# Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 120

# Ki Tetze | The Descent Is Part Of The Ascent



# **MESILLOT** 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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Parashat Ki Tetze - The Matzah



### The Matzah

**Rabbi** Shlomo Levenstein recounted the following:<sup>1</sup>

**I** heard this story from Rabbi Moshe Friedman of Rekhasim:

**In** the city of Bluzhov, Poland, there lived a Rebbe who led his congregation for many years, until the Nazis came and uprooted everything. The Rebbe was taken to one of the camps, and a few days before Pesach, he addressed the Jews who were there. He said, "Pesach is imminent. We need to get our hands on matzot !"

get our hands on matzot !"

**"We'll** be lucky to get our hands on a few crumbs of chametz, and are you talking to us about matzot?!" the Jews answered bitterly.

**But** the Rebbe didn't hesitate. "Every day we're given one slice of bread. Let's go to the camp's chief officer and ask him that instead of getting a slice of bread for the entire week of Pesach, we would like to receive flour on the eve of Pesach, from which we'll make matzot."

**"If** you're willing to put your life on the line and ask such a request from the camp's chief officer, go alone ! None of us are willing to risk our lives and make such a request."

**Many** of the Jews tried to dissuade the Rebbe, lest he dare to go to the chief officer, but he insisted, "I'm ready to go on my own. Just let me know that you agree to give up the slice of bread, in exchange for receiving the flour."

After receiving their consent, the Rebbe approached the chief officer, as many began to sit *shiva* for him.

**But,** with Hashem's help, he returned.

1. Doresh Tov (Shavuot, p. 385)

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**He** said that the chief officer agreed to the request, and only added that he had to get permission from the main headquarters in Berlin.

**On** the eve of Pesach, the Rebbe was called to the chief officer's office, and he asserted, "I've received approval! Here's the sack of flour you asked for."

**The** Jews in the camp were stunned at the sight of their eyes. They pushed the bunks aside, and built a stove from some broken tiles they found. The Rebbe divided the work, each Jew was assigned a role, and he himself kneaded the dough.

**"What** joy !" everyone exclaimed with a smile.

**Suddenly,** the door burst open. A Nazi officer was standing in the doorway.

**"Who's** in charge here ?" he asked.

**The** Jews, who thought that the Rebbe had received the sack of flour with permission, pointed to him and said, "He is."

**The** officer approached him and began to beat him to a pulp,

murderous blows that only a Nazi knows how to give. The Rebbe fell to the floor, covered in blood, and lost consciousness.

**The** officer was not content with that. He approached the pile of matzot and crushed them with his rough boots into millions of crumbs, and to be sure that the Jews wouldn't use the crumbs, he poured poisonous acid on them, and left the room.

**Immediately,** the Jews came running over the Rebbe's body to

try to bring him back to life.

**When** he finally woke up, they started apologizing to him for having snitched on him, "We were sure you got permission to bake matzot."

**"It's** okay," the Rebbe answered, "What interests me right now is not the beatings I received. I'm interested in whether nightfall has already arrived and the holiday has come in so we can start reciting the Haggadah !"

**The** Rebbe sat on the floor, surrounded by all the Jews, and they began to say, *"Ha Lachma Anya,"* as the Rebbe encouraged them to

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believe that redemption will come soon, and that they'll merit getting out of *gehinom*, just as our ancestors merited leaving Egypt.

**There** was no wine for the four cups, of course, but they had plenty of *maror*...

When they reached the point where they needed to eat the matzah, the Rebbe stood up and said, "When the Nazi officer began his beatings, I managed to grab a small piece of matzah and

hide it in my pocket !"

**He** took the piece of matzah out of his pocket, and added, "We have to choose by raffle as

to who will get to eat it."

**But** everyone unanimously said, "Why hold a raffle? The Rebbe, who came up with the idea, that risked his life for the flour, who suffered the terrible beatings to the point of endangering his life,

is the one who will eat it !"

**Suddenly,** a woman who was sitting behind the Rebbe stood up and said, "Rebbe ! I'm here with a four-year-old boy, and in my humble opinion, he's the one who

should eat the matzah ! After all, the whole purpose of making the Seder is for the next generation. This child is the 'next generation,' he will have to tell the story of the Exodus to his children. He has to eat the matzah."

The Rebbe ruled, "She is right."

The little boy ate the matzah...

A month later, they were liberated. The Jews dispersed one by one. The Bluzhover Rebbe came to America where he established a small Beit Midrash. At first, there were hardly any students, but slowly, more and more followers gathered, and the

Beit Midrash grew.

**One** day, a woman came crying to the *gabbai* and asked him to be allowed to enter the Rebbe's room. She cried and begged that she must urgently see the Rebbe in

order to consult with him.

**The** Rebbe ordered the *gabbai* to let her in. When she entered, she burst into tears and said, "Rebbe ! I've gone through *gehinom* in my lifetime. I was left alone ! I don't want to be alone. I want to get married. I've been offered matches,

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but I don't know how to clarify about the match. I need help."

"You're right. I will help you," the Rebbe told her, "Do you have any specific offers that you would like me to inquire about ?"

"Yes! I was offered a man named Israel Spira, and I ask that the Rebbe find out about him, if he's a man of good character, so that I can be calm and marry him."

"What a small world," the Rebbe told her. "I happen to know this man well. He is a positive and easy-going person, I recommend you meet him, and if you like him during the meeting,

you can get married."

The next day the woman came to the meeting, at the place and time agreed upon, and suddenly, she saw the Rebbe standing there.

"Rebbe," she said in embarrassment, "I didn't mean for you to come to the meeting to be impressed by the man. It's enough for me that the Rebbe knows him and recommends him."

