

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 136

**Miketz** | Withstanding Trials – A Vessel for Blessings

# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

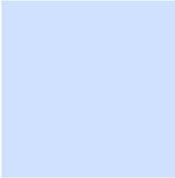
Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha  
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

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



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**DONATE**



# Parshat Miketz

## Tale of the Final War

**On** the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev in the year 3621 to creation, in the 213<sup>th</sup> year to the Second Temple, Greek legionaries entered the temple with a pagan idol in their hands. The priests and Levites turned pale with grief and indignation.

**"What** is this? Why did you bring this here?"

**"This** is your new G-d! Starting today, you must serve him alone! Every day, you must sacrifice a swine to him."

**The** erection of the idol in the temple marked the end of a long period of terror against the Jews. A period during which Jews who wanted to study the Torah and follow its commandments, observe the Sabbath, and circumcise their children, faced cruel torture and execution.

**The** Jews' hearts burned with anger: "how dare they commit such a desecration of G-d's name!"

**Twelve** men, the family of Hasmoneans, decided that they could no longer tolerate this and waGad war against the Greeks, having little if any, chances of success.

**However**, a miracle happened, and they achieved victory after victory. And over time, other Jews joined them as well.

**When** Bagris, the Greek military commander, saw all the military successes of the Hasmoneans, he appealed to Antiochus, the king of Greece:

**"Listen**, these Jews possess some incredible power. They cannot be conquered using our regular units! We need to mobilize all our forces

scattered throughout the empire to conquer Judea!"<sup>1</sup>

**Antiochus**, following Bagris's advice, declared a general mobilization. In a short time, huge armies were gathered, together equipped with the latest military technology of the time: catapults, battering rams, war elephants, horses, dogs, snipers, infantry, and special forces.

**All** these hordes rushed towards the land of Israel, intending to crush any attempt at resistance. Approaching the battlefield, commanders strained their eyes to better see the enemy's forces and determine the strategy of attack. However, there was no enemy...

**After** some consulting, they decided that it's hard to imagine a large army setting up an ambush, and the generals concluded that the enemy simply dispersed, frightened by the sheer number of soldiers.

**However**, after moving forward some distance, they saw a small group of warriors, more resembling a masquerade than a military formation. It all looked so surreal that it wasn't even funny. This handful of "warriors" with kitchen knives, axes, and slingshots would fight against a well-supplied, experienced, and numerous army?

**Even** the toughest and cruelest fighters felt pity for them.

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*Wellsprings of Wisdom*

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**1.** "In the words of the Scroll of Antiochus: 'Bagris spoke up and said to King Antiochus, "You, O king, have commanded the abolishment of the Sabbath, the sanctification of the new moon, as well as circumcision, and their leaders have rebelled.

**Even** if all the nations and peoples of the world come against them, the clan of Matityahu will not be subdued, for

they are strong as lions, light as eagles, and mighty as bears.

**Now**, O king, heed my advice, and do not fight against them with these armies, with few men, for you will have a downfall before all the kings.

**Rather**, send letters to all the provinces of your kingdom, summon the commanders of their armies, have them gather with them all the peoples, and also armored elephants..."

"**Fools!** Do you really think you can fight with us? If each of our soldiers just spits in your direction, you will all drown! Surrender now, saving your lives! Even your G-d cannot defeat us!"

**Upon** hearing such mockery, the Hasmoneans raised their eyes to the heavens:

"**Lord** of the world! How long will Your Great Name be defiled by the nations? Almighty, help us for the sake of Your Great Name, for the sake of Your Glory!"

**Their** prayer was heard. In a miraculous turn of events, defying all logic, the small, untrained, and unequipped Jewish army defeated the Greek empire.<sup>2</sup> Bagris was killed, and Antiochus escaped, earning the nickname "the runner." His ignoble end was not long in coming: one bright sunny day, he decided to jump off his ship and into the sea, never to be heard of again.

"**So** may all Your enemies perish, O Lord!"<sup>3</sup>

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**2. As** described elsewhere: At that moment, the Almighty seized all the celestial angels, who were appointed over the nations of the world, and bound them with threads of burning fire, saying to them: 'Each one must slay the sons of his nation - and if a single man remains alive, your soul will be accountable for theirs.'

**The** heavenly army trembled, 'Since the Almighty created man on earth, such a thing has not occurred,' and immediately all those angels descended, took the weapons of the Greeks and their allies, and plowed them into their hearts, and the verse was fulfilled: "Their swords shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken"

(Psalms 37:15).

**Since** the Hasmonean sons were priests and couldn't defile themselves, the angels came and looted the bodies of the soldiers, bringing all the spoils to the homes of the Jews.

**3. Sometimes,** when the nations of the world transgress beyond repair, G-d has 'no choice' but to punish them severely...

**As** the following story recounted by the Rabbi Avraham Elimelech Shapiro (Mishnas Chachamim, page 38) illustrates:

**Once,** the Haydamaks (bands of marauders in the Polish Ukraine) formed an alliance against the Jews in Ukraine and Poland, launching attacks to kill, destroy, and plunder all their possessions.

**And** this was only the beginning of miracles.

**After** the military victory, the Hasmoneans entered the

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

**In** light of this crisis, the Jews gathered and went to the Maggid of Mezritch to seek advice on what to do in this dire situation and to request that he arouse compassion for the people of Israel.

**The** Maggid listened to their words and covered his face... with his holy eyes, he saw that permission had been granted from heaven for the destroyer to destroy...

**The** Maggid lifted his face, and tears welled up from the corners of his eyes: Hurry, each one should take his family and belongings and flee from here. Hurry !...

**And** so they did. Some of the crowd hurried to the Maggid's study hall to save the Torah scrolls, sacred vessels, and also the menorah that the Maggid lit every Friday evening. The value of this menorah was great, and it had thirty-six branches.

