

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 162

Naso | Preparing the Soul to Attain Wisdom

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

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Tale of a Feeble-Minded Jew	1
From Freedom to Slavery	7
Go On Now, Get to Work	9
Worthy of Receiving the Torah	9
Four Questions	11
As If He Was Released from Egypt	12
Cjount Seven Weeks For Yourselves	14
One Encompassing Answer	16
Customs of the Eve of Shavuot	19
The Importance of 'Tikkun Leil Shavuot' . . .	21
Shavuot Night Torah Study	22
Summary and Practical Conclusions	25



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Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l



500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666



en@h-l.org.il



www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en



HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel



(954) 800-6526



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Parshat Naso - Shavuot

A Tale of a Feeble-Minded Jew

Rabbi Israel Yaakov Klapholtz related the following tale:¹

A wealthy Jewish man lived in one of the large cities in Poland.

This man was G-d-fearing, honest, generous, and a prosperous merchant with an open heart and a giving hand.

Every year, he would set aside his business affairs and travel to the Seer of Lublin for several days. These days were days of happiness and satisfaction for him, days of spiritual bliss and devotion to Torah and prayer.

This Jew generously dispersed much money in Lublin for holy purposes, for the needy, and for the upkeep of the Rabbi's house. Years of wealth and happiness had passed upon the Jew and his family until one day, his fortune suddenly

started to turn, and success no longer shined upon him.

He began to lose his fortune and was forced to sell his property, and his situation deteriorated daily. He did not travel to the Chozeh of Lublin, as he was accustomed to, since he had no money and was ashamed to stand before the Rabbi and the followers who had known him as wealthy and generous.

The unfortunate Jew tried hard to fight his bitter fate, but all to no avail. He had lost all his property, and to provide for his family, he had to work as a porter in the market to avoid living off charity.

One day, while standing in the market waiting for work, the city's priest, who recognized him from earlier days when he was

wealthy, passed by. The priest found it hard to recognize the destitute porter as the respected, wealthy man he had once been in the past, but when the Jew shared the story of his downfall with the priest, the latter sympathized with his sorrow to the point of tears and invited him to visit his home.

The priest's interest in his fate and sincere sympathy touched the Jew and were a pleasant surprise to him, but he was ashamed to accept the priest's invitation and did not visit him.

Then, one day, a messenger from the priest's house arrived with an official invitation, and again, the Jew did not go, but the priest persisted and kept calling and asking him to come until he achieved his goal, and finally, one day the Jew went to his house.

They spoke for a long time, and the priest spoke kindly, comforting and encouraging the Jew. Since then, the Jew visited the priest's house frequently and enjoyed conversing with him and hearing his encouragement.

The unfortunate Jew was a worthy target for the priest, who had decided to convert him to Christianity.

With gentleness and patience, the priest spoke to the Jew's heart and enticed him to convert, promising him many great things, especially to rescue him from poverty and misery.

At first, the Jew refused to listen to the terrifying proposal, but as days passed, the priest's words entered his heart. As his economic situation worsened, it became difficult for him to resist the temptation, and he decided to consult with his wife.

When he told her about the advice of his friend the priest, the woman immediately agreed. Not out of a lack of faith in G-d, Heaven forbid, she claimed, but out of a sheer lack of choice.

"We'll only convert outwardly," she confidently told her husband, "but inside our hearts, we'll remain Jews, and G-d who examines the heart and innards, will surely forgive us."

Despite his wife's positive opinion, the Jew's heart was not at ease, and in despair, he went to the synagogue to pour out his heart before G-d and to ask for forgiveness for the terrible act he was about to commit.

In the empty synagogue, the broken-spirited Jew climbed the steps to the Holy Ark, caressed the curtain in his hands and kissed it with a trembling heart.

He opened the Ark and said in tears, "Master of the Universe, it is known before You that all I am about to do is only out of great distress. The waters have reached my soul, and I don't even have bread to eat or water to drink; my wife and children are suffering, and I cannot bear to see their agony.

Therefore, G-d, do not judge me guiltily for following the priest's advice. I will only do it outwardly, as my wife said, but in my heart, I believe only in You, the G-d of my ancestors, the Creator of heaven and earth, and I will believe in You forever."

From the synagogue, the Jew went to the priest's house yet did not dare enter it. Even outwardly, he could not do it, he made up his mind.

Suddenly, an idea sparked in his mind: he would go to his Rabbi of Lublin to consult him. He had not been there for a long time, he would tell him everything and ask for his advice.

Despite his wife's and the priest's objections, the Jew walked to the Rabbi on foot. After two days of travel, he entered the Rabbi's study hall.

No one recognized the tattered Jew to be the once generous donor who had visited the study hall all those years before, and no one approached him. The Jew pushed through the crowd, and when he approached the Rabbi, the latter immediately recognized him and asked why it had been so long since he last saw him. With a voice choked from crying, the Jew told the Rabbi all of his troubles, and finally, about the priest's proposal and his

decision to convert merely outwardly to escape his miseries.

