

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 224

Ekev | Humility – Key to Torah and Intelligence



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 עקב | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Eikev

The Dove Sought Rest on Shabbat

On Wednesday, the 17th of Cheshvan, in the year 1656 to Creation, the torrential rains began to fall.

At first, they came gently. People looked heavenward and inhaled the fresh scent of the rain. But as the day wore on, something changed.

Suddenly, from the crevices of the rocks, jets of water began to burst forth, and from the deep blue sea came a mighty roar.

Waves gathered, foaming and raging, and assaulted the shore in fury.

From the sky, the floodgates opened, and the rain began to pour down with force, vigor, and fury.

The Great Flood had begun.

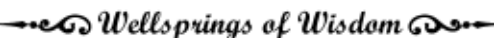
A few strong swimmers tried to fight the water's current, but in the end, they too ran out of breath.

The Divine attribute of judgment demanded its due from the inhabitants of the earth.

Amidst the powerful currents, drifting upon an endless expanse of water, floated a large ark that housed Noah and all those under his care.

The rain did not pause for even one moment, as it is written: "And the waters prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days" (Genesis 7:24).

During the entire stretch of time, the whole world was submerged in one vast mikveh, and thus regained the purity and holiness that had vanished in the era of the generation of the Flood.¹



1. In a talk by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, he explained that the world's

purification had to come specifically through a mikveh:

Parshat Eikev - The Dove Sought Rest on Shabbat

Then, on the first day of Tammuz, signs of a new world appeared, and the “tops of the mountains” were finally visible.²

Forty days passed, and on the tenth of Av, Noah opened the

window of the ark and sent out the raven, but it refused to fly and carry out its mission.

Noah waited seven days, and then, on the seventeenth of Av, he sent the dove.

—Wellsprings of Wisdom—

There is a dispute between the Talmud Bavli and Talmud Yerushalmi regarding what happens if a creature that is prohibited to eat falls into a permitted dish. Is there a possibility for a “complete creature” to be nullified by a large quantity of the permitted food or not?

According to the Talmud Bavli (Chullin 100a), the beriah cannot be nullified; thus, even if it fell into a dish where the permitted food was one thousand times its volume, the dish remains forbidden.

However, according to the Talmud Yerushalmi (Terumot, ch. 10, Halachah 5), a creature can be nullified if the permitted dish is 960 times its volume. The Yerushalmi even relates an incident of a mouse that fell into a huge pot containing a ratio of 1000:1 — and the sages permitted consumption of the dish.

In practice, we follow the ruling of the Bavli (as ruled in Yoreh De’ah, section 100).

Nevertheless, regarding the purification of the human body, we rule in line with this idea that is expressed in the Yerushalmi:

A person is purified in the waters of a mikveh, which as we learn in the Mishnah Mikva’ot (1:7): “A mikveh that contains forty se’ah — one may immerse in it.”

Now, one se’ah consists of six kav, and each kav has four log, so 24 log are contained in each se’ah. Thus, in forty se’ah, there are 960 log; a person’s lifeblood of the heart is no more than a log in amount.

This alludes to the idea that by immersing himself in the mikveh, a person nullifies his prior state and assumes a new identity.

It was this same process that occurred with the Flood — G-d immersed the entire world in a great mikveh to purify and renew it.

2. As the verse states: “And the water steadily receded until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen” (Genesis 8:5).

Targum Yonatan translates this verse as follows: “And the waters went and diminished until the tenth month, Tammuz; on the first of Tammuz, the tops of the mountains were visible.”

Parshat Eikev - The Dove Sought Rest on Shabbat

Out on its mission, the dove searched for a patch of dry land on which to alight but found none, and it promptly returned to Noah.

Another seven days passed, and on the twenty-fourth of Av, Noah sent the dove out a second time, and this time, it returned with an olive leaf in its beak.

Yet another seven days went by, and on the thirtieth of Av, he sent out the dove for the third and final time — and this time, it did not return. Realizing that the dove had not come back, Noah understood that it had found a place upon which to rest.

That very day, the thirtieth of Av, was a Shabbat afternoon.

Many generations and years passed afterward — more than three thousand years, and in the era of the Rishonim (medieval Torah sages), whose teachings and holiness illuminated the Jewish world, one outstanding figure was Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi.

On one particular occasion, while studying the Torah portion of Noah, divine inspiration came

upon him, and he composed his famous poem about the sanctity of Shabbat, in which he wrote: “Yom Shabbaton” - A day of rest... The dove found rest there, and there the weary shall find repose”.

As is typical with the Rishonim — who embedded lofty wisdom in their concise words — this poem contains many hidden secrets, and we shall focus on the very first words of the poem: “The Day of Rest must not be forgotten; its remembrance is as pleasing to G-d as the scent of a sacrifice.”

Here, the question arises:

Is the greatness of Shabbat truly comparable in importance merely to sacrificial offerings? After all, Shabbat is considered equivalent to all of the mitzvot of the Torah. As stated in the Jerusalem Talmud (Nedarim 3:9): “In the Torah, Prophets, and Writings, we find that Shabbat is equal to all the mitzvot in the Torah.

In the Torah, it is written: ‘How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and

My teachings?’ (Exodus 16:28), and immediately afterward it says, ‘See that the L-rd has given you Shabbat’ (ibid. 16:29).

