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Ki Tavo | The Power Of The Holy Letters





MESILLOT Pathways to the Soul

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

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

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Parashat Ki Tavo - Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah



Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah

We are approaching the month of Tishrei, a month of utmost significance. This month is filled with endless possibilities to attain all that one's heart desires...

The month begins with the awe-inspiring Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah, followed by the Ten Days of Repentance and Yom Kippur.

Then we enter the joyous seven-day holiday of Sukkot, which corresponds to the seven supernal

tzaddikim: Avraham Avinu, Itzchak Avinu, Yaakov Avinu, Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon HaKohen, Yosef HaTzaddik, and David HaMelech, each one representing a specific day.

The seventh day of Sukkot, Hoshana Rabbah, corresponding to David HaMelech, is particularly regarded as a day of judgment.¹

Immediately following Hoshana Rabbah, we enter the day of Simchat Torah, which corresponds to Shlomo HaMelech.

1. Rabbi Yosef Yashar (Levush Yosef – Moadim, Vol. 1, p. 226) writes: Hoshana Rabbah is the final day of Chol HaMoed Sukkot, a time of joy. Nevertheless, it is considered the culmination of the Yamim HaNoraim, because the inner seal is finished on Yom Kippur. However, on the night of Hoshana Rabbah, at midnight, the heavenly judgment of a person's outer seal is finalized. Therefore, on this night, the verdicts are handed over, and one must awaken with sincere teshuva. One's heart should be filled with teshuva even during the day because

although the verdicts have been handed over, there is still time for salvation until the eighth day, Shemini Atzeret.

On this day, it is customary to increase prayers and supplications, for it marks the conclusion of the 51 days of teshuva granted to Am Israel, from the beginning of the month of Elul until the 21st of Tishrei. The name "הּוֹשִׁעְנָא רַבָּה" (Hoshana Rabbah) contains a hint, as "נָא" (na) is a term of supplication. Therefore, 51 days are given for the purpose of supplications and pleas,

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Simchat Torah is a day when joy emerges in the Jew's heart with all its strength, true happiness that descends from heaven and enlivens the soul.

But we should reflect on the following:

1. The time difference between Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah is fleeting, as the end of one, marks the beginning of the other. Nevertheless, the transition between the themes of these two

days is extremely profound. On Hoshana Rabbah, we find ourselves in the tremor of judgment, crying out, "Hoshana!" ("Save us!"). But on Simchat Torah, joy rises and fills every corner of the soul!

Where does the power of this transition come from?

2. Why specifically is David HaMelech associated with Hoshana Rabbah?²

And another question arises...

for this day is the 51st day, and thus it is called "הוֹשַׁצְנָא רַבָּה" meaning "הוֹשַׁצָנָא רַבָּה" (hoshea – save us) on the נ"א (51st) day which is "דְּבָּה" (great) because everything follows the seal.

2. David HaMelech was blessed with the ability to compose the Book of Tehillim. Those who wholeheartedly embrace its words have the opportunity to reach great spiritual heights.

Rabbi Mordechai Gerlitz shares a story that sheds light on this topic (B'Sod Avdecha – Vol. 4, p. 11): Meir HaNagid possessed a sensitive soul filled with strong spiritual aspirations. Despite his immense wealth, he was not captivated by material possessions. Instead, his heart was drawn to matters related to Torah and serving the Creator. While he actively engaged in Torah study and surrounded himself with scholars, Meir felt a unique responsibility

due to his abundant blessings. He believed he had an obligation to use his wealth to honor the Torah and further its study.

With much contemplation, Meir decided on a course of action. He resolved to write a beautiful Torah scroll, adorned with the utmost precision and all the *hidurim* of all the *Poskim*. By doing so, he aimed to fulfill the mitzvah to write a Torah scroll (Devarim 31:19). This endeavor would also benefit the public by providing them with a perfect Torah scroll to read from.

Meir diligently pursued this project, traveling to various Jewish settlements to seek the most laudable scribe. He invested extensive time and effort in acquiring the necessary materials, preparing the parchments, etc... The entire process took several years to complete, culminating in a beautifully crafted Torah scroll.

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The joy and satisfaction Meir experienced upon completing this cherished mitzvah were immeasurable. The labor, time, and financial resources invested in this endeavor paled in comparison to the exultation he felt when he held the finished scroll.

After completing the scroll, Meir saw fit to celebrate its entry into the synagogue. The celebration was grand, unlike anything seen or heard before. The festivities extended to the entire city, as Meir opened the gates of his palace to all residents. Magnificent attire flooded the streets as people eagerly offered their services in exchange for a chance to partake in the feast, knowing that they would be generously compensated for their work.

Among the workers was Feitel, a water carrier. Despite his simple background and lack of extensive knowledge, Feitel possessed a deep connection to the Tehillim of David HaMelech. He would often recite them, feeling the splendor of sanctity resonating within his soul. Feitel was known as "Feitel the Psalmist" by the residents of the city due to his constant recitation of the Tehillim.

Feitel was elated to be chosen to serve at Meir's joyous feast, as it offered him an opportunity to earn extra income and enjoy a better Shabbat meal with his family. However, his inability to understand the eloquent speeches being delivered by the rabbis brought Feitel to continue to recite Tehillim as he fulfilled his role as the water carrier. But this caused some disturbance, leading to whispers and requests for silence.

