

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 142

Beshalach | The 15th of Shevat - Renewal of Man and World

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The "Ani Ma'amin" Song	1
It Was Worth It	4
The Four New Years	5
The Days of Creation - Three Pairs	7
The Virtues of Fruit Trees	8
The Trial of Man	9
The dire consequences of the Tree of Knowledge	9
Barren Trees - Egocentricity	10
The Dilemma Between Good and Evil	11
The Beginning of Refinement - Abraham	12
The Holy Tree - Jacob	14
Source of the Souls - The Twelve Tribes	15
Egypt and its Wise Men	16
Egypt - Full of Vitality	18
Barren Souls	19
The Swapped Prince and Slave Child	21
Egypt - Pure Narcissism	22
Disgust of the Nations = Redemption	23
Tu B'Shevat - Rectification of the Tree of Knowledge	24
The Importance of Self-Examination	25
Summary and Practical Conclusions	25
Some Laws Concerning Tu B'Shevat	26



DONATE

Beit Hamidrash Hameir La'aretz

Publisher and Distributor of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l



500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666



en@h-l.org.il



www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en



HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel



(954) 800-6526



HameirLaaretsEN



HameirLaaretsEN



054-870-8737

Message Us to Join Our WhatsApp Groups

Parshat Beshalach

The "Ani Ma'amin" Song

The town square was empty now. The echoes of shouts, cries, and whispers still lingered in the air. Signs and remnants of the horror that unfolded there but a few moments ago were still visible-scattered papers, a discarded shoe, a small package forgotten in the commotion. Yet, now, after the last 'Aktzia' in the Warsaw ghetto, the expanse was empty and forlorn, empty like never before.

Empty, that is, except for a few local Poles who stood there, holding bottles of cheap whisky, and gazing with a look of satisfaction...

Another train, filled with the despised Jews, was about to leave the station, about to leave Warsaw, about to be liquidated and removed from the world! And they rejoiced, oh, how they rejoiced...

The heavy doors closed on the Jews in the cattle car. They had known about this frightening possibility, and had even spoken about this eventuality now and then, yet now, they were extremely distressed. Some sat in the crowded confines, and others stood in spaces that were cramped beyond imagination.

In one of the cars, alongside the other Jews, was Rabbi Azriel David Pastag. He was a respected Jew, knowledgeable in the study of the Torah and also a Chassid and a poet of the Chassidic court of Modzitz.

The train moved terrifyingly, its wheels turned, and it gained speed. It was headed for Auschwitz, towards the furnaces and crematoria. The Jews knew where they were going. Some were happy to finally be able to go to Heaven and meet

Parshat Beshalach - The "Ani Ma'amin" Song

their murdered parents, yet others prayed. Some cared to find a place for their friends to rest their tired feet. Surely, there were also many whose fear of the unknown caused them extreme anxiety.

Undoubtedly, the anxiety, stress and pressure filled every cell of the wooden walls of the car. But there was something else, something terribly beautiful. Something immensely Jewish that someone else wouldn't comprehend. This something was the melody that the soul of a Jew, every Jew, wherever they were, sang. It expressed the essence of the life of the Jewish people and the bliss of their existence. It is called faith. No one could comprehend it. Certainly not the German officers guarding outside. Nor the coarse Poles who still mocked and sneered at the great calamity that was befalling the Jewish people.

Like all Jews, Rabbi Azriel David knew where he was going. And he was an honorable Jew and a composer. In these moments, as the train wheels

creaked and the train swayed and rattled, something stirred in his heart. We cannot guess as to what he thought, but we know what he did. He took the hopes and prayers of the Jews and composed a melody for them.

No, he didn't compose it; it flowed from his pure soul. His burning soul couldn't be restrained, and sang the words that echoed in the hearts of all the Jews: "Ani Ma'amin (I believe)... Ani Ma'amin... Ani Ma'amin..." Slowly, soulfully and hauntingly, he sang the melody, as one that someone who *knew* that he was going to meet his Father. His Father in heaven.

He knew about Heaven and was sure of his being on the way there. Whoever sang with such determination and fervor 'Ani Ma'amin' on their way to Auschwitz, had already been to earth and heaven many times before...

The melody was prayed in barely a whisper. These were the sacred sounds of faithful prayer. With faith and pride, they knew

Parshat Beshalach - The "Ani Ma'amin" Song

that even though they were going to die now, victory was theirs. They sang, and knew that they were the victorious ones. They are the ones with whom the Al-mighty made a covenant and promised to redeem...

Rabbi Azriel David stood in the crowded car and sang this song. Surely, his eyes were closed, and his face glowed with fire. He sang the melody once, sang it twice... And by the third time, the Jews standing next to him joined in. And thus, more and more Jews joined. By the fifth time, the singing voice filled the entire train car.

The Jews in the next car were stunned. They heard a tune and thought they were dreaming. They heard the pure words that pierced through the grimy wooden walls and didn't believe what they were hearing. But by the next time, they also joined, first in a whisper and then with all their might, and all their soul. Not many moments passed, and the melody passed from car to car and spread like wildfire...

From the train windows, the song erupted, an awe-inspiring, believing, hopeful, and passionate song that rose toward the heavens, toward the Father in Heaven...

And then, as the story is told, Rabbi Azriel David asked for paper and a pencil. From somewhere, a scrap of paper was procured, and someone else handed him a stub of a pencil. Rabbi Azriel David, ever the composer, wrote the musical notes of this exquisite composition on paper, and then stood up, and asked:

"Anyone who can survive, please pass on these notes to my great Rabbi, the Rebbe of Moditz, who has arrived in America, and in exchange I promise him half of my world to come."