**On** the side of the study hall sat the revered Rabbi Aharon from Karlin, absorbed in his thoughts and did not respond to the unfolding events. However, when they proceeded to uproot the Maggid's menorah, Rabbi Aharon stirred and exclaimed, 'Who dares to touch the Rebbe's menorah !'

**Immediately**, the Hasidim rushed to their Rebbe, the Maggid, and told him Rabbi Aharon's words.

**Upon** hearing this, the Maggid said to the Chassidim: 'Hurry, each should

take his family and enter the study hall !'

**Hundreds** of people, men, women, and children, gathered in the study hall. Rabbi Aharon understood that his Rebbe, the Maggid, had imposed upon him the task of protecting them. He felt this great and heavy responsibility and sent a messenger to his Rebbe, asking for mercy and at the very least some spiritual assistance in nullifying the evil decree. However, his Rebbe, the Maggid, did not respond...

**Rabbi** Aharon continued to pace in the study hall, clutching his garments, and his holy countenance shone with radiance...

**Suddenly**, one of the worshippers approached Rabbi Aharon in distress and excitement, shouting: 'Rebbe ! The marauders are already in the city, and soon they will reach the study hall !...'

**Rabbi** Aharon exited the study hall and stood by the entrance, and as the marauders approached the street where the study hall stood, Rabbi Aharon raised his voice and said: 'Woe, Master of the Universe ! "Why do nations conspire, and peoples plot in vain" (Psalms 2:1)...

**He** had barely finished the verse when the horse of the gang leader began to act wildly in panic, throwing off the leader who landed on his head, dying on the spot... Fear and dread fell upon the rest of the mob, and they fled for their lives...

Temple to cleanse and restore it. Trying to find uncontaminated oil for lighting the menorah (temple lamp), not defiled by the Greeks, they found only one sealed pitcher, containing enough oil for only one day. An incredible miracle occurred, and the oil lasted for eight days.

**In** honor of this miracle, to

this day, we light a special lamp for eight days,<sup>4</sup> starting from the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, we recite praises, and add a special insert in prayers and blessings after meals: the 'Al HaNissim' prayer (for the miracles).

**Before** we analyze an aspect of the 'Al HaNissim', let's go back in time...

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**4. Rabbi** Mordechai Garelitz (in his book "Besod Avadecha," Volume 3, page 47) relates the following:

**Twice** a year, on Chanukah and Shavuot, Reb Gad, from the nearby town of Zitomir, would ascend to see and be seen by his mentor, the righteous and holy Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin.

**Reb** Gad, a devoted Chassid in every aspect, was steadfast in his commitment, ascending to Ruzhin on schedule. Neither rain nor stormy winds during the rainy days, nor scorching heat in the hot summer days hindered his pilgrimage.

**There**, near his holy teacher, Reb Gad replenished his spiritual treasury with the essential means of sustenance for the Jewish soul. He drew close to the cistern of love for Torah and fear of Heaven, which affixed him firmly on his feet and poured vitality of holiness into his soul.

**The** days spent in Ruzhin were sacred, and the subsequent days and weeks, until his next journey, were a continuation of the lofty spiritual acquisitions he made there.

**During** the Chanukah in our story, winter revealed its formidable strength. The biting cold and relentless storms were draining, but even more burdensome were the heavy snowfalls that persisted for weeks on end.

**This** was the first time that Reb Gad's family attempted to dissuade him from his regular trip to Ruzhin.

"**Can't** you postpone your trip for after Chanukah?" his wife tried to convince him.

"**Isn't** there a genuine danger to life associated with traveling in such extreme weather conditions?" His wife expressed concern.

**But** Reb Gad, bold and resilient in his conviction, was like a fearless eagle; no winds in the world could move him from

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his place. He was willing to give up everything and postpone anything, aside from these days of soulful tranquility. If he didn't travel for blessings for his livelihood and sustenance, these would be adversely affected. In this situation, weather conditions are not taken into consideration.

**Thus**, Reb Gad set out on his journey despite all obstacles. His wagon, deep in the snowdrifts, moved slowly, the wheels immersed in the tightly packed snow covering the landscape.

**In** one of the villages along the way, Reb Gad had a fixed lodging arrangement with the local Jewish innkeeper. He used to stay overnight in this inn on each of his journeys to Ruzhin. Following the local custom, he would leave his hometown early in the morning, reach the village around the time of the afternoon prayer, pray the afternoon and evening prayers, light the Chanukah candles, break bread with an evening meal, and stay there until morning. After the Shacharit prayer, he would continue his journey and arrive in Ruzhin by early afternoon. This was his customary practice every time.

**However**, this time, due to the slow progress of the wagon on the rough, snow-covered roads, Reb Gad did not reach the village (where his lodgings were) until midnight. It was indeed a great miracle that he managed to guide the horses in the complete darkness that had settled with the falling hail, for he had never before traveled that route after nightfall, especially when almost a layer of snow covered the track from view.

**Despite** the late hour, the innkeeper responded to the urgent knocking on the door and opened it to welcome his familiar guest with a warm and earnest expression. Quickly, the dim candle in the guest room was relit, and a hearty evening meal was served at the table, which would undoubtedly help to revive the frozen limbs of the guest.

**However**, Reb Gad was not at ease. He still had to pray the evening prayer and light the Chanukah candle before joining the meal. The host's urging barely convinced him to have a cup of tea from the boiling kettle before his prayer. But as for the meal – it would have to wait until after he finished praying and lighting the Chanukah candle in his designated room.

**Finally** later that night the host returned to his bed, leaving darkness and silence to reign in the house. Only in Reb Gad's room did the sparks of the Chanukah candles still flicker, his eyes glistening with emotion. Yet, as he gazed at the candles, weariness overcame him as well, his tired body sinking into a deep sleep.

**Half** an hour had not yet passed and the silence was once again shattered by knocking on the door. Before anyone in the household could reach the door to open it, the knocks intensified and turned into banging, accompanied by wild shouts and cries from outside.