The Rabbi looked at him in wonder and asked: "Do your ears hear what your mouth is speaking? Is this how a Jew, whose ancestors stood at Mount Sinai, speaks? Many Jews lack sustenance, but it never occurs to any of them, G-d forbid, to abandon their faith."

"**I'm** not like others," the Jew replied to the Rabbi, "I have complaints against the Holy One, blessed be He. My family and I suffer from disgraceful hunger, and I can no longer bear it."

"**If** so," the Rabbi said, "being that you have complaints against G-d you must take Him to a rabbinic court. For this is the way of the world: when a person has a complaint against another, he must invite him to court, and this way, if you win the case, He will surely pay you."

"**I** never knew or heard that one could sue G-d," the Jew said, "but if the Rabbi says so, I agree to it all."

Immediately, the Rabbi called three distinguished disciples, all great in Torah and judicial

authority, and appointed them as a court of experts.

The rabbinic court session at once began.

The plaintiff spoke first. The Jew stood up and detailed his complaints, describing his troubles and suffering over many years without ever harboring thoughts of apostasy. He spoke about the commandments he observed, especially emphasizing the charity and kindness he had performed when he was wealthy.

Representing the opposing side, the seer of Lublin spoke.

The Rabbi looked at the Jew with his enlightening eyes and reminded him of his sins and transgressions.

The Jew was not deterred in the least and cried out, "I know many who sinned like me and much more so but were not punished, and on the contrary, their wealth and blessings increased. What about my fate?"

"**Let** our Rabbi say, am I worse than the worst of the wicked? I gave endless charity.

Let all those who benefited from my generosity testify on my behalf. Did I lose everything because of my open hand? An outrageous injustice has been done to me, and my property has been unjustly taken to the depths without judgment."

The Rabbi argued against him, proving again and again how many sins he had committed from the day he became aware of himself until today.

The Jew's head spun as he trembled with fear and emotion, and he left the court and ran out of the study hall in shock and grief.

The three disciples, appointed as judges, deliberated the claims of both sides and discussed every detail. After much deliberation, they issued a verdict with the holy Rabbi's consent.

According to their opinion, legally, the Jew's money and property that were lost did not need to be returned since he had committed sins whose punishment was very great, even though he practiced charity.

However, since G-d is merciful, forgives iniquities, and deals kindly with every person, G-d would return all of his wealth on condition that the Jew improves his ways and follows the path of Torah and commandments. They wrote and signed the verdict, handed it to the Jew, and set a period of thirty days to fulfill the verdict.

With the verdict in hand, the Jew returned home, showed it to his wife, and told her everything that had happened in Lublin. She still could not understand how they would be saved without doing anything and urged him to approach the priest. But the Jew refused and decided to wait thirty days to see what may come.

He rose early every morning and stood near the large hotels, ready to carry the suitcases and trunks of ministers and wealthy people staying there. His livelihood, as before, was very difficult, and hunger still afflicted his house. Yet, the Jew did not even consider going to the priest and instead behaved as

a proper Jew, and he almost forgot the court's verdict.

It had been a month since he had visited the seer from Lublin. The Jew stood as usual at the hotel's entrance when suddenly a luxurious carriage approached. The Jew hurried to the wealthy minister, who got out of it, took his suitcases and the heavy trunk from the carriage, and brought them into the hotel lobby.

Then he waited for the minister to come and pay him for his service.

But the minister did not enter. The Jew waited for him until the evening, but the carriage along with its owner disappeared, and they were nowhere to be found, and the hotel owner demanded the Jew remove the belongings from his property.

The Jew carried the suitcases and the trunk to his home, hoping the minister would come the next day to retrieve them.

His home was located at the edge of the city, and the journey

home from the hotel was long and tiring.

Weakened from carrying the heavy load and exhausted from the day's work, he collapsed in front of his home. The heavy trunk fell from his shoulder, broke open, and from it spilled gold and silver coins of great value. The sight of the treasure stirred the Jew, yet he faithfully gathered the coins and hid them in his house, intending to return them to the minister soon.

He went to the inn every day for a long time, hoping to meet the minister, who would surely come searching for his money.

But no one came. No one had recognized the minister, and no one had ever seen him before.

One day, while looking at the gleaming coins, the Jew decided to count them. To his great surprise, he found that their value equaled the vast amount of money he once had and lost.

The Jew now understood that G-d had returned his wealth as decreed by the Rabbinical

court in Lublin. He, too, fulfilled his part of the court's verdict in full, repenting completely, and becoming a G-d-fearing man, together with his sons after him.

The role of the righteous leaders throughout the generations is to assist the Jewish people, in general, and every Jew, in particular, in emerging from the depths of impurity and ascending to the peaks of holiness.

Although this is the mission common to all of the righteous, the most prominent among them was Moses.

The Jewish people living in his generation were deeply immersed in the gates of impurity, on the brink of the fiftieth gate, and in addition, their essence was crushed from submission and slavery to Egypt.

From Freedom to Slavery

In the year 2238 to creation of the world, Jacob and his sons left the Land of Israel and descended to Egypt, where

However, Moses succeeded in redeeming them from Egypt and following fifty days of self-work elevated them - at Mount Sinai - to the level of prophecy.