Two young men accepted this challenge. They took the notes and jumped through a tiny train window. One of them was shot dead on the spot by German snipers on the roof of the train, whose task it was to prevent such escapes. The other friend survived all the horrors of the Holocaust and survived. Finally, one day, he

Parshat Beshalach - It Was Worth It

reached the Modzitzer Rebbe, the "Imrei Shaul" from Modzitz. Perhaps he still had the page with the notes, perhaps he only sang the melody from memory. He told the Rebbe about his Chassid and of his request regarding the special melody of "Ani Ma'amin."

He described how the melody traveled throughout the death train, how it soldiered on in all the various labor and death camps, tortured and ailing, and nearly beaten to death. How it resounded with pride amidst dark swamps, and how he escaped with his life into the depths of the forests and

found a refuge in partisan bunkers. How he attempted to reach the shores of the holy land, time and again, on shaky and flimsy boats. And how he didn't wipe away his tears, nor remove his smile, nor drown, despite the efforts of the cruel British forces.

He had a sacred duty to fulfill.

The holy countenance of the "Imrei Shaul" from Modzitz glowed like a fiery flame, and warm tears flowed from his eyes... And he said: "When Moshiach comes, the people of Israel will sing before him these words and with this melody"...

It Was Worth It

The following is excerpted from the testimony of Zalman Kleinman in the Eichmann Trial in the summer of 1961.

“One day, I lay on my bunk in the children's barrack in Auschwitz and saw the deputy commander of the barrack going with a thick rubber hose to beat someone. I jumped from my bunk to see who they were going to beat. For any small thing we did

we were subject to beatings, and the number of beatings depended on the size of the infraction.

On that day, they introduced beatings by the rubber hose. Usually, they used a stick that broke many times during the beating, so they started using a rubber hose, and I wanted to see how it worked. I jumped from my bunk to see how it worked, maybe I would need to face it one day.

Parshat Beshalach - The Four New Years

The deputy commander approached one of the bunks, and the boy who was there already knew a punishment was coming his way and waited for him. The deputy told him, 'go down,' and he stood bent over, and he began to beat him. We, the group of boys standing around, looked and counted to ourselves the number of lashes. The boy did not cry, and did not scream, and did not even groan. We were very surprised; we didn't know who this was...

The commander continued, and already 25 lashes have passed. Usually, there were 25 lashes, and now he'd reached thirty. When the cruel commander reached forty lashes, he turned over the boy, and started whipping him on his legs and head. The boy neither whimpered nor cried; it was quite a

wonder to see a young 14-year-old boy who was beaten and didn't cry.

The commander became very angry and frustrated, but after completing fifty beatings, he promptly left. We lifted him, and I distinctly remember a big red mark on his forehead from one of the beatings of the rubber hose. We asked him why they beat him. He answered: 'It was worth it; I brought a few prayer books for my friends.' He added nothing more, he got up, went to the barracks, and sat there...

From where did this lofty spirit come, and what characterizes this young man's strength ?

To explain this, our talk will delve into the differences between fruit trees and barren trees...

We will open with a question...

The Four New Years

Tractate Rosh Hashanah opens with the Mishnah (1:1):
"There are four new years.

The first of the month of Nissan - the new year for kings and festivals.

The first of Elul - the new year for tithing animals...

The first of Tishrei - the new year for years, Sabbaticals, and Jubilees, for planting and vegetables...

The first of Shevat - the new year for a tree, according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel says - it is on the fifteenth.'

To explain:

There are several Torah laws dependent on the concept of a 'year,' for which it is necessary to determine which day of the year marks the beginning and which day marks the end. The start of the year for one concept is not always considered the start of the year for other laws.

For each law there is a specific date on which the year begins, and the days from that point onward until the same day in the following year are considered one year. The above Mishnah lists

the various 'heads of the years,' meaning the days when a new year begins, related to the various laws related to them.

Regarding the fourth such 'New Year', says the Mishnah: 'On the first of Shevat - the new year for a tree, according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel says - it is on the fifteenth.'

Several laws relating to the forbidden first three years of the trees as well as the various tithes are dependent on the beginning of the 'year' in this context. Beit Shammai argues that it is on the first of Shevat, while Beit Hillel contends that it is on the fifteenth of Shevat, and the law follows the opinion of Beit Hillel.¹

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

1. Once, a Chassid came to the Rabbi Yitzchak of Skvir for the High Holidays and the festival of Sukkot. Following the uplifting festival, the Rebbe did not give him his blessing to return home...

A few months thus passed by, Cheshvan... Kislev... Tevet...

Only when the 15th of Shevat had passed did Rabbi Yitzchak of Skvir call the

Chassid to wish him success in his travel home and bless him with a good year.

He revealed to him: 'Know that until now, despite my best efforts, I couldn't effect on your behalf a good year. Only now, on the 15th of Shevat, which is also a New Year, did I succeed in sealing for you blessings for a sweet year. So now, you can go and travel in peace... (Treasures of the Righteous, Mo'adim 2 - Page 496).

The terminology of the Mishnah states 'The new year for *a tree*', while the laws of the forbidden trees and tithes and contributions apply to all fruit trees.

Which begs the question: Why does the Mishnah state 'The new year for *a tree*' in the singular form?

Before we answer, let's go back to the early days of Genesis...

The Days of Creation - Three Pairs

In six days, the Al-mighty created His world. These six days are divided into three pairs:

The first and fourth day, The second and fifth day, and finally the third and sixth day.

The explanation is as follows:

On the first day, light was created, but only on the fourth day were the luminaries (the sun and the moon) created - the bearers of light, through which light can influence life on Earth and bring about its growth.

On the second day, the Al-mighty separated between the waters, between the upper waters in the firmament and the lower waters on Earth. Thus, the expanses of water and sky were created. But it was only on the fifth day, that the Al-mighty

created the birds and fish, the inhabitants of the sea and the sky.