**"I** am Israel Spira !" the Rebbe told her, "I initiated this match, out of my acquaintance with you. I still remember very well how you cried, in *gehinom*, to receive the piece of matzah for your child. I decided that I want such a woman who, even in gehinom, sees her child telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt... I want to marry a woman who, in the middle of the 'four questions,' sees

the redemption of Israel !"

**They** got married, but they didn't merit having children. The current Bluzhover Rebbe is the boy who ate the matzah that Seder night in Nazi hell...

#### Rebbe! What Do I Do?

Yankel'e, a lovable yeshiva bachur, walked around his room, heart beating excitedly, his "Baruch Hashem, I merited learning and finishing masechet Bava Batra !"

**The** cheerfulness of his heart increased from moment to moment. He decided to hold a feast thanking Hashem.

He approached his parents and asked, "I want to hold a feast

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to thank Hashem and invite my friends." His parents were delighted with his enthusiasm and prepared a meaty feast for him.

**They** sang songs of joy, of *dvekut*, of longing... After they finished saying Birkat HaMazon, each participant was served a plate with a piece of cake and a scoop of ice cream next to it...

**Everyone** dispersed to their homes. Yankel'e entered the kitchen and wholeheartedly thanked his mother and sisters for the wonderful food, and for the great thought that had been put into it... His eyes, wandering here and there, inadvertently got stuck on the empty ice cream tub...

His eyes darkened and his heart almost stopped beating, the

ice cream was dairy !!!

**He** left the kitchen without saying a word and ran to his room. He lied on his bed and tears began flowing from his eyes, "I committed and caused my friends to commit the severe prohibition

of eating meat and dairy !"

**He** cried bitterly for a long time. Then he got up, washed his

face, and called one of the rabbis of his community.

**The** rabbi listened to the story and said, "From a halachic point of view there is nothing to do now. They have already eaten and what has been done cannot be undone. But you're seeking *tikkun*, and it's not in my power to help you. Contact your Rebbe and tell him."

Yankel'e was related to the Rebbe of Pittsburgh, Rabbi Mordechai Yissachar Ber Leifer zt"l. He visited him and told him what happened.

**The** Rebbe heard his words and began to praise him, "You finished *masechet* Bava Batra? *Ashrecha*! It's impossible to express the greatness of a Jew who learns the holy Gemara *leshem shamayim*, and even more so, it's impossible to express the greatness of a Jew who merits

learning an entire *masechet* !"

And so, for several minutes, the Rebbe explained how precious and important in heaven a Jew is who learns the Gemara *leshem shamayim*.

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**Then,** the Rebbe continued and said, "Yankel'e, a mishap came about through you, and you want to correct it. Your *tikkun* is to study another *masechet* and finish it, and hold another meaty feast, and serve ice cream, and this time, make sure that it's parve..."

**Yankel'e** told this story and concluded, "I received so much encouragement and strength from that heavenly conversation, that a few years later, I was privileged to complete the entire Shas..."

#### **Even One Million Times!**

**Every** person in the world throughout their life not only goes through ups and successes, but also downs and failures. Even a tzaddik goes through certain declines from time to time, as it says, "The tzaddik falls seven times, and gets up" (Mishlei 24:16). However, the greatness of a person is measured by the fact that they do not remain in their fallen state, but manage to overcome and rise from it, and return to their original state,

and even greater than that.

**This** is the greatness of the tzaddikim, that even though they go through sorrow and suffering and declines in *avodat Hashem*, nevertheless, they always get up and rise from their fall and come out from their experience even greater. Therefore, even though

"The tzaddik falls seven times," he immediately "gets up."

**The** declines that occur in a person's life are not only connected to actions, but also, and above all, to desire...

We find that sometimes, precisely those who genuinely decide to do something with their lives, may reach despair and helplessness, since it's a common phenomenon that after a great awakening, comes a period when the determination and enthusiasm fade, and then human nature and the yetzer hara cause the person to forget their resolution and genuine decision, and suddenly the person finds themselves in the same place and in the same lowly mood before they made all the big decisions. A phenomenon that brings them to

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despair and lack of confidence in themselves. "It's a waste of time," they say to themselves, "I guess I don't have the strength for the task."

**But** the truth is, that the feeling of despair that attacks a person, is a lie !

A spiritual life means that the person gets to ascend each time and achieve new spiritual levels. Levels that they had not even heard of

that they had not even heard of...

**It's** impossible to go up from level to level without first going through a period where all kinds of forbidden desires and passions suddenly arise in the person's heart, every one according to their own test...

**Even** if during the struggle against the *yetzer hara* you get a little dirty, you mustn't wave a white flag and surrender to it, rather you must shake yourself off with all your might, "shake yourself off from the dust, arise" (Yeshayahu 52:2), and continue to fight !

**Even** when a person has a decline in spirituality they mustn't

fall into despair. They mustn't cool down, not even for a moment, the engines of longing, yearning, desire, passion... Rather they must try to serve Hashem according to their strength and ability at that hour !

**Then,** after the battle is over, they merit ascending to the next level, and after they attain it and build on it, they then stumble upon another battle...

**This** is what the holy Torah commands us in our parasha, "When you go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem Elokecha delivers them into your hand, and you take some of them

captive" (Devarim 21:10).

**The** war that the verse is (also) speaking about is a person's individual war with their *yetzer hara* that wants to bring down their spirit and make them despair completely from any real connection with Hashem!<sup>2</sup>

**Here,** in this verse, the Torah pleads, "Please, don't despair! Don't lose your desire! I promise you, in the end, you will win!"

- Wellsprings of Wisdom 🍛

<sup>2.</sup> See Zohar Chadash (Ki Tetze 72a)

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Parashat Ki Tetze - The Viewpoint of A Tzaddik

**All** this is well known... But we'll walk down an additional

path... Let's open with a story...

### The Viewpoint of A Tzaddik

**Knocks** were heard at the door. The Chafetz Chaim got up, opened the door, and invited the

man to come inside.

**The** man, addressing the Rabbi, said, "I would like to purchase all of your books ("Mishnah Berurah," "Likutei Halachot," etc.), except for the book that deals with "guarding one's tongue" (the book primarily focusing on the laws of *lashon hara* and *rechilut*).

**The** Chafetz Chaim asked, "Why are you not interested in this book ?"

**The** man apologized and said, "Rabbi, I'm a wealthy man. I have extensive business dealings with many different people. It's my responsibility to sign agreements, hire employees and investigate their backgrounds, dismiss employees who don't fulfill their tasks properly, gather information about various buyers, assess the honesty of sellers, and more... It's clear to me that I cannot refrain from engaging in *lashon hara*, and therefore, I see no benefit from this book."

**The** Chafetz Chaim listened patiently to the wealthy man's words and then said, "Know, that I worked hard and exerted myself in writing the book 'Chafetz Chaim.' After I finished writing it, I hesitated whether it was even worthwhile to print it.

**I** decided to go to Rabbi Yisrael Salanter and tell him about my indecisiveness, 'On the one hand, there is no doubt that every Jew needs this book. On the other hand, I'm afraid that many people will fail to observe these laws. Therefore, I'm unsure whether to print it or not.'

RabbiYisraelSalanterimmediatelyreplied, 'Know, thateven if yousucceed in uprootingjust one sigh from the heart of a Jew,grieving over the failure to refrainfrom lashon hara, all your efforts inwriting this book are worth it !'''

Let's return to our focal point...

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Parashat Ki Tetze - Your Eyes Will See Your Teacher

#### Your Eyes Will See Your Teacher

In the beginning, it was Hashem's will to create a world in which He could be revealed within it.

**He** desired that this revelation, the revelation of His light, would only be accomplished through the sacred *avodah* of Am Israel.<sup>3</sup>

**Therefore,** in order for there to be *avodah*, He created our world in such a way that His light would be concealed by numerous garments.

**He** created the souls of Am Israel and gave them His holy Torah so that they would learn it and observe its mitzvot. Through this, the world would be rectified, the garments and coverings that conceal His light would be removed, and Hashem would be revealed in the world without any concealment.

**Thus** it says (in the days of the Mashiach), "Your Teacher will no longer be concealed; your eyes will see your Teacher" (Yeshayahu 30:20), and, "The voice of your watchmen, they lift up their voice; together they sing, for they shall see eye to eye when Hashem returns Tzion" (Yeshayahu 52:8), and, "The sun shall no longer be your light of day nor for brightness; the moon shall not give you light, but Hashem shall be to you an everlasting light, and your G-d your glory" (Yeshayahu 60:19).

**This** revelation, the seeing of Elokut with one's physical eyes, is the ultimate purpose of the entire history of the world !

Let's start from the beginning...

#### **Consulting With The Angels**

**On** the second day of creation Hashem created the angels.<sup>4</sup> He then

**3.** See Hemshech 5666 (Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah) by the Rebbe Rashab zt"l consulted with them saying, "I want to create man. What do you think ?"

**4.** There is a *machloket* in Bereshit Rabbah 1:3 regarding when the angels were created. Rabbi Yochanan says one

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#### Parashat Ki Tetze - The Power of Teshuva

**The** angels asked Him, "Master of the universe, You've already created millions of creatures in the sea and on land. You didn't consult with us regarding any of them. Why specifically do You wish to consult with us before creating man?"<sup>5</sup>

**Hashem** answered, "My entire purpose in creating the world was to reveal My light. Therefore, I want to create man who will have the power of free will (the only creation with this power) so that he may choose good. Through his actions, he will reveal My light in the world... Since he's the primary creation, I decided to consult with you regarding him."

**The** angels replied, "Master of the universe, if you give him the power of free will, he may also sin." **Hashem** responded, "That is why I will create teshuva. Even if he sins, he will be able to repent, and atonement will be granted to him."

**These** are the words of the Zohar,<sup>6</sup> "Before Hashem created the world, He created teshuva. He said to teshuva, 'I want to create man in the world, so that when they repent from their sins, you will be destined to atone for their sins.' At every moment, teshuva is available for the people. When people repent from their sins, teshuva returns to Hashem and He atones for everything, and the judgments surrender, and everyone receives a fragrance (like a baby who has a naturally good smell because he is pure and clean of sin), and man is purified from his sin..."

Let's further elaborate on this.

### The Power of Teshuva

**Before** the creations were formed, Hashem created teshuva, and through it, every Jew can return and draw closer to Him. **Teshuva** consists of four stages:

**1.** Abandoning the sin.

**2.** Regretting committing the sin.

the second day, and Rabbi Chanina says on the fifth day... 5. See Bereshit Rabbah 17:4

6. Acharei Mot 69b

Parashat Ki Tetze - The Power of Teshuva

**3.** Confession.

**4.** Genuinely resolving not to commit the sin again.

A Jew who merits doing genuine teshuva instantly draws near to Hashem and their sins are atoned for. The Rambam writes<sup>7</sup> that after one does teshuva, "They are beloved, cherished, close, and dear."

**The** Gemara (Yoma 86b) highly praises baalei teshuva and extolls their greatness.

It then poses a question: Does every baal teshuva truly merit these lofty levels?

It answers: No! Only one who does complete teshuva merits these levels.

**The** Gemara continues to explain what constitutes complete teshuva: **What is an example of a baal teshuva** whose teshuva is complete ? **Rav Yehuda said, "For** 

example, if an opportunity to commit a transgression that the person had previously committed arises before them, and they refrain from it twice, having learned from their past experience." Rav Yehuda provided an example to **illustrate** that in order to be a baal teshuva. one must refrain from committing the same sin while in the same circumstances as they were when they previously sinned. For example, if the person encounters the same woman with whom he previously stumbled, during the same period in his life, and in the same location where he committed the transgression, and then his yetzer hara overpowers him and says, "Get up, do what you've already done before," yet he conquers his *yetzer hara* and doesn't sin. he is considered a baal teshuva.<sup>8</sup>

**After** comprehending all this, let us briefly review some historical events.

# 7. Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 7:6 8. HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes (Imrei Noam – Nitzavim, Maamar 4):

**Every** year, Parashat Nitzavim falls out adjacent to the holy day of Rosh Hashanah, which is the first day of the Ten Days of Repentance, during which Hashem, in His

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mercy, is very close to all who call upon Him. Concerning these days, it says, "Seek Hashem while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (Yeshavahu 55:6). (See Rosh Hashanah 18a) Therefore, in Parashat Nitzavim, many matters related to the teshuva of every Jew are alluded to. It is also stated in Parashat Nitzavim, "And you shall return to Hashem Elokecha and listen

to His voice..." (Devarim 30:2).

There are two levels, one higher than the other, regarding teshuva:

**The** lower level of teshuva is called "teshuva out of fear," or in the language of the Zohar, "lower teshuva." The higher level of teshuva is called "teshuva out of love," or "upper teshuva." These two levels of teshuva are alluded to in the verse. "And vou shall return to Hashem Elokecha."

**Regarding** the lower level of teshuva, "teshuva out of fear," it says, "And you shall return," as it only symbolizes the beginning of the teshuva process, but not its ultimate purpose and completion.

**Regarding** the higher level of teshuva, "teshuva out of love," it says, "to Hashem Elokecha," for this level of teshuva ascends and reaches Hashem Himself. Concerning this, Rabbi Levi said (Yoma 86a): Great is teshuva for it reaches the Throne of Glory, as it says, "Return, O Israel, to Hashem Elokecha" (Hoshea 14:2).

Simply explained: When a person suffers from illnesses and afflictions, chas *v*'shalom, and because of them, they become afraid of Hashem's punishments (for their ultimate good, only to cleanse them of their

filth, like a father who showers his child to cleanse him, yet the child feels uncomfortable and possibly even suffers) and resolves to do teshuva so that they may cease, this is "teshuva out of fear." Concerning teshuva out of fear, *Chazal* say (Yoma 86b) that it has the power only to transform intentional sins into unintentional ones but not to completely atone for them, for even a sin committed unintentionally is still a sin.

**Teshuva** of this kind is not considered "complete teshuva" because the person's intention in this teshuva is merely to cease the afflictions and not because they truly desire to draw near to Hashem. Moreover, as soon as the afflictions cease and the cause that led them to teshuva disappears, it's possible that they will return to their negative ways. In other words, a person who does "teshuva out of fear" seeks themselves and not Hashem. However, due to Hashem's abundant mercy and love, He also accepts this type of teshuva.

However, when a person exercises true and proper discernment, and contemplates the greatness of the Creator, as well as the beauty of the Torah and its mitzvot, and also reflects upon the abundant kindness that Hashem bestows upon them every day, and this contemplation arouses within their heart intense love for Hashem, as a result of which they resolve to do teshuva, this is called "teshuva out of love." Regarding this type of teshuva, Chazal say (Yoma 86b) that not only are the intentional transgressions of that person completely atoned for, but they are even transformed into merits.

Such a teshuva is considered "complete teshuva" because it emanates from the

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deepest place in the heart, in the aspect of "Out of the depths I call to You Hashem" (Tehillim 130:1). The individual's intention is solely to draw closer to Hashem, and all other material concerns do not trouble them at all, for they seek the Creator and not themselves.

When a person's teshuva stems from true, sincere love for Hashem, nothing in the world can deter them from the path of teshuva, and they will continue to ascend higher and higher in the levels of teshuva until their teshuva reaches the Throne of Glory itself, as mentioned earlier. Even if it involves financial losses and a life of hardship. they will always accept everything that comes upon them with love and joy, knowing that Hashem loves them and does everything for their benefit. and all that matters to them is to be close to Hashem, as it says, "As for me, closeness

to Elokim is my good" (Tehillim 73:28).

**Just** as in the observance of other mitzvot of the Torah, every Jew strives to fulfill them with excellence. For example, regarding the mitzvah of tefillin, every G-d fearing Jew seeks to acquire beautiful, well-crafted tefillin and is willing to pay whatever the scribe determines. Similarly, regarding the mitzvah of teshuva, every Jew should aspire to fulfill the mitzvot in the most honorable manner, namely, to merit returning to Hashem out of love, which is the highest, most perfect form of teshuva. This is why we pray three times a day, "And restore us in complete teshuva before You."

**Above** the two levels of teshuva mentioned so far, there is another level of teshuva, which is the teshuva performed by true tzaddikim every day until their last day in this world. One may ask, "Since true tzaddikim do not commit any significant sins, why do they perform teshuva every day ?"

**Rebbe** Nachman of Breslov zt"l explains (Likutei Moharan I, Torah 6:3) as follows:

**"Even** if a person knows that they have already done complete teshuva, they still need to do teshuva for the initial teshuva. Because initially, when they did teshuva, they did it according to their level of understanding. Then, surely, when they did teshuva, they recognized and comprehended Hashem on a higher level. Consequently, their initial comprehension is on a materialistic level. Therefore, they must do teshuva for their initial comprehension because it was embodied in a materialistic manner."

In other words, even a true tzaddik who has already done complete teshuva and has no sins, nevertheless needs to do complete teshuva every day. This is because each day they comprehend the greatness of Hashem more than the previous day, and based on the level of their current understanding, they realize that yesterday they didn't comprehend the Creator properly and didn't serve Him as they should have. Therefore, today they need to do teshuva for what they did yesterday without complete intention. This is the case every day, as there is no day in which the tzaddik doesn't acquire additional spiritual

levels that they didn't have yesterday.

It says in the book *Chovot HaLevavot* (Shaar Avodat HaElokim, ch. 3):

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"The mitzvot of the Torah are limited. They amount to a known number, i.e., the 613 mitzvot. But the mitzvot of the intellect have almost no limit, for every day a person increases their knowledge of them, and the more they comprehend and understand the kindnesses of Hashem, His strength, and His sovereignty, the more they will humble and submit themselves before Him... And it has already been said about some of the perushim that they spent their entire lives in teshuva because they renewed their teshuva every day due to their increased recognition of the greatness of Hashem each day, and they realized how much they had fallen short in the fulfillment of their obligation of service in the past, as David HaMelech, may peace be upon him, said, "Day to day utters speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Tehillim 19:3), and he also said, "My eyes shed rivers of tears because they do not keep Your Torah" (Tehillim 119:136)."

Rebbe Chaim of Chernowitz zt"l brings the following related story in his book Sidduro Shel Shabbat (Vol. 2 – Derush III 3:5):

**One** night, a disciple of our great teacher, Rabbi Saadia Gaon. came before him and found him rolling in the snow to atone for his sins. When the disciple saw this, he stood in amazement and fear, and said to his teacher, "Rabbi, Rabbi, do you really need such severe suffering and affliction for atonement? Aren't you a righteous and holy person ?! And if you, who have always preserved your honor from any blemish and sinful thought, are humbling vourself in this way, what should we, who are full of sins and transgressions since our youth, do? Shouldn't we be subjected to various pains and afflictions, severe as death, in order to atone for our sins?"

Rabbi Saadia Gaon replied, "Know, my dear student, that I truly know in my own soul that I have never, chas v'shalom, committed a sin that required such weighty tikkun. Nevertheless, I behave in this manner because of an incident that happened to me.

Once I stayed at the house of a certain Jew who didn't recognize whether I was a Talmid Chacham or not, and he honored me as much as is customary to honor any Jew.

Later, the news spread in the city that I had arrived, and all the members of the city, men, women, and children, gathered to honor me, as is the custom of Am Israel whom the honor of Talmidei Chachamim is precious in their eyes. They all treated me with great respect and praised me extensively. When that Jew saw that I, whom he had hosted, was an esteemed and respected person, he also began to honor me greatly beyond his means and ability, even more than what he had done until then

When I wanted to leave the city, and all the members of the community came to accompany me, that Jew also came and fell at my feet, weeping, begging me, 'Please forgive me for not honoring you as I should have.' I said to him, 'Have you not honored me to the best of your ability? What else could you have done for my honor?!'

He replied, 'I ask you to forgive me for the initial period when you stayed at my house before I knew your greatness and didn't honor you with the appropriate respect that you truly deserve, but only

#### Parashat Ki Tetze - The Power of Teshuva

as one would honor regular people. And for this, I prostrate myself before the feet of our master and teacher, and I request from Him to forgive me for the slight to his honor I showed him when I did not yet know his greatness.""

**Rabbi** Saadia Gaon continued and told his student, "The words of that Jew penetrated deep into my heart and affected me profoundly. If for the honor of flesh and blood, he fell before me in tears and supplications, asking for forgiveness for the past, how much more so in relation to the greatness of Hashem, whom I know very well that my awareness and recognition of His greatness has now increased far beyond what it used to be. And now, my service, fear, and love for the Creator have grown to a greater extent in accordance with the magnitude of recognition I have for Him at present.

And these self-reproaches that you see me engaging in are in order for Hashem to atone for me and grant me forgiveness for my limited service, and for the insignificance of my fear and love during the days that have passed, for they are indeed extremely small compared to what is fitting to serve the Creator and to fear Him with awe and reverence, according to what I now recognize of His greatness."

**Rabbi** Saadia Gaon added, "Not only do I regret the past, but every day I regret the previous day because each day reveals to me more of the greatness of Hashem according to my capacity. Consequently, I am engaged in even greater service at all times, and every day I regret and make complete teshuva for my service of the previous day, which was lacking the proper honor in light of my awareness of the greatness of Hashem on that day."

According to the above, we can now understand what *Chazal* say (Brachot 34b), "In the place where baalei teshuva stand, even complete tzaddikim cannot stand." Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev explains this in his book *Kedushat Levi* (Likutei Maamarim – Masechet Avot) that *Chazal's* intention is not only about "baalei teshuva" regarding actual sins, but their intention also includes the tzaddikim who have not sinned at all, only that their hearts are always broken within them because they understand that according to the greatness of the Creator, they have not yet begun to serve Him at all. Therefore, they constantly do teshuva, and they are included

in the category of "baalei teshuva."

**This** is the meaning of "In the place where baalei teshuva stand, even complete tzaddikim cannot stand." That is, the lofty place and spiritual level that will be attained by those tzaddikim who are classified as "baalei teshuva," constantly engaging in teshuva despite never having sinned, even those who are regarded as "complete tzaddikim" and diligently serve Hashem through Torah study and fulfilling mitzvot, but lack the aspect of being "baalei teshuva" due to their hearts not fully recognizing the immense greatness of the Creator and vearning to serve Him even more, and thus not experiencing the same urgency to engage in continual teshuva throughout their lives, won't be able to attain that same

elevated place and spiritual level.

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Parashat Ki Tetze - The Period of The Judges

#### The Period of The Judges

**In** the year 2488 from the creation of the world, the leadership of Yehoshua began. This leadership continued for the next twenty-eight years.

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**Similarly,** it is explained in the book *Yitav Lev* (Parashat Vayetze, Ofen 7), "There are people who consider themselves tzaddikim, these are called "completely tzaddikim." On the other hand, there are people who always find deficiencies in themselves, because with every passing moment, they add and progress in Torah and *avodah*. Therefore, they regret the past, and with each ascent, they humble themselves more and more in their own eyes. This is the "baal teshuva," whose level is higher than one who considers themselves a complete tzaddik."

(This concept of one's heart being broken within them, and always finding deficiencies in themselves, and humbling oneself in their own eyes requires a proper understanding. It revolves around keeping a deep focus on Hashem. It is not about feeling inadequate or becoming depressed due to personal shortcomings. Rather, it involves shifting the focus entirely to Hashem's perspective. It's not about self-deprecation; it's about striving to bring even greater joy to Hashem. Even if I am doing well, observing Shabbat, learning Torah, wearing tefillin, dressing modestly, and fulfilling mitzvot, I still long to bring even more happiness to Hashem. Therefore, my heart is humbled within me, not in a sad or depressed way, but in a fervent desire to give Hashem more nachat, more joy. Thus I feel satisfied with who I am, and what I have accomplished in the past until this moment, and at the

same time, feel unsatisfied with only doing so and so, for I want to give Hashem even more happiness !

As a side note, on an entirely different topic but with the same principle: If, *chas v'shalom*, I commit a sin, my focus remains on how Hashem feels. I am conscious of His sadness and disappointment, feeling remorse for causing Him any sense of disloyalty. I apologize for hurting You, Hashem! There is never a feeling of depression, which stems from the *yetzer hara*. I do not view myself as a terrible or hated person. On the contrary, I am aware of the immense love Hashem has for me, and I realize that His love is truly unconditional. How, then, could I have acted in a way that "hurt" You ? I am sorry, and I won't do it again. I don't want to do it again, because I care about You ! I love You !)

**Therefore,** truly commendable are those who consistently adhere to the path of teshuva throughout their lives. Even after many years of teshuva, even when they have reached great levels as devoted servants of Hashem and Talmidei Chachamim, they continue to acknowledge the profound greatness of Creator. Consequently, the thev constantly feel the need to engage in complete teshuva before Him. embodying the essence of being "baalei teshuva."

#### Parashat Ki Tetze - The Period of The Judges

**After** Yehoshua's passing at the age of 110, the leadership was transferred to the "elders" of that generation. However, due to their negligence in properly eulogizing Yehoshua, they were punished, and all of them passed

away during that same year.

**Following** the demise of the elders, the period of the judges commenced. During their leadership, the Jews started committing idolatry. Over time, their

idolatrous practices escalated until they worshipped various forms of idolatry, as stated after the passing of the eighth judge, Yair HaGiladi, "Bnei Israel continued to do that which was evil in the eyes of Hashem. They worshipped the Baalim, the Ashtarot, the gods of Aram, the gods of Tzidon, the gods of Moav, the gods of people of Ammon, and the gods of the Plishtim. Thus, they abandoned Hashem and did not serve Him" (Shoftim 10:6).<sup>9</sup>

**9. Rabbi** Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler zt"l (Michtav M'Eliyahu – Vol. 5, p. 143;412), writes the following:

**The** Gemara (Sukkah 52a) says, "One who is greater than his fellow, his *yetzer hara* is also greater than his fellow's."

This can be likened to a pendulum. According to the measure it is raised on one side, so it will ascend to the opposite side. And if it were not so, it would be easier for tzaddikim to choose good than for ordinary people, and the value of the deeds of tzaddikim would be diminished.

**There** are two types of *yetzer hara*. The first is the natural *yetzer hara*, which operates through negative character traits in individuals. The second is the spiritual *yetzer hara*, which presents

temptations to individuals not through their character traits.

**For** a person of lesser value, their negative character traits dominate them. Their traits mislead them into believing that evil is good and a transgression is a mitzvah.

**However,** for those who possess higher spiritual understanding, the *yetzer hara* arouses a strong desire within them that pushes them away from recognizing the truth. This can be observed, for example, in the case of a person suffering from eczema. Even though they are well aware that scratching will not bring about any healing, and they genuinely desire to be healed, when the desire to scratch intensifies, it overwhelms all other considerations.

**In** those generations (the generations of the judges and the kings), the souls were lofty and

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#### Parashat Ki Tetze - Kiddush Hashem

**The** period of the judges lasted until the coronation of Shaul as the King of Israel, marking the beginning of a new era, the era of kings.

**We** don't know if those souls from the generation of the judges had the opportunity to do teshuva before their passing or what occurred in heaven when those souls appeared before the Heavenly Court.

**Nevertheless,** we have discovered something significant...

**Note:** It's important to read the words of the *Michtav M'Eliyahu* mentioned in footnote 9, as we will need it as a reference later on.

#### **Kiddush Hashem**

**The** kabbalist, Rabbi Mordechai Cohen zt"l writes:<sup>10</sup> "In the year

sublime, possessing an exceptional recognition of the truth. Their battles were solely against the spiritual *yetzer hara*.

**Due** to the tremendous sanctity and exaltedness of their holy actions, the *yetzer hara* was greatly provoked and incited against them.

**Due** to the strong swinging of the pendulum in an upward direction from this side, it inevitably returns with a strong counter-movement, inciting a powerful agitation from the opposite side.

**Considering** that they were so great in their holiness, to the extent of being infused with *Ruach HaKodesh* and prophecy, the impure chariot with all its forces stood against them, enticing them towards idolatry. 1530 (approximately), the King of Portugal published a proclamation

**In** summary: A great tzaddik feels a great swing of the pendulum. On the other hand, a simple person experiences a much smaller movement. However, there are individuals of a much lower degree who do not perceive any movement of their own pendulum. This is a grave situation because it indicates that they are entirely under the influence of their inferior character traits, and the satan says about them, "This one is mine." Since they do not struggle against their *yetzer hara*, their *yetzer hara* sees no need to fight back.

**Hence,** one who doesn't sense the battle against their *yetzer hara* isn't truly engaged in teshuva, even during

the Ten Days of Repentance...

10. Siftei Cohen (Parashat Vayelech)

#### Parashat Ki Tetze - Seven Courts

throughout his kingdom (which spread over a large territory), "Anyone who does not convert (to Christianity) will be burned alive !"

**Contrary** to what happened in other countries, the Jews in Portugal didn't wait until they were taken to the fire, but they clarified where the place of burning was, and they went there with their wives and children, singing and dancing, and they threw themselves into the fiery furnace, sanctifying the name of Hashem."

Rabbi Mordechai Cohen "This and writes. continues happened because they (those same souls) desecrated the name of Hashem during the period of the judges, as it says, "They worshipped the Baalim, the Ashtarot." [Therefore,] thev returned reincarnation in and publicly sanctified the name of Hashem by throwing themselves into the fire "

**Let's** continue with the period of the kings...

#### Seven Courts

**Shlomo** HaMelech (who was the third King of Israel) died, and the Kingdom of Israel was divided into two: the Kingdom of Yehuda and the Kingdom of Israel.

**These** two Kingdoms existed for approximately 380 years. While all the Kings of Yehuda belonged to the same family (the descendants of David HaMelech), the Kings of Israel came from different families.

**In** general, the Kings of Israel emerged from seven different families, their heads being: Yarovam ben Nevat, Baasha ben Achiah, Achav ben Omri, Yehu ben Nimshi, Pekach ben Remalyahu, Menachem ben Gadi, and Hoshea ben Elah. Regarding them, the Navi said, "She who bore seven languishes" (Yirmiyahu 15:9).

**Throughout** all those years, Am Israel worshiped idols with desire, enthusiasm, willingness, and yearning.

**Due** to this terrible persistence in idol worship, Eretz Israel was destroyed, and Am Israel was scattered to the four corners of the world ! These are the words of the

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#### Parashat Ki Tetze - Four Hundred Years

Gemara:<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "Eretz Israel wasn't destroyed until seven courts of idol worship were established within it." These courts were the seven families mentioned above...

We don't know if those souls

from the generation of the kings had the opportunity to do teshuva before their passing or what occurred in heaven when those souls appeared

before the Heavenly Court.

**Nevertheless,** we have discovered something significant...

#### **Four Hundred Years**

**Rebbe** DovBer of Lubavitch, the Mitteler Rebbe, writes:<sup>12</sup>

**During** the period of the First Temple, they worshiped Hashem and didn't throw off the yoke of heaven except through idolatry, in which they greatly transgressed. They had a remarkable desire for idolatry, to the extent that only 7,000 individuals didn't bow down to the Baal during the days of Achav...

**Throughout** all those generations, which consisted of lofty souls, there was no

opportunity for complete *tikkun* until the time of the philosophers from the era of Rashi and the Rambam until the Arizal. This period spanned from the First Crusade (1096) until the expulsion from Spain and Portugal (1492-1497).

**All** those thousands of Jews who sanctified the name of Hashem in every generation, as detailed in the book *Shevet Yehuda*, specifically during the various persecutions that took place over a period of four hundred years (1096-1497), were all souls who lived during the time of the First Temple...

## The End of Idolatry

**The** Temple was destroyed! Am Israel was exiled to Babylon. After seventy years of exile (under the rule of the Babylonian dynasty, and

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12. Shaarei Teshuva (p. 5)

<sup>11.</sup> Gittin 88a

Parashat Ki Tetze - The End of Idolatry

later the Persian and Median kings), they merited to return to the Holy Land.

**In** the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, it is recorded what happened during their initial period of resettlement in the Land. In the book of Nehemiah, it is mentioned that the Members of the Great Assembly abolished the inclination toward idolatry:

**"On** the twenty-fourth day of this month. Bnei Israel assembled with fasting, sackcloth, and earth upon them... They stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers... Upon the platform of the Leviim stood Yeshua and Bani, Kadmiel, Bunni, Sherevya, Shevanya, Bani, and Chenani, and they cried in a loud voice to Hashem their

G-d" (Nehemiah 9:1-4).

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 64a) says: "They cried in a loud voice to Hashem their G-d" What did they (the Members of the Great Assembly) say to Hashem?

**Rav Yehuda said, and some say it was Rav Yonatan who said**: They cried out to Hashem and prayed that He deliver the yetzer hara of idolatry into their hands. They said, **"Woe, woe ! This** yetzer hara for idolatry is what destroyed the First Temple, and burned the Sanctuary, and murdered the tzaddikim, and exiled the Jewish people from their Land. And even now, he dances among us and entices us. That is, despite all the calamities that the sin of idolatry brought upon us, the *yetzer* for idolatry still has the strength to tempt us. Master of the Universe! Haven't You given it (the yetzer) to us only to overcome it and receive reward for conquering it? We do not want it, and we do not want its reward when we conquer it..."

The Members of the Great Assembly didn't settle for supplication and prayer. They accepted upon themselves and sat a three-day fast, continuous fasting for three days and three nights, and they prayed for mercy to deliver the *yetzer hara* for idolatry into their hands...

A note fell for them from heaven, in which the word "Truth" was written, indicating

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Parashat Ki Tetze - Each Generation and Its Folly

that Hashem had accepted their request, as if to say, "I agree with you in this resolution to eliminate the *yetzer hara* for idolatry."

**After** 920 years, during which the *yetzer hara* for idolatry had "celebrated" and caused Am

Israel to sin (from the time they entered the Land of Israel), it was finally abolished ! It disappeared !

**However,** don't worry. In place of admiration for this *yetzer hara*, admiration for other things arose...

## Each Generation and Its Folly

At the beginning of the Second Temple period, some Jews began to admire Greek culture, but after the victory of the Chashmonaim, that admiration disappeared among the Jewish people.

Later, during the era of the Geonim, a significant admiration for philosophy, particularly the teachings of Aristotle, started to emerge among some Jews, especially in Spain. However, expulsion with the from the vear Spain in 1492. the admiration for philosophy faded away among the Jewish people.

**In** a later period, the Haskalah began in Berlin, and it too lost its admiration after the terrible Holocaust.

**Shortly** thereafter, admiration for the communist ideology started to rise, leading to the establishment of the kibbutz movement in Israel. However, its significance waned after the dissolution of the kibbutzim in 1980.

**In** parallel to the communist ideology, the Zionist movement emerged, initially believing that it was possible to settle in the Land of Israel without the study of Torah and observance of mitzvot. This ideology was highly admired for years but has now diminished and proven to be nothing more than a dream. It became clear that without Torah, no idea can sustain itself.

**Now** let us turn our attention to the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe...

Parashat Ki Tetze - All Is Well That Ends Well?

All Is Well That Ends Well?

Thirty-three years ago, on the  $2^{nd}$  of Nisan, 5748 (1988), the Lubavitcher Rebbe said the following,<sup>13</sup> "In а discussion delivered bv mv revered father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz, 59 years ago, he said, 'The work has already been completed, and now all that remains is to polish the buttons' (meaning that the Jewish people were already deserving of redemption, and what remains is only minor work, like polishing buttons). And now, after an additional 59 years of work, we have also finished polishing the buttons, and now all that is left is to wait for the Mashiach..."

wait for the Mashiach..."

**But** we need to understand, if everything has concluded, why haven't we been redeemed yet?

**Recently,** Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern (author of "*Yam HaChochma*") published a letter, in which he explained:

**In** heaven, a characteristic has begun to emerge, the footsteps of

the Mashiach are approaching, sparks of excitement are sprouting and blossoming. The verse, "And it shall be said on that day: Behold, this is our G-d; we hoped for Him, and He will save us; this is Hashem to whom we hoped; we will exult and rejoice in His salvation" (Yeshayahu 25:9) – seems more tangible than ever...

And suddenly, multitudes of souls gathered and stood before the Throne of Glory, weeping and crying out, "Master of the Universe ! Throughout the ages, we stumbled and sinned, with idolatry during the time of the Judges and the First Temple, with the Greeks, the affinity for philosophy, and so on...

And although we returned in reincarnations and endured what we endured (to atone for previous sins), we have not yet merited complete teshuva. For in order to merit complete teshuva, one must confront the transgression in the same manner as the initial sin, in

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13. Sefer HaSichot (5748 – Vol. 1, p. 355)

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#### Parashat Ki Tetze - The Secret of The Pendulum

the same circumstance, during the same period of life, and in the same place where the transgression occurred. Only then, when all the conditions are similar to the initial sin, and one conquers their *yetzer hara* and doesn't sin, can one achieve complete teshuva.

**However,** the souls that sinned with idolatry, after the Members of the Great Assembly abolished the *yetzer hara* towards

idolatry, didn't face the same test again (as there is no longer any significance to idolatry). Therefore, even after all the hardships, they didn't merit complete teshuva.

**The** same applies to the souls that sinned with philosophy, the Haskalah, and so on...

**Thus** - the souls claimed, shedding their tears - what will be with us? How will we merit the revelation of Hashem's light?"

### The Secret of The Pendulum

**In** heaven, they heard their claims and responded, "The ultimate purpose of creation, the revelation of *Elokut* to humanity, is drawing near. Then, every Jew, male and female, will merit to gaze from one end of the world to the other.

**Now,** in order to provide you with a *tikkun*, we will combine both aspects: We will move the pendulum to the opposite extreme, and on this side, all human beings will be able to gaze from one end of the world to the other, but it will

be from the side of impurity.

Additionally, we will create a device that contains within it all impurities, sorcery, heresies, immorality, transgressions, and sins of all generations.

**Each** time you overcome it, without looking or staring at those impurities, you will merit to rectify all generations ! And it will be considered as if you confronted the transgression exactly in the same way as you sinned !

**About** this, Yeshayahu HaNavi prophesied, "A redeemer shall come to Tzion and to those who repent from **sin** among Yaakov –

Parashat Ki Tetze - The Secret of The Pendulum

the word of Hashem" (Yeshayahu 59:20), meaning that there will be a single **"sin"** that encompasses everything, and through its merit (each time you overcome it), you will be deserving of redemption, "A redeemer shall come to Tzion." **One** year after the talk of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in the year 1989, Tim Berners-Lee proposed the concept of a global hypertext system in which people could share information and link documents...

**And** the Internet was established...

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# Shabbat Times **Ki Tetze** 9<sup>th</sup> of Elul, 5783

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:22 pm	8:21 pm	8:51 pm
Miami	7:31 pm	8:23 pm	9:00 pm
Los Angeles	7:11 pm	8:06 pm	8:39 pm
Montreal	7:28 pm	8:31 pm	8:56 pm
Toronto	7:48 pm	8:49 pm	9:16 pm
London	7:46 pm	8:55 pm	9:14 pm
Jerusalem	6:57 pm	7:45 pm	8:34 pm
Tel Aviv	6:54 pm	7:43 pm	8:31 pm
Haifa	6:54 pm	7:43 pm	8:31 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:53 pm	7:42 pm	8:30 pm

#### Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

Parents who honored Talmidei Chachamim had the joy of witnessing their children grow into individuals of utmost sanctity, devoted to the study of Torah and living with genuine yirat shamayim. Conversely, those parents who disregarded the honor of Talmidei Chachamim often saw their children drawn into negative influences, chas v'shalom.

Therefore, if one wishes to ensure that their children walk the path of Torah without faltering, they must be exceedingly mindful of honoring and revering Talmidei Chachamim. Even if someone may not fully observe all the mitzvot, if they sincerely harbor love and respect for Talmidei Chachamim, they are assured a place in the World to Come



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