In the words of the divine Kabbalist Rabbi Abraham Abulafia:²

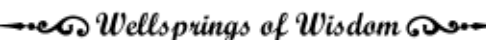
"Just as we glean from the Torah, that Moses impacted the Jewish people in just three months that they all ascended to the level of prophecy or close to it, so too, each according to his merit, upon hearing the Ten Commandments".

Since then, this power to ascend from the depths of the abyss to the pinnacle of holiness has remained in the world, as is present during these days.

And about these days, our discussion ensues.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave them a region called 'Goshen'.

Jacob and his sons settled in Goshen, and there they grew and



2. 'Chayei Haolam Habah' (page 58).

multiplied, until they filled the land of Egypt.

Naturally, their demographic strength became significant in Egyptian society.

Moreover, they stood out due to their captivating personality. The Israelites had an impressive and radiant appearance. Their foreheads shone with divine light, their bright eyes exuded wisdom and kindness, and their faces, glowing like angels, overflowed with grace, nobility, and humility.

In their marvelous and colorful character, wisdom and humanity, understanding and vision, tranquility and leadership merged, and they became shining stars in the Egyptian sky.

Although flames of fire blazed in their hearts, their interaction with others was calm and peaceful like waters that flow gently, and a spirit of nobility, kindness and pleasantness wafted from their hearts and captivated all those around them.

And despite all we have written, we have only begun to

describe their external appearance, but their inner world is beyond our ability to describe at all. Their inner world brimmed with purity and clarity, and burning embers inherited from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the holy tribes still glowed in their hearts.

Thus, 102 years passed in Egypt, after which Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, died, and his son inherited his throne.

Then, the persecution began. From that day on, the Egyptians began to embitter the lives of the Israelites, oppressing them to no end or purpose.

The Egyptians' persecution exceeded human imagination, and they were forcibly introduced into a new world, a world of sadness and bitterness, shortness of breath, and despair.

The Egyptians took from them every last shred of minimal freedom and vestige of independence, and the Israelites became entirely enslaved to Pharaoh.

As a result of this enslavement, the collective soul

Parshat Naso - Shavuot - Go On Now, Get to Work

of the Jewish people began to erode. Slowly, it started losing its light and inner vitality, and feelings of bitterness,

loss, and self-hatred took place.

In this manner, the years continued to pass.

Go On Now, Get to Work

Their loss of identity deepened, and the Israelites continued to deteriorate rapidly, the terrible abyss, the fiftieth gate of impurity, was already visible nearby, seeking to devour its prey.

A shudder passed through all of existence; for if the Jewish people were caught in the snares of the fiftieth gate, they would be entirely lost, there would be no hope left for them...

Then, G-d the Merciful, who pities His children, revealed Himself to Moses and commanded him: "Go on now, get to work!"

Worthy of Receiving the Torah

From the time the Jewish people were informed that they were to receive the Torah, yearning and longing for it began to burn in their hearts, and they

began to count the days that had passed.

Under the spiritual guidance of Moses, the Jewish people, in just 49 days, reached a state

Moses arrived in Egypt, and the process of redemption began.

It took a whole year for the wicked Pharaoh to submit before G-d, and then the Jewish people were informed: Thank G-d, the exile is over, and we are now - on the 15th of Nissan in the year 2448 to creation of the world - leaving Egypt, and in 50 days we will receive the holy Torah.

Our sages reveal that the number of 50 days was intentional, for the Jewish people could not receive the Torah before that time.

where their spiritual faculties were ready to receive the Torah.³

While that generation has passed, the light of those days remains alive and present, and to merit it, we must prepare ourselves properly during these days of the counting of the Omer.

Therefore, we were commanded: "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat, from the day that you bring the sheaf of the wave offering; seven complete weeks" (Leviticus 23:15).

Every Jew needs to count seven weeks starting from the 16th of Nissan (the day of the

offering of the Omer sacrifice), until the festival of Shavuot (which is the fiftieth day to the Omer offering), and through this counting, we are able to abandon impurity and enter into purity.

Therefore, in the commandment concerning the counting of the Omer, it is said: 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat' - 'for yourselves' meaning for your own benefit and rectification, for it is through this counting that we are purified with a great and supreme purity.

We shall, with G-d's help, discuss this further.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

3. Once, the Chasid Rabbi Binyamin Kletzker sat with several young Torah scholars on the night of Shavuot, and they discussed various matters related to the Giving of the Torah.

One of the scholars asked: Is not the Giving of the Torah a revelation from above, why then, is preparation of man necessary?

The question was difficult for them to answer, and they decided to ask

their mentor, the 'Mitteler Rebbe' of Lubavitch.

He replied: We need to gather around the table and discuss this at length.

Afterward, he asked this of his father, the Alter Rebbe, who responded:

'They are correct with their question, but preparation is nonetheless necessary so that we may be 'vessels' to receive the revelations of the Giving of the Torah'.

(Sefer HaSichot 5704, page 117).

Four Questions

In the Torah portion of Emor (in the book of Leviticus) there is an entire chapter (chapter 23) that deals with the laws of the Shabbat and the festivals.