**A** shadow of death fell upon the entire household, freezing their blood. They all stood in silent shock, like statues nailed to their places, no one moved a hand or a foot to approach the door. The door was

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forcibly broken open, and a gang of ruthless bandits stormed in with wild yells, much like a pack of demonic spirits.

**In** a matter of moments, the marauders tied up the guests and their hosts with ropes, and began to plunder whatever they found in the house. First, they set to the barrel of whiskey they found in the lobby, and then they divided themselves into two groups – one collecting household items and gathering anything valuable, while the other packed the loot and valuables into bags and boxes, preparing them for their journey ahead.

**Reb** Gad sat on his bed in his room, pale as death, his heart pounding with fear. Somehow, his existence had vanished from the sight of the invaders, and when they tied up the rest of the family, they ignored his room. Now, peering through the cracks, his eyes saw and comprehended there was no escape route before him. He saw a sharp sword placed on the necks of the family members, and on his own neck. The intruders behaved as if they were in their own home, moving around and looting from cupboard to cupboard and room to room. Soon, they would reach his room too. They all wore belts with swords by their side, undoubtedly prepared to shed innocent blood. When they reached his room, they might, heaven forbid, kill him on the spot.

**On** the spur of the moment, Reb Gad took in his hands the Zohar book that accompanied him frequently, both at home and on his journeys. He opened it wherever it opened and began reading from it fervently, surrendering himself

and entrusting his spirit and soul into the hands of his Heavenly Father.

**His** spirit stirred within him, and Reb Gad forgot for a moment where he was and in what kind of a situation he now found himself. As he raised his voice in excitement, the head bandit caught on to his words. With a mighty kick, he burst open the door of the room, nearly dislodging the doorframe entirely.

**Upon** hearing the commotion, Reb Gad fell silent, closed his eyes, his lips whispering the Shema Yisrael prayer, preparing himself to accept the divine judgment with love. However, much to his surprise, a deep silence overcame the room.

**Reb** Gad opened his eyes and saw before him the most formidable of bandits. Armed from head to toe with menacing weapons, his hair and beard unruly like a wild beast, and fierce as an evening storm. His clothing was stained with blood, replacing the usual insignias of battles fought. He stood there, facing Reb Gad, bewildered and stunned, thunderstruck, piercing him with sharp glances – first at Reb Gad, and then at the flickering Chanukah candles.

**After** a long moment that seemed eternal, the loud voice of the bandit echoed in the room: "Gad ? From the Zhitomir region ?"

**"Yes !"** - Reb Gad answered, still in shock.

**"Huh ?!"** Chanukah today ?" - the bandit continued, his voice fading.

**"Yes !"** - Reb Gad uttered with fear.

**"What** are you reading ?" - the bandit asked.

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**Reb** Gad remained silent.

**The** bandit pointed to the open book in Reb Gad's hands and declared, "Ah, Zohar!"

**Reb** Gad was entirely bewildered, beside himself out of sheer astonishment.

"**Do** you know me?" - the bandit whispered, lowering his voice.

"**No!**" - Reb Gad replied firmly.

"**I'm** Izzy Pappar," the bandit whispered, revealing his identity.

**Reb** Gad's entire body convulsed. Trembling on his seat, his bed rocked beneath him. A moment more, and he would have collapsed. However, at that very moment, the bandit's head fell on Reb Gad's neck, embracing him with all his might, and he began shedding hot tears that streamed like rivers from his eyes.

**After** the emotional outburst, the bandit left the room, and upon hearing a sharp whistle from his lips, he gathered his gang of robbers around him.

"**Orders!**" - he declared.

**The** entire gang stood silent, waiting for his words.

"**Immediately** release the captives," he commanded, "return all the loot to its place, get on the wagons and horses, and... vanish in the blink of an eye! I will come after you!"

**The** command was executed with astonishing obedience. In a short time, almost no trace was left of the turmoil that had unfolded in the place.

**As** the storm subsided into stillness, the leader of the bandits began to speak.

"**Firstly,**" he said, "you must recite the blessing of 'Hagomel' thanking G-d for your miraculous rescue, since only a thread separated between you and a certain death. If not for my sudden encounter with Reb Gad, a dear friend from my youth, and if not for the sparks of the Chanukah candles that raced in his room against my eyes, none of you would have survived to escape!"

"**Secondly,**" he continued, "do not see me anymore as a bandit, for from this moment on, I have severed my ties with the gang, even if this means that they might return here, and kill me! I have decided so, and I will not change! Consider me now, a man in repentance!"

**Now,** I will recount to you the adventures that befell me and brought me here to the state I'm in:

**You** surely remember, Gad, those blissful days when we sat together and toiled in Torah study in the study hall in our hometown. We were close friends, engaged day and night in the realms of Abaye and Rava. We saw the divine blessing in our learning...

**Only** marriage separated us when I was called to study and be supported by my father-in-law, who was the tax collector in one of the villages.

**Even** in the village, Torah was my daily bread. I was completely reliant on the table of my father-in-law and didn't need to raise a finger to toil and bring in my own earnings. All my hours were

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in my hands to dedicate to Torah study, providing me absolute peace of mind.

**However**, who can describe the power and strength of the evil inclination, which comes to a person with light and trivial suggestions, but before long, that which seemed small and meaningless brings in its wake greater and weightier deeds - 'until it demands go and worship foreign gods !'

**The** following such incident occurred to me:

**One** day, while I was engrossed in my studies, immersed in the intricacies of the Talmud - debating, analyzing, and delving into profound discussions, my wife knocked on my door.

"**Indeed**, blessed are you, for you engage in Torah," my wife exclaimed. "For, from heaven, they have designated for you a decent windfall of wealth !"

**I** wondered and asked: Why do I need such a windfall ? Perhaps, God forbid, my father-in-law has passed away, and I must abandon my studies to pursue wealth ?