Reluctantly, Feitel had to silence himself, and since he was not allowed to recite Tehillim, all the toil and effort that he had exerted throughout the day, from the early morning hours when he woke up before dawn to fetch the first bucket of water from the river, until this very moment, joined forces and caused him to fall into a deep slumber.

The noisy chatter that filled the hall from end to end, with the conclusion of sermons and the racket of the participants, didn't cause him to flinch even in the slightest.

The chatter gradually subsided as the participants prepared to bless Birkat HaMazon. Meir's reproach toward the supervisor of the entire feast then pierced the air, "Where's the *mayim achronim*?" The supervisor momentarily flustered and then quickly remembered Feitel's role, "Feitel!" echoed the supervisor's sharp call, traversing the hall like ripples in a pond. Curious gazes darted in all directions, searching for the elusive culprit until the call reached Feitel, who had been dozing.

With hazy eyes, he hastened his steps toward the head table, disregarding the decorum guidelines the supervisor had emphasized only yesterday and reiterated earlier that day. His momentary drowsiness was overshadowed by the embarrassment of his aged appearance, serving the respected individuals in the front row with the *mayim achronim* in a manner that elicited murmurs.

Meir's heart was burning in shame from Feitel's actions. Meir HaNagid struggled

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to contain his temper, believing that the water carrier had tainted the beauty of the celebration. He rose in anger, loudly proclaiming, "Tehillim reciter! Return to your Tehillim and don't disturb our joy!"

As Feitel retreated from the scene, Meir finally regained composure, and the festivities resumed as they were intended. With the absence of the *mayim achronim*, the participants engaged in conversations about Torah and various subjects. With time to spare and the desire to alleviate his lingering anger, Meir stepped outside to his balcony for a brief respite, where he indulged in his pipe while inhaling the fresh night air.

Unexpectedly, a sudden storm erupted, catching Meir off guard. Before he could utter a short cry, the wind snatched him up, tossing him on his back as he swayed like a ship on a turbulent sea. Everything went black.

When he woke up, he found himself lying on the ground, deep within a dark, dense forest. Slowly rising, he discovered that he was unscathed, as if he had merely fallen from his bed. Trembling and disoriented, he noticed a radiant light in the distance. Despite his heart being filled with fear and unease, his feet led him toward the growing light.

As he approached, a house came into view, emanating a brilliant glow from within. Crossing the threshold, the intensity of the light blinded him, rendering him unable to see anything. He did, though, hear a voice. The voice echoed, "Welcome, Avraham Avinu! Welcome, Itzchak Avinu!

Welcome, Yaakov Avinu! Welcome, David HaMelech!"

Meir strained to catch a glimpse of the awe-inspiring figures whose names he heard, yet the blinding light prevented his eyes from discerning anything. The resounding voice was heard once again, "Welcome, Rabbi Israel, the Baal Shem Tov!"

At that moment, Meir managed to open his eyes slightly, catching a glimpse of the glowing face of the man who had just entered. Despite having heard the name "Baal Shem Tov" countless times before and the relatively short distance between his city and Mezhibuzh, he had never had the chance to see the face of this revered figure until now. Even for today's joyous feast, he had neglected to invite the renowned tzaddik, although the surrounding rabbis had made sure that no one would be absent.

A deep silence fell upon the house, interrupted by a lone voice amidst the stillness, "David Melech Israel, for what purpose have you summoned us here? Speak, and let your words illuminate us!"

"Let there be a judgment between me and the man standing at the entrance," a responding voice was heard, "and I request to judge him before you! Have you not known, holy forefathers, how much blood and tears I shed over my sacred Tehillim, composed with the guidance of *Ruach HaKodesh*, until they ascended as a pleasing fragrance before my Creator and Master?

They were intended to nullify and remove accusations and severe judgments

Parashat Ki Tayo - Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah

from Am Israel, tearing apart the decrees of evil wherever they may be. Hashem assured me that the recitation of my Tehillim would be considered as valuable as Torah study with all its intricate details.

And now, this man stood at the height of the grand festive gathering he held today, in the presence of numerous people and congregations, and mocked and belittled a Jew whose lips do not cease from reciting Tehillim. He referred to him as the "Tehillim reciter" in a disdainful and derogatory manner, as if the recitation of Tehillim is an insignificant *avodah*, *chas v'shalom*! Now, pass judgment upon him, holy forefathers, on the humiliation of my Tehillim!"

The fear of death descended upon Meir. His tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth, rendering him speechless.

Then, the voice that had spoken first resounded once again, "There is no doubt that this man deserves punishment, but here with us is Rabbi Israel, the Baal Shem Tov, who wishes to speak in defense of this individual! Rabbi Israel, the Baal Shem Tov, speak up and let your words illuminate us!"

"Indeed, David HaMelech's judgment is correct," the voice of the Baal Shem Tov proclaimed, "But what benefit will the punishment, which is to be imposed on this man, bring about?! Will the injustice he committed be rectified through it?! Moreover, this man is a Talmid Chacham, a *baal tzedakah*, and a tzaddik, meticulous in treating even minor mitzvot with utmost importance. There is

room to handle his case with leniency beyond the strict letter of the law...