In this chapter, we are also commanded regarding the mitzvah of Counting the Omer and the holiday of Shavuot: "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat, from the day that you bring the sheaf of the wave offering; seven complete weeks they shall be. Until the day after the seventh week, you shall count fifty days" (Leviticus 23:15-16).

On Passover (16th of Nisan), they would offer the Omer sacrifice that came from the barley (from the new barley harvest), and on Shavuot, they would bring two loaves of bread from the wheat (from the new wheat harvest).

One must count from the barley harvest until the wheat

harvest, and these days are called the 'Counting of the Omer'.

When the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch of blessed memory studied these verses, he raised four difficulties:⁴

The first difficulty everyone asks is about the verse, 'You shall count fifty days.' But do we actually count 50 days? We count merely 49 days, as it is said: "Seven weeks shall you count for yourself" (Deuteronomy 16:9).

The second difficulty: As it is known, we have three festivals a year: Passover, Sukkot, and Shavuot. Each of them is named after a specific mitzvah practiced on it.

On Passover, we eat matzah. On Sukkot, we dwell in a sukkah. Shavuot is named after the seven weeks we count.

But we must understand, apparently, there is no connection

Parshat Naso - Shavuot - As If He Was Released from Egypt

between the counting of the weeks that preceded the holiday of Shavuot and the holiday of Shavuot itself since it is the fiftieth day that occurs after the seven weeks, as it is said: 'after the seventh week.' So why is it called 'Shavuot'—Weeks?

The third difficulty: Why is it that only regarding Shavuot (unlike the other holidays) is it said: "And you shall observe and fulfill these statutes" (ibid, verse 12)?

The fourth difficulty: As it is known, when we count the Counting of the Omer, we recite:

As If He Was Released from Egypt

On Thursday, 6th of Iyar in the year 5567 (1807), the righteous Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi of blessed memory stood in the synagogue in the city of Mogilev and recited the Chassidic discourse 'And you shall count for yourselves',⁵ and there in great length, the subject of the Counting of the Omer is explained.

today is one day of the Omer, today is two days of the Omer, today is one week of the Omer, today is two weeks of the Omer etc.

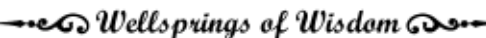
Seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to count in ordinal numbers: today is the first day of the Omer, today is the second day of the Omer, today is the first week of the Omer, today is the second week of the Omer, etc.

Let us precede before we bring the answer of the Tzemach Tzedek of blessed memory.

We bring a small excerpt from his words:

The Talmud (Pesachim 116b) says: 'In every generation, a person is obliged to see (and to show) himself as if he came out of Egypt'.

Behold, since we are commanded about this in the Torah, it is understood that it is indeed the truth, that he too was



5. Printed in Likkutei Torah (Parshat Emor - page 35a). This is explained at length in

'Chassidus Mevueres'—Festivals (Part 2, page 186).

Parshat Naso - Shavuot - As If He Was Released from Egypt

enslaved in Egypt and is now coming out of Egypt.

Yet according to the simple understanding, it is difficult to understand, what does it mean that a person needs to imagine 'himself a slave and released out to freedom and redeemed'⁶ - when in fact he was never a slave in Egypt.

The answer to this:

We have already explained that the main difficulty of Egyptian bondage was not the physical labor but the darkening of the Jewish people's inner world, their holy and illuminated world, full of spiritual pleasure. The cursed Egyptians darkened the Jewish people's inner world, and consequently, they entered a world of sadness and bitterness, distress and despair, and the peak of this was their loss of identity.

Although we were redeemed from Egypt - from the physical bondage so many years ago, we were not completely redeemed from the spiritual bondage, and every time a Jew sins, he darkens his soul, and generates within himself a feeling of 'self-hatred'.

Sin and transgression cause the soul to descend from its level, lower and lower. As the sin grows greater and more frequent, so does the soul contract until it enters a small, narrow, and dark spiritual dimension. This lowly place is called 'Mitzrayim' (Egypt), which means constraint and boundary.

When we reach the Seder night prepared spiritually, and conduct it according to the Jewish law, a great light shines upon our divine soul, and it escapes its confinement.

—*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*—

6. To quote the Rambam (Laws of Chametz and Matzah, 7:6): 'In every generation, a person is obligated to show as if he himself has now come out from the servitude of Egypt, as it is said: "And He brought us out from there" (Deuteronomy 6:23).

On this matter, G-d commanded in the Torah: "And you shall remember that you were a slave" (ibid. 5:15). Which is to say, consider as if you yourself were a slave and were released to freedom and were redeemed'.

In the words of the holy Tanya (Likutei Amarim - Chapter 47):

'And it (the daily redemption from spiritual Egypt) is the release of the divine soul from the confinement of the body, from its soiled grasp to be included in the unity of the Infinite Light of G-d'.⁷

Cjount Seven Weeks For Yourselfes

In order to clarify and purify our animal soul as well, G-d gifted us the days of Counting of the Omer.

