

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 140

Va'era | Refinement through Torah and Prayer

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

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

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

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Va'era

G-d of Meir Answer Me

Four periods of exile were decreed upon the nation of Israel, namely: Babylonian exile, Median exile, Greek exile, and Edomite exile.

And thank G-d, we have already endured three of the exiles, and we now find ourselves at the end of the fourth exile - the Edomite exile. May we speedily see the fulfillment of this redemption, hinted in the verse: ""Who comes from Edom, from Botzrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is it, robed in splendor, striding forward with the greatness of strength? 'It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save'" (Isaiah 63:1).

The following story occurred at the beginning of the final exile, the Edomite exile.

This story took place following the establishment of the evil Roman Empire, at which time

they sought to kill the great sages of Israel, including the ten famous sages who would later be known as the "Ten Holy Martyrs."

The Talmud relates (Avodah Zarah 17b):

The divine sage Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion sat in his study hall and delivered a deep and intricate Torah lecture. Suddenly, the sounds of pounding horse hooves were heard, and the study hall was surrounded by Roman soldiers, clad in gray uniforms and expressionless faces. Rabbi Hanina was insolently and forcibly dragged into the carriage of prisoners.

A stern and brutal judge fixed his gaze on Rabbi Hanina and asked, "You must surely know that we have prohibited Torah study, why did you study the Torah, disregarding our command?"

Rabbi Hanina replied simply, "I did as the Lord, my God commanded me".

The eyes of the judge gleamed with cruelty, and he decreed that Rabbi Hanina be burned at the stake.

However, the merciless judge was not satisfied; he ruled to decimate Rabbi Hanina's family.

He decreed that his wife be killed by the sword and that his unmarried daughter serve the high-ranking Romans in the lowliest profession of all.¹

The Talmud continues: Rabbi Hanina had an older daughter named Bruriah, who merited and married the divine sage Rabbi Meir, the miracle-worker.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. In the Talmud (ibid), it is written that these wicked individuals were able to rule over the righteous because there was a minute trace of sin within the righteous.

This punishment befell Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon for pronouncing and enunciating the Holy Tetragrammaton (even though it was permissible for him, he should've been stringent upon himself), and his wife was killed, for not protesting (meaning she should have objected the routine pronunciation of G-d's name). And regarding his daughter, it was decreed that she sit in a brothel, since she once passed in front of the prominent men of Rome, and when they remarked: 'How graceful are the steps of this girl,' she immediately paid attention and heeded her steps (she had intended to sanctify G-d's name, to demonstrate before the nations the modesty of the daughters of Israel, but they had impure thoughts because of her behavior)...

The Talmud continues and says: 'Thus said Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said:

What is the meaning of the verse, "The iniquity of my heels surround me" (Psalms 49:6)? - The sins that a person tramples with his heels in this world will surround him on the Day of Judgment...

The evil inclination seeks to cause a person to stumble with minor sins, sins that a person tramples with his heels, and then when a person falters, stumbling, it opens the gates for the evil inclination to enter into his heart...

In this context, we bring the story of Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Klapholz (HaChozrim BeTeshuvah, page 188):

The great sage, Rabbi Yisrael 'The Maggid' of Koznitz, sat among his disciples and recounted:

In one of the towns nearby, there were two children who were friends in heart and soul. Together they would roam and disturb the class, together they would be punished, and together they would be sent home...

Parshat Va'era - G-d of Meir Answer Me

When they matured, and their intelligence blossomed, they decided 'enough of nonsense', it was time to straighten out, and they resolved to dedicate their lives to the study of the Torah...

They entered a nearby study hall and engaged in Torah with tremendous perseverance. Day and night, Torah did not cease from their mouths... And as their perseverance increased, so did their feelings of camaraderie and friendship strengthen...

This was a true love sincerely, each loved their friend, without jealousy of their friend's talents and knowledge. Together they learned, questioned, and answered - without contention, each revealing innovative Torah insights to each other...

Many weeks passed by...

The Evil Powers saw the behavior of these two friends, flawless in their conduct, and decided to sow discord between them. When initially not successful, the evil inclination within their hearts didn't give up and tried to corrupt them in a different manner. It planted the idea in their minds to read and study from books authored by unscrupulous authors who believed they were wiser and knew better than our holy sages...

This strong desire to know more and more from the heretical books took hold of the two friends. Initially, they left their studies for just a short break and read those forbidden books, but alas, as it is known, 'one who comes to defile himself is given an opening' (Yoma 38b). And a little impurity blocks the paths of Jewish

understanding and so, within a short time, they completely abandoned their Torah pursuits, and instead, dedicated all their time to books authored by heretics and those who disparaged and dishonored our venerable sages...

The Powers of Evil rejoiced in their victory, but as per its infamous routine, when the person is entangled and submits to it, it does not relent but continues to drag them from one transgression to another. And so it was with the two youths, once they tasted of heresy, they became lax in observing the commandments, to the extent that they ceased to fulfill them entirely...

The leaders of their community, seeing these two close friends deteriorate greatly spiritually, were alarmed and made an effort to stop their steep and absolute decline. However, these two young men were in transgressions and iniquity up to their necks. They eventually left their city, roaming for many days in places where they were unknown, mingling with the gentiles, learning from their ways, wanting to be like them and ultimately renouncing their religion.

After a long period of time, the two friends separated, each going their own way. Their friendship remained, but time and distance separated them, and they did not know or hear from each other.

One of these young men successfully completed his higher studies, married, and had sons and daughters. He excelled in his business and became very wealthy,

owning many towns and villages. Many servants fulfilled his every request and demand, and he seemed to lack nothing. During the summer, the apostate Jew resided in one of his villages, traveling to the nearby town for an hour or two each day to manage his businesses.