**God** forbid - she replied - however, I just saw a group of gentiles come to my father's estate, and from their words, it was apparent that they earned a considerable sum of money in their business dealings. Yet, alas, they are clueless when it comes to distributing it among themselves fairly. They don't know how to divide it properly ! Therefore, I thought to myself, since God endowed you with wisdom, and you can solve their dilemma and untangle their knots effortlessly - why not go to be

of service to them for a brief moment, and they will reward you handsomely ? !

**I** pondered the matter in my heart and found no objection to it. I arose, closed the Talmud, and followed her advice. In a short time, I indeed succeeded in resolving their dispute, and they, overjoyed at the solution to their problem and impressed by my knowledge, generously rewarded me.

**Indeed**, my heart was at peace afterward, although from their words, I learned to suspect that these gains were not earned through righteous endeavors but through deceitful means. However, I said to myself: Why should I care ? !  
What do I have to do with them ? !

**A** few weeks later, my wife arrived, bearing good news in her mouth: These gentiles are quarreling again...

**I** told her: Know that my soul does not pursue these profits, as my heart is not at peace. Must I drop my Talmudic studies to chase after their ill-gotten gains ? !

**She** reproached me, saying: Foolish one ! Are you their partner in their dealings, why should you care about the source of the money, are you not merely a mediator and arbitrator between them ? !

**After** I agreed with her this time as well, these gentiles became regular visitors, and they would come on their own, time after time, for me to arbitrate and settle their profits among them. Within a short period, I already knew for certain that ill-gotten gains and robbery were involved, but my heart was no longer troubled, and I continued to serve as their arbitrator and judge !

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**Indeed** how true are the words of our sages (Yoma 86a): 'Once a person commits a transgression and repeats it - it becomes permitted - it appears to him like a permitted matter!'...

**In** such a manner, several years passed, and I became an actual partner with them. True, I did not physically participate in their deeds, but I knew all their robberies and controlled all their secrets.

**One** midnight, one of the gang members appeared before me, fearful and bewildered, and recounted that their gang had encountered a landowner in his carriage in the depths of the nearby forest who turned out to be a formidable opponent.

**They** couldn't overcome him or subdue him, and they urgently needed reinforcements.

**I** was terrified to the depths of my soul, and I cried out in a desperate voice: "Why do you expect me to become a partner in your deeds?!"

**He** replied to me: "Know that if caught, we will reveal your name as a member of the gang! It's not possible for you to enjoy our pleasures, and then, in times of trouble, not fight alongside us!"

**My** wife listened in to their conversation, and she immediately pleaded that I help them so that no harm befall us by revealing my name to authorities.

**The** leader of the robbers shook his head "Indeed, I left - and I have not returned since! After actively participating once in a robbery, I began to sink into the abyss,

descent after descent, until I abandoned my home and family, joining a gang of thieves. Over time, I even became their leader and guide - and in that capacity, you met me tonight in your house."

**The** man concluded his story "Just as I saw Reb Gad's face, my dear friend since youth, with whom I grew up steeped in Torah and fear of God, recognizing him instantly, a pure spark that had been hidden and almost extinguished in the depths of my soul suddenly ignited.

**I** felt a kind of enormous buzz settling on my skull, cracking the terrible shell of sin that had enveloped me. In that instant, the Chanukah sparks shone and illuminated, their holy flames reminiscent of the candles of Chanukah. I remembered their hidden meaning - the pure selected oil that is protected, warding off impurity from reaching it - and I understood that they hinted at that remaining spark within me, untainted even after I descended into the abyss. I knew with certainty that I would remain here! Whether alive or dead! I will not return to the marauding gang ever again!...

**As** he finished his story, the man collapsed to the ground, in a terrible cry that persisted until morning...

**This** time, Reb Gad did not come to Ruzhin alone. This time he had a companion..

**Following** his visit, Reb Gad returned home alone. The companion remained there, rectifying his soul...

## The Ascent of Greece

**In** the year 2448 to the creation of the world, the people of Israel left Egypt. After 40 years of wandering in the desert, the Jews entered the Promised Land. The portable Tabernacle continued to exist for 480 years, moving from place to place until the construction of the First Temple began in 2928. However, the people of Israel did not maintain a high level of G-d-fearing and service to the Creator. After 410 years of the Temple's existence, our sins led to the destruction of the Temple, and the people of Israel were expelled from their land, heading to Babylon.

**After** seventy years of exile, the people returned to their land and rebuilt the Temple, in the year 3408. These were bright and hopeful days. Although Israel was still dependent on Persia, they did not interfere much in Israel's internal politics. Ezra and Nehemiah, the Prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Mordecai, Hananiah, and others), and the sages of the

Torah, who together formed the 120 member Great Assembly, led the people. They devoted all their efforts to restoring the people to their exalted level of divine service, and succeeded. Many decrees, as well as the establishment of the fixed and permanent text of prayers and blessings, date back to this period.

**Time** passed. Nehemiah, by the king's order, was forced to return to Persia. Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died. For the first 34 years off the first Temple, the Jews lived in their land in peace and tranquility. However, in the year 3442 from the creation of the world, a new player appeared on the world stage: Greece.

**A** nineteen-year-old youth ascended the throne of Greece. Initially, some doubted his ability to govern the state due to his young age, but soon all doubts were dispelled. The young ruler was a highly educated disciple of Aristotle and wisely governed the country. Under his leadership,

culture and science reached unprecedented heights.

**On** the military front, he had no equals, effortlessly conquering country after country, promoting Hellenistic ideals everywhere. His name was Alexander the Great. Any conquered country was obliGad to adopt Greek laws and culture. For many, this was a beacon of light: a highly developed culture, philosophy, science, and architecture. Scholars and philosophers with extensive knowledge, theaters and stadiums, sports, and poetry—all of this was met with great enthusiasm by the uneducated

pagans in the neighboring lands.