However, on the Seder night, only the divine soul of man is redeemed. Being encllothed in a physical body, it feels itself bound within 'Mitzrayim' - 'limits and constraints' - and yearns to escape them in order to cleave to G-d.

However, additional work is required to redeem the animal soul within man.⁸

As Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel of blessed memory once explained:⁹

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

7. It is written in the Tanya (ibid) that every day we need to leave "Egypt", and this departure happens every day during prayers, especially during the recitation of Shema, through which a person achieves a spiritual exodus from Egypt.

In the words of the Tanya: 'Behold, in every generation and every day, a person must see himself as if he left Egypt today. This refers to the exodus of the divine soul from the imprisonment of the lowly body, to be included in the unity of the Infinite Light of G-d through engaging in Torah and mitzvot in general and particularly through accepting the yoke of Heaven in the recitation of Shema, through which he accepts and draws upon himself G-d's blessed unity'.

8. The holy Arizal wrote in Etz Chaim (Gate 50 - Chapter 2):

Every Jew has two souls - one from the side of holiness and the other from the side of the unholy and impure powers.

The soul of the side of holiness is called 'the divine soul.' Its function is to draw the person towards everything spiritual: prayer, mitzvot, kindness, Torah study, and good deeds.

The second soul, the animal soul, however, draws the person towards materialism.

9. Imrei Noam - Festivals (Counting of the Omer - Article 1).

On the first evening after the Seder night, we begin to count the Omer for forty-nine days until the holiday of Shavuot on the fiftieth day.

G-d required the Jewish people to wait expectantly fifty days before the giving of the Torah because, being in Egypt, they were sunk into forty-nine gates of impurity. In order to be worthy of receiving the Torah, they needed to exit those gates of impurity and enter the gates of holiness.

On each of the forty-nine days that the Jewish people counted, they merited to exit one gate of impurity and instead, enter one gate of holiness, until on the day of the giving of the Torah, they had entered all the gates of holiness.

Similarly, today, each and every one of us, by counting the Omer during these days, exits yet another gate of impurity, and enters an additional gate of holiness, so that by Shavuot, every one of us is worthy to receive the wonderful light of the giving of the Torah.

Thus, is the interpretation (according to Chassidut) of the verse: "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Shabbat" (Leviticus 23:15).

'Usfartem' - 'And you shall count'—means Illuminate and purify; 'lachim' - 'for yourselves'—means your character and attributes, till they shine like a precious and sparkling sapphire.

Our divine service during the days of counting of the Omer is to strive to purify our animal soul by persistent daily work throughout the forty-nine days of counting of the Omer, so that by the end of the counting, by Shavuot, we are purified from all impurity and imperfections, and worthy of the revelation of G-d's blessed light.

And herein we may understand an additional point:

In the times when the Temple stood, on the first day of the counting of the Omer, the 'Omer offering' that came from barley was offered in the Temple, and at the end of the counting of the Omer, on Shavuot, the 'two loaves' made from wheat were offered.

Parshat Naso - Shavuot - One Encompassing Answer

The inner reason behind this is: at the beginning of Passover, a person's animal soul still dominates within him, and corresponding to this, the Omer offering from the barley is brought, since barley is animal feed (Sotah 14a).

However, after the completion of the Counting of the Omer, when the person purified his soul step after step, removed it from the forty-nine gates of impurity, and entered it into the forty-nine gates of holiness, he no longer belongs to the category of 'animal' but rather to the category of 'human'. Therefore, an offering from the wheat, which is human food, is brought.

We must be aware that although the external aspects of the Omer days seem like regular and simple weekdays, in truth, they are very holy days, similar to the holiness of the intermediate days

of the festival (Ramban Leviticus 23:36). Therefore, even someone who does not usually immerse in a mikveh every day during the rest of the year should strive to immerse every day during the Omer days.

During the holy days of the Omer, immense quantities of divine assistance in serving G-d and refining the attributes descend from Heaven, equal to all the days of the year combined. Therefore, it is appropriate to reduce leisurely outings and other unessential worldly affairs and seize every moment for Torah study and spiritual refinement so that each and every one of us may become a worthy vessel to receive the wonderful and immense light of the Torah that is to be given on Shavuot.

Now, let us return to respond to the four difficulties raised by the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch.

One Encompassing Answer

During the days of Counting of the Omer, we refine the animal soul.

The essence of the animal soul is emotions,¹⁰

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

**10.** As mentioned, every Jew has two souls, a divine soul and an animal soul,

and both of these souls consist of intellect ('mochin') and emotions ('midot').

which are called attributes in Kabbalah.

**There** are seven general emotions in the soul, which are: Love (Chesed), Fear (Gevurah), Compassion (Tiferet), Perseverance (Netzach), Humility (Hod), Connection (Yesod), Nobility (Malchut).

**Each** of these seven emotions contains all the other emotions within it, meaning that within each emotion, there is the expression of the original emotion, as well as six forms of that particular emotion mixed with the others.

**For** example: there is Chesed within Chesed, followed by: Gevurah within Chesed, Tiferet within Chesed, Netzach within

Chesed, Hod within Chesed, Yesod within Chesed, and Malchut within Chesed.