Therefore, this shall be done and agreed upon by our King, David: the man shall return immediately to his home and seek reconciliation with the water carrier he humiliated before all the attendees. Furthermore, he shall recount to all present the events that transpired here, so that they may understand the tremendous power of reciting Tehillim and those who engage in it. Through this, the man will achieve teshuva, and his sins shall be atoned for!"

"I concur!" David HaMelech's voice resounded...

"What do you say?" Meir heard the voice addressing him...

 ${}^{\hspace{-2pt} \bullet} So$ it will be!" Meir managed to utter.

The violent storm erupted once more, and in an instant, Meir found himself standing on his balcony as before. With hesitant steps, he entered the hall, where everyone remained seated, eagerly awaiting the host's entrance for *Birkat HaMazon*...

Lying on his rickety bed, Feitel, the water carrier, rested and sighed. The resounding failure he experienced today in his work at Meir's festive gathering deeply disheartened him. Above all, he was furious at those petty pennies he lost because of his idleness and unlucky life. The bitter tears that welled up in his eyes trickled down and were swallowed by the worn-out pillow beneath his head. In his

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distress, his lips began to murmur verses of Tehillim.

Loud knocks were heard at the door. Feitel reluctantly rose from his bed, hastily wiped the tears from his eyes, and dragged his weary feet toward the door.

"Who is it?" he asked, his voice strained and fatigued.

"Avraham Zelig, the son of Meir HaNagid!"

Feitel was taken aback.

"Wh... Who?" he stammered, struggling to believe his ears.

"Avraham Zelig, the son of Meir! I already told you! Open up!"

The rusty door creaked open, yet the voice of Meir's son standing at the threshold was louder.

"My father requests your immediate presence in the banquet hall! He apologizes for offending you and wishes to make amends!"

Although innocent, Feitel was clever enough not to readily believe what his ears heard. It was no easy task for Meir's son to persuade him to accompany him.

Meanwhile, a swift journey was made to Mezhibuzh, the nearby town, to bring the Baal Shem Tov from there to the banquet. Rabbi Meir still harbored some doubt in his heart, wondering if it was all just an illusion. Therefore, he longed

to see the mysterious face of the Baal Shem Tov himself, to ascertain whether he was truly the man he had seen in the depths of the forest during his vision...

Upon arriving in Mezhibuzh, the holy Baal Shem Tov was already standing at the entrance of his home, as if he had been awaiting their arrival. He ascended into the carriage, accompanied by an entourage of his devoted disciples.

As soon as the Baal Shem Tov entered Meir's banquet hall, Meir passed out and was lying in his seat unconscious. It took him a considerable amount of time to regain his composure.

Opening his eyes, he reached out his trembling hand to the Baal Shem Tov, kissing his pure hand with his lips and whispering weakly, "Thank you for speaking in my defense!"

Then, he rose humbly from his seat and, with tearful eyes, stood to appease the water carrier in the presence of all the guests. He then recounted in detail everything that had transpired during the minutes he was absent from the hall.

This story was told by the holy tzaddik, Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, the Tzemach Tzaddik, to his chassidim, in order to teach them the greatness of Tehillim and the power of their recitation, as well as the immense influence of the tzaddikim, the pillars of the world, who

bring merit to the Jewish people.

Parashat Ki Tavo - The Four Weapons

The Four Weapons

Chapter 4 of Tehillim addresses Jews who feel the need to strengthen their *avodat Hashem*.³ Within this chapter, practical advice for strengthening is provided through the verse, "Tremble and do not sin; say in your hearts upon your beds, and forever be silent" (Tehillim 4:5).

The Gemara explains this verse as follows:⁴ A person should always arouse their yetzer hatov against their yetzer hara, as it says, "Tremble and do not sin."

The *yetzer hara* is an expert disguiser. When it wants to tempt a person to sin, it disguises itself and goes out to carry out its mission. Therefore, a person should always be vigilant regarding the schemes of their *yetzer hara*. When one identifies a suspicious movement "in the enemy's territory," they should enlist their *yetzer hatov* and go out to the *milchemet mitzvah*.

The Gemara continues: If one

succeeds in subduing their *yetzer* hara, excellent, but if not, they should endeavor in Torah study, and this should defeat the *yetzer* hara, as it says, "say in your hearts," that is, say words of Torah and ponder them in your hearts.

If one succeeds in subduing their *yetzer hara* through Torah study, excellent, but if not, they should recite Keriyat Shema, which contains the acceptance of the yoke of heaven and the concept of reward and punishment, as it says, "upon your beds," which alludes to the words "when you lie down," in Keriyat Shema.

If one succeeds in subduing their *yetzer hara* through reciting Keriyat Shema, excellent, but if not, they should contemplate the day of their death, and this should defeat the *yetzer hara*, as it says, "and forever be silent," that is, the day that is completely silent, the day of death.

^{3.} See Rashi (Tehillim 4:1).

^{4.} Brachot 5a.

Parashat Ki Tavo - Lights Revealed In Vessels

Regarding these teachings of the Gemara, Rebbe Natan of Breslov raised two questions:⁵ If remembering the day of death is the most effective solution, why is it left for last? Why don't they immediately commence the war by remembering the day of death? (And why is there a need to first study Torah and recite Keriyat Shema?) Experience has shown that remembering the day of death is not effective at all.