In the Prophets, as it is written: ‘But the children rebelled against Me; they did not follow My statutes’ (Ezekiel 20:21), referring to Shabbat, as it is further written: ‘They profaned My Shabbat’ (ibid. 20:13).

In the Writings too, it is written: ‘You descended on Mount Sinai’ (Nehemiah 9:13) and this is followed by: ‘You made known to them Your holy Shabbat’ (ibid. 9:14).”

Thus, how does this verse of the poem do justice to the holiness of Shabbat?

Before we address this matter, let us introduce something else.

Reflections of a Teacher

Eliyahu sat at his desk, opened his teacher’s notebook, took out his pen, and began filling in the lines.

He couldn’t remember what had prompted his nearly forgotten memories to suddenly emerge from the depths of his mind and flood his thoughts, but whatever the cause might have been, he found himself carried away by his recollections.

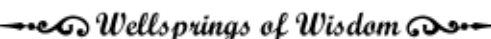
He saw himself in his mind’s eye at the beginning of his teacher training, sitting in class, listening to the instructor’s voice:

“The most elementary and the very first thing in education you must understand,” the instructor explained, “is how the brain works.”³

“The brain is the most refined and subtle material in the human body, and it is the vessel that houses the intellect — the loftiest power of the soul.

In this fact lies the difference between people.

Some have a more ‘coarse’ brain substance, and consequently they cannot grasp abstract



3. See ‘Kuntres Mahutam shel Yisrael B’Mishnat HaChassidut’ (p. 127).

concepts; they can only handle the simplest of ideas.

Others have a far more refined brain material, enabling them to delve into deeper, more nuanced lines of thought.

Your job as teachers is to refine and elevate the brain material of your students — to ensure that all of them develop a refined, delicate mind capable of grasping subtle and abstract concepts.⁴

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

4. In this connection, we share the following story ('Ma'ayanotecha' #17, p. 29):

Once, on his travels, the holy Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Baal HaTanya, arrived in the city of "Terkesha Mahelav." What occurred there, Rabbi Pinchas Raizes — who accompanied the Baal HaTanya — recounted:

When the Baal HaTanya arrived, the townspeople received him with great honor and asked him to deliver a discourse in the main beit midrash.

He delivered a profound sermon on both the revealed and mystical aspects of the Torah, alongside awe-inspiring rebuke, in the presence of exceedingly great personalities and leading Torah giants. When he finished, all the listeners were deeply moved.

At the back of the beit midrash stood two exceptional Torah scholars talking to one another. While the first was thoroughly impressed by the deep Torah insights, the other spoke disparagingly about the Baal Shem Tov's perceived lack of scholarship.

The Baal HaTanya had a wondrous sense of hearing and heard this exchange and was sorely distressed.

He asked permission to speak again and said:

"My brothers, you must know that the Baal Shem Tov was incredibly sharp and erudite, and the manner in which he studied the revealed Torah was on the level of Abaye and following his approach.

If you wish, I will teach you a discourse I heard from my holy teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch, as he heard from his teacher, the Baal Shem Tov — but I ask that you all listen deeply, for it is extremely profound."

Then he delivered an intricate pilpul (analysis) concerning the halachah in Bava Kamma of "palga nizka mamona" (whether half-damages are considered payment of monetary compensation), expounding upon it for three and a half hours.

Rabbi Pinchas Raizes continued:

"I was able to fully grasp the first half of this discourse, and the profound concepts I heard then I had never encountered before and had not seen in any early sources. The subtlety was almost purely spiritual, and the breadth of knowledge was astonishing — encompassing Talmud Bavli, Yerushalmi, Sifra, Sifri — essentially every source imaginable.

And the ideal way to do that," the instructor concluded, "is to study stimulating topics appropriate to their level, diligently and persistently. Through sustained effort and continuous study, the mind becomes ever more refined, until ultimately it is able to receive and comprehend most profound concepts."

The memories kept flowing in Eliyahu's mind.

He recalled his very first day as an educator at the Talmud Torah. Nervous excitement filled him as he entered the classroom, and spread out before him, sat his sixth-grade students like olive saplings.

He would spend long hours preparing the piece of Gemara

he was to teach the next day; many hours were devoted to thinking of ways to convey the sweet flavor of Torah learning.

Yet, despite all of his most valiant efforts, he constantly felt that he had not succeeded to the degree that he had hoped.

True, his students understood the material and could repeat it, but he had not yet managed to impart to them the Gemara's delightful taste.

Eliyahu shook off his memories and found himself once again at his writing desk.

He decided that he would consult with his mentor.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

As for the second half, my mind could not fully absorb it; I only perceived it in a peripheral manner.

When the discourse ended, all of the Torah giants there were astounded, declaring: 'This is most clearly the learning method of study of Abaye and Rava.'

The Baal HaTanya responded, 'This is in fact the manner of Abaye's learning of the subject — Rava's approach was quite different.

'May G-d protect you from ever voicing words against the Master of Torah, the Baal Shem Tov — both in the revealed and hidden dimensions.'"

The Requirement: A Taste in Study

Eliyahu entered his mentor's home and poured out his heart: "How can I get my students to truly taste the pleasing and satisfying flavor of the Gemara?"

His mentor listened quietly and then began to explain: "One of the morning blessings we recite at the start of each day includes a special prayer: 'Please make the words of Your Torah sweet in our mouths, L-rd our G-d.'