**Thus**, there are 49 attributes or emotions (seven times seven), and during the 49 days of the Omer, we rectify one attribute each day.

**All** these attributes are included one within the other, and with each counting onward, we carry all that we have already rectified.

**“All** the days of counting of the Omer are united together, and therefore we count today is two days and not the second day, because if we were to say the second day, it would imply that the illumination and attribute of this day, the second, is separate and distinct from the attribute of

—*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*—

**However**, there is a fundamental difference between the intellect and emotions of the divine soul and those of the animal soul.

**The** essence of the divine soul is intellect, hence in its merit one is called 'Adam,' which denotes intellect. The emotions are then derived from the intellect; contemplation of G-d's greatness produces love or fear of G-d.

**Whereas** the essence of the animal soul is emotions, and its emotions are

instinctive - it is drawn to physical pleasures, and it does not rationalize the benefit of the desires, it is naturally drawn to them.

**The** intellect of the animal soul only assists in developing the emotions; hence, the intellect determines the overall level of the emotions, but the emotions are what is most felt and emphasized.

(Lessons in Tanya, Vol. 1, page 83).

yesterday, which is not the case when we say today is two days, meaning that the attribute of today is united with that of yesterday, and so today there are indeed two days as one, and so on to tomorrow, there are three days, up to 49 days to the Omer, when (on the 49<sup>th</sup> day) all 49 attributes shine as one”.

**Then**, after we have already - on the Seder night - redeemed our divine soul from its imprisonment and purified our animal soul during the days of counting the Omer, we arrive at Shavuot, when we merit to enter the sublime fiftieth gate of holiness.

**There**, in the fiftieth gate, the spiritual light is in the form of engraving, which are ‘letters’ from the realm of supreme delight.

**Therefore**, specifically regarding Shavuot it is said: "And you shall observe and fulfill these statutes" (Deuteronomy 16:12) - where the word ‘chukim’ - 'statutes' refers to these spiritual

‘letters of engraving’, which is similarly called ‘chakikah’.

**This** also explains why the holiday is called 'Shavuot' even though the seven weeks of counting have already passed. The essence of this day truly includes all the prior seven weeks since the fiftieth spiritual gate revealed on this holiday, includes within it all the 49 attributes that emanate from it.

**This** then is the intention of the verse: "And you shall make a holiday of weeks" (ibid, verse 10) for indeed, on this day the revelation of the fiftieth gate is drawn which includes within it the essence of the divine service of the seven weeks'.<sup>11</sup>

**As** aforementioned, on Shavuot, we are able to merit the fiftieth gate, and to be worthy of it, we must prepare ourselves.

**Our** holy sages have paved the way for us, let us bring some of the practices of this special day.

## Customs of the Eve of Shavuot

**Our** holy Sages said that the eve of Shavuot is like the eve of Rosh Hashanah itself. Therefore, just as before Rosh Hashanah, we seek to increase merits through giving charity, studying Torah, and performing mitzvot, so too before Shavuot should we strive to increase in charity, Torah, and fulfilling mitzvot and prepare ourselves to receive this day with holiness and purity.

**Here** are a few things to be mindful of:

**1.** It is proper to immerse in a mikveh and be worthy to receive the Torah.

**This** is in the same manner as the Jewish people immersed before receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, as written by the holy Kabbalist Rabbi Mordechai HaCohen (Sifte Cohen, Yitro, 'And G-d spoke):

**"I** have heard that the souls went to immerse in the river of fire, Dinur, before receiving the Torah in purity and holiness. For the Torah is fire, as it is said: "A law of fire"

(Deuteronomy 33:2), and therefore they immersed beforehand in fire. "My soul went out" (Song of Songs 5:6), which refers to the souls that expired during the giving of the Torah, has the numerical value of 'to the Dinur river'

**2.** Set aside charity to give to worthy poor people. In 'Ma'aseh HaTzedakah' (page 109b), it is recommended that 104 coins be set aside for charity on the eve of Shavuot, and it is a great rectification for the soul.

**3.** On the night of Shavuot, a person can merit great insights and illuminations, but he must prepare himself to be worthy of them.

**It** is tried and proven that when a person is tired, his spiritual capacity is diminished, and his intellect is unable to attain any insight.

**Even** if one's body is awake, the soul may be tired and unreceptive; thus, even if there are great insights and lights, they pass by and aren't grasped.

**Therefore**, it is important for a person to be alert, and therefore, one must sleep a few hours in the afternoon before Shavuot so that his mind will be clear at night.

**4.** On this day, we should rejoice and give thanks to G-d for choosing us from all peoples, elevating us above all languages, and giving us His holy Torah, which is our life and the length of our days in this nearly two-thousand-year exile.

**We**, the Jewish people, are alive and exist, while all the great nations of the world that once existed are gone, and their memory is erased from the world.<sup>12</sup>

**5.** On the night of the holiday, the cantor should lead the prayers with stirring melody and joy, in honor of this great and holy day.