Before continuing, let us move on to "Lights" and "Vessels."

Lights Revealed In Vessels

Hashem created His world in a way that within everything, there is "light" and a "vessel."

The "light" represents the Divine vitality that permeates within the object, and the "vessel" is the object itself through which this vitality is revealed.

For example, in a human being, there is the "light" of the Divine vitality, which is the soul, and the "vessel" is the body through which the vitality of the soul is expressed.

Likewise, in the intellect of a person, there are two components, the "light" being the essence of

the intellectual power, and the "vessel" being the physical brain that is visible to the eye.

This principle applies to all of creation, as it is a fundamental principle in the teachings of Kabbalah that spiritual light cannot manifest without a vessel capable of containing it.⁶

There is much to elaborate on this topic, but we will focus on a point relevant to our subject:

The Ben Ish Chai writes⁷ that there are two main approaches to acquiring Torah: prophecy and wisdom.

- **5.** Likutei Halachot (Orach Chaim Hilchot Seudah 5:22).
- **6. HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes (Betzur Yarum Vol. 9, ch. 38, p. 84):

In the holy *sefirot*, there are lights and vessels. The light is infinite in relation to the vessel (since the vessel itself is defined within the boundaries of *chochma* (wisdom),

Parashat Ki Tavo - Lights Revealed In Vessels

In order for a person to be worthy of having prophecy revealed to them, they need to prepare within their mind and heart a spiritual vessel suitable for that purpose. When the vessel is fully prepared, it will draw within itself the abundance of prophetic light.

Similarly, in acquiring the wisdom of Torah, one needs to develop within their mind and heart a spiritual power that serves as a vessel, capable of receiving the light of wisdom that Hashem imparts through Torah. This is the meaning

of the verse, "He gives wisdom to the wise" (Daniel 2:21), indicating that Hashem grants wisdom only to those who have prepared within themselves a suitable spiritual vessel (and this vessel is called "wise").

When one attains wisdom, a clear world is revealed...

Now, it is incumbent upon us to know whether there is a way to create within ourselves, within our minds and hearts, a receptive vessel capable of containing and holding the abundance of the light of wisdom within it...

chesed (kindness), etc.), and in order for the light to enter the limited vessel of the particular *sefira*, it needs to contract or restrict itself.

Thus, the term "light" signifies a state of expansion, while the term "vessel" signifies a state of contraction.

Despite the greatness of the light compared to the vessel, if there is no vessel, there is no light. In other words, in order to merit the attainment of Divine light, one must prepare a vessel that is suitable to receive that light. But if a person does not have sufficient vessels to receive the light, they will not be able to attain it in any way or form. The most fundamental concept in the

inner teachings of the Torah is that in order to attain light, one needs to prepare a vessel in the aspect of a "keli machzik beracha" (vessel that holds blessing).

As an example, we all, Baruch Hashem, know how to pray, but only a few of us truly know how to direct the intentions of the prayer. Nevertheless, just by articulating the words of the prayer clearly and correctly, we create broad vessels, and Hashem fills those vessels with an abundance of light. And the more we increase our prayers, the more vessels we create, and consequently, Hashem also bestows upon us a greater amount of light...

Parashat Ki Tavo - Wisdom is a Gift from Heaven

Wisdom is a Gift from Heaven

The Gemara says: The angel in charge of conception is called "Night." We learn this from the verse, "The night said: A male is conceived" (Iyov 3:3). That is, the angel named "Night" proclaims that conception will occur.

When the time comes, the angel takes the drop of seed and presents it before Hashem, and says, "Master of the Universe, what will be the destiny of this drop? Will the man who will be formed from it be strong or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor?"

The Gemara notes, the angel does not ask Hashem if he will be wicked or righteous. The reason for this, according to Rabbi Chanina, is as Rabbi Chanina said: Everything is in the hands of Heaven, all the character traits a person possesses and the events of their life are determined by Heaven and are not dependent on them, except for the fear of Heaven

which is subject to the individual's choices, as it says, "And now, Israel, what does Hashem Elokecha ask of you, but to fear Hashem Elokecha" (Devarim 10:12). Only this does Hashem request from the individual, for it is in their hands, but all other matters are in the hands of Hashem. Therefore, the angel does not inquire from Hashem about the fear of Heaven.

This Gemara explains that even before birth, it is predetermined whether a person will have strong "vessels of wisdom" (and therefore they will be wise) or weak "vessels of wisdom" (and inevitably...).

Regarding this matter (whether a person will be wise or not), there is no free will!

Now, let us contemplate what a person who is not predetermined to be wise can do in order to merit the light of Torah.

And not only that...

^{7.} Otzrot Chaim (Darkei Limud HaTorah, p. 28)

^{8.} Niddah 16b

Parashat Ki Tavo - Shattering Wisdom

Shattering Wisdom

Even if a person has been blessed with "vessels of wisdom" from Hashem, if they commit one of the three cardinal sins – idolatry, illicit relations, or bloodshed – their "vessels of wisdom" will be shattered into fragments.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zt"l explains⁹ that the infinite light that descends into the world is a pure and boundless light. It seeks vessels to dwell within, and when it finds a suitable vessel, it enters and encompasses it.

