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; the name of it was therefore called Marah. The people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'" - It was here, for the first time, that they complained.

Until now, they were silent, and did not voice any concern - but when they finally came upon water, and could not drink it because it was bitter, they realized the great trouble that they were in, and their patience burst, and they complained.

"**Moses** cried unto G-d; and G-d showed him a tree, which he cast into the waters, and the waters were made sweet: there he set for them a statute and an ordinance, and tested them."

It says, 'and there he tested them', to indicate that leading them in this route, where there was no water, and bringing them to the place of bitter waters - was all merely a test.

Indeed, we can marvel at the great level of the Jewish people, who walked into the terrifying desert in their great multitudes; to the point that even the Master of the Universe, as it were, was impressed by this, as it says (Jeremiah 2:2): "Thus says the L-rd, 'I remember the kindness of your youth, your bridal love, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown!'"

This emphasizes even more how astonishing it was that G-d gave them such a great test, to leave them without any water for three days.

We are accustomed to gloss over this passage without contemplation, reading

The Clarification Continues

Twenty days passed since then, and on the 15th of Iyar, the 30th day after they had left Egypt, the bread they had brought from Egypt ran out.

Again they complained: "The whole congregation of the Jewish nation murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the Jewish nation said unto them, we wish we would have died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots" (Exodus 16:2-3).

Later, the Jewish nation arrived at Rephidim and again ran

out of water, and once again complained. "And all the congregation of the Jewish nation journeyed... and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. And the people chided Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why do you chide me? Why do you test the L-rd?" (Exodus 17:1-2)

A period passed, and the Jewish nation was later instructed to leave Mount Sinai and continue onwards. Then again a complaint arose "And the people were as murmurers, speaking evil in the

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

what is written in the Torah "and they went three days in the desert and found no water" - and it seems to us like a standard story of the Torah, which we may read without really paying attention to what is written here!

But if we reflect, we can see that such a situation is not normal or logical, millions of people with cattle and sheep walking in the desert for three days without water.

We are amazed and marvel at them being put through such a great test because we

do not understand the greatness of the level of the Jewish people at that time.

For it was only now that they had come from the splitting of the Red Sea, where they sang a song, which is even greater in level than prophecy! Thus it turns out that all of the Jewish people were prophets, and the test that G-d brought upon them was a test of the level of prophets!

Thus, it is no wonder that they withstood a test that is beyond our understanding.

See there further for elaboration on the subject.

ears of G-d: and when G-d heard it, his anger was kindled; and the fire of G-d burnt among them, and consumed those at the outskirts of the camp" (Numbers 11:1).

Rashi (ibid.) explains: Their entire intention with this complaint was to find a pretext and a reason to separate themselves from following G-d and to provoke Him.

In their complaint, the Jewish nation expressed their frustration that G-d had led them on a continuous journey for three days without rest.

G-d was quite angry with this complaint, because His entire intention was for the benefit of the Jewish nation, to hasten their journey so that within a few days they would already merit to enter the Land of Israel.

They did not pay attention to the great good that G-d was doing for them, and instead found it to be a reason to complain.

The outcome of this complaint was bitter indeed, as it is written: 'and when G-d heard it, his anger

was kindled; and the fire of G-d burnt among them and consumed those at the outskirts of the camp'.

Only after Moses prayed to G-d did the fire subside, and they were saved. The place was named Taberah, (fire) "because the fire of G-d burnt among them" (Numbers 11:3).

Yet, the Jewish nation had still not recovered, and another complaint arose, this time arising from the mixed multitude. "And the mixed multitude that was among them fell into desires, and the Jewish nation also wept and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we ate in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all before our eyes, besides for this manna" (Numbers 11:4-6).

This complaint was a baseless and deceitful one, for our sages taught in the Midrash that the Jewish nation could taste any flavor they desired in the manna.

When a person from the nation of Israel craved a

particular food, all he needed to do was think about that food, and G-d would fulfill his desire by flavoring his portion of manna with the taste of that particular food. Therefore, there was no food in the world that they lacked.