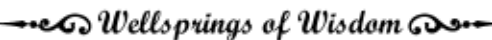
**After** the prayer, all should go home with joy and a good

heart, make Kiddush over wine, and have in mind in the blessing 'Shehecheyanu', the merit that the Creator of the World has granted us to reach this great day, and with it that same illumination of ancient days, when the gates of Heaven are again opened to acquire deep-rooted and steady faith, and great insights in the Torah.<sup>13</sup>

**6.** Do not make Kiddush until it is absolutely nightfall, to fulfill "seven complete weeks they shall be", for which reason it is called 'Shavuot'.

**Some** explain that the name 'Shavuot' - 'Vows', refers to the vows that we exchanged with G-d, who swore not to exchange us with another nation and we swore not to exchange Him for another, Heaven forbid.

**7.** Following the holiday meal, we all go to the synagogue and begin the unique divine service of this special night.



**12.** Thus wrote Rabbi Kadir Shlomo Eton of blessed memory ('Benjamin Tzair' - page 154).

**13.** 'Chag Shavuot B'halacha V'aggadah' (page 80).

## The Importance of 'Tikkun Leil Shavuot'

**The** holy Jewish custom is to study throughout the entire night of Shavuot until the morning light.

**This** custom is founded upon sacred sources, as explained in the holy Zohar (Emor, page 98a): 'The early pious ones would not sleep on this night, but would engage in Torah study, saying: Let us inherit this holy legacy for us and our children in both worlds.'

**The** holy Zohar (Introduction, page 8a) also explains: 'All those who repair this Tikkun on this night and rejoice with it will be inscribed and written in the Book of Remembrances, and G-d blesses them with seventy blessings and crowns of the upper world.'

**Although** the importance of studying on this night was known in the time of the sages of the Zohar, it was forgotten over the generations until the great Rabbi Joseph Karo, author of the 'Beit Yosef', arrived, and then the

importance of studying on this night was revealed again.

**This** matter was revealed to Beit Yosef in the following manner:<sup>14</sup>

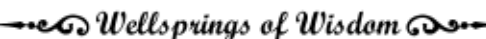
**One** eve of Shavuot, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz and Rabbi Joseph Karo - who had not yet lived in the land of Israel - decided to sit and study on the night of Shavuot, all night long, with another few Torah scholars.

**Thus**, they sat and engaged in Torah incessantly, learning the Tanach, the Mishnayot, and many other subjects.

**When** they began to study Mishnah, and had learned two tractates, they merited a wondrous and awesome experience, and heard a voice of an angel talking from the mouth of Rabbi Joseph Karo.

**Overwhelmed** by its intensity, they began to tremble.

**It** revealed itself in the name of the holy Shechinah and



14. Brought in the holy Shlah (Tractate Shavuot, Ner Mitzvah - Letter 5).

disclosed to them awesome things, words of wisdom and Torah secrets that set their hearts ablaze in a way that cannot be described.

**They** continued to study with great enthusiasm, until once again it revealed itself to them.

**At** dawn, they went to the mikveh and met their acquaintances. They told them what they had witnessed, and their friends wept that they had not merited this.

**Outside** of Israel, in the diaspora, there are two days of Yom Tov, and they decided to gather on the second night of Shavuot as well and engage in Torah study.

**The** Beit Yosef and Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, from the great enthusiasm, and the great lights that enveloped them - were unable to sleep all day.

**They** continued studying Torah all day, and the following night they approached the Torah study with even greater enthusiasm.

**Once** again, before midnight, the angel revealed itself to them through the Beit Yosef, and everyone there experienced a tremendous holiness.

**The** revelation was not a one-time event, but throughout the night, it appeared several times, showering them with supreme secrets and blessings without end, and ultimately commanding them to ascend to the Land of Israel, which of course, as is well known, they did.

**Since** then, this night of Torah study has been instituted in all communities, and has a special place in the hearts of all Jews.

### **Shavuot Night Torah Study**

**We** end with the words of Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel of blessed memory (Imrei Noam, Festivals - Shavuot article 9):

**It** is appropriate to raise awareness of the great obligation and importance of studying Torah on the night of Shavuot.



**These** are the words of the Arizal in 'Shaar HaKavanot' (Discourses on Shavuot - Discourse 1):

**'Know** that anyone who does not sleep at all on this night, not even for a single moment, and engages in Torah study all night long, is assured that he will complete his year without any harm befalling him in that year. Furthermore, man's life path for that year depends on this matter, for if he does not sleep at all, it is certain he will not die that year.'

**From** his holy words, every person should learn how important it is to strive with all one's might to study on this holy night and exert his utmost effort to not fall asleep throughout the night.

**If** a person feels tired, he should immediately stand up, wash his face with cold water, drink a hot beverage, etc., to successfully ward off the tendrils of sleep. His entire fate in the coming year depends on his vigilance on this night.

**One** should also be careful not to speak idle words

throughout this entire night because it is sacred to G-d'.

**It** is proper to study on this holy night, specifically the study order printed in the book "Keri'ei Moed," specifically for the night of Shavuot. One should not deviate from this and study Talmud or the like since this study order was arranged according to the words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the holy Zohar and according to the words of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Arizal.