**The** Greeks were on top of the world, they had an important task – to ‘enlighten’ the entire world. With great enthusiasm, they set out to achieve this, capturing one country after another and imposing their culture there.<sup>5</sup>

**However**, in relation to a small sliver of land in the Middle East, they were, for some reason, unsuccessful. Upon entry to the land of Israel, the Greeks did not find the usual worship and adoration of their culture but discovered a people

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**5. In** the holy language, the form, numerical value, and position of a letter in a word hold significance. Examining the Hebrew spelling of "Greece" (יִוּן), where Hebrew is read from right to left, we observe that a person is fully drawn in, starting from the small.

**In** the Tanakh, the concept of טיין (clinging mud) is mentioned, spelled the same way as "Greece" in Hebrew. Undoubtedly, this is not by chance. Just as clinging mud sucks a person in, so does the Greek worldview. While Greek culture encompasses positive aspects

such as beauty, sports, and science, these are beneficial only when pursued for the sake of the Creator. Constructing a beautiful synagogue for the Creator, a woman adorning herself for her husband, or engaging in sports for a healthy body in service to the Creator are positive actions.

**However**, when the means become the end — studying science for the sake of knowledge itself, building a beautiful structure for the sake of beauty alone, or bodybuilding for the sake of appearing muscular — this reflects Greek philosophy.

in which even the small children read and possessed extraordinary knowledge, far above the Greek wisdoms.

**Alexander** the Great was a relatively fair ruler and left the Jews in relative peace. However, 143 years later, Greece was ruled by Antiochus Epiphanes. He was consumed by intense envy and fierce hatred. Unable to bear the shame of there being a culture more advanced than the Greek one, Antiochus decided to draw the Jews closer to Greek culture by any means necessary – either the carrot or the stick.

**Throughout** the land of Israel, stadiums and "cultural centers" were built with the most "benevolent intentions": to give people the opportunity to relax from the daily hardships of life. The fact was that in these establishments the body was idolized, and all modesty laws were trampled upon.

**Unfortunately**, there were Jews who were drawn to the opulence offered by Greek culture.

**These** "enlightened" Jews become fans of Greek culture. They were called "Mityavnim" (Hellenized, from the word Yavan - Greece).

**Antiochus** was pleased with every Jew caught in his nets. To encourage additional masses among the Jews to Hellenize, he appointed Hellenists to high positions.

**Nevertheless**, he was still far from achieving the goal. Summoning the general staff, he ordered them to mobilize forces and direct them at Judea. Upon entering Israel, the soldiers began a mass slaughter of the noncompliant. Under the threat of death, the study of the Torah, observance of the Sabbath, and circumcision were forbidden. Agents were dispatched across the country to identify the obstinate and pious Jews and to punish them to the full extent of the law.

**Many** Jews decided to hide in the mountains to continue serving the Creator there. At some point, the Greeks realized that to conquer a people, they had to strike at the heart. This heart was the Temple.

## Parshat Miketz - Strange Dreams

**On** the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev in the year 3621, the 213<sup>th</sup> year to the Second Temple, the Greeks invaded it with the intention of defiling everything they could.

**As** for their end, we have already recounted at the start. The war had ended, the

Hasmoneans entered the Temple, cleansed it of all impurity, and lit the lights of the Menorah. As many scholars write, the Hellenized Jews ended up returning to their roots!

**Let** us dwell next on our weekly Torah portion...

### Strange Dreams

**Our** weekly Torah portion begins with the story of Pharaoh's dreams. In the first dream, he sees seven fat cows rising from the Nile, followed by seven skinny cows. The skinny ones swallow the fat ones, but it doesn't affect them – they remain as skinny as before. In the second dream, something similar happens, but with ears of grain.

**“And** it came to pass in the morning: his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men, and Pharaoh told them his dreams: but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.”

**Pharaoh** woke up in a cold sweat, realizing that these

dreams were to warn him about something, but what?

**And** then the cupbearer "remembers" Joseph...

**Joseph** appears before Pharaoh and interprets his dreams: seven years of abundance will be followed by seven years of severe famine, and preparations had to be made.

**Rabbi** Ze'ev Tzvi Klein asks:

**How** come none of the Egyptian priests thought of this relatively simple explanation to this dream?

He answered:

**The** Egyptians could not interpret the dream because Pharaoh saw in his dream things

that contradicted the natural course of events. According to the laws of nature, the strong consumes the weak. For the local sorcerers and interpreters, who were raised with a materialistic worldview, this was incomprehensible.

**However**, Joseph, raised with faith in the Creator, saw nothing strange and immediately said, "what the Almighty will do, he has related to Pharaoh." The Almighty not only rules this world, but He

governs it. He created the world with its laws, and He changes them as necessary.

**And** Joseph continued and said: "The events of my life will testify as well, for G-d has brought me out of the prison's confinement, and from the ashes he raises the poor, and a throne of glory he will inherit..."<sup>6</sup>

**Now**, for the explanation of the 'Al HaNissim' text:

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**6. Joseph** the Righteous succeeded with the power of his words of faith to illuminate the darkened souls of Pharaoh and his sorcerers. Through the light he shed in their souls, at those moments, all their materialism was nullified, and they achieved the mighty level of Abraham who sat all day immersed in Torah study. Therefore, they nullified themselves to him and said: "From now on, you shall be the ruler!"

"**Pharaoh** made him ride in the second chariot to the king, and they called out before him, 'all must bow the knee!'... (Genesis 41:43).

**This** power of illuminating faith is revealed every year during the holy days of Chanukah. Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk,

known as the Meshech Chochmah, explains that the term "tarmudei" mentioned in the Talmud (Shabbat 21b), referring to the time for lighting the Chanukah candles, is derived from the Aramaic word "tarmud," meaning rebellion. Our sages hinted that there is power in the intense light that shines from the Chanukah candles to illuminate even the hearts of those farthest from the ways of God – those who rebel intentionally against the Creator and transgress His will. The goal is to inspire them with thoughts of repentance until the rebels leave their state, and everyone returns in complete repentance.