One hot summer day, after bathing in the nearby river near his spacious home, the wealthy man rode his horse, his dog running ahead, enjoying the beautiful world he lived in, his life seeming so happy. Suddenly, his dog disappeared from his view, and he only heard its strange and frightening bark. The wealthy man hurriedly rode in the direction of the sound and saw the dog standing, barking in front of the battered dead body of a Jew. Shocked and moved, the wealthy man dismounted his horse, approached the body, and was horrified by the sight of the profuse wounds that were still bleeding. Without a doubt, a gentile had murdered him, pondered the wealthy man, and his heart, the warm Jewish heart, stirred within him.

Memories of the past overwhelmed him, and feelings of remorse and sorrow filled his heart. With caution, he lifted the deceased, placed him on his horse, and led the horse to the city. There, he handed the deceased over to the 'Chevra Kadisha' (Jewish burial society) and returned home.

The body of the Jew, with whom he had done a true act of kindness, did not leave the mind of the apostate Jew, and feelings of regret and sorrow didn't allow him any rest. In vain, he tried to behave as usual

among the members of his household, but his thoughts were stronger than his will. Feelings of sadness for abandoning the faith of his ancestors and the holy Torah overpowered him and weakened him to the point that he decided to go to a Jewish Rabbi, to lay out his life story and seek a way back to the fold of the Jewish faith.

Late one night, the apostate Jew knocked on the door of the Rabbi. Surprised by his appearance, looking like a wealthy and respected baron, the Rabbi was taken aback. His surprise grew further when the 'wealthy man' spoke to him in the Jewish tongue and tearfully recounted his life story until the day he found the body of the Jew. And since then, the apostate added, choking with tears, he has found no peace. He deeply regretted his sins and wished to be a God-fearing Jew again and observant of the commandments.

The Rabbi tried to dismiss him, fearing that this may have been a fabrication of some kind, and didn't want to fulfill his request. However, the apostate was relentless, crying and pleading for his soul, swearing not to leave the Rabbi's room until he accepted him and showed him a way of repentance.

After his pleading and begging, the Rabbi was finally convinced of the sincerity of the man's intentions and advised him to return home, sell his property for cash. All of this should be done without arousing suspicion that he intends to abandon everything and disappear. When he would gather a large sum of money in hand, he must come to him again.

Parshat Va'era - G-d of Meir Answer Me

With feelings of gratitude and joy, the apostate left the Rabbi's house, returned home, followed the Rabbi's advice, and managed to turn a significant part of his property into cash. And with this bundle of his money, he came back, on one dark night, to the Rabbi's house. This time, the Rabbi received him with a warm demeanor, and gave him the address of a Rabbi in a distant town and handed him a letter to give that Rabbi detailing his life story and requesting that he help the man study Torah once again and to guide him on the path of repentance.

Without any hesitation, the wealthy apostate abandoned his wealth, his home, and his family and traveled to the place where the Rabbi had sent him. There, he found peace for his soul. The Rabbi of that town brought him close to the Torah and its commandments and showed him the ways of repentance. The apostate Jew, listened attentively to every word that came from the Rabbi's mouth, taking upon himself the yoke of Torah and repentance, meticulously following the commandments, dedicating many fasts to rectify his soul, and becoming a complete Baal Teshuva (a penitent).

Although he had brought with him a large sum of money, he did not enjoy his wealth but was satisfied with very little. He lived a life of austerity and invested all his strength and soul in the study of Torah. By virtue of the Torah he learned in his youth, he quickly acquired all the good qualities our sages attribute to Ba'alei Teshuva, and his

name became renowned far and wide as an outstanding scholar and righteous person. His knowledge in Torah and his humility brought people close to him, even though no one actually knew where he came from or who he was.

As the final days of the town's rabbi drew near, all the leaders and important figures of the community stood around his deathbed, inquiring who would fill his place. The Rabbi hinted to them in the direction of the Baal Teshuva to fill his post, and everyone wholeheartedly agreed.

In his role as the head of the rabbinate, the Baal Teshuvah continued to behave with modesty and humility, leading his congregation with understanding and wisdom. His path was characterized by love of truth, kindness, and compassion, and in the eyes of his congregation, he was like an angel of God. His name became known in all the surrounding towns, and people from everywhere sought his advice. The sick requested him to pray for them, and great Torah scholars established rulings according to his teachings.

One day, a man came to the city who was possessed by an evil spirit that tormented him day and night. The community brought the tormented man to the Rabbi's house to seek mercy and pray for him.

'Who am I and what is my strength?' the Rabbi said to the assembled community before him. 'Let us all gather in the synagogue, pray together for him as a community, and through the power of communal prayer, may the Lord send complete healing to the sick man.'

The entire congregation, led by their revered Rabbi, assembled in the synagogue, standing in awe around their revered leader. The Rabbi stirred the people to repentance, and instructed them to recite the entire Psalms with tears and profound fervor. Afterward, he approached the sick man and declared loudly, 'By the authority of this holy congregation and by virtue of the multitude's prayers and repentance, I decree the departure of the evil spirit that has entered this body, to retreat and return to its origin.'

A heavy silence filled the synagogue, and suddenly, a terrifying and menacing voice was heard, 'Who are you that I listen to your voice?' the spirit within the possessed man exclaimed.

'Are you not a sinner like me? Together we studied Torah and later deviated to a sinful path. We, as one studied and became great Torah scholars, yet later left the fold entirely to a wicked and sinful life. How dare you command me to leave this man's body? Are your deeds not worse than mine?'

Shock and fear seized those gathered; they stood still and dared not look at their revered Rabbi whose obscure past was suddenly thrust before them. But the Rabbi looked straight at the possessed man, ascended the platform, and spoke to his congregation with a loud voice:

'My esteemed fellow Jews! All that you have just heard is true and correct. I confess and acknowledge that I have sinned and transgressed. However this

all belongs to the past and is no longer. The Holy One, blessed be He, who examines hearts and minds, knows this, will bring the judgment to light.