Our sages in the Talmud (Yoma 75b) add that there was a great wonder in the eating of the Manna, for the limbs completely absorbed it, and following its consumption the Children of Israel did not need to relieve themselves.

Is there any food greater than this in the world?

However, this is the way of complainers - even if you give them the world and all it contains, they will always find something to complain about.

The outcome of this complaint was bitter.

Following their complaint, G-d indeed sent them quails from the sky, and the entire nation collected their meat in abundance as they had craved - "And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered

the quails: he that gathered least, gathered ten clusters: and they spread them all around and about the camp" (Numbers 11:32).

This ended all too tragically, as it is later stated: "While the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of G-d was kindled against the people, and G-d smote the people with a very great plague" (Numbers 11:33-34).

That place was then named Kibroth Hattaavah, (graves of the desire) "because there they buried the people that desired" (Numbers 11:34).

The Jewish nation continued their journey and arrived at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Paran, where Moses sent the spies to scout out the land.

The spies returned from their mission, bringing back tales of terror, and yet again the Jewish nation complained, "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the Jewish nation murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, we

wish we would have died in the land of Egypt, or have died in this wilderness !" (Numbers 14:1-2).

G-d then said to Moses: "Because all of these men have seen my glory, and miracles, and have not hearkened unto my voice; they shall surely not see the land which I promised to their fathers, and neither shall any of those who provoked Me see it" (Numbers 14:22-23).

Complaints after complaints were heard from the Jewish people, and the heart of the Jewish nation seemed as fickle as can be, what was happening within them ?

What is happening to us and inside our inner world, are we righteous or - G-d forbid - sinners? Do we even have hope?⁷

Parenthetically: These series of trials revealed their inner world

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

7. Regarding this matter, the following story is told (R' Asher, page 79):

Rabbi Asher Freund, throughout his life, spoke incessantly about absolute faith in G-d, and worked with all his might to instill in the hearts of his students and bring to action in their daily lives the clear knowledge and feeling that there is nothing besides Him !

In his younger years he was hidden, and for his livelihood, he dealt in gold jewelry (in his shop in Jerusalem). In this anonymity he served the Creator with flames of fire and immense devotion.

He once recounted: I was a merchant and sold jewelry on Jaffa Street. I had great spiritual trials there, the kind that Joseph the Righteous encountered.

One day I faced a particularly difficult trial, and I had a rule then, that when I

was in distress I would go to the tomb of Rabbi Shlomo of Zvhil, I hurried up to his grave and prayed there.

For three hours I prayed with meditation, thinking that by doing so, I would rid myself of the evil inclination. However, even after the reading of the Psalms, the evil inclination came a second time and awaited my return to the shop as if three hours had not passed.

So at once I left the shop and ran for a second time to Rabbi Shlomo's tomb and again prayed there for three hours...

As mentioned above, Rabbi Asher dedicated all his life to teaching and demonstrating the belief that nothing exists besides for G-d.

In this vein, Rabbi Yair Weinstock recounted (ibid., page 75):

Rabbi Asher wanted to travel to Meron, and asked one of his best

Parshat Acharei Mot - The Clarification Continues

students to accompany him on the trip to the Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. The student jumped at the opportunity with enthusiasm, this would be another good opportunity for spiritual elevation.

In those years a journey to Meron was a long and arduous trek. As was his custom, Rabbi Asher sought to utilize every moment to its fullest.

Since he was already going to Northern Israel, he wanted to incorporate some element of business and trade into his trip.

He owned a jewelry shop and wanted to purchase a significant quantity of jewelry.

Since Rabbi Asher was fluent in Arabic, he planned to stop by the shops of the Arab merchants in Nazareth as well as the Jewish merchants in Tiberias or Safed with whom he had trade relations, to make a large purchase.

For this planned transaction, he set aside a large sum of money and also borrowed a significant amount.

They set off, and indeed, Rabbi Asher made the most of the trip and bought a huge quantity of gold and silver jewelry at good prices, which he could sell at a decent profit in his shop in Jerusalem. The jewelry was stored in a suitcase, which they guarded very carefully.