It is important to understand that the vessel provides definition and limitation to the light. When the vessel is whole, the light manifests as a blessing. However, when the vessel is damaged, the light manifests as a curse.

Out of all the 613 mitzvot, only three sins affect the vessel of the intellect. Therefore, when a person is compelled to commit

these sins, they are obligated to sacrifice their life.

Although one might think that sacrificing one's life should apply to any mitzvah in the Torah, for how can one transgress any mitzvah? Nevertheless, Hashem, in His great mercy, has cautioned us against this. He decreed that there is no mitzvah that supersedes the preservation of life, except for the three sins – idolatry, illicit relations, and bloodshed. For it says, "And live by them" (Vayikra 18:5) – and not die because of them. 10

For the life of a Jew is extremely precious to Hashem. Throughout their life, they receive the supernal light and utilize it for good. Their very existence depends on this, as they are created to fulfill Hashem's will according to the Torah, and through this, they draw forth the light of blessing according to the essence of their

^{9.} Likutei Moharan I (Torah 36); also see Likutei Halachot (Yoreh Deah – Hilchot Yayin Nesech 4:13).

Parashat Ki Tavo - Shattering Wisdom

soul, bringing about the *tikkun* of all the worlds that depend on them.

Therefore, in regard to all other sins in the Torah, one should transgress rather than be killed. Even though the picture becomes marred through these sins, and one must work to manifest the light for good, one should not forfeit their life because of this. The life of a Jew is more precious, and by continuing to live, they will subsequently draw forth the light for good through the

fulfillment of the other mitzvah throughout their life.

However, in the case of idolatry, illicit relations, and bloodshed, one should choose to be killed over transgressing, for these sins shatter the vessels of the mind, and one will no longer be able to manifest the light for good. ¹¹ Therefore, regarding these three sins, one should choose death over transgression.

11. HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes (Betzur Yarum – Vol. 9, ch. 40, p. 271):

Know, that a person receives spiritual abundance from heaven according to the vessels they prepare. Hashem has a good eye and desires to bestow every type of goodness upon a person in this world. However, if the person isn't deserving and isn't in a state of being a vessel that can hold blessings, then Hashem doesn't bestow His blessings upon them.

This can be likened to someone who opens a small grocery store and orders large trucks loaded with merchandise. Where will they store all that merchandise if their small store cannot accommodate it? On the other hand, someone who opens a large supermarket can easily store all the merchandise without any problem because they have the proper vessels to contain it.

The same principle applies to spirituality. The more a person prepares greater and broader vessels, the more Hashem will bestow upon them greater and more abundant blessings.

One of the examples supporting this concept is found in the story mentioned in the Book of Melachim (Melachim II, ch. 4). Ovadia HaNavi took it upon himself to support Talmidei Chachamim in the year of famine and, for that purpose, borrowed money. After the period of famine ended, he passed away.

Ovadia's wife came to Elisha HaNavi and cried out in distress that her husband had passed away, leaving her with a large debt she couldn't repay. The creditor came and demanded to take her two children as slaves in exchange for the debt. Elisha

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Parashat Ki Tavo - Shattering Wisdom

wanted to bless her with a livelihood, but he needed something, even minute, upon which the blessing of Hashem would rest. So he asked her if she had anything in her house. She replied that she only had a small jar in which there were only a few drops of oil. When Elisha heard this, he was very happy because now there was something for the blessing to manifest within.

Immediately, he instructed the woman to borrow as many empty vessels from her neighbors as she could and to close the door of her house behind her, for blessing only rests on something hidden from the eye (Taanit 8b), and to pour the oil into the vessels.

The woman followed Elisha's instructions and poured the oil from her small jar into the numerous vessels she borrowed. As long as she brought more and more vessels, the oil didn't cease flowing until she ran out of vessels. When she asked for another vessel and was told that there were no more, the oil stopped flowing.

Then the woman sold the abundant oil that was produced through Elisha's blessing and paid off her debt. With what remained, she and her children lived comfortably all their lives.

This story comes to teach us that anyone who desires the blessings of Hashem should prepare as many vessels as possible, as the more vessels one has, the more abundance they will receive.

If you want a good livelihood, prepare good vessels, which means doing business honestly and earning only clean money. If you want peace in your home, prepare good vessels by guarding your speech and ensuring it is clean and pure. If you want to merit righteous children, prepare good vessels by maintaining pure and clean thoughts. The same principle applies in every other aspect of life. You must prepare suitable vessels, and only then will you merit that abundance.

Many times, a person attends a Torah class but understands very little of what the rabbi is saying. As a result, they become greatly distressed and may even consider discontinuing their attendance since they don't comprehend anything. However, this is a mistake. The truth is that a person should not be distressed, because by merely sitting in the class and having their ears hear and absorb the words of Torah. this creates great vessels within their soul. Over time, a day will come when Hashem will have compassion on them and decide to fill their numerous vessels with wisdom. Suddenly, they will receive tremendous assistance from heaven and become like an ever-flowing river of wisdom.

Therefore, Rava said in the Gemara (Avodah Zara 19a), "A person should always study, even if they subsequently forget and even if they do not understand what they are saying." This means that a person should learn Torah even though they may immediately forget everything they learn and even if they do not understand what they're learning. The reason is that the mere act of pronouncing the letters and holy words of the Torah creates numerous vessels within a person's soul.