Repentance was created for transgressors, and the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, is extended to accept those who return to Him... Our sages of blessed memory said (Vayikra Rabbah, Parsha 10:5): 'Repentance accomplishes half, and prayer accomplishes everything,' and I have embraced both. I have also added Torah study and benevolent charity giving.

I have deeply regretted my sins, and my dear friend seems to have died before repenting. He departed from this world without having merited repentance. Therefore, I am authorized to decree his spirit's departure out of this man, 'and may the Merciful One atone for his sin and not rouse His anger.'

Following these heartfelt words, the Rabbi descended from the platform, the spirit departed from the man, never to be heard from again in his lifetime.

Rabbi Yisrael 'The Maggid' of Koznitz continued and said, 'Behold the great power of repentance. Our sages of blessed memory said (Berachot 34b): 'In the place where a Baal Teshuva (a penitent) stands, even the completely righteous cannot stand.'

If his level was so great, why did he deserve to be shamed in public, in front of his entire congregation, in whose eyes he appeared righteous and holy?

After the Romans executed their decree and placed her younger unmarried sister in that dark and abhorrent station, Bruriah turned to her husband Rabbi Meir and said, "My dear husband, my heart is torn apart, I can't bear my sister's pain any longer !..."

Rabbi Meir, moved to the core, closed his eyes and his face reddened... A pure and divine light was revealed to him. He turned to his wife, and said, "I will go and redeem her, but know, dear wife, I can save her only if she has preserved her sanctity."

Rabbi Meir disguised himself as a soldier and arrived at her booth in the brothel. He searched for her, and attempted to approach her and entice her in various ways. However, with her wisdom, she successfully evaded him. Rabbi Meir then understood that she had maintained her sanctity.

Approaching the guard of the brothel, Rabbi Meir said, "I

have here a sack full of golden dinars; take them and give me that girl." The guard replied, "There is very strict observation here, if they see that someone is missing, they will behead me."

Rabbi Meir advised him to recite a chant against any harm, "Every time they try to harm you, say, 'Eloha D'Meir Aneini (G-d of Meir answer me),' twice and you will be protected." The guard was surprised, "How can I know that this works?" Rabbi Meir demonstrated the chants' power to him. There were ferocious guard dogs that prevented Rabbi Meir's exit. Rabbi Meir approached them and began to throw stones and sand at them, and the dogs became very angry and leaped on him to devour him. Rabbi Meir chanted, 'Eloha D'Meir Aneini, Eloha D'Meir Aneini' - and they became heated and anxious and fled from him as quickly as their feet could carry them..

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

Because a small flaw still existed in him, his sins were once publicly known, yet his repentance was concealed. Aside from the

latter Rabbi and the friend who sinned with him, no one knew he was a Baal Teshuva, and both of them were no longer alive.'

Seeing this transpire, the guard agreed, took the golden dinars, and released the girl. A short while later the observation arrived, and discovering that the girl was missing, sentenced the brothel guard to hanging. Yet every time they tried to hang him, he recited, 'Eloha D'Meir Anani, Eloha D'Meir Aneini' and was saved; once the hanging post broke, and the following time the hanging rope tore.

They interrogated him, "Why aren't we successful in hanging you, what is going on

here?" The guard broke down and told them the entire story.

The Romans became incensed with anger and immediately issued proclamations and hung signs reading: "Wanted - Rabbi Meir the miracle worker," and began to pursue him...

According to the simple understanding, 'Eloha D'Meir Aneini' ('G-d of Meir answer me') is a prayer and request for mercy. However, in an ancient Kabbalistic book - Sefer Karnayim, we find an entirely different explanation, as we'll discuss further on...

The Very First Hunt in History

In the six days of creation, G-d fashioned the world. In those same six days, the Creator formed this world and all that is in it: the inanimate, the plants, the animals, and the humans.

Throughout those early and blissful days, all the creatures lived in love and marvelous unity; all living beings coexisted peacefully without malice or mischief. The divine prophecy of global peace was fulfilled: "The wolf shall

dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf, the cub lion, and the fattened bull all together... And the cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah 11:6-7)...

In that heavenly period, the whole idea of 'hunting' did not exist at all!

On the sixth day of creation, the Creator made humankind in

Parshat Va'era - Hotheaded Generations

His image and likeness, as it is written: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God, He created him" (Genesis 1:27)... Man was created with a pure love for the blessed Lord, and his heart burned with a perpetual flame of love, the fire of love for the Lord. His heart was filled with yearning, desire, aspiration, longing, and a burning fiery passion to merit closeness to the Divine.

G-d, desiring the divine service of His children, created the reality of evil – the power of evil, for the purpose that there be free choice and that there be the ability to test man..

The powers of evil in the form of an angel of destruction spread their wings over the head of Man, and bared its sharp fangs. He decided that come what may, he had to hunt and succeed to bring down Man. He searched until he found the perfect agent for the task, the serpent...

Having received the mission from the powers of evil, the serpent approached the first humans and said: "I can hear the pulsating beat of your hearts, your aspirations, and the yearning of your souls to behold the Divine Presence. I have advice for you ! Eat from the Tree of Knowledge, you will be 'like God, knowing good and evil'" (Genesis 3:5)...

You cannot imagine the lofty and sublime places you can reach through the simplest action – reaching out and plucking from the Tree of Knowledge, and eating from it...

The serpent succeeded mightily in his hunt, Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, and this grave transgression caused all of humanity to lose its stature and fall down to a very lowly state...

The Evil Powers' hunting expedition continued...