**Therefore**, we light the Chanukah candles at the entrance of the house or in a window facing the public domain, not inside the house in a private domain. The essence of Chanukah is to bring the light

### Eight Thanksgivings

**Our** sages decreed that during the eight days of Chanukah, we light the Chanukah candles and add a special insertion in the three daily prayers (evening, morning, and afternoon) and in the blessing after meals – the ‘Al HaNissim’ prayer.

The text reads as follows:

“**In** the days of Mattathias, son of Johanan the high priest the Hasmonean, and his sons, when the evil Greek kingdom rose against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the laws of Your will, You, in Your great mercy, stood by them in their time of distress and

1. fought for them,
2. judged for them,

3. avenged for them,
4. delivered the strong into the hands of the weak,
5. and the many into the hands of the few,
6. the impure into the hands of the pure,
7. and the wicked into the hands of the diligent in Your Torah,
8. and made for Yourself a great and holy name in Your world and to Your people Israel, You granted a great salvation and liberation to this day.

**Then** Your children entered the Holy of Holies of Your house, cleansed Your temple, purified Your sanctuary, kindled lights in

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of holiness even to those furthest away, immersed in impurity and shells that are considered a "public domain" due to their distance from the holiness categorized as a "private domain" because it belongs to the unique realm of the Almighty.

**Therefore**, the Rebbe instructed his Chassidim and emissaries worldwide to light giant Chanukah menorahs in central

locations in every city and country globally – at intersections, hospitals, military bases, and various other places. This is to bring all the Jews in the world, without exception, into the holy light of the Chanukah holiday.

**On** Chanukah, we all take responsibility and strive to illuminate the souls of all Jewish sons and daughters!

the courtyards of Your sanctuary, and established these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great name.”

**In** the text of this insertion, the sages decreed to thank the

Creator for various miracles done for us. Why did the sages not decree to thank G-d in this prayer for all the Hellenized who returned to the bosom of the Jewish faith?

### **Free Choice vs Divine Assistance**

**In** a lesson given by Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kahan, he said:

**"The** Creator, blessed be He, gave to the righteous, the ability to temporarily change the laws He established in this world. Thanks to this, they can perform miracles. However, all the miracles performed by the righteous pale in comparison to the greatest miracle of all: to help someone with freedom of choice choose good over bad.

**Everything** that exists in our world is dictated by the will of the Creator. That is - almost everything. Being G-d-fearing is a decision a person makes, it is not compulsory from above.

**When** the Hasmoneans drove out the Greeks and resumed service in the Temple, they performed the great miracle of awakening the Jewish hearts from their slumber, and even those most distant returned to the Creator. "Hellenization" remained in the trash heaps of history.

**This** strengthens the question mentioned above:

**Why** don't we thank the Creator for this, it being perhaps the greatest miracle of all Chanukah events?

**To** understand this, let us first discuss the purpose of creation...

### **Creation - from Ruins to Edifice**

**King** Solomon, the wisest of all men, revealed to us:

**"For** a man goes to his eternal home..."

**Parshat Miketz - The Soul's Expansion by Trial**

**Each** person builds his world with his own hands. This spiritual world one has built accompanies them everywhere and is where the divine presence dwells. This world is also where they receive their reward. In order to know how to build this world, the Almighty has revealed to us how He built the world. Of the many aspects involved, we will focus on one.

**The** world, with all its beauty and complex laws, evokes our amazement and admiration. "How manifold are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom, You have made them all; the earth is full of Your creatures!"

**However**, our sages reveal to us that before our world reached its current calm state, it experienced certain cataclysms. "Rabbi Aba said: before our Creator created the world, He created and destroyed worlds."

**Before** the world solidified into what we are familiar with

today, it was in a state of collapse!

**Similarly**, darkness always precedes light, and just before dawn, darkness intensifies.

**The** Creator arranged it so that in everything, before light (success) shines, one must go through darkness and confusion.

**Before** a person receives enlightenment in the service of the Creator, he must go through difficult times and situations when he cannot fulfill his desires, and any success seems far from him.

**Only** after he has passed through all the darkness, obstacles, and his soul has suffered from various setbacks, weaknesses, fractures, trials, hardships, and sufferings; only after all this, does a person merit to stand firmly on solid ground and receive the light of the Creator.

**To** expand on this theme:

**The Soul's Expansion by Trial**

**One** of the fundamental concepts in the teachings of

Kabbalah is that every light requires a vessel. In other

words, any good coming from heaven needs a vessel to receive it. Without a vessel, there is no receptacle for that good.

**Similarly**, when the Almighty wants to elevate and strengthen a person's soul, it is required that the soul be a suitable vessel to receive the good. The path to making the soul a suitable vessel often involves struggle.

**There** is a well-known rule in Kabbalah and Chassidut: non-being always precedes being. That is, before something new is created, the previous reality must be nullified. Like a seed in the ground, initially, it completely decays, and only then does a tree grow from it.

**Similarly**, with a person, the great strength of a person's spiritual powers is revealed when he is in darkness, in the concealment of the

divine light. When one overcomes all difficulties, they gain abilities that stay with them for life.

**The** trial reveals in a person strengths they never suspected before. These strengths, lying dormant within, were waiting for their moment, and now, manifested, they remain with them forever.

**Therefore**, in a difficult time, a person should remember that he is building new vistas in his soul. One should not fear from what seems like the concealment of the Creator's face; instead, one must know how to use this situation for their spiritual advancement, to get even closer to the Creator.

**"I** am encompassed by the ropes of death, and the troubles of the grave have found me. I find trouble and sorrow; then I call on the Name of G-d."

### Hold On!

**During** difficult trials, a person must hold steadfast with faith, otherwise he may have a downfall, G-d forbid!

**Rabbi** Yitzchak Isaac of Komarno writes:

**"Indeed**, my brothers and friends, how much bitterness

## Parshat Miketz - Two States of the Soul

a person must initially endure...