Rabbi Asher's custom when he arrived in Meron, was to go up to the mountains for a secluded meditation and prepare himself spiritually; he wouldn't just enter the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai just like that.

This pre-entry meditation was a very significant practice for him.

Before going up to his secluded meditation, he wanted to be freed of the burden of guarding the suitcase and turned to his accompanying student and asked him to watch the suitcase with the jewelry until his return, which the student happily agreed to do.

Rabbi Asher warned him "You must be very careful, this suitcase contains all my savings and moreover, I've also borrowed a significant sum for the items that are inside. Be extra vigilant from the various unsavory characters that wander about.

Rabbi Asher went to his usual place of secluded meditation, and the student stayed in the courtyard, guarding the suitcase as if it were the apple of his eye.

However, the eyes of an experienced thief were watching. He 'smelled' that the suitcase contained a fortune and took advantage of a moment of inattention and snatched the suitcase and fled at lightning speed.

The student suddenly felt that something was amiss, and his heart stopped when he saw the suitcase was gone.

He began to search all over the courtyard near Rabbi Shimon's cave in despair, but the suitcase had been stolen.

He was beside himself with sorrow, and he ran frantically around the mountainside, searching everywhere for the suitcase, but alas, there was no sign of either the suitcase or the thief.

He was distraught, thinking he would lose his mind from grief, his face turned ashen, and his heart pounded fiercely.

to them, the trials showed them that within them lies the dormant unholly spark of complaint.

Once they discovered this and became aware of it, we do not find any more complaints that they made in later sections of the Torah.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

What would he say to Rabbi Asher?

Could he not even be entrusted with an object for a short while, and this was a suitcase that held a great fortune!

Rabbi Asher had told him it contained not just his assets, but also the money of many Jews who had trusted him and lent him their money. How could he face Rabbi Asher now?!

Meanwhile, Rabbi Asher finished his meditation and descended to the courtyard.

He approached his distraught student, who was wandering around the courtyard in shock and dismay, but a brief glance was enough for him to understand exactly what had transpired.

He quickly approached the man, who was on the verge of collapse, and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. 'Calm down,' Rabbi Asher said.

"The suitcase," the man stammered with a broken heart, "the suitcase has been stolen, woe is to me!"

This is the principle, that as long as a person is not aware of his inner world, he cannot correct himself. 'For he who does not know how to differentiate between good and evil, how can he repent?'

We now continue with the initial questions we asked.

"Have you eaten lunch?" Rabbi Asher asked him calmly, trying to distract him from the distressing incident.

"No, I haven't eaten yet," the student replied, not understanding the relevance.

"Then let's eat," Rabbi Asher said with a warm smile, "I've brought bread and vegetables from Jerusalem, let's sit down and have a bite."

They sat and ate and Rabbi Asher made sure not to let the conversation drift to talk of the theft, doing everything to divert his student's attention from it.

After they finished eating, he entered the cave to pray as if nothing had happened, as if he hadn't just lost a great fortune.

"From that day and ever since", that student continued to relate, "Rabbi Asher never spoke a single word to me about the whole incident, it was as if it had never happened."

Great righteous people said: Passing this severe test elevated him to his exalted levels.

Studying Torah - Correction of the Inner World

Parshat Acharei Mot occurred several months after these crises.

As Rabbi Moshe Mitrani, the 'Mabit', wrote:⁸

In the month of Nisan of the second year when the Tabernacle was erected, the entire book of Leviticus was stated.'

In our Torah portion, G-d teaches how a person can correct his inner world.

Thus it is stated: "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, and to all the Jewish nation, and say to them; This is the thing which G-d has commanded, saying."

And the Midrash expounds (Tanhuma Acharei 16):

'This is the thing' - G-d foresaw that the Temple would eventually be destroyed.

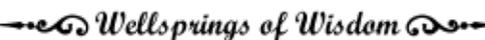
G-d said, 'As long as the Temple stood and you offered sacrifices within it, you were

atoned for, but without the Temple standing, how shall atonements be made for you? Engage in the study of Torah, for it is comparable to the sacrifices and it shall atone for you, as it is said, 'This is the thing'.