We beseech the Creator of the universe to grant us the merit of sensing the sweet and delightful taste of the Torah.⁵

The sweetness and good taste are not, by force, intrinsic to the commandment of Torah study itself. Even someone who studies Torah without finding it enjoyable still fulfills his obligation and will be rewarded.

Nonetheless, the good taste, the sweetness, and the delight involved — transforms it into something deeper and more inward.

We then are able to engage in our sacred divine work not merely because "this is how one ought to live" but with desire and pleasure as well, savoring its sweetness and pleasantness.

This is even more crucial — and exponentially so — when it comes to education.

If we wish to impart a certain value to our children, we must ourselves connect with that value, love it, and believe in it; together with the substance of the subject itself, we must also convey the feeling, the pleasure, and the sweetness we ourselves experience.⁶

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

5. 'Kesselman Teshura' 5772 (p. 31).

6. Toiling in Torah is the ultimate form of Torah learning; the essence of Torah is attained through the effortful exertion of the mind, not through tears.

In the Tanya (Likutei Amarim, ch. 5), the reason for this is explained:

"Every concept, when a person contemplates and grasps it with his intellect, is encompassed by his mind, and at the

Parshat Eikev - The Requirement: A Taste in Study

It is extremely important to invest great effort to ensure that our children's education is infused with delight and sweetness. If we too, after all, are drawn to sweetness — how much more is this the case with our children?

The moment that we make mitzvot and meaningful values appealing and beloved to them, they will cling to them with great force and affection."

"Do you understand?" asked the mentor.

"The moment you genuinely experience the true taste of Gemara, you can transmit and pass that taste on to your students."

"Please believe me, Rabbi," Eliyahu exclaimed. "I devote all of my energy to the study and the teaching of the Gemara.

Why, then, am I not successful in conveying its flavor to them?"

Wellsprings of Wisdom

same time the mind becomes surrounded by the concept itself in his mind at this time.

For example, when someone understands and completely masters a law in the Mishnah or Gemara, his intellect 'encompasses' that law and the intellect is at the same time clothed within the particular law.

Indeed, Halacha is the wisdom and will of the Holy One, blessed be He, for it arose in His will that if, for example, Reuven makes such-and-such claim, and Shimon such-and-such, then the verdict between them should be one way.

Even if this particular case never was and never will be brought to trial, nonetheless, since it arose so in the

will and wisdom of G-d — this is the law.

Therefore, when a person knows and grasps this ruling with his intellect as it stands clarified in the Mishnah, Gemara, or codifiers, he comprehends and encompasses within his mind the will and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed be He — wisdom that no thought can grasp at all except as they are 'clothed' in these laws before us; and at the same time, one's mind becomes enveloped in them.

Such a union is wondrous, for no comparable union exists in the physical world — two beings becoming literally one and unified from every side and in every manner."

The Requirement: Letters of Engraving

“Before delving deeper into the concept of truly toiling in Torah study,” said the rabbi, “let us study the verse: ‘If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them’ (Leviticus 26:3).”

He went to his bookshelf and, picking up a volume of 'Imrei Noam,' he opened up to Parshat Bechukotai (Maamar 1) and began to read:

“Parshat Bechukotai begins: ‘If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them,’ followed by a detailed list of the great reward G-d promises the Jewish people for fulfilling this command.

In his commentary on this verse, Rashi explains that ‘If you walk in My statutes’ does not refer to observing the Torah’s mitzvot — for the verse already says, ‘and keep My commandments.’ Rather, these words mean: ‘that you toil in the Torah.’

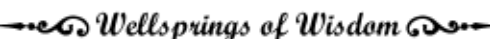
The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, explains:⁷

“Besides its literal meaning of statutes, the word 'Bechukotai' also hints at an effect of 'engraving.'

The difference between writing and engraving is that when one writes letters in ink on parchment, the ink and parchment remain two separate entities merely bonded together and thus can be separated. But when one engraves letters in stone, the letters become one with the stone itself and cannot be separated in any way.

When the Torah says, ‘If you walk in My statutes,’ it means the words of Torah we learn should be engraved in our hearts, becoming one with our very being — like letters carved into stone — rather than remaining external to us, like ink on parchment.

The way one reaches that high level, where the words of Torah



7. ‘Likutei Sichot,’ (vol. 3, p. 276).

become “engraved” on the heart and become part of one’s essence, Rashi explains, is by ‘toil in Torah.’

Notably, Rashi specifically says ‘that you should be (toilers) in Torah,’ rather than simply ‘learn Torah,’ emphasizing that it is only through exertion and great and strenuous effort in Torah study — investing all one’s strength — that one merits that the words of Torah become engraved on the heart and merge with one’s very being, but if a person studies Torah without special effort and exertion, this does not occur.”

This also explains the following interpretation of the verse: ‘You shall remove the old because of the new’ (Leviticus 26:10):

Our Sages say (Chagigah 12a) that the original light that G-d created enabled Man to see from one end of the world to the other.

However, foreseeing the existence of future evildoers, G-d concealed this light for the righteous in the future time to come (hence it is called the Hidden Light), and in its place, He created a physical light, the kind we all are familiar with.