Hotheaded Generations

Due to their grave sin, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

The Earth began to be settled and populated by human beings, and the Evil Powers inflamed

Parshat Va'era - The Great Man Among Giants

their hearts with forbidden desires and passions. The blood flowing in their veins was in a constant state of boiling...

The passions and seething desires of humankind dissolved any reason, and they walked about the word bewildered and without a settled mind.

It was then common to encounter people walking in the street with glazed eyes, foaming at the mouth, and with an emblazoned heart for the desires of this world and all therein.

In this manner 1948 years passed over the world, years in which its inhabitants were

captive to their evil and desirous inclination. Certainly, there were some differences between the generations, each excelling in its unique 'madness,' each generation with its idols and fashions, but all had the same common denominator, a passionate and unquenchable thirst for material desires. This caused a great spiritual darkness to envelop them constantly, and they went about without any trace of awareness of the G-d, the perpetual Creator, and Sustainer of the world...

Only after 1,948 years, was the soul of our forefather Abraham born...

The Great Man Among Giants

Abraham our forefather was born, and his blood also burned with a passionate desire. Yet, he successfully channeled this fervor toward Holiness. This passion transformed into an immense love for the Creator, as he was termed by G-d - "Abraham, My lover!" (Isaiah 41:8), and also earned the title of "the great man (Adam) among giants" (Joshua 14:15)...

For further explanation:

In a discourse delivered by the Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick, he stated (Toch HaNachal - 2013, page 327):

“The word 'Adam' (man) is composed of two parts: Aleph (א) and Dam (ד).

In Likutei Moharan (I, 6:5) it is explained that through the attribute

Parshat Va'era - The Great Man Among Giants

of repentance, one attains the title 'Adam'.

Adam is Aleph - Dam.

The essence of one's life is the Dam - the blood within them, as it is written: "For the blood is the soul" (Deuteronomy 12:23). The evil inclination dwells within the blood and inflames it with passions and desires, and burns within him the attribute of anger ...

The primary task of man is to serve the Almighty with every drop of his blood until it is thoroughly purified, and thereby draw down the Creator of the world, symbolized by the letter Aleph, 'Alufo Shel Olam' (master of the world) within his purified blood.

It is then that one earns the title 'Adam', Aleph-Dam."

Every Jew has the power to purify his blood and draw down upon themselves the Creator of the world, thereby receiving the title 'Adam.' Then, one ascends to true greatness, being worthy of sitting on the throne, as written: "And upon the appearance of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of man" (Ezekiel 1:26)...

Abraham our patriarch purified the passions, and purified himself. He did not stop, but continued his lofty work until he received the title 'the great man (Adam) among giants'!

From that point onward, the title 'Adam' continued to be earned in subsequent generations...

The three large initial links in the golden chain of the Jewish people, the three fathers of the people of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were connected with the Creator in a manner that never ceased. Their pure hearts and souls were constantly immersed in holiness and purity, with yearning for the Creator.

In continuation of the chain, twelve great and lofty souls, the tribes of G-d, were born. Twelve sons, all of whom were luminous and bright, pure and holy, men of spirit and prophecy...

These twelve had a total of 57 children, all pristine, blessed, and radiant...

Before we continue, let's take a brief moment to describe Egypt at this time.

Ten Gates of Egypt

Egypt was a most impure land, and all the ten powers of impurity existing in the world were entrenched within it.

The Egyptians were delighted to host these impure powers, and desiring that the impurity to continue to rule within them, built for them ten gates in Egypt.

In Each gate they built a special Temple dedicated to one of the forces of impurity.

Indeed, the forces of impurity did not disappoint, revealing their full power and ability in Egypt. The passions were awakened, and the spirits stirred...

Denying the existence of the Creator turned into a lofty 'philosophy,' and immorality and

abomination became a way of life... And the inhabitants were drawn into a whirlwind of desires...

In this manner, a great number of years passed...

In the year 2238 to creation of the world, Jacob our patriarch understood that the time had come to descend to Egypt with all his family, children and grandchildren.

However, he worried mightily about the great forces of impurity there: how would he cope with such terrible impurity?

Joseph, understanding his father's concerns, sent him a message. But to understand the message, we need to go back to the story in Parshat Miketz...

You're All Spies !...

The rumor spread throughout the world: there's food in Egypt ! Endless caravans traveled there, to the main market - "Joseph is the master over the land; it is he who sells to all the people of the land" (Genesis 42:6)...

Two hard years had passed in which every conversation of the people revolved around food - 'Where will we get a slice of bread for tomorrow, what will we have next week to eat'...

After these two years, Joseph's brothers arrived and stood at the entrance of Egypt. There, they learned that the Land of Egypt had ten gates. The brothers, believing that Joseph was sold to slavery in Egypt, decided to spread out and look for him. Therefore, they separated, and each one entered through a different gate...

Well-dressed security personnel in dark official uniforms posted at each of the gates, quickly passed along a report to Joseph about the suspicious behavior of the brothers, and a group of elite soldiers were sent to gather and bring them...

"You are all spies !" Joseph bellowed, "You all came to expose the land !" (Genesis 42:9).

"Excuse me, sir ! How did you come to this conclusion ? !" They asked, frightened.

Joseph explained: You are ten brothers, yet you did not enter together; each of you entered through a different gate. It must be that you're seeking the vulnerable points in the city so you can conquer it ! - You are spies !...

Joseph eventually revealed himself to his brothers and told them: I am Joseph ! Now, go and bring our father Jacob and the whole family to Egypt. Tell my father not to worry about the forces of impurity, for with the help of G-d, I succeeded to subdue and suppress all of the ten forces of impurity dwelling in Egypt !