Rabbi Yoram Abargel explained (Imrei Noam - Nitzavim Essay 2):

Here, the Torah imparts a crucial and precious message to every member of the people of Israel until the end of all generations: The Torah is not hidden nor is it distant from any Jew, even from the least among the least. Rather it is exceedingly close to him, and as soon as he wishes to grasp it, it opens its gates to him, elevates and sanctifies him, and aids him in all his material and spiritual needs.

This is the real reason why when a Jew, even one who is far



8. "Beit Elokim" ('Sha'ar Hayesodot', Chapter 32).

Parshat Acharei Mot - Studying Torah - Correction of the Inner World

from the path of Torah and Mitzvot, finds himself in a Torah class, or happens to hear words of Torah, will find these words to penetrate deeply into his heart and make a profound impression on him.

This is because several thousand years ago, his soul was also present at that sacred assembly convened by Moses at mount Sinai, where he connected to the holy Torah to such an extent that at any time and under any circumstances, he will find himself in the study of the Torah and will receive vitality from it.

Indeed, every Jew's soul is rooted in one of the letters of the holy Torah, for all souls of Israel are included in the 600,000 general souls, and in the Torah, there are 600,000 letters, with each general soul connected and drawing its vitality from one of the letters of the Torah.

This is hinted to in the name "Israel" which is an acronym for "There are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah" (see 'Midbar

Kedemot' under 'Israel', and 'Pnei Yehoshua' on Kiddushin 30a).

Therefore, every Jew has a portion in the Torah, though sometimes it is hidden from him, and it is for this, that we pray: "Give us our portion in Your Torah", meaning, may G-d reveal to us our unique portion in the Torah and let us hold onto it with all our might for it is the source of our vitality, as stated "It is a tree of life to those who grasp it" (Proverbs 3:18).

Hence, it is essential to encourage every Jew to attend Torah classes and to also set fixed times for Torah study as much as he can, even if he is currently far from observing Torah and Mitzvot in practice.

This is because the power of the Torah is great and will enlighten him with a tremendous light and perform wonders to the extent that he will merit a complete repentance.

As our sages have said (Jerusalem Talmud, Hagigah 1:8, Introduction to Midrash Eichah, 2), "If only they had abandoned Me

but kept My Torah! For the luminary within it would have led them back to the good."

Meaning, one should draw closer to Torah study even a Jew who does not observe Torah and Mitzvot, because the Torah has the immense power to bring him back to the right path.

The reason our sages chose the term 'the luminary within it', with reference to the Torah's light, is to teach us an amazing aspect of the Torah's greatness. 'Light' is one thing, but there is something higher than it called 'the luminary', the origin of the light, from which the light emerges.

For example, the sun's rays are 'light', while the sun itself, from which the rays emanate and which is their source, is the 'luminary'.

Similarly, in spirituality: the light of holiness present in the world is 'light', and G-d, who is the source of this light and holiness and from whom they are bestowed upon the world, is the 'luminary'.

This is what our sages hint at by saying: 'the luminary brings them back to good', meaning, within the letters of the holy Torah dwells G-d Himself in all His glory and essence, and He is the 'luminary', not just His light, and therefore the Torah has the great and immense power to draw a person closer to his Creator more than anything else.

One cannot return in complete repentance without Torah study. True repentance is only when it is accompanied by Torah study, since the Torah guides a person in the paths of repentance, teaching him what to draw near him and what to distance himself from. Without Torah study, a person is like a blind man groping in the dark, not knowing in which direction the light lies, and certainly, cannot achieve true and complete repentance.

Therefore, it is most important that a person cling himself to Torah study, and through this, will merit complete

repentance, as brought in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 25:1): "If a person sins and deserves the death penalty, what can he do to live? If he was accustomed to reading one page, let him read two pages; if he was accustomed

to reviewing one chapter, let him review two."

And may G-d bless us to recognize our inner world, and may we have the merit to purify ourselves through the immense power of the Torah.



Summary and Practical Applications

1. G-d said to the people of Israel: As long as the Temple stands and you offer sacrifices, they will atone for you. But if, Heaven forbid, the Temple is destroyed and the sacrifices that atone for you are no longer available, engage in the study of Torah, which is likened to the sacrifices and this will atone for you.

2. Therefore, every single member of the people of Israel, until the end of all generations, needs to know that the main rectification is done through the study of Torah, and one should not think that it is far removed from him and beyond his capacity to learn and achieve his rectification.

Rather, one should know that the Torah is not hidden and is not distant from any person of Israel, but it is very close to everyone, and whoever wishes to grasp it and engage with it, will immediately be elevated and exalted, and saved in all his material and spiritual needs.

3. Since every Jew, even the most distant, is truly and deeply connected to the Torah, when he

finds himself in a Torah class or hears Torah words, these words penetrate deeply into his heart and make a profound impression on him.

4. It is impossible to return in repentance without Torah study.

True repentance is accompanied by Torah study, since the Torah guides a person in the paths of repentance, teaching him which actions to draw close to and which to distance himself from. Without the study of Torah, a person is like a blind man groping in the dark, not knowing at all which way leads to light, and certainly, he cannot achieve true and complete repentance.

5. Just as there are levels in everything spiritual, so too in Torah study there are several levels. The World of Atzilut is the highest level, and this corresponds to the service of the great righteous sages of the generation who are truly a chariot to the Infinite One, blessed be He.

Parshat Acharei Mot - Summary and Practical Applications

6. Below it is the level of the World of Beriah, which corresponds to one who maintains the commandments, studies the Torah, and prays, out of a tremendous sense of awe, and out of the burning love of G-d in his heart.

His service ascends to the ten Sefirot of Beriah, and the place of such a person is in the upper Gan Eden of the World of Beriah.

7. Below it is the level of the World of Yetzirah, corresponding to serving G-d with a natural love hidden in his heart. A person who merits to reveal this love to serve G-d at this level - his service ascends to the ten Sefirot of Yetzirah, and the place befitting such a person is in the lower Gan Eden of the World of Yetzirah.

8. Below it is the level of the spiritual World of Asiyah which corresponds to one who serves G-d 'by rote', that is, without any feelings of love or awe, neither intellectual nor natural.

Such prayers, Torah, and performance of the commandments ascend only to the external sanctuaries of the worlds, but are not included in the inner aspects of the worlds which are the ten illuminating Sefirot of Yetzirah or Asiyah.

9. Below this is the descent to the neutral powers and to the three impure powers, and even lower. - This happens when a person studies Torah not for its own sake, but for the sake of honor, glory, and personal enjoyment.

From there, he may descend to studying Torah without any intention of fulfilling it, and may even descend to the study of Torah to dispute it, G-d forbid.

Nevertheless, and despite all this, Repentance is so great that with its power, it is possible to rectify everything.

May G-d grant us the merit to recognize our inner world, and to purify it through the power of the Torah.

Shabbat Shalom!



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Miami	7:35 pm	8:30 pm	9:06 pm
Los Angeles	7:22 pm	8:21 pm	8:52 pm
Montreal	7:46 pm	8:56 pm	9:18 pm
Toronto	8:05 pm	9:12 pm	9:36 pm
London	8:10 pm	9:29 pm	9:41 pm
Jerusalem	7:05 pm	7:56 pm	8:48 pm
Tel Aviv	7:03 pm	7:53 pm	8:45 pm
Haifa	7:03 pm	7:54 pm	8:45 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:01 pm	7:52 pm	8:43 pm

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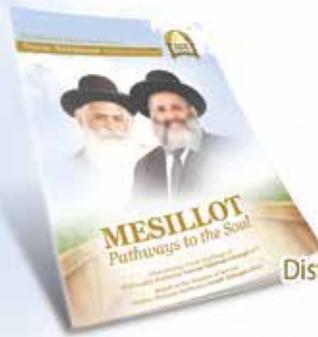
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