On the third day, the Al-mighty created dry land, and the Earth brought forth fruit trees, flowers, and more. And it was on the sixth day, that the Al-mighty created man, who settled the land and resembled the trees of the earth, as it is said: "For man is like a tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19). Hence, man and the trees form the third pair.

To add an important point:

On the third day, all the plants of the earth were created, but in practice, they did not actually sprout, and remained covered beneath the surface of the earth.

Only on the sixth day, when the first man stood in prayer for rain to fall, did the fruit trees,

grass, and blossoming flowers begin to sprout and emerge from the surface of the earth...

But left behind, in the darkness, below the surface of

the earth, the roots of barren trees and thorns and thistles remained, awaiting the moment when they too would burst forth and sprout...

The Virtues of Fruit Trees

There are many types of fruit trees. Each tree and its appearance, each tree and the fruits it produces.

The beginning of a fruit tree is in its seed; the more refined and pure is the seed, the mightier and stronger the tree that will grow from it will be.

The seed is planted in the soil and undergoes a process of decay. Following this decay, the roots emerge and take hold into the soil.

A trunk eventually begins to form, and after receiving abundant sunlight, water, and nutrients, the trunk strengthens and grows.

However, the trunk has an internal conscience and sense of responsibility: 'Is this the final purpose? Is this why I exist? To merely occupy space and expand?'

And the trunk, possessing this inner moral compass, directs all of its energies to its fruits... The fruits draw strength from it, drawing upon its strength and vigor. Once again, it is not robust and strong; and no longer has the attractive appearance it had in the beginning...

But the tree doesn't mind. After all, it doesn't think about itself.

It stands bowed, bent under the weight of its fruits, yet its heart sings, full of joy: Fortunate am I to bring benefit to others. From me, the inhabitants of the world will enliven themselves!'

How great and wholesome are the fruit trees!

And we continue with the second of the pair, he who was created on the sixth day of creation - Man...

The Trial of Man

When the Al-mighty desired to create the soul of mankind, He created two types of souls:

The first category - holy, righteous, and pure souls.

The second category- empty and hollow souls, souls without any inner reality.

When G-d created Man on the sixth day of creation, He took all the souls from the first category, the holy and pure souls, and placed them inside him.

As for the second type of souls, the empty and hollow souls, He took them and confined them somewhere, without any ability to break free and emerge...

And the empty and hollow souls remained in the darkness, deep within the confines, waiting for the moment when

they too would burst forth and sprout...

The creation of man was complete, and the Al-mighty turned to him and said: Man ! You may eat from all the trees of the garden, but there is one tree called the 'Tree of Knowledge,' from which you are forbidden to eat !

This command was the first inner conflict to take place in the world - to eat or not to eat ?

If Man would have succeeded and overcome this trial, refraining from eating the fruit until the arrival of the Sabbath, the world would have reached its complete rectification...

However, Man did not succeed, and the serpent managed to seduce him, and Man transgressed and ate from the fruit...

The dire consequences of the Tree of Knowledge

When Adam sinned, the doors of the ethereal prison were battered, and the empty

and hollow souls burst out, arranged in a procession, and entered the body of Adam...

Parshat Beshalach - Barren Trees - Egocentricity

Until then, only the souls of the people of Israel were sourced in Man, but now, after the sin, the souls of the nations of the world also entered him.

In the words of the holy Arizal:

Behold, when the Al-mighty created the first man, all the souls included in him were only the souls of Israel. And if he had not sinned, the nations would not have come into existence.

After he sinned, the soul sparks of the nations of the world mixed within him.

And this is the meaning of the verse referring to the Jewish

people: "You are [Man] Adam" (Ezekiel 34:31) - Initially, only the souls of Israel were included in the first man...

The damage of Adam, created on the sixth day, affected the creations of the other day of the pair - the third day as well.

The doors of the earth were now opened, and from them, the barren trees, and the thistles and thorns emerged and sprouted.

As it is said: "And the thorn and thistle shall sprout forth for you" (Genesis 3:18)...

Let us begin with the significance and influence of the barren trees...

Barren Trees - Egocentricity

Barren trees are a term for trees that do not bear fruit. When comparing barren trees and fruit trees, the question arises: 'What causes this difference?'

After all, both go through the same process: choosing the seed and planting it in the soil, initial decay and the emergence of roots.

Both require sunlight, water, and food. Both experience the same natural events and occurrences. Why does the fruit tree yield fruits, while the barren tree does not?

The answer is simple: the barren tree lacks internal conscience and responsibility. Its entire world begins and ends with its own

Parshat Beshalach - The Dilemma Between Good and Evil

existence and reality, that's it, no one else matters !

'Why should I give away my strength and power to someone else, have I gone mad ?'

It leaves all its strength to itself. And the result is visible: a barren tree is strong and resilient, beautiful and impressive, standing upright with a powerful and resplendent appearance...

The Dilemma Between Good and Evil

Before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, the main trial that stood before man was whether to choose evil or not. However, in the aftermath of this grave sin, a new trial emerged! This trial is called in the language of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov - 'the trial of substitution' !...

To explain:

Before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, there was a reality of evil as well. But the existence of evil was not confusing. The holy, pure and good shone greatly, in magnificent and wonderful shades, while evil,

Starving animals foraging for food, pass by, with parched lips and croaking bellies, and look with disdain: 'Oh, another egoist'...

Alas ! The shortcomings of the barren trees !...

The trees' partner to creation - Man, often suffers from this shortcoming as well...

standing on the side, seemed pale and poor compared to it. But precisely because of this, because of its dullness and inferiority, it aroused curiosity... 'What is that there, why is it so dismal ?'

The trial of Adam was to resist curiosity, to choose the good, the clear, the enlightening, and life-giving, and to repel the intriguing evil...