The holy Baal Shem Tov explains that the righteous did not lose out on the Hidden Light on account of the wicked. Rather, G-d concealed that primordial light inside the holy Torah, and the righteous who toil in Torah with holiness and purity merit this divine illumination — through which they can see from one end of the world to the other.⁸

Indeed, it is related that whenever the Baal Shem Tov wanted to see or know something, he would open the holy Zohar and study it intensely with profound holiness, and the Hidden Light within the Torah

~*Wellsprings of Wisdom*~

8. My father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, once related (‘Betzur Yarum,’ vol. 10, p. 167):

The Cohen family was one of the wealthiest families in London, and G-d blessed them with many children.

Parshat Eikev - The Requirement: Letters of Engraving

would allow him to see from one end of the world to the other.

And this primordial light, which was created and then hidden away, is called 'the old,' being that it was of such ancient origin, while the light we currently feel in our world is compared to it — 'new' — since it is the later and more recent light to be revealed.

Hence the Torah's statement: 'If you walk in My statutes... you

shall remove the old because of the new;' in other words, if you toil in the study of Torah until its sacred words are engraved on your heart and become part of your very being, you will merit having G-d extract for you the ancient Hidden Light from within the Torah in place of the newer, ordinary light that you are normally accustomed to. It will reveal its illuminating mysteries to you — enabling you to see from one end of the world to the other.

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

One day, their son vanished. The family searched themselves and involved the police, but nothing helped — the boy was not to be found.

Having heard of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzera (the Baba Sali), they traveled to him and begged and pleaded that he pray to save them.

The Baba Sali turned to them and said, "In this matter, I cannot help you, but my holy son, Baba Meir, surely can.

However, as much as I know him, because of his great humility, he will refuse to reveal his power in this area; therefore, tell him that I sent you and that I am requesting his assistance."

The family traveled to Ashdod and came to Baba Meir's home. When they told him that the Baba Sali had sent them, he got up, took a piece of paper, and began sketching the streets of London for them.

After he finished, he drew a bit more of the details of one specific street and sketched a building on it.

Inside that building, he drew the outline of an apartment and said to the parents, "A gang of criminals has kidnapped him, and here is where you'll find your son. Send the police there, and everything will be fine."

Needless to say, every word of his turned out to be entirely accurate.

This illustrates the power of the Hidden Light.

Parshat Eikev - The Ultimate Goal: Acquiring a Torah Mind

This illustrates to us the importance of striving and devoting a significant portion of each and every day to Torah study; nothing in the world binds us to G-d as closely and as strongly as Torah study.⁹

The rabbi closed the book and returned it to the shelf.

He then turned to Eliyahu and said, “We now can move on to explain the concept of ‘toiling’ in the study of the Torah.”

The Ultimate Goal: Acquiring a Torah Mind

As we mentioned earlier, the words of Torah we study must be engraved in our hearts, becoming an inseparable part of our very being — like letters engraved in stone.

The way to achieve this is by exerting oneself and toiling intellectually with all one's strength — pushing to the extreme — until

one merits that their intellect becomes an intellect of Torah.

Rabbi Kahaneman of Ponevezh, of blessed memory, used to relate that when the Russians conquered the city in which lived

Rabbi Avraham Burshtein, also known as the "Rav of Tvrig" during World War I, they found him studying late into the night.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

9. In the preface that Rabbi Chaim Volozhin wrote to 'Sifra D'Tzni'uta' with the commentary of the Vilna Gaon, he relates:

“I heard from the saintly mouth of the Vilna Gaon that numerous times, several ‘maggidim’ (heavenly informants) came early in the morning to his doorstep with questions or requests, wanting to convey to him secrets of the Torah, but he paid them no heed at all.

One of these maggidim pressured him greatly; nevertheless, he paid no attention

to that imposing display. Instead, he responded and said:

‘I do not want to gain an understanding of G-d's Torah through any intermediary whatsoever. My eyes are turned solely to G-d, blessed be His Name, to reveal to me my share in His Torah — according to the effort I exert with all my might.

As for the attainments gained through angelic maggidim and “ministers of the Torah,” without toil and effort on my part, I have no desire for them.”

Parshat Eikev - The Ultimate Goal: Acquiring a Torah Mind

They immediately suspected him of espionage; a blackout had been imposed, and yet there was a light burning in his home.

Moreover, he was a Jew, and not only that — a rabbi — and he was awake at such an hour while the entire city slept.

As if all this were not enough, he was sitting in front of an old, tattered book that clearly was not a typical reading book.

The Russians assumed it must be some sort of codebook used for transmitting information to the enemy, and the worn letters on the front cover — indicating that it was a commentary by the Rambam — meant nothing to them.

The Russian commander resolved to have him

executed by firing squad, but concerned about the outward appearance of such a sudden execution, he gave him two instructions:

To step outside so that the gunshot would not awaken his sleeping wife and rob her of the night's rest. Secondly, he would be granted five minutes to write a farewell letter to his loved ones.

The rabbi responded, “If you are willing to give me five minutes, I would like to use them for something else.”

“What do you want to do with them?” the commander asked, intrigued.

“You wouldn’t understand,” the rabbi replied.¹⁰

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

10. When Rabbi Elchanan Peretz was about eight years old, he would often play Shabbat afternoon on the lawns of the White House; in those days, security was not so tight, and one could enter freely.