Parashat Ki Tayo - Smallness Leads To Greatness

In conclusion, anyone who commits these three sins will shatter the vessels of their mind into fragments.

Now, let us return to our subject at hand: What can a person who was predetermined to be wise

but, due to severe blemishes, shattered the vessels of their mind and lost their understanding, do to merit the light of Torah?

Before we provide an answer, let us return to Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah...

Smallness Leads To Greatness

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zt"l writes (paraphrased): 12 Know, that Hashem created His world according to His will, as we say in *kaddish*, "May His great name be magnified and sanctified. In the world that He created according to His will..."

And so, Hashem created the "World of Attainment" in such a way that it is constructed with descents (smallness) and ascents (greatness). Before attaining greatness, one must always pass through the stage of smallness.

"Every person must go from smallness to greatness."

The essence of the descent is the dreadful feeling of not being wanted or needed. A person may pray and study Torah and work on correcting their character traits, yet they don't feel any pleasure from it. They don't experience any light or vitality...

However, one must not break due to this! A person must know that this is the path, and once it is completed, suddenly the light will shine, and they will merit a

And when the day comes that Hashem decides to have compassion on them, He will their numerous vessels with wisdom. Suddenly, they will succeed in understanding and remembering everything they have

learned. Ultimately, they will become proficient in the Talmud, Halacha, and other holy books...

12. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 74); also see Drashot Moharosh (Vol. 3, p. 108)

Parashat Ki Tavo - Smallness Leads To Greatness

wondrous revelation, greatness from the side of holiness...¹³

Then, before entering the next level, one will again have to contend with the "smallness" present there...

The concepts of smallness and greatness correspond to Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah.

During Hoshana Rabbah, we constantly cry out to Hashem,

13. Rebbe Yitzchak Isaac of Komarna zt"l (Netiv Mitzvotecha – Netiv Emuna 1:6) writes:

Know, my brother, that even those who strive for spiritual ascent cannot remain at the same level because the *chayot ratzo vashov*, and the *mochin*, light, vitality, and *dvekut* depart. Each and every Jew experiences ascent and descent... as the *yetzer hara* challenges them and fills their hearts with sorrow and darkness, causing their hearts to become dull like stone. They are unable to begin any holy matter, and they taste in this a semblance of death.

The advice is not to despair but to uphold the principle of "awaiting salvation," for just as there will be a general redemption in the days of the Mashiach, "Let there be light, and there was light" (Bereshit 1:3), and before darkness and afflictions his arrival. intensify, so it is for every individual. Before the revelation of personal redemption, "Come near to me and redeem me" (Tehillim 69:19), and likewise, before Shabbat and Yom Tov, darkness, weakness, and idleness intensify to the point where one deems oneself repulsive, despicable, and worthless, believing that they have no portion in this world or the World to Come. chas v'shalom. **Through** the merit of unwavering *emuna* and not letting oneself despair, believing and knowing that even in this concealment and darkness, the glory of Hashem is present, albeit in great concealment, and fulfill the verse, "I will wait for Hashem who hides His face from the house of Yaakov, and I will hope in Him" (Yeshayahu 8:17).

One should pay attention and understand that on all levels, one is never separated, *chas* v'shalom, from Hashem. Rather, Hashem is concealed. And then one performs a *yichud* and elevates *mayin nukvin* from the depths of the great abyss to the highest heights. "Suddenly, Hashem will come," (Malachi 3:1) – in an instant, redemption, light, and vitality will come, to the point where one can become nullified from existence [from such dvekut]. All this is achieved through emuna, by believing and anticipating salvation, knowing that even in darkness, Hashem is with you. Through the merit of emuna, one will be redeemed and emerge from darkness into light. This is the positive mitzvah, "I am Hashem Elokecha who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Shemot 20:2) – specifically, from the source of impurity. Even there, Hashem Elokecha is with you. In a moment, the light of redemption will come to you!

Parashat Ki Tavo - Smallness Leads To Greatness

saying "Hosha na! Save us, have mercy, etc.," as we circle the *bimah* with the *lulav* and *etrog*, and afterward, we strike the ground with the *arava*... All of this doesn't require great effort from anyone. Each individual can call out to Hashem without exertion, and this is likened to the *arava*

(which lacks taste and fragrance), for the *arava* resembles lips...

This pertains to the aspect of smallness, as we serve Hashem with simplicity and innocence...

However, when the path is completed and the sun sets, suddenly Simchat Torah is

In this context the following story is told (Rabbeinu HaOhr Letzion – Vol. 1, p. 424): There was a bachur who had just recently entered the realm of mitzvot. His parents had "succeeded" in enrolling him in an excellent yeshiva that had a high level of learning. However, his talents didn't measure up, and he couldn't keep up with the pace. He came before Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, disheartened and despairing. No, he didn't advise him to transfer to another yeshiva of lower standards. On the contrary, he encouraged him, saying, "Persist stubbornly and remember the words of Rashi (Shemot 19:5): From now everything will be sweet, as all beginnings are difficult! There is a barrier that needs to be broken, and then the road is smooth!"

The bachur wasn't convinced.

Rabbi Ben Tzion asked, "Tell me, how much is one plus one?"

"Two," the *bachur* replied, perplexed. After all, he wasn't a complete fool.

"And how much is two plus two?"

"Four," he responded, surprised by this childish examination.

"You didn't even think, you just answered hastily," Rabbi Ben Tzion said.

"Well, know that you will rule over the entire Torah in the same way. Whenever someone asks you a question, you will give an immediate answer. That is my promise!"

He relied on that, returned to his studies, concentrated diligently, and failed the examination. He was broken and shattered.

He felt this wasn't meant for him.

With great affection, Rabbi Ben Tzion held his hand and said, "You see, this is the problem. When they say that all beginnings are difficult, some people think it refers to time – a day, a week, a month. They don't understand that it refers to a stage. For one person, it takes a short time, and for another, a long time. But this is a barrier that can be broken, and one can continue on the path of Hashem. A day will come when everything will shine. How much joy you will experience! Know that your life will

be a life of constant happiness!"

Parashat Ki Tavo - Two Paths

revealed, and then we merit dancing and rejoicing with the Torah. At that point, one has already attained in their intellect the profound joy of studying Torah and the realization that, Baruch Hashem, they were born a Jew. Even though they may not behave as they should and certainly have done wrong and transgressed, nevertheless, they merit to be part of Am Israel...

This understanding pertains to greatness, as we serve Hashem with inner understanding, and

this is the secret of joy!14

Now it is understood where the power comes from to transition from Hoshana Rabbah to Simchat Torah, as during Hoshana Rabbah, we cried out to Hashem with simplicity and from a state of smallness, and through this, we created broad vessels capable of receiving joy...

Although these two days occur only once a year, their concept accompanies the life of a Jew throughout the entire year...

Two Paths

Rebbe Nachman continues: 15 These two aspects, Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah, are two aspects of speech.

Hoshana Rabbah represents speech without understanding.

Simchat Torah represents speech with understanding.

The Zohar explains these two aspects as follows: ¹⁶ **The** first aspect, speech without understanding, is as follows:

"When a person has a desire to engage in Torah study and cannot find anyone to teach them, yet they learn out of their love for Torah,

14. According to what we've explained, it is understood why specifically David HaMelech corresponds to Hoshana Rabbah. For David HaMelech merited composing the Book of Tehillim, which encompasses all matters of raising a person from smallness to greatness...

In the book *Divrei Itzchak* (p. 228), it is mentioned that Rabbi Itzchak Kaduri zt"l was asked, "What can one do to open their heart [to spirituality and Torah]?" And he responded, "Recite Tehillim."

15 Likutoi Moharan I (Torah 74)

15. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 74)

16. Zohar HaKadosh (Parashat Kedoshim 85b)

Parashat Ki Tavo - In-Depth Study of Torah

stumbling and stammering in their lack of knowledge—every word they utter ascends, and Hashem rejoices in that speech and accepts it. He plants it around that stream, and from those words, great trees grow, called "arvei nachal." This is the meaning of what is written, "In her love, you shall be intoxicated always" (Mishlei 5:19).

The second aspect is speech with understanding:

"Fortunate are those who know the ways of Torah and strive to follow them uprightly.

They plant trees of life above that are all curative."

The intention of the Zohar in the words "stumbling and stammering in their lack of knowledge" is that one utters the words of Torah from their mouth without understanding... This is called "girsa."

And there is great benefit for the soul in *girsa*...

Before we delve into the benefit derived from *girsa*, let us briefly discuss the aspect of speech with understanding...

In-Depth Study of Torah

Everyone agrees without dispute that the essence of Torah study lies in studying with depth and concentration, engaging the mind with all its faculties.

There is no disagreement that the primary elevation of a person comes through diligent study, particularly through in-depth analysis. It is through this analysis that one merits to experience the pleasantness and sweetness of Torah, which

brings about an inner sense of joy.

Therefore, specifically the day following Hoshana Rabbah, the day symbolizing speech with understanding, the study of Torah with depth, is called "Simchat Torah" (the Joy of Torah). For the deeper one understands Torah, the purer their joy becomes.

There is no disagreement that as one deepens their knowledge in the holy Torah for

Parashat Ki Tavo - Each Word is a Vessel

its own sake, they merit to be sanctified through the sanctity of the Torah, to the extent that their body becomes holy to Hashem.

All of this applies to a Jew whose vessels of wisdom are strong. However, for a Jew who doesn't possess such strength, there is another path to merit this...

Each Word is a Vessel

We find ourselves in a transitional period, in the passage between the time of exile and the time of redemption. Unfortunately, during this time, many of the concepts that were clear to every Jew throughout the generations have become obscured.

One of the things that has almost completely disappeared is the concept of the "sanctity of the letters." We'll explain:

In Lashon HaKodesh, there are 27 letters (22 consonants and 5 final letters). A combination of several letters (at least 2) is called a "מִילָה" (milah – word) in the language of the Tanach. But in the language of Chazal, a "word" is also called a "תֵיבָה" (box).

The reason *Chazal* changed the terminology from the language of the Tanach is to

teach us a great secret:

Each and every "תֵיכָה" (box, i.e., word) from the words of the Torah and tefillah is a vessel within which Hashem's light is revealed (hence it is called a "box" meaning a vessel).

This understanding was clear in previous generations. Thus, when they engaged in prayer or studied the holy Torah, they would pronounce the words with fear, love, and true *dvekut*.