But after the sin, a new situation arose; evil received light and color, and often appeared to be more beautiful than the good. Evil began to gain importance and seem great... and the good

Parshat Beshalach - The Beginning of Refinement - Abraham

and holy seemed insignificant and remained far away.

And this caused great confusion...

Adam was expelled from the Garden of Eden and settled down to build his family, and within a few years, the world was filled with mankind.

Adam lived a long time - 930 years. And throughout all those years, he taught his descendants wisdom and Torah.

But the confusion that resulted from the sin of the tree of knowledge was much stronger... and those who heard the teachings of Adam retorted: 'What are you talking about? Look at the charm

and beauty of evil, look upon its greatness and importance!'...

All those early generations failed the trial of 'substitution' - the two realities of good and evil stood before them, yet they failed not merely because they chose evil, but because the two were mixed up for them...

To be more precise: after the value and esteem of good and evil were 'substituted', evil spread throughout the world, and the reality of the good disappeared almost entirely...

1,948 years passed, yet all the humans were defective and failed in the trial of 'substitution', all that is except for two individuals: Noah and Abraham...

The Beginning of Refinement - Abraham

In the year 1948 to the creation of the world, the soul of

our patriarch Abraham descended to the world.² Already at the age

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

2. In Seder Hadorot (year 1948), it is mentioned that when Abraham was born, his father Terah arranged a great feast. And at that feast, the astrologers of Nimrod saw a large and radiant star flying in the sky, swallowing four stars in its path...

They approached Nimrod and told him about the vision, adding, "Know that, according to our best understanding of the stars, this vision is a sign that this infant, the son of Terah, is destined to rule over the entire world"...

Parshat Beshalach - The Beginning of Refinement - Abraham

of three, Abraham merited and recognized the Creator.

Abraham immediately began the holy work of removing the veil of blindness from people's eyes, and to reveal and inform the inhabitants of the world of the existence of G-d.

After succeeding in his holy work, as described in Isaiah (29:24) "And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and the disobedient will learn doctrine", he advanced further and

began teaching them the doctrines of the divine will.

At every opportunity, he clarified and taught mankind: The divine will is good and proper and beneficial, and what opposes His will is evil !

He succeeded in his holy work, and from day to day, the circle of followers of G-d expanded, and by doing so, he essentially crowned the Al-mighty as King of the world !...

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

Nimrod, ever fearful for his despotic rule, decreed without hesitation, death upon little Abraham, the son of Terah !...

Terah said to Nimrod, "Give me, my L-rd the king, three days' time to console my wife." After many pleas, Nimrod agreed and granted him three days' time.

Terah went to his house, and spoke to his family about the king's decree, and they were greatly afraid. On the third day, the king sent for Terah, saying, "Send me your son, and if you don't, I will kill everyone in your house, leaving no one alive !" Terah hurried and took one of his servants' babies, born on the same day as Abraham, and brought him to the king... The king immediately took the child from

Terah, and crushed his skull on the floor, immediately killing him !

The matter was forgotten from the king from that day onward, for it was destined from G-d that Abraham not be killed. Terah took Abraham, his son in secret, along with his mother and nurse, and hid them in a cave, providing for their sustenance and needs monthly.

G-d was with Abraham, and he grew. He was ten years in the cave, and the king and his officers were sure that they had killed Abraham...

In this instance, the exchange between the prince and the child slave turned out for the better...

Parshat Beshalach - The Holy Tree - Jacob

In the year 2123 to the creation of the world, our patriarch Abraham passed away. Yet, his holy work did not cease...

His holy descendants, Isaac and Jacob, our patriarchs, continued his holy and lofty work, proclaiming His divine presence and will before the world...

The Holy Tree - Jacob

Each of the holy patriarchs had a significant role in the rectification of the world, and Jacob our forefather, who was the third patriarch, merited to bring about the decisive rectification.

Ever since the sin of Adam, souls were mixed, the good and righteous souls were mixed together with the empty and hollow ones...

During that long period of time of almost 2,000 years, people had many children, and each had a different soul - some with a good soul, and yet others with a hollow soul. Even among the holy patriarchs, it was so:

To our patriarch Abraham, two sons were born: Isaac with a holy soul, and Ishmael, the son of the maidservant, who was born with an inferior soul.

To our patriarch Isaac, two sons were born: Jacob, with a lofty and elevated soul, and Esau with a darkened soul.

However, Jacob our patriarch, through his tremendous divine service, caused that only good and pure souls concentrated within him and his children, and from then on, for all posterity...

From now on, these pure and holy souls would be called: 'the souls of Israel', and the empty and darkened souls: 'the souls of the nations'...

Since these two orderly systems were formed, a store of holy souls and a vast store of hollow and empty souls, the great trial of 'substitution' took on yet another form, and this trial would be destined to

Parshat Beshalach - Source of the Souls - The Twelve Tribes

accompany the people of Israel forever...

We continue regarding the sons of Jacob...

Source of the Souls - The Twelve Tribes

Jacob our patriarch merited twelve holy sons, and from them, all the souls of Israel descended to the world from then until the very last day.

The souls of the twelve tribes are the source of the souls of all the people of Israel.

The souls of Israel are complete in every aspect, from seed and till eventually its fruit.

Their source and seed is taken from the Al-mighty, as every Jew is a part of G-d Above.

Their nurture and life energy come from the worlds of holiness, from realms that continually emanate life and inner energy...³

They are inherently good, and since the nature of the good is to benefit others, they benefit everyone, and primarily think of

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

3. The souls of Israel are a part of the divine, they are souls that nurture all of their energy from the Creator. The souls of Israel are inherently good and have a sense of duty to fulfill the will of G-d in the world.

Since that's the case, they cannot and are not capable of "getting stuck" in place. Just as the divine light is infinite and every day continues to reveal itself, so too the desire of the soul is to progress, to draw closer, and to attain...