The 'Megaleh Amukot' writes (Parshat Bo):

In Egypt, there were ten gates, and over each gate dwelled a force of impurity (of the Ten impure powers). Joseph managed to subdue them, and this is what is written: "And to his father, he sent ten donkeys, carrying the fat of Egypt, and ten female donkeys carrying grain, bread and foodstuffs to his father for the way" (Genesis 45:23) - the 'donkeys' and 'female donkeys' mentioned in this verse allude to the ten forces of impurity (each of these forces having a male and female counterpart). Joseph sent them, bound twice to hint that he subdued the forces of impurity and they were bound and suppressed under holiness...

Parshat Va'era - The Enslavement Began

Once Jacob understood the message, he came with all his

family to Egypt, settling in the land of Goshen...

The Enslavement Began

Egypt, the stronghold of impurity, was not accustomed nor had they ever seen such sights on their streets. People who walked modestly and humbly, living orderly lives, people engaged in prayer, Torah study, and work...

The forces of impurity were stirred and agitated: Here, among us?! How dare they behave like this?! The evil forces tried with all their might to penetrate the hearts of the Israelites and inflame their blood...

But they did not succeed. Each time one of the forces attempted to break through the divine light surrounding and enveloping the children of Israel, they failed. All the impure powers who approached them were consumed by the lofty and holy flame burning in their hearts...

On the side stood the final, tenth force, the evil power of 'Ba'al Tzafon'. seeing that all the impure forces had raised their hands up in surrender, he asked them: 'That's all, have you already given up?'

The impure forces answered, 'Yes. They serve the Almighty with all their strength, and they have purified themselves, we have no chance.'

And the infamous 'Ba'al Tzafon' sneered: 'but if I succeed, will you admit that I am the greatest amongst you all?'

'Yes. If you succeed, we will acknowledge you.' they answered in unison.

And the evil 'Ba'al Tzafon' took out his wide and terrifying net...

Successful Hunting

Throughout his life, King David served his Creator with love, joy, and loyalty.

But it wasn't always easy for him. Difficult and bitter trials assaulted him, "like the roaring of

waters... like the tumult of mighty waters, they roar" (Isaiah 17:12)...

King David, who felt the impure powers surrounding him, threatening to overpower him, began to pour out his heart before the Almighty... With prayers and supplications, tears and longing, with songs and melodies...

And his holy words, prayers, and supplications pierced the darkness, shattered the impure powers, and kindled in his heart a strong thirst for the divine light...

One evening, the forces of impurity gathered and deliberated about him: "The only reason the Holy One, blessed be He, created us is so that we can trap people in our net. We usually succeed in our mission easily and almost effortlessly.

However, with King David, we encounter a faithful Jew who serves the Lord with all his might and manages to evade all the traps we set for him! Does anyone know or have any ideas how to catch him, or how to ensnare him in the net?'

One of the evil forces stood up and said: 'It is through succumbing despair! If we manage to weaken his resolve and cause him to despair, we will succeed in trapping him!'

King David, who wandered in the Judean desert at that time, his heart burning with longing for God, sensed their plot and began to seek mercy and supplications from the Almighty: 'Master of the Universe! "The proud have hidden a snare for me, and ropes; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set traps for me" (Psalms 140:6)...

And he continued to plead: "Master of the Universe! They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down. They dug a pit before me; they themselves have fallen into the midst of it" (Psalms 57:7)...

From these supplications of King David, we learn that the righteous are caught by the net of despair and despondency.

As we find in the teachings of the divine Kabbalist Rabbi Aharon of Kardinia (Sefer Karnayim

- Article 6), who expounded upon this topic and called this 'net' - the 'Net of Blood'...

Before we elaborate, a few words about the lifeblood found in each person...

Soul Vitality - Lifeblood

We've mentioned in the past that the vitality of life is our emotions. As is one's emotion, so are their life experiences. One of the most undesirable character traits for a person to have is the feeling of pride.

In the Talmud (Sotah 5a), this emotion is extensively criticized:

“Rabbi Alexandri said: anyone with an inflated spirit, even the slightest wind troubles him, as it is written: "And the wicked are like the tossing sea," (Isaiah 57:20) just as the slightest wind stirs up the sea which is comprised of many pints of water, a person, who lives from a mere pint of blood all the more so is stirred up by the smallest slight and offense”

It is found that the haughty have no life, the smallest offense or lack of honor totally decimates them, and their spirit is broken entirely.

Therefore, regarding the proud and haughty it is written "But the wicked are like the troubled sea" (Isaiah 57:20). Just as the sea loses its calm and clarity through the wind, so too, a person inflated with pride, impassioned by his lifeblood, collapses and is entirely destroyed by even the smallest amount of disrespect or dishonor.

From his holy words, we learn that the blood in the human body is divided into two groups: the first - the general blood in the body, and the second - the pint of lifeblood. A person who is haughty brings about harm to this lifeblood within him.

The Tosefot commentary there explain: In a person, there is a pristine and primary pint of blood that is essential for the heart's function. A person who is haughty harms this blood and this may cause a heart attack, G-d forbid...

Quarter of Blood - Chariot for the Soul

In a discourse conveyed by Rabbi Yoram, he said the following (Imrei Noam, Yitro - Article 9):

The Holy One, blessed be He, created His world with wisdom and understanding, arranging systems and levels upon levels, each level divided from the next. To ensure that a person does not mistakenly think that there are multiple deities, one creating each dimension, He created a connecting level between them, revealing that they are all one, created by one Creator.

Between the inanimate and the vegetative states there are the coral reefs. Between the living and human categories is the monkey, similar to both. Between the body and the soul is the pint of lifeblood. Between day and night is the time of sunset. Between Shabbat and holidays, and weekdays are the intermediate days of the festival. Between mankind and the upper spiritual worlds, are the People of

Israel. Between the written and oral Torah is the Masoretic reading of the biblical texts.

Thus, we find that between the body and the soul is the pint of lifeblood in the heart, and this pint is a vehicle for the soul !...

This lifeblood belongs to the spiritual dimension, and over it there is no passionate and desirous nature. In the words of the saintly Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch (Sefer HaMa'amarim, 5687, p. 141): 'However with this dwelling of the spiritual vitality in the blood (in the primary blood, the pint of blood upon which the soul depends), there is still spiritual life.'

For the impure power of 'Ba'al Tzafon', there is a special 'net' capable of capturing even this pure pint of lifeblood ! And when successful, one's human vitality and emotions are under its wicked control...

Let's expand on this further.

The Impurity of Ba'al Tzfaon

The tenth impurity, the impurity of Baal Tzafon, began

its work to ensnare the pint of lifeblood, the essential soul

vitality of the Jewish nation within its net.

In the holy book "Karnaim" (Ma'amar 6), it is written that Ba'al Tzafon is the harsh impure power of the world of Asiyah, and beneath it are 944 "brazen dogs."

These 944 dogs are equal in number to the numerical value of "Reshet Dam" (blood net), and have the power to capture the essential lifeblood within the Jew.

To elucidate:

As explained above, in the early generations of mankind, the powers of evil had an easy task... Civilization was inflamed with passions and foreign desires, and were drawn to wickedness like moths to the light.

However, over the coming generations, the Holy One, blessed be He, had compassion and sent from on High a number of holy souls into the world - the souls of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. Through their divine service with self-sacrifice, they became purified, and their natural passions were refined...

However, a different hurdle awaited them, the 'blood net'...

It operated as follows:

Initially it merely introduced into the person's consciousness the existence and reality of sin, although, of course, the person did not actually sin - for his natural passions were refined...

Then, suddenly The 'bloodnet' would be cast upon him, and their legs would lead them there. Suddenly, the person found himself in a place of impurity, in the realm of sin !...

Usually, on the first and second occasions, the person resisted and fled, but when this was repeated several times, the person would be weakened and succumb to sin !...

Thus, the impure powers of 'Ba'al Tzafon' succeeded in ensnaring the Jewish people within their net. It managed to degrade them until their passions stirred and were inflamed, after which it had the authority and ability to turn them into slaves !...

Parshat Va'era - Redemption Through Ten Plagues

This is what is stated regarding the Egyptian exile: "I passed over you and saw you wallowing in your blood" (Ezekiel 16:6) - the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that the people of Israel were floundering

in their blood which has been impurely inflamed, and even the pint of pure lifeblood had been crushed by the net.

Thus, long years of servitude passed upon them...

Redemption Through Ten Plagues

Moses, our teacher, was by then eighty years old. The Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to him, and commanded him: Go redeem My children! I give you the authority and power to redeem the lifeblood of the Jewish Nation from exile!

The Holy One, blessed be He, granted Moses the power to subdue the forces of impurity that inflamed and boiled in their blood...

This was accomplished through the Ten Plagues.

As the righteous Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin wrote (Pri Tzadik, Va'era, segment 10):

"The Holy One, blessed be He, created ten holy sefirot, and opposite them, He created ten powers of impurity, each consisting of five gates...

Each of the Ten Plagues performed two actions:

Firstly - each plague subdued one of the ten impure powers; the plague of blood subdued the power of the attribute of 'kingdom', the plague of frogs subdued the power of the attribute of 'foundation' etc...

And by subduing the ten powers of impurity, the Jewish people exited the gates of impurity...

And secondly - it brought and drew in the people of Israel to the gates of holiness.

This follows the conduct of the Holy One, blessed be He, who while striking the nations of the world - in the same blow, brings benefit to Israel. As referred to in

Parshat Va'era - The Final Battle

the verse "And the Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing" (Isaiah 19:22), 'striking' - upon Egypt, 'and healing' - for Israel.

Finally, following the Nine Plagues of blood, frogs, lice, wild beasts, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness - once again, the Jewish people merited a refined blood, purified of foreign desires and passions...

However, the finer pint of essential lifeblood still remained trapped within the impure net...

Even the tenth plague of the firstborn, did not succeed in subduing the impure power of 'Ba'al Tzafon' - the 'indolent dogs', it merely silenced it, as stated: "And to all the children of Israel, not a dog will sharpen its tongue, from man to beast" (Exodus 11:7)...

The Final Battle

The Children of Israel left Egypt and began their journey from Ramses towards the Land of Israel. This journey led them through the sea, having left Ramses, heading south toward the Sinai Desert. There, they passed beside the statue of the great idol, 'Baal Tzafon,' the chief deity of the Egyptians...

And it was specifically then, at the splitting of the Red Sea, that they completely subdued 'Ba'al Tzafon' - the awesome fiery divine love they experienced then, scorched the threads of the 'bloodnet', burning them, and leaving only ashes behind... The 'bloodnet' of evil was finally

subdued, and the divine light of the pure lifeblood of the soul shone once again brightly...

In the words of Rabbi Yehoshua Horowitz (Imrei Noam vol. 3, p. 14b):

At the splitting of the Red Sea, they overcame the impure powers of 'Ba'al Tzafon', as indicated by the verse: "Before Ba'al Tzafon, you shall encamp on the sea" (Exodus 14:2) - and therefore, at the splitting of the Red Sea, their victory was final.

King David expresses this: "The Lord said, 'I will return from Bashan, I will return from the depths of the sea, so that your

foot may crush [the enemy] in blood, the tongue of your dogs may have its share from [the enemy's] nations" (Psalm 68:23-24) - at the splitting of the Red Sea, this impure power of bloodnet was crushed,

and specifically 'your dogs' are referred to, since, as above, 'bloodnet' is numerically 944, the same in the number to these evil dogs.

Now, let us return to the beginning of our discussion...

The Great Rabbi Meir, the Miracle Worker...

When G-d created Adam, He clothed him in a lofty spiritual garment (made from the brilliance of the higher worlds) - at that time, man was adorned with garments of light.

After his sin, the Holy One, blessed be He, stripped him of that garment and made for him another garment, a physical one made of animal skins - as it is said: "And the Lord, God, made for Adam and his wife leather garments and dressed them" (Genesis 3:21).

From this garment, a separating and thick curtain was formed and pitched over the world, covering and completely concealing the divine light from the worldly beings.

Rabbi Meir, through the exertion and power of his divine service, succeeded in purifying his body to the extent that he

merited that his body shone like Adam before the initial sin !...

In the ancient text of "Karnayim" (Ma'amar 6), the author reveals to us that Rabbi Meir fought against this 'bloodnet' and succeeded in nullifying the impure power of the 'insolent dogs' related to the root of his soul. Therefore the Midrash (Bereishis 2,12) describes that in Rabbi Meir's Torah it was written "Garments of light" instead of "garments of leather" since that was what Rabbi Meir accomplished through his divine service.

Since he prevailed, he ruled over the dogs. Therefore, when dogs wanted to attack him, he mentioned 'Eloha D'Meir Aneini' twice, and they fled !

For further clarification:

We have mentioned that there are 944 dogs who derive power from the impure power of Ba'al Tzafon, and behold, the numerical value of twice 'Eloha D'Meir Aneini' is exactly 944!

Since this power of Baal Tzafon is the main and most

powerful of the evil forces, overcoming it allows one to overcome all the other harmful beings and situations. Therefore, the guard who recited the chant 'Eloha D'Meir Aneini' was saved as well from the public execution of hanging!...

In Those Days, at This Time

3,335 years ago, at Mount Sinai, we were chosen and became a nation. Before 3,335 years, we were tasked with the mission to proclaim and publicize the divine unity to the world. The revelation at Mount Sinai concluded, and the war against the forces of impurity began. For thousands of years, battles raged, fiery volleys were shot from all directions, and rivers of blood and sweat flowed.

The forces of impurity surrounded the people of Israel with snares and traps, initiating a campaign of annihilation. Foreign idol worship, baseless hatred, bloodshed, evil desires, jealousy, to name a few...

The struggle against them was exceedingly challenging, and the

Children of Israel waged war. Yet, the truth be told, the forces of impurity managed to be victorious several times, resulting in the destruction of the Tabernacle in Shiloh, the First Temple, and the Second Temple... And hundreds of glorious Jewish communities were annihilated by Edom and Ishmael...

But no good intention is in vain, no sigh or cry to G-d goes unheard... All the efforts of the people of Israel, throughout generations, gathered together, striking at the forces of impurity...

And now, after so many years, the raging blood of impure passion has lost its power, the rectified and refined blood emerges from their shackles, and the clarity has been revealed...

Regarding the Jews of our generation, it is said: "And your people, all of them are righteous" (Isaiah 60:21) - in the heart of every Jew burns a love for the righteous and the Torah scholars. In the heart of every Jew, embers of faith in the Creator glow.

Every Jew gives recurring donations to at least one Torah institution and/or institution of charitable kindness. Every Jew has an inner desire to be better, and to merit and draw closer to G-d.

The blood in the Jews of our generation is pure and pristine. This is particularly evident in Torah scholars and yeshiva students, who are the pride and glory of the Jewish people, the apple of the eyes of the Creator !...

The forces of impurity fume and rage. Does anyone know how to trip them up ? How can we cause these individuals whose blood is so refined, to stumble ?

And the 'Ba'al Tzafon' took out his 'net', and innocent Jews

began to be exposed to impurities through the 'web' and 'net'...

Initially, they felt nausea and disgust. 'What a low level ! How can we endanger ourselves like this ?'...

And the wicked 'Baal Tzafon' chuckled surreptitiously: Nausea ? Disgust ? Don't you just wait, you are already trapped in my net...

These innocent Jews returned to their activities, yet suddenly the 'net' was thrown on them once again. Their feet lifted off the ground, as though on their own, and alas, returned willingly to the place of impurity...

Thus, 'Ba'al Tzafon' manages to trap them !...

As it was in those days - at the beginning of the Egyptian exile, so is it now - at the end of the fourth and final exile...

The nation of Israel then was redeemed through the power of Moses. And from the final exile we will be redeemed by the merit of studying Torah in general, and fixed lessons of Torah fluency in particular. Let us expand further...

Strike Him on the Head

In the Talmud (Bava Batra 73a), the words of Rabbah bar bar Chana are cited:

'Sailors told me that the wave that sinks ships, resembles a white flame at its top, and it is struck with a staff that is engraved with the holy words "I will be what I will be, the Lord of Hosts, Amen Amen Selah" and then it is still.

As usual, with Torah, this statement has countless interpretations.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, chose to begin his holy book Likutei Moharan with an explanation of this statement. And this is how he explained it:

The evil inclination wants to drown the Jew in a sea of desires, the evil inclination wants to boil their blood with foreign passions and muddy the waters of the soul...

And the way to subdue it is to strike it with a stick! This stick is the words of the Torah that the Jew utters.

For the holy Torah resembles a stick, since the Torah is symbolized in the Hebrew letter "vav" (which has the numeric value of six, and the length and width of two tablets that Moses brought down from heaven containing the Torah, were six handbreadths (Bava Batra 14a)) and the Hebrew letter "vav" is in the form of a stick. And the Torah is entirely names of the blessed One be He, for every word in the Torah is a name (Shirat HaNachal, I page 17).

It is clear from here that the striking of the unholy waves is by uttering the words of the Torah - the holy names - by one's mouth.

To explain further...

Every word is Filled with Significance

We find ourselves at twilight, in the period of transition between the time of exile and the time of redemption. Unfortunately, many

concepts that were once clear to every Jewish man and woman, have over the years now become obscured beneath a thick dust...

One of these concepts that have almost completely 'disappeared' is the 'sanctity of the letters.'

Let's elaborate:

In the holy language, there are 27 letters (22 letters and 5 additional final letters). A combination of two or more letters is called a 'word'. In the language of our Sages, the term for 'word' alternatively means a vessel. The fact our Sages use this teaches us a great secret:

Every single word, be it from the Torah or of the prayers, is like a 'vessel' in which the blessed divine light is revealed.

This understanding was clear and well known in previous generations. Therefore, when engaged in prayer or studying the holy Torah, they would utter the words with love and awe, with true dedication.

This tremendous simplicity caused them to be constantly close to G-d.

Yet, today, as the world unfortunately regresses in strides, it is imperative to review and clarify:

A person who wishes to merit understanding the depth of the Torah needs to prepare broad vessels in his soul to contain the light. The way to prepare these vessels is through broad and encompassing Torah study. Subsequently, when one approaches the study of the Torah in depth, they will have sufficient vessels to contain the awesome light of the Torah.

Therefore, our sages direct us to “gain knowledge to its breadth, afterwards delve in it” (Shabbat 63a).

Meaning that initially one should recite as much as possible the words of Torah in Mishnah, Talmud, Shulchan Aruch, even if initially one doesn't understand it all to its depth, or forgets what he learns, since this study of breath develops and provides one with broad receptacles in their soul and to be able to merit in the future the great light in their study and understanding.

By uttering these holy words, one sends sparks that set forth a

Parshat Va'era - Summary and Practical Conclusions

consuming fire that torches the strings of the evil 'net'...

And therefore blessed is one who establishes additional fixed schedules for Torah study to its breadth in all parts and areas of the Torah, expressing the words with love and awe...

Blessed is the Jew who organizes fixed schedules for study in all parts of the Torah, and reads every day with enthusiasm and delight, in joy and liveliness...

In 'Chelev Ha'aretz', we elaborated on this further, see there at length.

Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. The evil inclination wants to immerse the Jew in a sea of desires, and aims to boil their blood and turn it cloudy with desires. For the evil inclination knows that all of a person's vitality comes from the blood within them. Thus, if it can control the blood, it has control over the person.

2. The control of the evil inclination over a person is achieved through boiling the blood, done in one of two ways: through anger and secondly by igniting the fire of desire. When successful, it causes great spiritual darkness in a person, a darkness that envelops them constantly, leading to a great depression and further descent downward.

3. The way to subdue the evil inclination and the boiling passion of the blood is through two things: Divine service in prayer and Torah.

When a person starts pouring out his heart before G-d, in prayers and supplications, with tears and cries, with songs and melodies, with holy words, prayers, and supplications, they eventually break through the surrounding darkness, destroy the impure power enveloping him, and ignite in their heart a strong thirst for God.

4. The second way is through the study of Torah in general and the study of Torah to its breadth in particular. The Torah is akin to the form of a staff, since it is symbolized by the Hebrew letter

'vav,' and 'vav' is in the form of a staff. The entire Torah is the names of the blessed Lord. The main method of subduing the evil powers is through uttering the holy words, the sacred names, from one's mouth.

5. In the language of our Sages, 'milah' (word) is called 'teivah' (vessel), teaching us that every word from the Torah and prayers is a 'vessel' within which the blessed light is revealed. Therefore, if a person wants to merit understanding the depth of the holy Torah, he must prepare broad vessels in his soul to contain the light. The way to prepare the vessels is through diligent study. By this means, the study will create broad vessels within his soul, and subsequently, when he approaches the study of the Torah

in depth, he will have sufficient vessels to contain the light of the Torah.

At the beginning of a person's path in Torah study, they should read as many chapters of Mishnah, pages of Gemara, and sections of the Shulchan Aruch as possible, even if he does not fully understand what he is learning, and even if he forgets what he learned—because this method will create broad vessels within his soul, allowing him to later merit a great understanding in his study.

By uttering these holy words from his mouth, one 'neutralizes' the evil inclination within him. Fortunate is the Jew who establishes for himself additional fixed schedules every day in all parts of the holy Torah, uttering the holy words with love and awe.

Shabbat Shalom !



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3rd of Shevat, 5784



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New York	4:31 pm	5:35 pm	6:02 pm
Miami	5:31 pm	6:26 pm	7:02 pm
Los Angeles	4:46 pm	5:45 pm	6:17 pm
Montreal	4:15 pm	5:23 pm	5:46 pm
Toronto	4:44 pm	5:50 pm	6:15 pm
London	4:15 pm	5:13 pm	5:29 pm
Jerusalem	4:39 pm	5:30 pm	6:03 pm
Tel Aviv	4:35 pm	5:26 pm	5:58 pm
Haifa	4:33 pm	5:24 pm	5:55 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:37 pm	5:28 pm	6:00 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

One should steer clear of cruelty to the extreme, even if others are cruel to you, respond to them with compassion.

Even if someone holds you in contempt, provide them a livelihood, and as King Solomon writes: "If your enemy is hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink". Maintain the virtue of compassion so that you do not awaken the measure of judgment upon your family.

The statement "One who has mercy upon the creatures, is merced upon from on High" should be engraved deep in the heart, and routinely repeated to one's spouse and children.



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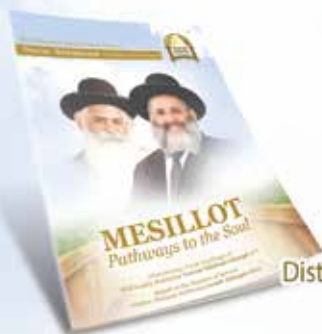
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