Occasionally, when his kippah fell off while playing, he would stop the game and refuse to continue until he’d put the kippah back on his head.

One Shabbat, a tall man approached him and extended his hand, asking, “What is that on your head?”

Young Elchanan explained that it was a symbol of his religion.

The man asked further, “Where are your parents?”

Parshat Eikev - The Ultimate Goal: Acquiring a Torah Mind

The commander insisted, "There is nothing in this world that a Jew can grasp that a Russian cannot."

The rabbi looked at him and, having had no choice, explained: "I am currently studying the Rambam, and I came upon a question in his words, and if you grant me five minutes, with G-d's help, I can come up with an innovation to reconcile the difficulty — and then when I meet the Rambam in the upper realms in just a short while, I will be able to tell him the explanation that I reached."

The Russian gazed at him with pity, convinced that fear of death had deranged the rabbi's mind.

"I told you that you wouldn't understand," uttered the rabbi, and no sooner had he said that, and after a few short moments, Germans began firing in their direction heavy artillery, and terrified, the Russians fled.

"This was Torah in Lithuania," Rabbi Kahaneman would end the story by saying, "Such were their values. Death carried little weight compared to a satisfactory resolution in Rambam's commentary."

A few years after Rabbi Kahaneman passed away, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky told this story to the gaon Rabbi Eliyahu Man.

Rabbi Eliyahu was amazed and had trouble fathoming this depth of erudition and dedication to Torah study.

"Doesn't the Gemara say (Megillah 28b): 'A learned discussion requires tranquility'? How can someone who is about to die in five minutes possibly arrive at a nuanced interpretation of the words of the Rambam?"

Instead of answering, Rabbi Chaim looked with surprise. "What does one thing have to do with the other?" he asked.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

Elchanan replied that they weren't around.

The man said, "When you go home, tell your parents that Calvin Coolidge shook

your hand and asked to say to them that they are educating their son well in their religion and that their son is indeed proud of his faith" ('Ohel Moshe' Devarim vol. 1).

Parshat Eikev - The Root of It All — Self-Negation

“If a person is about to die, he can’t learn in-depth? Why should that bother or get in the way?”

In the face of Rabbi Chaim's bewilderment, Rabbi Eliyahu felt uneasy — how did he have trouble grasping something so obvious? Why didn't he feel the same way that nothing

could interfere with Torah study in depth?

Rabbi Chaim added: “After all, the only reason they wanted to kill him was because he was learning, and it couldn’t be that dedicated Torah study itself would come to be the cause for an inability to innovate and rejoice with the Torah.”¹¹

The Root of It All — Self-Negation

In a talk delivered by Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, he said:¹²

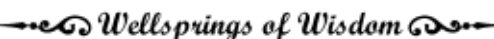
Of Moses, our teacher, and the greatest prophet to have ever lived, the Torah states: "Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

The Torah praises Moses with a single character trait: humility. It does not extol Moses' great wisdom or great piety but rather his extraordinary humility. Humility is key to many lofty

and holy traits, among them the trait of joy, as it is written: "And the humble shall increase their joy in G-d" (Isaiah 29:19); thus, the more humble a person is, the more his joy grows.

When the disciples of the Arizal asked him, “In what merit did you attain divine inspiration?” he answered, “It was through having joy in performing mitzvot.”

It is explained¹³ that the Arizal was a reincarnation of Moses, and



11. ‘Umatok Ha’Or,’ P’ninei Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, p. 228.

12. ‘Shiurim B’Sefer Sod Hashem Liyre’av’ (vol. 2, p. 198).

13. ‘Ma’amarei Admor Ha’Emtza’i — Nevi’im (p. 27).

thus had a great sense of humility, and his attributing his spiritual attainments to his joyous state of mind, is very much in line with a deep sense of humility, for the two are very much intertwined — “And the humble shall increase their joy in G-d.”

Moses merited that the feeling of humility permeated all ten of his soul's faculties completely — his wisdom, understanding, knowledge, kindness, humility, and so on, and the more humility he possessed, the more he was filled with joy.

Yet despite all of the above, the main success of a humble person lies in acquiring da'at — true knowledge and understanding.

To elaborate upon this point:

Chassidic teaching explains extensively that a primary factor for the distortion of both intellect and heart is the lack of total surrender to Torah; a person might study Torah his entire life and know a great deal, yet remain "crooked" because he has never fully submitted himself to Torah

study - there is "the Torah's perspective" on the one hand, and then there is also "his perspective."

Although everyone possesses their own intellect — how they think, there is also the intellect of the Torah, and the main rectification accomplished by learning Torah is when a person can relinquish — and nullify — their own intellect in favor of the Torah's intellect.

There are some individuals who always seek the Torah to say whatever it is that they want. They may be one hundred percent observant, never deviating even an iota from the Torah, yet their study is overshadowed by the subconscious aim of pulling the Torah into alignment with his own thinking, molding it to fit his mind.

Such learning, however, will often be distorted. One could be the greatest genius, but if all of their Torah learning has been subjected to this warped lens of self-aggrandizement and self-interest — attempting to

Parshat Eikev - The Goal: Nun (Fifty) Gates of Understanding

make the Torah conform to his personal intellect — they have never genuinely yielded the mind to the Torah's viewpoint.