However, from the perspective of a Jew's body, it desires rest and idleness, and this creates internal tension, and when

the body prevails and triumphs, the Jew may feel a sense of failure and sorrow...

Every Jew must know to never despair. The Holy One, blessed be He, has given us a gift called "Teshuvah," (repentance) and the essence of "Teshuvah" is to return to one's true state. "Teshuvah" is not to create something new but to return to one's natural state !

Through "Teshuvah," the inner and true goodness of the Jew is revealed again...

In this regard, there is told the story:

Once, the Chassid R' Monia Moneson visited the Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitch,

Parshat Beshalach - Egypt and its Wise Men

the other, especially when that 'other' is G-d, these souls are occupied with the thought of 'How can we sanctify G-d's blessed name in the multitudes'...

These souls are sometimes termed by the following names:

- a. Souls of Israel.
- b. Princely Souls.
- c. Fruit-bearing Souls.

Egypt and its Wise Men

Ancient Egypt was relatively small in area. However, the tumult

These divine and pure souls began their descent to the world beginning with Jacob.

But since the iniquities caused by the sin of the Tree of Knowledge had not yet been rectified, these souls were required to descend to Egypt and to face the trial of 'substitution'...

Before we continue, let us briefly introduce Egypt and its wise men...

and uproar it involved during that era was global and immense.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

of blessed memory. The Rebbe Rashab spoke in praise of several simple Jews.

R' Monia Moneson was surprised and asked, "Why do you make such a big deal of their virtues?"

The Rebbe Rashab replied, "they have many virtues!"

R' Monia Moneson said, "but honestly, I don't see these virtues."

As it is known, R' Monia Moneson was a great diamond merchant. the Rebbe Rashab asked him, "Do you have a packet of diamonds with you?" R' Monia Moneson answered, "Yes, I

brought it with me, but now, when the sun shines so brightly, it is impossible to properly examine the diamonds."

Only later, R' Monia Moneson took the package of diamonds and spread them out in another room, pointing to one stone that was exceptional and extraordinary.

The Rebbe Rashab said to him, "I don't see anything special in this stone." R' Monia Moneson replied, "to appreciate this stone one needs to be an expert."

The Rebbe Rashab answered and said, "A Jew is extraordinary and exceptional, but to properly discern this, one must be an expert..." (Sefer HaSichos, 5705, p. 40).

Parshat Beshalach - Egypt and its Wise Men

This was true in many areas of life, for example, all inhabitants of the world knew: Egypt was the cradle of wisdom !

Any wisdom you desired, you could find in it: the wisdom of nature and the blending of elements, the wisdom of structure and engineering, the great wisdom of medicine, as well as art and poetry.

Moreover, the wise men of Egypt were also fluent in all the ten levels of impurity, and knew how to use them as they pleased. The ten levels namely: sorcerer, two additional levels of sorcery, clouding, divination, enchantment, snake charming, inquiring of spirits, clairvoyance, and seeking to the dead.

Parenthetically:

The Zohar states that the wisdom of Egypt did not come from the faculties of their mind or soul, but was rather bestowed upon them by G-d in His infinite Wisdom.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He created a place called Eden, and

from it emanated a river that watered the garden of Eden, and it separated to four heads of rivers: Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates.

This is true in the spiritual sense as well, even after Adam was sent from the Garden of Eden.

The Zohar continues to say that every day, forty-eight drops flow from Eden into the river, and from there, are divided into four rivers: Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. These drops are the root of wisdom and knowledge.

Since Pishon is the first river, it received the largest quantity of these drops. Years passed, and the residents who lived near the Pishon river changed its name to Nile River.

Those who drank from the Nile regularly felt that the paths of the mind and knowledge opened up to them. From all the information they achieved and understood, they managed to derive many insights and recognized many dimensions.

However, since they were corrupted and depraved, their

Parshat Beshalach - Egypt - Full of Vitality

wisdom backfired on them, and instead of uplifting them it caused them to fall into the depths, the halls of sorcery and impurity...

Only many years later when G-d met upon the Egyptians the ten plagues, did the powers of the Egyptian impurity become void. The Holy One, blessed be He,

Egypt - Full of Vitality

Egypt! Its name alone stirred strong emotions. In every corner of the world, people walked about waiting for the moment when they would succeed to reach Egypt...

In their conjured imagination, they saw before them a country of wealth and honor. A country where all of its inhabitants lived in happiness and joy. A country that gave flavor and vitality to life, where everyone sensed the power of life.

Yet despite this being the dream, not many managed to turn this dream into reality. The Egyptians set many conditions that prevented people from obtaining citizenship, and those who could receive citizenship wouldn't necessarily leave their homeland and migrate to Egypt.

stopped the descent of these 'drops' into the Nile, and thus, the verse was fulfilled: "And the wisdom of its wise men shall perish, and the understanding of its prudent men shall be hidden" (Isaiah 29:14)...

After this parenthetical note, we return to the days of Egypt's glory...

What was for certain however, is that they all adopted Egyptian culture. Nearly all the inhabitants of the world dressed according to the fashion of Egypt, ate Egyptian cuisine, and listened to Egyptian music...

The products created in Egypt were reflexively given preference over products originating elsewhere. It was enough to mention the name of famous Egyptians, and one's heart would swell with desire to be like them, to feel happy and blissful...

This was the environment the world over. There was only one rare exception.

The tribe of Jacob were not affected by these winds of change,

Parshat Beshalach - Barren Souls

and in the year 2238 to creation,
they descended to Egypt...

Before we continue, let us
reflect for one moment...

Barren Souls

At the beginning of creation, the Holy One, blessed be He, created the souls of the nations of the world and confined them with the intention that they remain there forever. However, due to the sin of the tree of knowledge, this confinement was broken, and these souls were released.