This tremendous *temimut* (simplicity) caused them to be constantly close to Hashem.

However, today, as the world regresses with giant strides, we need to clarify the following:

Know, that in order for a person to merit understanding the depth of the Gemara, they must first learn numerous chapters of

Parashat Ki Tavo - Don't Be Fooled!

Mishna and pages of Gemara with *girsa*. This study will create within their soul very broad vessels. Consequently, when they approach in-depth study later on, they will have sufficient vessels to receive the light of the Torah's depth.

Therefore, *Chazal* instructed us,¹⁷ "A person should first learn and then understand." That is, at the beginning of a person's path, they should prioritize learning as many chapters of Mishna and pages of Gemara as possible, even if they don't fully comprehend what they are learning or if they forget what they have learned. This is because this study will create broad vessels within their soul, allowing them to

subsequently continue their path and achieve great success in their learning and understanding.

This study method of *girsa* will repair the vessels of wisdom that have been damaged.

Now, let's return to the two questions we asked:

If the most effective solution is remembering the day of death, why leave it for the end? Why don't we immediately begin the war by remembering the day of death (and why do we need to study Torah and recite Keriyat Shema beforehand)? Experience has shown that remembering the day of death is not effective at all...

Don't Be Fooled!

Rabbi Natan of Breslov zt"l writes: 18

The intention of the Gemara is not to use this advice to overcome the *yetzer hara* which tempts a person, but rather to warn the individual of the schemes of the

yetzer hara. It has already been clarified that even someone who damaged the vessels of their mind has the ability to rectify everything through the simple and straightforward utterance of words of Torah.

^{17.} Shabbat 63a

^{18.} Likutei Halachot (Orach Chaim – Hilchot Seudah 5:22)

Parashat Ki Tavo - The True Joy is in The Future

By learning a lot of Tanach, Mishna, Gemara, Halacha, and Chassidut, in *girsa*, one will ultimately reach the depths of Torah. However, the *yetzer hara*, who knows this, tries to prevent a person from reaching their *tikkun* and confuses them. They claim that "this is not called learning," that "it's *bitul Torah*," and so on...

Then, of course, the person doesn't learn with *girsa*, and the *yetzer hara* exults, saying, "I have won! They are incapable of studying diligently because of their sins. From now on, they are mine, without Torah altogether!"

The holy Gemara cries out, "Recall that life in this world is not eternal! A time will come when all

will rest in the earth... And upon passing, they will be called to give an account. How wretched is the soul that arrives in heaven without the sweet fragrance of Torah!"

Thus the person remembers the day of death, recognizing that their true and eternal life lies in the Next World, and that they'll be sustained there solely by the Torah they have learned and the mitzvot they have fulfilled during their lives in this world. This realization motivates them to diligently study Torah and recite Keriyat Shema, even without understanding, for that's what they will bring with them after their passing...

Now let's move on to our parasha...

The True Joy is in The Future

Our parasha begins with the verse, "When you enter the Land that Hashem Elokecha is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and settle in it" (Devarim 26:1). The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains these verses

in relation to the soul's entry into the higher world after its passing.

Regarding the words, "You shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground" (Devarim 26:2), he explains as follows: The Zohar

Parashat Ki Tavo - Shabbat Shalom!

says¹⁹ that all the mitzvot and good deeds that a person performs during their lifetime gradually accumulate until the day of their passing. With them they greet the presence of the King, as it says, "Your righteousness shall go before you" (Yeshayahu 58:8). This is

what is meant by "You shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground," implying that one should only present to Hashem the finest and most distinguished deeds they have performed in this world.

This should suffice for the understanding...

Shabbat Shalom!







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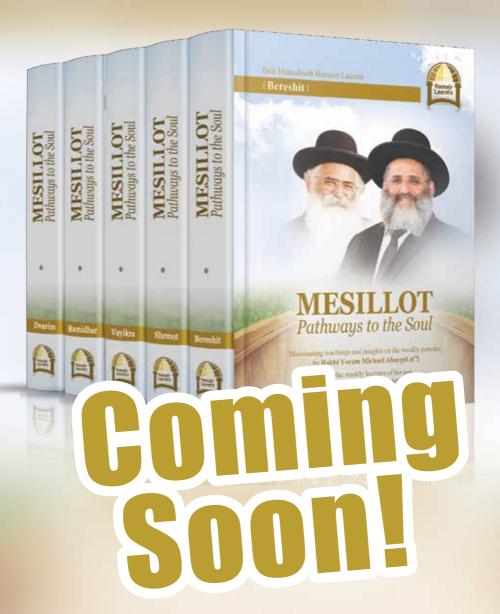


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Miami	7:24 pm	8:15 pm	8:53 pm
Los Angeles	7:01 pm	7:56 pm	8:30 pm
Montreal	7:15 pm	8:17 pm	8:43 pm
Toronto	7:36 pm	8:36 pm	9:04 pm
London	7:31 pm	8:38 pm	8:58 pm
Jerusalem	6:48 pm	7:37 pm	8:24 pm
Tel Aviv	6:45 pm	7:34 pm	8:21 pm
Haifa	6:45 pm	7:34 pm	8:21 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:44 pm	7:33 pm	8:20 pm

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