The uprightness of one's intellect depends solely on the ability to nullify one's own opinions before the Torah's opinion. One must feel the desire to align themselves with the Torah's perspective," like a student sitting before a teacher and regarding himself as completely insignificant compared to his teacher.

Thus, although in essence, a Jew belongs to "a wise and discerning nation" (Deuteronomy 4:6) — his own inner intellect will be revealed to him and reached only when he renounces and nullifies his own rigid thinking.

Through the trait of true humility, his intellect merges with the Torah's intellect until they become one essence.

Then one will appreciate even an initial approach to the subject of the sages of the Talmud that was later disregarded.

These sages all represented aspects of Moses, and their words are entirely words of divine wisdom, regardless of their acceptance as authoritative rulings in the practice. Had this approach been a complete mistake, it would never have been recorded in the Gemara in the first place at all.

Let us move on to discuss this week's Torah portion.

The Goal: Nun (Fifty) Gates of Understanding

This week's Torah portion, Parshat Eikev, opens with the words,

"And it shall be, because (eikev) you will heed these laws and observe and perform them" (Deuteronomy 7:12).

In his commentary, the holy Ohr HaChaim, Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, explains that here, the Torah reveals to us that one who studies Torah with humility "will merit to grasp the Fifty Gates of Understanding."

Parshat Eikev - The Goal: Nun (Fifty) Gates of Understanding

This is alluded to by the above verse: “And it shall be, because you will heed” (עקב תשמעו) — if you will conduct yourselves with humility and make yourselves like a heel (עקב), then you will merit to heed (תשמעו) — meaning you will merit the attainment of the Fifty (נון) Gates of Understanding.

Our sages have likewise taught (Avot 4:15), “Be a tail among lions and do not be a head among foxes.” Thus, not only among those who are lowly (foxes) should you avoid seeking prominence, but even among the holy and learned (lions), you should distance yourself from leadership and honor, but rather diminish your own sense of self and be as a mere “tail.”

It is specifically through making yourself “a tail” and behaving humbly that you will merit attaining the Fifty Gates of Understanding. This is hinted in the word ‘tail’ (זנב), which is an acronym for “זה נון בו” — “this contains Nun in it.”¹⁴

Let us expand further.

Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Chaver, one of the well-known disciples of the Vilna Gaon, wrote as follows:¹⁵

“Humility (ענוה) alludes to and embodies the Torah; thus, the entire Torah is contained within the word for humility (ענוה).

The letter ayin (ע) corresponds to the ‘seventy facets’ (עצ) of Torah.’

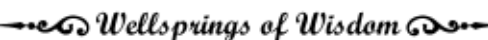
The letter nun (נ) corresponds to the Fifty Gates of Understanding.

The letter vav (ו) corresponds to the six orders of Mishnah (from which the entire Oral Torah extends).

Finally, the letter hei (ה) corresponds to the five books of the Torah.

Thus, whoever is most truly humble will have the greatest revelation of the most mystical and sublime aspects of the Torah.”

Thus, by cultivating the feeling of humility throughout



14. See also ‘Imrei Noam’ on Parshat Eikev, Ma’amar 1.

15. ‘Amudei HaTorah’ (Or Torah, 61).

Parshat Eikev - The Great Punishment: Forgetfulness

one's entire being, a person merits the revelation of Torah's light.

In order to more sharply highlight this contrast, let us

bring the opposite extreme, which is also mentioned in our Torah portion — Parshat Ekev.

The Great Punishment: Forgetfulness

Further on in our Parshah, the Torah says:

“And your heart will become haughty, and you will forget the L-rd your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves”
(Deuteronomy 8:14).

We bring the following excerpt from Chelev HaAretz (vol. 2, p. 255):

The main obstacle preventing a person from uniting with the Torah is the pride lurking within

him, causing him to forget the existence of G-d.

Pride empties one's heart of G-dliness, and no trait banishes awareness of G-d as thoroughly as does arrogance.

Our Sages taught (Sotah 4b) that one who has haughtiness of spirit is as though he worships idols and builds a private altar. In essence, instead of serving the Creator, the arrogant person builds an altar for self-worship, for there cannot be two “centers” in the same circle.¹⁶

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

16. The Jewish sages knew the blinding power of self-aggrandizement and used this knowledge when necessary to help the Jewish people.

In this context, the following story is told ('Avihem shel Yisrael LaYeladim,' p. 76):

In 1979, many young people in Iran revolted against the secular regime controlling the country, deposed the ruler, and installed in

his place Ayatollah Khomeini as leader of the Islamic Revolution.

After the revolution, diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and Iran were severed, and Iran became Israel's greatest enemy.

One day, a few years later, a woman approached a rabbinic court in Israel and explained: "I fled from Iran after my

Parshat Eikev - The Great Punishment: Forgetfulness

husband converted to Islam, and I couldn't bear to stay and live with him. Before I left, I begged him to grant me a get (Jewish divorce), but he stubbornly refused."

Several rabbinic courts examined her case, but all gave up in despair, unable to find any clue of a solution.

The dayanim shed tears, wringing their hands in sorrow, and shared in the pain of this young woman who could not receive a get, but there wasn't much that could be done.

Finally, the case reached the Supreme Rabbinic Court, where Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, the chief rabbi of Israel, was asked to review it.