The souls of the nations of the world are in complete deficiency, their source originated in the divine light that was constricted and descended down to the impure powers.

Their sustenance and life force come from the realms of impurity, from places of desolation, filth, and emptiness.

These souls do not bear fruits at all. In the words of the Zohar: "it does not multiply, and does not produce fruits..."

They are inherently egotistical, willing to recognize the reality of others only if it benefits them. These souls of the nations are empty and hollow, without any inner and true vitality. These souls feel and perceive only their own reality.

And since their reality is truly nothingness, they perceive their own reality to also be nothing !

Such an existence, hollow and empty, may be difficult to grasp for a Jew who is illuminated and has a profound inner self and soul.⁴

These hollow and inferior souls of the nations have three names:

- A.** Souls of the nations.
- B.** Slave Souls.
- C.** Barren Souls.

Let us return to the Jewish descent to Egypt...

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

4. **The** Holy Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, wrote (Tanya, Likutei Amarim - Chapter 1):

However, the souls of the idol worshiping nations, they are rooted in other impure forces which lack any

Parshat Beshalach - Barren Souls

goodness, as written in Etz Chaim (49:3) "All the goodness of the idol worshiping nations is only for their own benefit, as stated in the Talmud (Baba Batra 10a) on the verse: "And kindness to nations is sin" (Proverbs 14:34) - that all the charity and kindness that the idol worshiping nations commit is only done in order to boast...'

And Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, explained as follows (B'tzur Yerum, vol. 1, p. 207):

'**All** the goodness of the idol worshiping nations is only for their own benefit' - any good that the nations of the world do is for their own good, since their root is evil, and as it is ruled that "a bad root does not produce good fruit." That is to say, if a stem or a leaf is rotten, it's not such a big problem. If, however, the root is bad, it is impossible in any way to fix.

This is the reason why our forefather Abraham did not want under any circumstances to take Eliezer's daughter for his son Isaac, even though Eliezer was a close disciple of Abraham and gave Torah lessons to others, and even he is said to have entered the Garden of Eden alive (Derech Eretz Zuta, 1:16) and even though he still stands and serves Abraham in the Cave of Machpelah (Bava Batra, 58a). Nonetheless, Abraham, our forefather, refused to have him as his son-in-law.

Abraham explained to Eliezer: You are from a cursed source, and I am from a blessed source, and a cursed one cannot adhere to a blessed one, for everything eventually returns to its source...

Therefore, one must examine roots, and should not take a woman who lacks proper and qualified family ties; this is an important matter - as stated "Do not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell" (Genesis 24:3), since their root was evil.

Therefore, even though there is wisdom among the nations and they have some dignified behaviors, regardless "I have separated you from the nations to be Mine" (Leviticus 20:26).

One of the interpretations of this verse is that one should not imitate them; If their holiday arrives - do not celebrate it; if they have a church - do not enter it; if you mistakenly entered it, fast on that day every year; if on that same day there is joy for one of your children and they want you to participate - ask them to postpone it since on that day you caused anguish to G-d and transgressed as what is written (1 Kings 14:9): "And you have cast Me behind your back" (Yabia Omer (Volume 4, Siman 45) based on Sefer Chassidim).

It is said that when the Russian authorities arrested the Ba'al HaTanya, they interrogated him extensively, asking him twenty-two comprehensive questions regarding Judaism...

He answered twenty of the questions at length with much detail. The twenty-first question, he requested to respond to in writing, and he wrote a lengthy response, which they understood well.

However, the twenty-second question, he did not answer; he merely smiled.

The Swapped Prince and Slave Child

In the beginning of their settlement in Egypt, a holy divine glow still burned in the hearts of the people of Israel. Their lives were full of meaning and significance. Torah, prayer, and good deeds occupied and enriched their lives.

No words can fully describe the great happiness that filled their hearts... Joy and delight ruled in those days...

However, the forces of impurity standing on the side smirked wickedly. And seized a

most dreadful weapon - the weapon of 'substitution' - and began to use it...

It is not clear exactly how it started and how it unfolded, but gradually, the Jewish people began to feel that the Egyptians were the noble and important people, that the Egyptians were of exalted rank, and anyone not like them was inferior...

In the hearts of Israel, the desire to 'substitute' was born, 'let's substitute our way of life for theirs'

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

The twenty-second question was - Why did you write in your book that the nations come from completely impure powers and have no goodness at all (as quoted above)?

Do we not have any goodness at all? You can see for yourself the good that we have done - we build bridges and infrastructure, and develop the entire land for the betterment of all of civilization.

However, the Rebbe just smiled.

Later, the investigator took him to a side room and said to him, 'Just tell me your answer privately; you won't suffer any harm.' He said, 'It's not enough that I remained silent; do you want me to explain to you the truth of the matter? You won't

stand here anymore. If you knew what it means that there is no goodness in you at all, you wouldn't have a desire to live, yet you ask of me to explain it to you in detail?

Therefore, I contented myself with a smile'...

Fortunate is the person who knows when to speak and when to remain silent, everything in its time. Sometimes, it can take months to correct a misspoken word. And sometimes, it takes months to correct what wasn't said at the proper time, since sometimes one must say a word immediately to the right person, so that everyone receives the correct message...

Parshat Beshalach - Egypt - Pure Narcissism

they cried out ! And they sought to imitate the nations of the world...

Their habits had changed. New images appeared on their walls - images of famous people and 'celebrities,' and the downward spiral descent continued at an alarming pace...

In the words of the Yalkut Shimoni (Shemot 162): "And the land was filled with them"

Egypt - Pure Narcissism

In Yalkut Shimoni we find the following (Shemot Remez 164):

'In the year one hundred and thirty to the descent of Israel to Egypt, Pharaoh dreamed and behold, he was sitting on his royal throne. He lifted his eyes, and he saw an old man standing before him, and in his hand were scales akin to the scales of merchants.