**Elsewhere** he writes "if you see a Torah scholar who has left the righteous path for wicked ways, know that the reason is, having gone through difficult trials, they could not endure...

**Truthfully**, not only at first, when one only begins to take on the yoke of Torah, do they feel a deadly bitterness, but even a perfectly righteous person can constantly and daily go through bitter trials, all this intended to bring him onto the path of the

righteous, and to the light of life.

**If** one accepts on themselves the bitterness, and continues divine service with commitment and self sacrifice, the Almighty gives them the taste of the enjoyment of the future world, already here in this world, and all the bitterness turns into sweetness, bringing light to the soul. Just be silent, my brother, be silent, take on everything with love, and then you will be worthy of a [special] divine light..."

**Let** us process to describe the nature of this bitterness the soul exclusives during trials.

## Two States of the Soul

**As** is well known, a person is created from two polar elements: the material body and the divine soul. The soul is a spiritual reality containing vast powers and possibilities.

**The** manifestations of the soul can be further divided into two main states: expansion and contraction.

**The** location of the manifestation of the soul is the human brain. From there, it

extends to the heart, where it clothes itself in blood and then, together with the blood, spreads throughout the body, as written: "For the blood is the soul."

**Our** Sages reveal that the soul's highest experience is pleasure. Therefore, pleasure affects the root of a person. When the soul experiences pleasure, it illuminates and enlivens the wisdom (חכמה) in the brain, which then, through the heart and blood,

**Parshat Miketz - "With Joy, You Shall Go Forth"**

spreads throughout the body. This expression is called 'expansion'.

**However**, when the soul feels repelled by something, it "contracts" into itself, influencing all the senses to distance from

that particular subject. This is called 'contraction'. In a state of contraction, when they must put up with a difficulty or a trial, a person feels sadness and bitterness.

**"With Joy, You Shall Go Forth"**

**Until** now, we discussed that every Jew must go through difficulties and sufferings, through which he builds his inner world. We also talked about how, during suffering, a person's ability to experience pleasure contracts, leading to a potential crushing feeling.

**However**, there is a way to endure despite all situations that may happen to a person.

**In** many Chassidic books, it

is mentioned that when a person is in a joyful state, despite all his sufferings, this joy brings him out of a contracted state to expansiveness, from suffering to prosperity and flourishing.

**"For** with joy, you shall go forth."

**Being** in a state of joy, a person emerges from any and all adversities they may face.<sup>7</sup>

**Let** us Now return to the Hellenizers...

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**7. In** the lesson given by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel (cited in "Imrei Noam" Chapter Ki Tavo, Article 4), he spoke extensively on this matter. An excerpt of his words:

**Every** person has the obligation to wage a fierce battle against sadness, using all their strength to acquire joy because joy is the source of life for the people of Israel, as it is said: "Let Israel rejoice in its Maker" (Psalms 149:2). A joyful person

is like a burning lamp, while a sad person is like an extinguished one.

**The** secret of success is that no matter what happens to you, whether you face difficulties at home or at work, whatever may be, do not let go of the quality of joy even for a moment. Children should also be accustomed to this, not allowing them to fall into sadness. Give them some sweetness they love, just to keep them joyful.

## Darkness Over the Abyss

**142** years ago, on Chanukah in the year 5642, the "Sfat Emet" sat with his Chassidim and said to them: "We must know that during the Temple times too, one had to strive to reach their inner essence."

**The** Jews of that time went through trials and felt a contraction in their souls, much like we may feel today.

**At** that time, Greek culture began to rapidly spread. Turning

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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A person should always radiate joy—to his wife, children, grandchildren, to everyone around him; always be a source of joy.

**There** might be a teacher who is always embittered. When students hear that he hasn't come, they are happy because they suffer greatly from his embittered nature.

**Or** it could be a commander, very meticulous and harsh; his subordinates can barely tolerate him. Unpleasant to say, but sometimes they eagerly await the day when he will leave this world during some military operation. They cannot stand his sadness.

**You** shouldn't be the kind of person whose departure everyone anticipates because his sour expression brings a sense of sadness to people. On the contrary, be so joyful that people eagerly await your arrival, as all the time you spend with people, you bring them joy.

**If** a person had an understanding of how important joy is, he would dance with joy all day, even in the middle of the street. One must always be joyful. Just as a

person needs fuel to drive their car; otherwise, it won't go, he should fuel himself with joy because the Creator created the world in such a way that joy is the engine pushing everything forward.

**When** a person is joyful, a special connection is formed with the Almighty, as it is written: "Strength and joy are in His dwelling place" (Divrei Hayamim Alef 16:27). A Jew should know that when he is filled with joy, the Almighty is glorified through him, as it is said: "And He said to me: You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isaiah 49:3). Every Jew who possesses the quality of joy has the Almighty dwelling with him. In a joyful home, the Divine Presence resides...

(Undoubtedly, a reasonable question arises: you mentioned that it is crucial to be joyful. But how? With my negative balance in the bank, such a wife, and neighbors, government, and taxes... How? Of course, it doesn't work automatically; this needs to be worked on diligently and persistently. But let us take to heart what has been said here because when a person grasps the importance of a particular thing, he will strive with all his might to obtain it.)

**Parshat Miketz - "And The Sons Shall Return"**

to the Jews, the Greeks attempted to convince them: "Join us. We live and enjoy the now and here!"

**And** Jews who were in the process of spiritual attainment felt the bitterness of the spiritual trial and contraction and, often not withstanding the test, broke and began to feverishly seek pleasure, and began to look outward, towards the enticing Greek culture.

**However**, having tasted the "pleasures" of Greek culture, they realized that all the enjoyments it offered did not lead to the desired goal: the expansion of the soul. The feeling of a lack, and a dissatisfaction, persisted. The soul longed for something bigger and better.

**They** were aware of the bitterness filling them but found no strength within themselves to return. In a desperate attempt to 'quiet their conscience,' they

immersed themselves deeper and deeper into the darkness of Greek impurity.