He immediately took official letterhead bearing the Israeli emblem and dispatched a letter to Rabbi Yedidya Shofet, the rabbi of Tehran, and in it, Rabbi Eliyahu showered praise upon Ayatollah Khomeini — calling him a wonderful man, a fighter for religion, and a servant of G-d. The chief rabbi requested that the rabbi of Tehran approach Khomeini and ask for his help as a fellow G-d-fearing man, explaining that he surely would not allow such an injustice to go unresolved.

The letter reached Iran and passed through the hands of censors, who scrutinized every line and word.

They were astonished by the accolades for their revered leader, and the letter quickly reached its target — not Rabbi Yedidya Shofet's residence, but the palace of Ayatollah Khomeini himself.

The next day, a squad of soldiers went to summon Tehran's rabbi to the supreme leader's palace.

Rabbi Yedidya Shofet was terrified, certain this was his end and that they were taking him to the gallows.

He requested a few minutes to prepare, quickly entered an inner room, put on his burial shrouds under his clothes, and left his home trembling.

When he was admitted to the grand hall, Khomeini asked him, "Do you know Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu from the State of Israel?"

After confirming that he did, he was asked if Rabbi Eliyahu was considered a great rabbi among the Jewish sages.

"Of course," he replied, "Rabbi Eliyahu was indeed highly esteemed by all rabbis, who would act in unison to comply with his requests."

At that, Khomeini took out the letter, waved it proudly, and declared, "Look at what your great rabbi has written about me."

Khomeini then asked the chief rabbi of Tehran, "What must be done in order to secure a get from that recalcitrant husband?"

Rabbi Shofet proceeded to explain that they had to get the man to consent, of his own free will and volition, to give his wife a proper Jewish divorce.

Khomeini ordered a military unit to find the apostate husband, and within hours, they brought him to the palace.

Parshat Eikev - The Great Punishment: Forgetfulness

The arrogant heart pushes out thoughts of G-d, prompting the Shechinah to withdraw — and G-d declares, "I and he cannot dwell together." Clothed in the royal garment of the King of Kings, he harbors heresy and sorely lacks simple faith.

Further, the Talmud (Sotah 5a) calls the haughty person “an abomination,” echoing the verse: “Every haughty heart is an abomination to the L-rd” (Proverbs 16:5).

The great evildoer, Yeravam ben Nevat, despite his towering

Torah knowledge, was punished and lost both this world and the next solely because of arrogance.

Arrogance is the root of myriad sins, both toward G-d and toward one's fellow, leading to hatred, lashon hara, slander, anger, and a slew of other severe transgressions. As the verse says again, “Your heart will become haughty, and you will forget the L-rd your G-d” (Deuteronomy 8:14).

What good and to what use are one's wealth or possessions if a person behaves repugnantly in G-d's eyes?¹⁷

~*Wellsprings of Wisdom*~

Rabbi Yedidya Shofet waited until the man arrived and then met with him privately, gently persuading him to grant the divorce; a forced get would be invalid. The man understood he had no choice; his life was on the line. However, Rabbi Yedidya also wanted him to realize there was no reason to condemn his wife to misery for the rest of her life.

Once the man agreed, Rabbi Yedidya asked to call Rabbi Eliyahu in Jerusalem, and the conversation took place via a conference call through France.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu immediately realized there were likely eavesdroppers on the line, so he spoke in hints as he

guided Rabbi Shofet regarding all the halachic details of sending a get from an enemy country.

Rabbi Eliyahu then spoke with the woman, involving her in the conversation and instructing her how to appoint Rabbi Shofet as her agent to receive the get from her husband, after which she would be free from her status as an agunah.

Only a few days later, official confirmation arrived by mail in Israel, and the woman was permitted to remarry and establish a faithful Jewish home in the Land of Israel.

17. See 'Sha'arei Teshuvah' 3:34.

Parshat Eikev - "Its Remembrance" — Like a Sweet-Smelling Aroma

Hence, one must uproot every trace of arrogance, and as the Rambam writes (Hilchot De'ot 2:3), regarding pride, there is no "middle path"; we must flee from it entirely, being not merely "modest" but deeply humble, as our Sages taught: "Be exceedingly, exceedingly humble in spirit" (Avot 4:4).

Indeed, one who lifts his heart in pride is as though they are denying the basic principle of faith in G-d.

Who was greater than Moses, who attained the loftiest heights of prophecy and spiritual perfection, yet the Torah praises him only for his supreme humility: "Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

Thus, no trait is more cherished by G-d than humility and modesty.

Now, we return to our earlier question.

"Its Remembrance" — Like a Sweet-Smelling Aroma

At the beginning of our conversation, we cited the words of the poem:

"The Day of Rest must not be forgotten; its remembrance is as pleasing to G-d as the scent of a sacrifice."

We raised the question: Is this the true epitome of the greatness of Shabbat — that it is as important and pleasing as a sacrifice, but no more than that? After all, Shabbat is considered the equivalent of all the mitzvot of the Torah.

As with any question, one must locate the underlying assumption. Here, our premise was that the words "its remembrance" refer to the day of Shabbat, but if that premise is shaken, the question disappears.

Indeed, perhaps the refrain "Its remembrance is as pleasing to G-d as the scent of a sacrifice" refers to the Jew who "does not forget" the Shabbat day.