And the old man took all the wise men of Egypt, its officers and dignitaries, and placed them together on one scale. And then he took a small lamb, and placed it on the other scale, and the lamb outweighed them all.

(Exodus 1:7) - The amphitheaters and circuses filled with them [the people of Israel]...

The process of swapping from a prince to a slave child had completed...

There remained no choice but to teach the Israelites in the hard way 'what the life of a gentile is about'... and the people of Israel became enslaved...

Pharaoh marveled at this strange vision: why did the lamb outweigh them all ? And he woke up, and behold, it was a dream. And he got up in the morning, and told this to all his servants, and there was a great fear among them.

And one of his servants answered: 'This is nothing but a great evil, for a child will be born to the people of Israel, and he will destroy all the land of Egypt. If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go forth and be written in the laws of Egypt that every male born to the Hebrews shall be put to death, so that this evil may cease from upon the land of Egypt !'

Parshat Beshalach - Disgust of the Nations = Redemption

And the king did so, and he commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son that is born - into the Nile shall you cast him'" (Exodus 1:22).

Behold, we have a glimpse into the world and hearts of the wicked. We find primarily not evil, not cruelty, but absolute and refined egotism...

The Egyptians thus subjugated a nation to unfair labor from his birth. They justified it and turned them into a nation of slaves. In their view, this was legitimate because it was in their best interest and to their benefit.

Pharaoh merely dreamt a strange dream. It was sufficient that someone said that he dreamt of a danger posed by the nation of slaves - in order to decree the drowning to death of all their infants.

Disgust of the Nations = Redemption

For many long years, the Jewish people were in deep inner turmoil. Their minds and hearts were out of service until further notice...

And this wasn't a temporary or arbitrary decree. Rather: 'And they wrote in the laws of Egypt,' a permanent law like any other.

Why did they go to such vile lengths? 'So that this evil may cease from the land of Egypt.'

What specifically identified 'evil' did they so assuredly know of?

It didn't matter. It was preferable for them to kill all the Jewish infants, so that the Egyptians wouldn't have the slightest imaginary fear of danger... (Rabbi Shalom Meir Wallach, Ma'ayan HaMoed - Pesach Haggadah, page 199, 451):

And so, many long years passed with difficult labor and great suffering, until the time of the redemption arrived...

By the grace of G-d however, they gradually began to 'land' back on the ground and realized, 'These Egyptians are so impure and lowly, how did we admire them?'

Eventually, their desire and will to sanctify and distinguish themselves from the nations of the world emerged.

When this feeling was revealed, the people became prepared for redemption!

Thus, writes the "Sfat Emet" of Gur (Va'era - 5631): "And I

will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt" (Exodus 6:6) - 'burdens' meaning, that they could no longer bear the impurity of Egypt, and it was from this that the redemption sprouted!

Now, let's return to the question we opened with...

Tu B'Shevat - Rectification of the Tree of Knowledge

In Chassidic writings, it is explained that on Tu B'Shevat, one is able to rectify the negative effect of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge.

This is hinted to in the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1): 'The fifteenth of Shevat is the new year for the *tree*,' in the singular term. The tree here refers to the Tree of Knowledge.

The very holiness of this day is suitable for the rectification of the primordial sin – the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. And since the sin was caused by eating, this rectification is achieved through eating with holiness.

Therefore, the Jewish custom is to adorn the table on this day with various fruits, each person according to their means. At the very least, with the fruits of the seven species with which the Land of Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates – as it is said: "A land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey" (Deuteronomy 8:8).

And to bless on this holy day the L-rd for all the goodness He has bestowed upon us, and to pray to the L-rd that He continually bestow upon us goodness and blessing from His full and abundant hand...

Now, in addition to there is another important eating fruits, on this day practice...

The Importance of Self-Examination

As mentioned, on Tu B'Shevat, it is an opportune time to rectify the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and the damage that resulted from it. The main damage being the damage of 'substitution'.

From that time, everything became confused: the barren trees suddenly gained importance, and foreign lands became preferred over the land of Israel.

A gentile suddenly became most charming and significant,

and an unknowledgeable Jew who cannot even control his own self must become the prime minister...

On Tu B'Shevat, we must conduct true soul searching and examination: Has the impurity of the Tree of Knowledge entered us, if so, to what extent?

If we discover that indeed it has, then on this day of Tu B'Shevat, we must rectify this distortion and return to being fruit bearing trees...

Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. In Chassidic writings, it is explained that on Tu B'Shevat, it is possible to rectify the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. This is hinted at by our sages in the Mishnah: 'The new year for the *tree*,' in the singular language. The tree referred to here being the Tree of Knowledge.

The great holiness of this day is conducive for rectifying

the primordial sin – the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Since the sin was caused by consumption, the rectification is likewise achieved through consumption of holiness.

Indeed, it is the holy Jewish custom to adorn the table on this day with various fruits, each according to their capabilities, and

Parshat Beshalach - Some Laws Concerning Tu B'Shevat

at least, with the fruits of the seven species with which the Land of Israel was praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates, and to bless the L-rd for all the goodness He has bestowed upon us, and to pray to the L-rd that He continually bestow upon us goodness and blessing from His open, full, and abundant hand.

2. On Tu B'Shevat, every Jew has the power to merit perpetual renewal. Similar to a tree that each year, on the fifteenth of Shevat, 'sap rises in the tree' - renewing it, so too a person, on this day, is capable of initiating new beginnings in all matters.

3. The renewal of the soul connection between us and G-d is a fundamental aspect of Judaism.

Although the foundation and the basic form of the connection between a Jew and G-d began already with the forefathers of our nation (the holy patriarchs), however, without constant renewal, this connection would deteriorate like a plant without watering. Therefore, every year on this auspicious day, we have the power to strengthen this connection through divine service and repentance.