**"The** earth was unformed and void, and darkness formed over the abyss."

**In** the Midrash, it is said that in this verse, there is an allusion to all four exiles that were to befall the Jews. 'Darkness' represents the Greek exile, which blinded and darkened the eyes of the people of Israel.

**Then**, the Almighty had mercy on His people and cast the Greeks down from the heights they had climbed.

**The** "Sfat Emet" continues: When the Jews saw the great miracle, the souls of Israel were all elevated, since the potential of the people of Israel is such that in one moment, they can return to the Source of holiness within them.

**"And The Sons Shall Return"**

**"The** greatness of the Jewish soul is that it is part of the Living G-d. Moreover, a Jew and the

Creator are, as it were, one whole. That is, regardless of the state a Jew is in, his very essence

is always connected with holiness and with G-dliness.

**There** is an internal and hidden part in the soul, not subject to any external factors. This part is directly connected to the Creator and this is in fact the essence of a Jew."

**It** is for this reason that the Ba'al Shem Tov said that the essence of G-d is revealed specifically in the essence and plainness of a Jew - in the very existence of the Jew as it is, stripped of any level and quality.

**In** divine service, this simplicity is expressed in the work of nullification and putting aside one's existence before the divine, and through this nullification and unity with the divine, all Jews are revealed to be equal.

**Through** this connectedness with the essence of their souls, which envelops and penetrates their entire existence, their entire being unites with the essence of the Creator."

**Thanks** to the miracle that occurred in those days, the darkness of Greece dissipated, and the inner essence of the Jew shone in all its splendor.

**The** Hasmoneans opened the eyes of all the nation of Israel, and the entire nation returned to their natural state.

**Now** it is clear why the sages did not decree a special mention of this miracle.

**A** Jew returning to his Creator is not a miracle.

**It** is his natural place !



## Summary And Practical Conclusions

**A.** Every descent from Heaven requires a vessel to receive it, and without a vessel, the descending abundance has no significance. Therefore, when the Almighty wants to bestow new abundance upon the soul of a person, to fortify, enlarge, and strengthen it, there must be a vessel worthy of receiving that abundance. The only way to achieve this vessel is through facing challenges !

**B.** In human beings, the empowering of the soul's faculties occurs especially when one is in darkness and concealment. By overcoming challenges properly, one receives new strengths, which remain with them throughout life. The challenges reveal the great powers of the soul that were previously hidden within.

**C.** When facing difficulties and struggles, the human soul is in danger, and without knowing how to strengthen oneself, there is a risk of falling and shattering. However, if a person decides to endure and persevere

despite all bitterness, G-d, in His abundant mercy, transforms it into everlasting delight in this world. All the bitterness turns sweet, becoming light for the soul.

**D.** Whoever undergoes great trials and bitterness should know that joy is the source of salvation from all those troubles. As the verse implies, "For with joy, you shall go forth." By being joyful, one transcends all the difficulties in the world, as joy has the power to shatter all the challenges and judgments that befall a person, causing all troubles to disappear.

**E.** It is incumbent upon every individual to wage war against sadness and strive with all their might to be joyful. Joy is the source of life for the entire people of Israel. The principle is that a joyful person is like a lit lamp, while a sorrowful person is like an extinguished lamp. No matter what one goes through, even if there are difficulties at home or work, they should always, without a moment's

**Parshat Miketz - Shabbat Shalom And Happy Chanukah!**

pause, maintain the measure of joy. Children should also be educated in this way, preventing them from falling into sadness.

**F.** A person must always radiate only joy – to their spouse, children, grandchildren, students, and anyone in their vicinity – always being a source of joy. If one understands the greatness of joy, they would dance with joy all day, even in the middle of the street. One must be in a state of joy all the time. Just as a car cannot move without fuel,

similarly, one must be in joy, for G-d created the world in such a way that joy propels everything forward.

**G.** A person who is always joyful connects thereby with the Almighty. A Jew should know that every time they are filled with joy, the Almighty takes pride in them. Every Jew possessing the trait of joy, G-d immediately dwells within them. The Almighty seeks where to enter, and as soon as He sees a house filled with joy, He seeks to dwell therein.

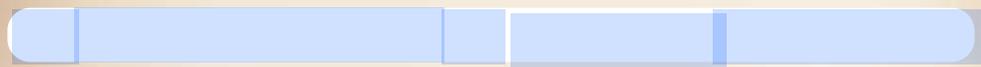
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4<sup>th</sup> of Tevet, 5784

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:11 pm	5:15 pm	5:41 pm
Miami	5:14 pm	6:10 pm	6:44 pm
Los Angeles	4:28 pm	5:27 pm	5:58 pm
Montreal	3:53 pm	5:02 pm	5:24 pm
Toronto	4:23 pm	5:30 pm	5:53 pm
London	3:33 pm	4:50 pm	5:04 pm
Jerusalem	4:22 pm	5:12 pm	5:44 pm
Tel Aviv	4:17 pm	5:08 pm	5:38 pm
Haifa	4:15 pm	5:05 pm	5:35 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:19 pm	5:10 pm	5:40 pm

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**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*The tale of David and Shimi teaches us to learn to foresee the future, David withheld his anger, and we later merited to Mordechai as a result. We might sometimes make a mistake and generations later with have to suffer the consequences.*

*Lucky is one who sees the future and responds with humility and forgoes offense. One must always be measured and composed, it is better to wait a day or a week, and not do something we'll regret, and may not be able to retrieve.*

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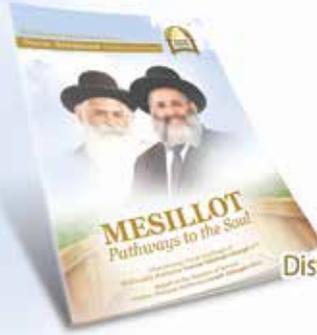
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