In fact, Rabbi Avraham Eiger of blessed memory explained it in the following way:¹⁸

"A Jew who has so closely united with the sanctity of Shabbat that he cannot tear his mind away from its holiness even for a moment — he and Shabbat merge into a single essence. Naturally, it follows that "The Day of Rest must not be forgotten" — such a Jew truly cannot forget Shabbat.

Such a Jew thus merits that from within him, the fragrance of Gan Eden arises and is "pleasing to G-d as the scent of a sacrifice" — the sweet-smelling aroma of the Garden of Eden that emerges when gateways open.

The rabbi finished his words, and silence filled the room.

Eliyahu concluded the conversation and declared, "Rabbi, you've just given me twenty years' worth of work."

Shabbat Shalom!



Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. By awakening the trait of humility throughout a person's entire being, one merits the revelation of the light of Torah.

Since humility (ענוה) is a prerequisite and alludes to the Torah, the letters of the word (ענוה) also hint at various facets of the Torah:

The letter ayin (ע) corresponds to the “seventy facets of Torah.”

The letter nun (נ) corresponds to the “Fifty Gates of Understanding.”

The letter vav (ו) corresponds to the “six orders of the Mishnah” (on which all of the Oral Torah is based).

The letter hei (ה) corresponds to the “five books of the Chumash.”

Thus, the more humble one is, the greater their revelation of Torah will be.

2. The main factor that distorts both the intellect and heart is the lack of total dedication to Torah.

It may be possible for someone to study Torah his entire life and know an enormous amount of its

wisdom, yet still remain uncouth and “twisted” because he has not fully sacrificed himself to Torah study; thus, there is “the Torah's perspective” on the one hand, and then there is “his own perspective” on the other extreme.

Each and every person has his own way of thinking, but with the intellect of the Torah, the primary refinement in learning Torah is achieved only when a person can relinquish — and nullify — his own intellect in favor of the Torah's intellect.

3. Some people want the Torah to encourage and endorse their thinking. They may be devout in every way, never deviating from the Torah in the slightest, yet their true aim is to pull the Torah into conformity with their own reasoning.

Such a person could be the greatest genius, but all he has learned — from childhood until now — has been in a crooked manner, trying to fit Torah to his intellect; he had never

surrendered his intellect to the Torah's perspective.

The uprightness of one's mind depends solely on one's ability to submit his own opinion to the opinion of Torah.

When studying the Torah, one must feel, "I seek out and want to draw close to the Torah's viewpoint," like a student sitting before his rabbi, feeling like "nothing" in comparison.

He must only pray and ask G-d to deliver him from his foolishness so he can receive the true wisdom of his teacher.

4. The reason a person is prevented from uniting with the Torah is the sense of pride that lurks within him and causes him to forget and not be mindful of G-d. Pride within man's heart empties him of every trace of G-dliness, in the spirit of the verse, "Your heart will become haughty, and you will forget the L-rd your G-d."

5. No emotion banishes awareness of G-d from a person's heart as greatly as does pride.

An arrogant individual, instead of engaging in the service of the Creator, is busy building an altar for the worship of himself.

Since there cannot be two "centers" in one circle, the center of his personality is occupied with self-reflection and self-importance, to the point that thoughts of G-d are completely driven out.

6. Hence, our Sages were extremely severe in their statements on this matter, saying that "anyone with haughtiness of spirit is called "an abomination," is worthy of being cut down like an idolatrous tree, and that he will not rise at the time of the resurrection, Heaven forbid."

Furthermore, the sages state that the Divine Presence weeps for such a person, and he is regarded as though he worshiped idols and denied the very foundation of the Jewish faith as if he transgressed every immoral sin and as though he built a private - forbidden altar.

Ultimately, such a person is destined to be diminished, removed

from the world prematurely, and forget his Torah learning.

The trait of pride is the root of many evils, and no other trait is as harmful. And even the Jewish king, who G-d appointed to be exalted over the entire nation, is warned not to stumble in the sin of pride and haughtiness — "So that his heart does not become haughty over his brothers" (Deuteronomy 17:20) — how much more so must everyone else - who is truly not worthy of being exalted over others - be wary of this sin.

7. Every individual must remove any trace of pride from their soul and distance themselves from it to the utmost extreme.

As the Rambam writes, pride is among the traits in which a person must not follow a "middle path" but instead flee to the opposite extreme. It is insufficient merely to be "modest"; one must be lowly in spirit — extremely humble.

This, then, is our Sages' instruction: "Be exceedingly, exceedingly humble of spirit."

Shabbat Shalom!





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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:35 pm	8:36 pm	9:04 pm
Miami	7:38 pm	8:31 pm	9:07 pm
Los Angeles	7:22 pm	8:18 pm	8:51 pm
Montreal	7:43 pm	8:48 pm	9:12 pm
Toronto	8:03 pm	9:05 pm	9:31 pm
London	8:04 pm	9:17 pm	9:32 pm
Jerusalem	7:07 pm	7:57 pm	8:47 pm
Tel Aviv	7:04 pm	7:54 pm	8:44 pm
Haifa	7:05 pm	7:58 pm	8:47 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:03 pm	7:56 pm	8:45 pm

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HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

When you love a Jew, you are essentially showing love to both a Jew and to G-d, but if you love G-d alone, you remain lacking the other love. Thus, it is surely worthwhile to love every Jew; loving every Jew who is themselves loved by G-d, proves the authenticity of your love to G-d.



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