4. Every Jew is inherently good, and therefore, even when he sins, G-d forbid, the sin does not damage his inner essence. Thus, repentance is possible for a Jew because its role is to return the person to their natural and original state. Through repentance, the Jew's inner and essential goodness is revealed again!

Some Laws Concerning Tu B'Shevat

1. Confession and prostration are not recited on Tu B'Shevat. If Tu B'Shevat falls on Shabbat, 'Tzidkatchah' is not said in the Mincha prayer. The custom is not to say confession and prostration in the Mincha prayer preceding Tu B'Shevat as well.

2. As above mentioned, it is proper on Tu B'Shevat to adorn the table with varied fruits. Some have the custom to engage in special study on this day, reading passages from the Mishnah and Zohar related to the day. One who reads a verse

Parshat Beshalach - Some Laws Concerning Tu B'Shevat

at its proper time brings much goodness to the world. It is also good to study the laws related to Tu B'Shevat, concerning Orlah (forbidden fruit of the first three years), tithes, and the laws concerning the order of the blessings, and so on.

3. When Tu B'Shevat falls on weekdays, according to many opinions, one should not bring fruits to the table after Birkat HaMazon (Grace After Meals) in order to gain an additional blessing, for this may be considered an unnecessary blessing. However, if after-the-fact they were brought following Birkat HaMazon in error, one may bless before and after them as usual.

On Shabbat however, it is permissible - to begin with - to bring the fruits to the table after Birkat HaMazon, in order to reach the required one hundred daily blessings.

4. Some have the custom to prepare the etrog with sugar and make it into jam, eating it on the eve of the fifteenth of Shevat.

One should not recite the blessing of Shehechyanu over it.

A woman however, should recite the Shehechyanu blessing on Tu B'Shevat when eating the etrog, if she did not recite this blessing on the lulav.

5. Fruits that may be infested must be opened and checked before reciting their blessing. Great caution should be exercised to consistently check fruits and vegetables for worms, since eating insects is a severe prohibition, and is a violation of five Torah prohibitions. This act defiles one's soul and distances the heart from the service of G-d.

6. It is advisable to pray on Tu B'Shevat to merit in the coming holiday of Sukkot a beautiful etrog.

As the 'Bnei Yissachar' writes:

“We have received the tradition to pray on Tu B'Shevat for a kosher and beautiful etrog that the L-rd, blessed be He, will provide for us at the time of the performance of this commandment. On this day the

Parshat Beshalach - Some Laws Concerning Tu B'Shevat

sap rises in the trees, and it does so according to the merit of each individual.

How proper is it then for a person to pray on this day - of the

foundational growth of trees - and ask the L-rd to prepare for him the 'fruit of the splendid tree' for the time he will need it. And behold, his prayer will bring forth fruits.”

Shabbat Shalom!





Spreading Torah Around The World

- Israel
 - Ontario
 - Montreal
 - Milan
 - São Paulo
 - Salford
 - Cozumel
 - Barcelona
- Enterp
 - Kingston
 - Toronto
 - Paris
 - Buenos Aires
 - Amsterdam
 - Thailand
 - Texas
- Florida
 - California
 - Kansas
 - Colorado
 - South Carolina
 - Utah
 - Illinois
 - Arizona
- Georgia
 - New York
 - Maryland
 - New Jersey
 - Pennsylvania
 - Guatemala
and more...



to join, dial: +1 (954) 800-6526



Free distribution

Preserve publication sanctity by use of Genizah

**Shabbat Times
Beshalach**

17th of Shevat, 5784



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:47 pm	5:50 pm	6:19 pm
Miami	5:42 pm	6:36 pm	7:12 pm
Los Angeles	5:00 pm	5:58 pm	6:31 pm
Montreal	4:34 pm	5:40 pm	6:05 pm
Toronto	5:02 pm	6:07 pm	6:33 pm
London	4:20 pm	5:34 pm	5:52 pm
Jerusalem	4:52 pm	5:43 pm	6:17 pm
Tel Aviv	4:48 pm	5:39 pm	5:12 pm
Haifa	4:46 pm	5:37 pm	6:10 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:50 pm	5:40 pm	6:14 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

The aspiration of every person should be that when they ascend to Heaven after long and healthy years, they will leave behind children who follow in G-d's ways. In Heaven they will be blessed for raising such wonderful children and regarding their children will be proclaimed the verse "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, Israel in whom I take pride.'"

One must send their children to study in institutions that offer a pure Torah education. If they demand certain high standards, for example to remove television from one's home, one should do so gladly, since the proper education of one's children is worth every effort.



Become a Partner!

For Donations:

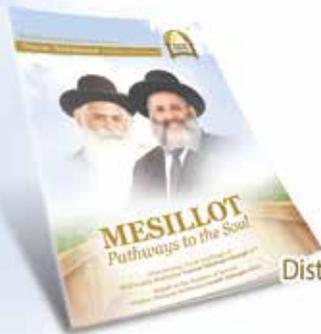
American Friends of Netivot Inc
Signature Bank

Account # 1504470357

261 Madison Avenue New York, NY 10016
Routing # 026013576

Or Visit: Hameir-Laarets.org.il/Donate

RECOGNIZED BY THE IRS AS A 501(C)(3)
TAX DEDUCTIBLE ORGANIZATION



Do You Enjoy Mesilot?

Distribute Pathways to the Soul in Your Synagogue!

Receive Mesilot Weekly Anywhere Worldwide!

- Free of Charge -

Join Now!



Ask The Rabbi!



Media

hameir-laarets.org.il/en

Hameir Laarets

(954) 800-6526

054-870-8737

en@h-l.org.il

Français joindre :	Русский присоединиться:	English to join:	Español Para unirse:	עברית להצטרפות: