

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 159

Bechukotai | The Power of Torah to Repair Man and the World

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

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

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת בחוקותי | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Bechukotai

Purification and Immersion

Forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert were drawing to a close. At the end of the fortieth year, the Jewish people arrived at the plains of Moab.

At that time, Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab. Seeing the Jewish people stationed near his country's border, he panicked, "What are they planning to do? I must find a way to prevail". Wrinkles furrowed his brow, and beads of sweat formed in his temples.

Eventually, an idea came to his mind. He sent messengers to summon Balaam the son of Beor, asking him to come and curse the Jewish people, but, as is known, he did not succeed.

Balaam waited for an opportunity when the Al-mighty will, so to speak, be angry and then Balaam will be able to curse the Jewish people, however,

throughout these days, the Al-mighty was not "angry" even once, and Balak and Balaam were left hanging, for instead of cursing, Balaam began to bless.

Balaam turned to Balak and said: "Sadly I have failed. But I have wonderful advice for you." Balak leaned in, and Balaam whispered the secret to him, and thus, the 'scheme' was set into motion.

In Moab and Midian, a staff sergeant was appointed to recruit the daughters of the land to cause the Jewish sons to sin, and as a result, thousands of the Jewish people were punished and died in a plague.

Balaam, standing aside and seeing Jews killed on account of his advice, was filled with joy, 'Great, I'm going to make a fortune out of this'.

Balaam approached and demanded exorbitant consulting fees from Balak.

Parshat Bechukotai - Purification and Immersion

Meanwhile, in the Jewish camp, G-d revealed Himself to Moses and commanded him: "Take vengeance on behalf of the Jewish people from the Midianites; afterward you shall be gathered among your people" (Numbers 31:2).

Moses gathered the Jewish people and passed on G-d's command. The Jewish people went to war and returned with many spoils, animals, vessels, and slaves.

G-d revealed Himself to Moses and said: "These vessels (that you brought from Midian) were used to cook non-kosher meat, and the prohibited foods were absorbed into them, and therefore they cannot be used until they are made kosher."

The way to make them kosher is as follows: vessels used for cooking without liquid (oven) - require libun (heating the vessel until it glows) and immersion.

Vessels used for hot liquid use - require hag'alah (immersing the vessel into boiling water) and immersion.

Vessels used for cold - only require immersion.

This all applies to regular vessels, but for earthenware vessels, hag'alah does not help, and the only way to make them kosher is by libun.

However, the sages were wary about libun for earthenware vessels, since they may really become damaged, and therefore a person will not torch the vessel properly, and so they prohibited making earthenware vessels kosher.

Yet still, there remains one way to make earthenware vessels kosher and that is by putting them into a welding furnace¹ (by doing so, the vessel is as created anew) - and by this, the earthenware vessel is made kosher for use.²

As usual, we shall begin with a story.

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

1. In the words of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 451:1):

Pots made of clay that have been used for chametz all year round... If they are returned to the kiln that is used for firing new clay

vessels, these pots are permitted, since one subjected them to such intense heat, certainly he is not concerned lest they crack.

2. See all this in detail in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah, 120).

What Would You Do ?

The following story is told by Rabbi Shalom Meir Wallach:³

The great 'Divrei Chaim' of Tsanz stood by his window and called the first Jew who passed by in the street. The Jew approached the rabbi in awe, and the rabbi asked him: 'Please tell me, what would you do if you found a wallet full of coins on the street ?'

The fellow being questioned knew who was asking, and exclaimed: 'What would I do ? I would announce it in all the synagogues and study halls, and return the lost property to its owner.'

'You're dishonest,' the rabbi decreed, and moved to the window and called a second Jew over, and repeated his question.

The second fellow's eyes sparkled: 'What would I do, rabbi ? It's a wonderful find, I would finally have bread for my children's mouths.'

'You are wicked,' the rabbi concluded, and called a third Jew, and asked him yet as well.

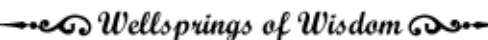
'The rabbi asked what I would do, but how would I know ?' The third fellow answered.

'If the rabbi had asked what one should do, that's quite clear: one must return the lost property to its owner. But when temptation comes, the battle begins. The evil inclination will argue and confuse me, and who knows who will prevail'.

'You are wise,' the rabbi declared with a smile.

This leads us to yet another story, told by Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky:⁴

A young man would always arrive late to his studies, and day after day, was punished. Once, his teacher spoke to him to try and understand the reason for his tardiness.



3. 'Ma'ayan Hamoed' ('Bein Hametzarim' - page 115).

4. 'Vehigadtah' (Deuteronomy - page 466).

Parshat Bechukotai - What Would You Do ?

The student apologized and explained: he was scattered and forgetful, and scattered his clothes all over, and each morning, had to search and gather them from here and there, which caused him great delay.

The teacher gave him advice: When you undress, write down on a note where each garment is, and in the morning, follow the list.

The young man was overjoyed, what a wonderful idea !

However, the next day, he didn't show up at all.

The teacher went to his house and found him standing there, perplexed and embarrassed.

“What happened ?” He wondered out loud.

The student explained: he had followed the advice and wrote: The tzitzit is on the dresser, the shirt on the chair, the pants on the floor, one shoe here and the other there, and finished the note with, 'I am in bed.'

Happy and content, he recited "HaMapil" and fell asleep.

In the morning, he washed his hands and followed his list, collecting the clothes one by one. He got to the end of the list, 'I am in bed,' but alas couldn't find himself in bed and was still searching for himself.

The story is humorous, yet illustrates a sad reality.

So many people are disconnected from their inner 'self.' They live, breathe, and experience life - all while being completely disconnected from their inner 'self.'

Life passes them by, and they stand aside, observing it.

So many people flow with the stream of life, along with everyone else, yet their inner 'self' does not take up space, it is stifled and seldom comes to expression. Their thoughts, actions, and behaviors stem from societal norms, and follow trends and the dictations of the media. The only concern that fills their hearts: 'What will the neighbors say if we behave differently'.

Regarding this Hillel the Elder proclaimed (Sukkah 53): 'If I am here, everything is here; if I

Parshat Bechukotai - What Would You Do ?

am not here, who is here' -
Everything around has meaning,
if one's 'self' is present.

One connected to his inner
'self,' knows what is expected
from him and while life is full

of challenges is prepared for the
battle.

Indeed, the only way to
reach one's 'self' is through
studying the Torah.⁵

Let us start from the beginning.

—*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*—

5. By studying the Torah, a person
merits to recognize his inner self and to
control it, and this is the source of his
control over creation.

We bring a story told by Rabbi Shalom
Meir Wallach Shlita to illustrate this
point ('Ma'ayan Haemunah', page 103):

As is well known, for the purpose of
baking matzah, we draw water from a
river or a spring the day before, and use
it the following day for baking.

These waters are called 'rested
waters' (for they are stored overnight for the
following day).

Once, the venerable 'Avnei Nezer' from
Sochatchov went to draw 'rested waters'
from the river, but despite it being
spring, the cold weather was so severe
that they had to break the frozen ice with
an ax to reach the water.

On their way back, they discussed that
the river had never been frozen at this
time of the year.

The rabbi's assistant replied, saying: 'If
you wish, I will tell you why the cold is
so intense.'

He recounted: At the start of winter, a
Jew came and told our dear rabbi that he
has six eligible daughters, but he has no
money for their dowry.

He had borrowed six hundred rubles,
and a large forest was offered to him to
work to cut its trees.

"Rabbi, you must know" - the man said
- "to transport the cut trees we float them
on the river, to the necessary location,
from where they are then taken ashore."

"Rabbi" - the man continued - "what shall I
do if there is no river near the forest that was
offered to me. There is only a large lake there
but it has no outlet to the relevant river. If I
cut the trees, they might lay in the forest like
a stone with no market..."

So the rabbi shrugged and said: "If so,
do not buy."

The man was desperate: "From what
will I have to marry off my daughters?"

The rabbi asked: "So my dear, how then
can I help you?"

The man said: "I researched and found out,
if the winter is very cold and a lot of snow
falls, the lake's level rises with the melting

The Beginning of Creation - The Elements

King David, in Psalms, praises G-d, saying: "Hallelujah, I will praise the L-rd with all my heart in the assembly of the upright and congregation... The power of His works He has declared to His people" (Psalms 111:1-6).

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto explained:⁶

“**King** David praised G-d, that The power of His works He has

declared to His people' - out of G-d's love for the Jewish people, He desired to reveal to them His hidden treasures, to inform them wonderful wisdom, what the other nations of the earth, who do not have a share in His Torah, do not know.

And when the Creator wished to create this lowly world, in which man would serve before Him and worship His name, He first prepared

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

of the snow and its waters flow into the river. Therefore, I came to ask, will there be a particularly cold and snowy winter...”

After so many pesky questions, the rabbi asked that he be dismissed and said: “Even such questions they come to ask me? How would I know what kind of winter it will be? He turned to me and ordered: Please escort him out.

I replied: “I cannot find the heart to throw a Jew out...”

Especially since the Jew stood pleading for advice...

The rabbi turned to me and said: “Well, what do you say? Can I predict the amount of snow?!”

I replied: “In my opinion, the rabbi can, and I even have evidence for this.”

The rabbi asked: “What is the evidence?”

I said: “The proof is the very fact that people come from afar to ask him for blessing and advice.”

The rabbi concluded: The Chassidim, who placed you here as assistant have done well, for you collaborate with them!

The 'Avnei Nezer' from Sochatchov leaned his head on his hands and stayed in that position for a few moments, and then lifted his head, and told the Jewish merchant: 'Go ahead and lease the forest!'

Now you know why we had to break the ice to draw our 'rested waters'...

6. In his book "Sha'arei Ramchal" (page 409).

Parshat Bechukotai - The Torah of Adam

the higher worlds, all spiritual, void of any physicality, for only in our world does physicality exist.

Finally, when he created our lowliest of worlds, He created the four elements from the four letters of His holy name (the Tetragrammaton) with which he fashioned all of creation:

From the letter Yud of His name - He created the element of water.

From the first letter Hei - He created the element of fire.

From the letter Vav - He created the element of air.

From the final letter Hei - He created the element of earth.

The creation of these elements are alluded to in the first verses of creation: "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and empty, and darkness appeared over the surface of the depths, and the Spirit of G-d hovered over the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2).

'**And** the earth' - refers to the element of earth; 'And darkness' - the element of fire;⁷ 'And the Spirit' - the element of air; 'The waters' - the element of water.

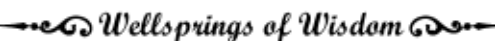
With these four elements that were initially created, all beings in our world were formed, including Adam.

The Torah of Adam

At the time Adam was created, all his innermost elements were pure and clean, free from any spiritual imperfections and impurities. As such, his eyes

shone with a special divine light, called 'the hidden light'.

This great light opened and revealed before him unfathomable spiritual vistas, and all the gates of



7. The Ramban wrote (Genesis 1:1): Fire is called 'darkness' because the pure elemental source of fire that surrounds

our globe is dark, for if it were red, it would illuminate our night.

Parshat Bechukotai - You Are Dust, and Will Return to Dust

divine understanding were open before him, and he strolled through the lofty spiritual worlds, as if walking through a splendid and marvelous garden.

As the divine Kabbalist, Rabbi Shlomo Eliyashuv added⁸ that Adam before the sin merited to study the Torah of Atzilut, which is the 'Tree of Life', and which

You Are Dust, and Will Return to Dust

Tragically, Adam sinned and ate from the Tree of Knowledge, and as a result, he dramatically fell from his level, and into the four elements of creation entered an impure spirit. From then on, the elements that form all of creation contain good and evil mixed together, and all have the potential to do evil.

Furthermore, the Torah of Atzilut - the Torah of the Tree of Life - was removed from us, and in its stead, we received the Torah of Beriah - the Torah of the Tree of

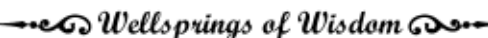
includes the divine intentions as well as the combinations of G-d's Holy Name.

About this Torah, it is said that G-d, so to speak, sits and engages in Torah study. And regarding one who merits this most lofty wisdom, it is stated: "I said, 'You are "G-dly", and you all are sons of the Most High'" (Psalms 82:6).

Knowledge of good and evil. This is the Torah we have today, which begins with the letter Bet - to hint at Beriah. (As brought in Likkutei Torah of the Arizal - beginning of Parshat Bereshit).

Following the grave transgression of eating from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, G-d revealed Himself to Adam and said to him:

“From now on, the filth of sin is mixed within you, and consequently, you are distanced from Me since near to Me the impure cannot dwell.



8. Quoted several times in his books, see for example 'Leshem Shevo Veachlama -

Sefer Hadeah' (Discourses Olam Hatochu, Part 2, Discourse 4 - 22:5).

Parshat Bechukotai - If Only We Had Been Brought to Mount Sinai

Going forward, there is no choice but to purify you through death, "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Through death, the flesh will decompose in the grave and turn to dust, and in this way, the impurities will separate from it,

If Only We Had Been Brought to Mount Sinai

The Talmud says (Shabbat 146a):

After Adam sinned and ate from the Tree of Knowledge, impurity entered the world, but when the Jewish people arrived at Mount Sinai, their impurity ceased.

The Talmud continues: While the impurity of the Jewish people who stood at Mount Sinai ceased, the impurity of the idolaters who did not stand at Mount Sinai, did not cease.

As we say in the Passover Haggadah: 'If G-d had brought us before Mount Sinai, and had not given us the Torah - it would have been enough', because by merely

and then the soul will be once again worthy to draw near the divine presence.

2448 years had passed, and then, we merited to stand at the foot of Mount Sinai, where we merited once more that our elements be purified.

standing before Mount Sinai we had already merited the removal of the impurity, and for this we must already rejoice endlessly even had we not received the Torah.

Since their elements were consequently purified,⁹ they merited to spring beyond the limits of their physicality and exit the boundaries of time and place, and consequently, no longer needed to die, and became free from the angel of death. In addition, they became worthy again to receive the Torah of Atzilut.

As Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l once said (Imrei Noam, Shavuot - Essay 1):

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

9. Thus wrote the holy Rabbi Nathan Neta Shapira in Megaleh Amukot (Terumah): He took them out of Egypt and brought them

before Mount Sinai, "The mountain which G-d desired for His dwelling" (Psalms 68:17), and there their four elements were rectified.

Parshat Bechukotai - If Only We Had Been Brought to Mount Sinai

At Mount Sinai, the Jewish people heard only the Ten Commandments. But it is explained in Tanya (Likkutei Amarim, beginning of Chapter 20) that in the first commandment: "I am the L-rd your G-d" (Exodus 20:2) all 248 positive commandments of the Torah are included, and in the second commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (ibid verse 3) all 365 negative commandments of the Torah are included.

Therefore, these two utterances alone were heard by the Jewish people directly from the Al-mighty (Makkot 24a), since they include the entire Torah.

Additionally, it is known what the holy Shelah writes (Yitro, Torah Ohr - 3), that the Ten Commandments are formed by 620 letters, which corresponds numerically to Keter (crown), which symbolizes 'the crown of Torah' - and includes the 613 biblical commandments as well as the seven rabbinic commandments.¹⁰

This signifies to us that the entire Torah is included in the Ten Commandments, and with the giving of the Ten Commandments, the entire Torah was essentially given to the people of Israel.

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

By standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, of which it is said: "The place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5), they purified the element of earth.

G-d then commanded them to wash their clothes, as it is said: "And the L-rd said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their garments'" (Exodus 19:10), and thus they purified the element of water.

Then the L-rd descended upon Mount Sinai, "and Mount Sinai was completely surrounded in smoke, because the L-rd descended upon it in fire, and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace,

and the whole mountain quaked greatly" (Exodus 19:18), and with this was purified the element of fire.

And when G-d spoke the word: "I am the L-rd your G-d" (Exodus 20:2), their souls flew from them, as it is said: "My soul departed at His word" (Song of Songs 5:6), and then, the element of air was purified.

10. The seven Rabbinic commandments are: The ritual washing of hands, Eruvin, blessings (all blessings are Rabbinic, except for the blessing of Birkat Hamazon which is from the Torah), Shabbat candles, Megillah, Chanukah candles, and Hallel (Megaleh Amukot, Vaetchanan, path 75).

Therefore, at the beginning of the commandments, it is stated: "And G-d spoke all these words, saying" (Exodus 20:1), as the Zohar explains (Yitro 90b): 'This principle is the general principle of all, the principle of what is above and below', meaning, the Ten Commandments are the general principle of everything, and in their giving, were essentially given 'all the words' - of the Torah - that would be revealed from then and forever.

The marvel, however, is that despite the immense significance of the event and all it encompasses, the actual event of the Mount Sinai revelation did not last a long time, to say the Ten Commandments does not take more than a few minutes.

Even if we include all the events surrounding the giving of the commandments, the entire event lasted no more than an hour. Yet, in such a short time, G-d gave the Jewish nation the foundations and roots of the entire Torah to come.

The reason for this is that the Jewish people prepared themselves

with great and immense preparation during the days leading up to the revelation on Mount Sinai.

The Jewish people sanctified and purified themselves inside and out, and 'polished' their hearts, removing their bad traits and base desires, and turning it into a pure and clean vessel.

Since the Jewish people had done great preparation and were a fitting vessel - accordingly, when the time came for G-d to give them His Torah, no more than a few minutes were needed.

In other words: From G-d's side, no more than a few minutes are needed to give a person an entire world, the person merely needs to be a fitting vessel for it.

Creating the vessel depends on the magnitude of the person's spiritual preparation, and all delays in a person's achievement come as a result of him not being a fitting vessel, which is delayed when one does not make proper preparations.

Therefore, we are commanded to remember the revelation of Mount Sinai every day, as it says: "Only take heed to yourself, and

Parshat Bechukotai - The Sin of the Golden Calf

guard your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life: and teach them to your sons, and your sons' sons; The day that you stood before the L-rd your G-d in Horeb..." (Deuteronomy 4:9-10).

The intent here is that we always remember that just as at Mount Sinai, the Jewish people

made a proper preparation from their side, and therefore such a short time was sufficient for G-d to imbue into their hearts the foundations of the entire Torah, so too in every generation, every day, and for every person - according to the level of preparation he makes on his part, so will be the level of influence G-d bestows upon him.¹¹

The Sin of the Golden Calf

Following the revelation of Mount Sinai, Moses ascended to receive the Torah.

Before ascending, he told the Jewish people: "I will return in forty days," and the Jewish

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

11. The following story was told by Rabbi Shalom Shvadron ('Sheal Avicha' Part 1 - Page 55):

A Jew once approached Rabbi Kastel, who was a great Torah scholar and a respected rabbi who lived a great many years, with a bitter complaint:

What will become of me? Every year on Yom Kippur we go to the synagogue, and we fast and pray all day, but afterward, everything returns to how it was.

Rabbi Kastel replied to him:

Do not worry, I will explain this to you by means of a parable:

Someone once dug a well in soft earth, and removed mounds of earth,

but because the earth was soft, it crumbled and slid back in, filling the excavation.

Because of this, the person was forced to dig a second time, and even a third time until his digging was successful. However, the difference between the first digging and the subsequent diggings is, that while the first time it was difficult, each time that he dug anew, the work became easier, until the earth no longer covered the well at all.

So too is the case with a Jew on Yom Kippur, every year the person digs into his own earth, which is the body, until it softens as it should, and accepts the yoke of Heaven.

Parshat Bechukotai - For He Desires Mercy

people stayed at the foot of Mount Sinai, counting the days.

While the Satan usually sends his messengers to sow the seeds of evil and cruelty, desires, and bad traits in the world, this time, he decided to go to war himself.

Since he knew the tremendous stature of the Jewish nation, and knew it would be very hard to fight against them, he decided to use his secret weapon specially prepared for the war against the last generation of exile, the weapon of 'illusions'.

And the Satan produced the first illusion.

The Satan darkened the sky, and in the darkness that ensued, the funeral procession of Moses was shown - how angels carried the bier, shedding tears - over Moses' death.

The illusion was more successful than anticipated, and the mixed multitudes made themselves a golden calf of idolatry.

Moses returned down the mountain the following day with the Tablets of the Covenant in his hand, and when he saw the golden calf, he shattered the Tablets at the foot of the mountain.

Following the sin of the golden calf, a terrible change took place: the elements were once again damaged, and once more, evil gained control over the elements of creation.

Thus, the same damages that were caused by the sin of the Tree of Knowledge happened yet again. Once again, impurity was mixed within the Jewish people, and from then on, the only option for complete purification for the Jewish people from impurity was through death, "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Through death, the flesh would decompose in the grave and turn to dust, and in this way, the impurity would be separated from it, and could then be worthy of drawing close again to G-d, blessed be He.

For He Desires Mercy

Although the damages caused by the sin of the Golden Calf

were similar to those caused by the sin of the Tree of

Parshat Bechukotai - For He Desires Mercy

Knowledge, there is nonetheless a great difference between them.

This time, before the sin, the Jewish people had already received the Torah, and now had the power, through Torah study, to purify themselves.¹²

In this connection we bring the words of Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l (Imrei Noam, Bechukotai - Essay 1):

This week's Torah portion begins by saying: "If you follow My decrees and keep My commandments and do them,"

(Leviticus 26:3) and following this, the Torah details the great reward that G-d promises to give to the Jewish nation if they do this.

Rashi in his commentary on this verse explains: 'If you follow My decrees', does not refer to walking in the path of the Torah's commandments, for that is immediately stated afterward: 'and keep My commandments', rather the verse's intention is: 'that you labor in Torah study'.

Thus, from Rashi's words we see that there's a close connection

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

12. In the book 'Vehigadta' (Deuteronomy - page 126) the following tale is brought:

The Rabbi from Ponevezh was walking in the street and met Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky who was then a Torah scholar of forty years of age.

Rabbi Chaim approached the Rabbi from Ponevezh and requested that he accept a certain young man into the yeshiva.

The rabbi informed him that registration had closed, but he would nonetheless try to fulfill his request.

When the yeshiva's administration convened, the Rabbi began: 'Gentlemen,

although registration has indeed closed, as I was walking through the streets of Bnei Brak, I suddenly encountered the Torah itself. The Torah approached me, requesting to admit another student into the yeshiva. I think we should comply with the Torah's request. What do you think?'

They requested an explanation, who and what.

The Rabbi from Ponevezh said, let's make the decision first, then I will explain.

The student was thereupon accepted, and the rabbi revealed that he had met Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, a walking sefer Torah...

Parshat Bechukotai - For He Desires Mercy

between the 'My decrees' and laboring intensely in Torah, but what exactly is the connection?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe Zt"l explained as follows:¹³

The word 'My decrees' - 'Bechukotai', has two meanings:

A. A statute. **B.** Engraving.

The Torah here is also referring to the meaning of engraving.

The difference between writing and engraving is that when letters are written with ink on parchment, the ink and the parchment do not become one entity, they rather remain two different things that are merely stuck to each other, and therefore can also be separated from each other.

In contrast, when letters are engraved in a rock, the letters become one entity with the rock, and therefore they cannot be separated from it in any way.

This then is what the Torah says: 'Im Bechukotai', meaning: The words of the Torah study

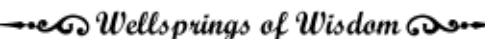
must be engraved in our hearts and become an inseparable part of our very existence - like the letters engraved on the rock.

How do we merit this level that the words of the Torah be engraved in our heart and become one with us? Rashi explains that 'If you follow My decrees' means: 'that you should labor in Torah study'.

Rashi was precise in his language 'that you should labor in Torah', and not 'that you should study Torah', to teach us that only when a person toils and exerts himself in Torah study with all his might - only then will he merit that the words of the Torah be engraved in his heart and become an inseparable part of his existence.

This also explains what is written later in our Torah portion that in reward for walking in G-d's statutes - "You will bring out the old to make room for the new" (ibid. verse 10).

This refers to what our Sages say (Chagigah 12a) that G-d hid



13. Adapted from Likkutei Sichot - Free Translation (Volume 3 - Page 275).

away for the righteous the initial intense divine light that existed with which one could see from one end of the world to the other, because of the wicked who were destined to come into being, and in place of the first light, He created the light that is before us.

That first light that was created in the world and was hidden is called 'old', since it is ancient and dormant. Whereas the light that exists in the world is called 'new', since its creation is newer relative to the creation of the ancient light.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that the intention of our Sages is not that the righteous lost the hidden light, but rather that this primordial light is hidden within the Torah, and a righteous person who labors and toils in Torah, and studies it with holiness and purity, G-d, illuminates for him the hidden light, and through it, the righteous can see from one end of the world to the other.

We find that this was indeed the case, that when the Baal Shem Tov wanted to see or know something, he would open

the Zohar randomly and study it with immense holiness, and the hidden light in the Torah would be revealed to him, and through it, he could actually see from one end of the world to the other.

Thus, the Torah says: 'If you follow My statutes' - it will be fulfilled in you: 'You will bring out the old because of the new'. Meaning: If you toil and exert yourself in studying the Torah until its words are engraved in your hearts and become an inseparable part of your existence as mentioned above, through this you will merit that G-d, will bring forth from within the Torah the old and hidden light, and will reveal it to you, (in this context "bring out" doesn't refer to taking out of the house, but rather to revealing what was concealed) and through this, you will be able to see from one end of the world to the other.

From this we learn how important it is for every person to dedicate significant time every day to Torah study, since there is nothing in the world that has the power to connect and bind us to G-d, like Torah study.

Parshat Bechukotai - Connecting Day and Night with Torah Study

This is also why the Ten Commandments (which include the entire Torah) begin with the letter Aleph of the word 'Anochi', because the form of the letter Aleph is composed of an upper Yud, a lower Yud, and a Vav connecting them. The upper Yud represents G-d, and the lower Yud represents every Jew, and the connecting Vav represents the Torah (which was given on the 6th of Sivan) that connects man to his Creator.

The shape of the Vav is also like a long conduit because the Torah serves both as the rope that ties man to his Creator as well as a conduit through which G-d, offers all His bounty to man: healthy children, long life, and ample sustenance - therefore, a person must not be idle from the Torah at any moment.

By virtue of studying the

Connecting Day and Night with Torah Study

One may ask: Granted, yeshiva students and Torah scholars have the merit to study Torah all day, and can be constantly connected to the Torah, which will be for them a shield and protection.

Torah, we are granted divine protection from all the nations surrounding us that thirst for our blood, as mentioned in the Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah, 25:1):

Rav Huna said in the name of Rabbi Benjamin ben Levi: This is explained through a parable of a king who told his son to go out to the marketplace.

The son said to him: 'Father, I am afraid of robbers on the way, and at sea of the pirates'.

What did his father do? He took a staff and carved it, and placed in it a charm and gave it to his son, and said to him: 'Let this staff be in your hand and you shall not fear any creature'. Likewise, G-d, said to Moses, tell the Jewish nation: 'My sons, engage in Torah and you shall not have to fear any nation'.

But what about a person who must fulfill what Adam was decreed: "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:19), and is busy most of the day earning his livelihood?

In "Chelev Ha'aretz" (Part 1, Chapter 3 - Page 210), we answer this question:

Our sages of previous generations ruled that although every person should aspire to constantly study the Torah, if this is not within their ability, they should at least strive to set fixed study times every day, and study diligently and persistently.

Likewise, when an opportunity for a Torah class arises, such as in synagogues where a lesson is held between Mincha and Maariv prayers, one should not miss it and should participate and listen attentively.

Therefore, those who immediately after the Mincha prayer leave the synagogue 'to get some air' and wait outside for the Maariv prayer, should be made aware that this is an undesirable custom, and should be uprooted.

There are several reasons why this is an evil habit:

1. They are neglecting Torah study, as written by the Chafetz Chaim in Biur Halacha (Siman 155):

“In our many sins, many people completely slacken their hands from the Torah, and do not set even a little time each day for Torah, because they do not know the great obligation of this. Our Sages have already said (Eicha Rabba - Introduction 2): G-d forgave the sin of idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed, but did not forgive the sin of neglecting Torah study.

2. Furthermore, in their idle talk, they can easily come to commit the severe sin of gossip, slander, and other transgressions, and this is of course not permitted.

3. It often leads to quarreling and other undesirable behaviors.

4. The most severe of all is when they stand in the synagogue and speak mundane words.

In Chayei Adam (I, 17:5) the Holy Zohar is quoted which severely penalizes a person who speaks mundane words in the synagogue, saying: "Woe to him, he who does not have a share in the G-d of Israel".

5. Yet even more severe is that they raise their voice and

distract those who study Torah at this time - not only are they neglecting Torah study, but they also cause others who

are studying to neglect their studies.

May G-d save us from these transgressions.

Confusion of Mind

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, he said:¹⁴

The Midrash states (Bereshit Rabbah, 21:2) "I passed by the field of a lazy person" (Proverbs 24:30) - this refers to Adam.

This requires clarification, for did Adam sin through laziness and inaction? On the contrary, he sinned through his actions of eating from the tree of knowledge?

Rather we must differentiate between laziness and patience.

A patient person is thoughtful and has composure and does not hurry to decide and act, while the lazy person is too lazy to be thoughtful and considerate, and in haste, he hurries to act.

Thus, the Midrash explains that Adam, due to his great stature, did not consider properly

his actions as he should have, and confused his role.

The existence of all created beings, matches their will, and they are connected to their inner 'self', and are therefore happy and content with their life.

Man as well, before his downfall, was this way as well.

Before the sin, his inner purpose shone before him, and all his actions stemmed from complete awareness and absolute composure, and his intellect and will were completely synchronized.

After the sin, the knowledge of good and evil developed in man, creating contradictions and unresolvable questions, concealment without any apparent purpose.

These contradictions, and the discrepancy between intellect

Parshat Bechukotai - Refinement of the Four Elements

and will, caused man to be unsettled, lacking composure, panicked and confused.

Thus, the only way to return to the state of 'before the sin', is through immersion in Torah

study, for through study, a person merits to experience a clear world, connecting with his 'self'.

Being that we have come this far, let's detail more on how one can merit to purify their elements.

Refinement of the Four Elements

Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar, the holy Ohr HaChaim, in addition to his commentary on the Torah, wrote a commentary on the Tanach called 'Rishon Letzion', where he wrote (Proverbs 2:1):¹⁵

The human body is composed of the four elements, of fire, wind, water, and earth.

Initially, these elements were pure and holy, but after Adam sinned, all the elements were damaged.

We should not think - adds the holy Ohr HaChaim - that the elements were merely damaged

once and that's it. Rather, every time a person sins, he damages his elements.

When a person sins in thought, he damages the element of air.

When a person sins in consumption, he damages the element of water.

When one sins by disrespecting the words of our Sages and Torah scholars, as well as in matters of modesty,¹⁶ he damages the element of fire.

G-d, the Merciful Father, prepared and arranged a sequence of rectification for these four elements:

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

15. We have been assisted in this passage by the explanations of Rabbi Moshe Schwartz.

16. In this connection we bring a story from the book 'Botzina D'Nehora' (Volume 2 - Page 56):

Once, two Chassidim traveled to the holy Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibozh (the grandson of Rabbi Israel, the Baal Shem Tov). The journey was long, and on their way, they passed through a dense forest.

Parshat Bechukotai - Refinement of the Four Elements

Suddenly, from a distance, they saw a burning candle. For some reason, they were curious and felt compelled to go and look at the candle.

When they arrived, they saw that there was a grave, and the tombstone was engraved with the words: Here lies Moshe the son of Aharon who resisted his inclination more than Joseph the Righteous.

They were amazed by this, and thought to themselves that surely it could not be Moses since no one knows of his burial place, (besides for the fact that he wasn't the son of Aaron but rather his brother). **When** they came to their Rebbe, they told him about this wondrous event, and Rabbi Baruch said that he himself wanted to see it.

Rabbi Baruch got on the wagon and went with them.

When they arrived there, Rabbi Baruch saw that the matter was indeed true, and immediately went to the nearby villages to search if perhaps there was an elder who knew the story, but found no one who knew anything about it, but they told him that in a certain nearby village lived a very old gentile, and perhaps he would know the story.

They all went to that place, and found the gentile lying in his room on the bed. Immediately when he saw them, he gathered his strength and stood up, and said in a loud voice: Welcome. Then he turned to Rabbi Baruch and asked: You are Israel's descendant, not so, for what reason have you come here?

Rabbi Baruch told him about the reason for his visit. The gentile said: I have been waiting for you to come, and I will tell you why: In this village lived a landowner, who had all his clothes tailored by a Jewish tailor in the city of Mezhibuzh.

When the work was substantial, he would send one of his servants to the tailor and give him the work. But sometimes the work was minor: to sew a button that fell off, or to mend a seam that opened, and then, he would ask the tailor to send one of his workers to his house to fix it.

This landowner had an only daughter, and one day the daughter began to desire the tailor's servant who was very handsome, and she told her father that if he does not give her to marry that boy, she will die, because without him her life would not be worth living. The landowner sent a letter to the tailor to send his servant to fix some clothes.

The tailor sent his servant, who took with him bread and butter for several days. When he arrived, they gave him clothes to mend, and this daughter would walk back and forth in front of him every time, trying to start a conversation, but it was all in vain, he did not cooperate at all.

Seeing all this, the landowner called him and told him all about his daughter's request, and said: "My daughter is an only child, and if you will be my son-in-law, you will live in wealth and

Parshat Bechukotai - Refinement of the Four Elements

By immersion in a mikveh, the element of air is rectified - this

corresponds to the immersion of vessels.

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

honor, and after I die, you will inherit all my property.”

the dead daughter and the still-alive servant.

The servant replied: “I am a Jew. I will not do it.”

After a few days, the tailor came asking about his servant. The landowner replied: "I paid him, and he left on his way, and it seems he ran off with the money." The tailor accepted this explanation.

When the landowner heard this, he consulted with his wealthy friends what to do, since his daughter was most adamant, and they decided to lock him up together with his daughter in a room all night, hoping he would be tempted by her.

The old gentile continued the story: "Since then, a spiritual candle has been burning over that grave, visible yet intangible.

The landowner did so, and his daughter attempted to win him over throughout the night, but he did not listen to her at all.

One day, as I was herding my animals, Rabbi Israel, the Baal Shem Tov, came to me and asked me to come with him. I followed him to the cemetery. He asked me to dig up and remove the young man from that grave and move him to a certain place in the forest. And so I did. And as soon as I finished covering the new grave, the candle lit up again.

In the morning, the landowner went to see what happened during the night and found his daughter nearly lifeless, having failed in her endeavors.

Rabbi Israel, in return, blessed me to live to a great age.

The landowner decided to try again for a second night, placing them together in a small room. In the morning, he went to see the outcome and found his daughter lying dead before his feet, while the young man was quite alive.

He told me then: If my grandson comes to you, tell him this story.

The landowner was filled with rage and said: "If you did not want to live with her in life, then you shall dwell with her in death." He then bound the servant to his daughter and buried them together,

Now that I have told you this story, I know that my time has come.”

Indeed, a short time later the elderly gentile died at a ripe old age.”

Parshat Bechukotai - The Element of Earth

By fasting, the element of water is rectified - this corresponds to the 'boiling' of non-kosher dishes, (since through fasting the body temperature is heated and one perspires).

By studying Torah, the element of fire is rectified,

as the Torah is compared to a fire - this corresponds to the torching, all as mentioned earlier.

Yes, you must be wondering, why didn't we mention the element of earth...

The Element of Earth

The Ohr HaChaim continues (ibid):

“The above mentioned is the rectification for the three elements within the body, which are fire, air, water, but for earth, the truth be told that its law is to be prohibited as the well-known adage: "An earthenware vessel cannot ever be purged of its impurity" (Pesachim 30b).

For this reason, when Adam sinned and his 'earthenware vessel' absorbed prohibition, there was no hope except to return to the furnace of its making, in which it was baked, that is to return to the earth from which it was taken.”

We understand from his holy words, that when Adam sinned, impurity entered the element of

earth within him, and since impurity cannot be purged from an earthenware vessel, and it is impossible to purify, man needed to die and return to his original element of earth.

The Ohr HaChaim continues and says:

“However, even for the element of earth, there is rectification, and it is through studying Torah with all one's might to the utmost.

You will find that there are righteous people who have cleansed their bodies with Torah so much so that they expelled its impurity, and turned their physicality into 'white glass' (an earthenware vessel discussed in Tractate Shabbat 15b) that everyone who sees

Parshat Bechukotai - Summary and Practical Applications

it will say that it is not earth at all due to its transparency and clarity.

This then is the purity attained by returning the vessel to the furnace to be made anew.

One who reaches this lofty level of Torah study, may pass away and be buried as is the way

of all the earth, yet his body will remain intact in the grave, for there is no need to separate evil from among his elements.

May the Merciful G-d grant us the merit to study Torah and to hold fast to its study all the days of our lives.

Summary and Practical Applications

A. It is proper for every person to dedicate significant time each day to Torah study, since nothing in the world has the power to bind and connect us to G-d, as much as Torah study.

The power of Torah study is great because the Torah also serves as the rope that ties man to the Creator, and also as a conduit through which G-d delivers bounty to man: healthy children, long life, and ample sustenance.

By virtue of studying the Torah, a person is granted protection from all the nations that surround us.

B. This is also true also for a person who works to provide his

daily bread, he too is not far from the sanctity of the Torah.

Rather, every person who toils in the Torah and sets fixed times for its study, merits the radiance of its sanctity and protection.

C. Therefore, every person should strive to set fixed study times every day, and study them with perseverance and determination.

Likewise, when an opportunity for a Torah lesson arises, for example between Mincha and Maariv prayers, one should not miss it, and should participate attentively and with focus.

D. Besides for the mitzvah of Torah study itself (between Mincha and

Parshat Bechukotai - Summary and Practical Applications

Maariv), one also merits by his study to connect the day and the night, and it is known from the Kabbalistic sages, that engaging in the Torah and prayer at the time that connects day and night causes a great rectification in the upper worlds.

E. It is therefore necessary to bring to attention regarding the undesirable 'custom', to leave the synagogue 'to get some air' immediately after the Mincha prayer.

F. Every person, both those who can study more and those who can study less, have the duty and obligation to financially support those who are immersed entirely in the world of Torah, and by doing so, it is considered as if they themselves have studied Torah in this manner.

Thus, the Torah scholar they support will protect them and their household against any harm that may come.

G. The reward for those who support Torah scholars is no less than the reward of those who study Torah themselves, and this

includes the reward that they will receive in the World to Come,

Next to the Torah scholars in Paradise, G-d will place also all those Jews who supported Torah scholars financially, since it is through their merit that they were able to sit and engage in Torah with a calm and easy heart.

H. The human body is composed of four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. When a person sins, he damages these elements.

When a person sins in thought, he damages the element of air.

When a person sins with the consumption of food, he damages the element of water.

When he sins by disrespecting the words of the Sages and Torah scholars, as well as in matters of modesty, he damages the element of fire.

Our Merciful Father, out of His great mercy for His people, gave us the means of rectification for these sins.

Thus: by immersion in a mikveh, the element of air is rectified.

Parshat Bechukotai - Summary and Practical Applications

By fasting, the element of water is rectified.

By studying Torah, the element of fire is rectified.

I. The element of earth is rectified by studying Torah with

all one's might. Whoever reaches this level, rectifies his body and earthly element.

May the Merciful G-d grant us the merit to study Torah and to hold fast to its study all the days of our lives.

Shabbat Shalom !





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Bechukotai**

10th of Iyar, 5784



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	8:03 pm	9:11 pm	9:33 pm
Miami	7:50 pm	8:47 pm	9:20 pm
Los Angeles	7:42 pm	8:43 pm	9:12 pm
Montreal	8:17 pm	9:33 pm	9:48 pm
Toronto	8:34 pm	9:46 pm	10:05 pm
London	8:50 pm	10:20 pm	10:21 pm
Jerusalem	7:24 pm	8:15 pm	9:10 pm
Tel Aviv	7:21 pm	8:12 pm	9:04 pm
Haifa	7:22 pm	8:13 pm	9:08 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:19 pm	8:10 pm	9:04 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

As long as they are our children, we must invest in them our souls. We must 'enslave' ourselves to the education of our children, that they remain G-d fearing and Torah learned.

If we do not assist them to overcome their challenges, they will search for solutions elsewhere, and ultimately their fear of Heaven will erode. This will then continue in the following generations, and the family may leave the way of the Torah.

A person must therefore be preoccupied with their children's future, "And you shall see sons to your sons, peace upon Israel" (Psalms 128). When you guarantee a proper future for your posterity, you will experience true tranquility in life.



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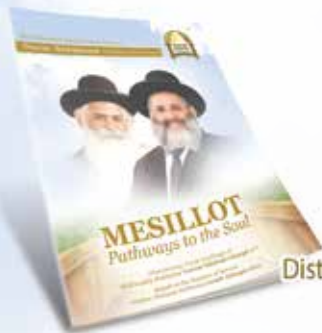
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