**There** are great mystical secrets specifically in this study order, as written by the Chida ('Lev David' - Chapter 31), and similarly written by the Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshat Bamidbar - Letter 3):

**'Be** vigilant to study the entire study order of this night with great eagerness and with immense joy and fervor of the heart, for the study arranged for this night produces great fruit above, and draws holiness and purity to the person's soul.'

**On** the night of Shavuot, a person is like a shopkeeper who orders goods for his store. He needs to order different types of goods for the store to be filled with a variety of products. But if he orders only one type of product, that's all that will be in his store because everything depends on the order.

**Similarly,** on the night of Shavuot - he studies throughout the night from every specific part of the Torah, and thus orders abundance for the following year.

**But** if he studies only Gemara, that is what will open up to him in the following year and nothing else. However, if he studies the arranged study order, which includes: Torah, Prophets, Writings, the 613 commandments, Midrashim of our Sages, secrets of the Torah, etc. - a little of everything, in this way, he orders for himself a variety of spiritual 'goods' for the entire following year.

**Towards** the end of the night, one should go to the mikveh.

**Know** that this immersion, at the dawn of Shavuot, is the most important immersion all year, and fortunate is he who is meticulous in it.

**After** completing the study order of this holy night, one should immediately pray the Shacharit and Musaf prayers with great enthusiasm and vigor, so as not to be overtaken by sleep in the middle of prayer or make a mistake in the prayers.

**One** must exert extra effort in these prayers, for it is through them that a person reaps the fruit of his labor during the fifty days of counting the Omer, for everything follows the conclusion (Ben Ish Chai—ibid, Letter 5).

**In** merit of this, may all our divine service throughout this holy night be accepted favorably before G-d!

### Shabbat Shalom!

## Summary and Practical Conclusions

**1.** The holiday of Shavuot has a lofty status, and every Jew can merit to reach the fiftieth gate of holiness on it.

**However,** to be worthy of this, one must prepare oneself accordingly. Our holy sages have paved the way for us and instructed us how to sanctify and purify ourselves in preparation.

**2.** Our holy Sages have said that the eve of Shavuot has the same significance as the eve of Rosh Hashanah. Just as before Rosh Hashanah, we seek to accumulate merits through giving charity, studying Torah, and performing mitzvot, so too before Shavuot, every person should strive to the best of their ability to increase in charity, Torah, and mitzvot, thereby preparing themselves to receive this day in holiness and purity.

**3.** There are several things that are especially worth being careful about on the eve of Shavuot: Firstly, it is good to immerse in a mikveh, thereby making oneself worthy of receiving the Torah,

just as the Jewish people immersed themselves before receiving the Torah.

**4.** Secondly, one should be careful to set aside charity to give to the deserving poor. It is proper to allocate 104 coins for charity on the eve of Shavuot, as this is a significant rectification for the soul.

**5.** On the night of Shavuot, a person can merit great spiritual insights and illuminations, but to be worthy of this, one must also prepare oneself physically. It is a tried and tested fact that when a person is tired, a significant part of their soul's faculties and intellect is obstructed from any insight.

**Therefore,** it is important that a person remains alert, and it is advisable to sleep a few hours in the afternoon before Shavuot so that their mind is clear at night.

**6.** One should be very joyful on this day and thank G-d for choosing us from all peoples, elevating us above all languages, and giving us His holy Torah, which is our life and the length of

our days in this exile of nearly two thousand years, and we, the Jewish people, live and exist forever.

**7.** On the night of the festival, the Chazzan should pray in honor of this great and holy day with a melody and tune. After the prayer, one should go home with joy and a good heart and sanctify the day over wine, and in the blessing of "Shehecheyanu," one should intend the merit that the Creator of the Universe has granted us to once again reach this great day that comes to us once a year, in which that same illumination of ancient days returns, and the gates of Heaven are opened for acquiring faith and lofty insights of the Torah.

**Therefore,** one should only make Kiddush once it is certainly night, so as to fulfill the requirement that 'seven complete weeks they shall be', for which reason, it is called 'Shavuot'.

**8.** The holy Jewish custom of studying throughout the entire night of Shavuot until the morning light is founded upon sacred principles. All those who recite the Tikkun on this night

and rejoice in it are inscribed and written in the Book of Remembrances, and G-d blesses them with seventy blessings and crowns of the upper world.

**9.** Anyone who does not sleep at all on this night, not even for a single moment, and engages in Torah study all night long is assured that he will complete his year without any harm befalling him. Furthermore, the person's life path for that year depends on this matter, and if he does not sleep at all, it is certain he will not die that year.

**10.** From here, every person should learn how much it is appropriate for him to strive with all his might to come to the study of that holy night, and to exert his utmost effort to not fall asleep at all throughout the night. If a person feels tired, he should immediately stand up, wash his face with cold water, drink a hot beverage, etc., just to successfully ward off the tendrils of sleep, since his entire fate for the coming year depends on his vigilance on this night.

**11.** One must be careful not to engage in idle conversation

throughout the night. There needs to be great vigilance on this night because whenever there's a gathering of many people, the evil inclination tends to tempt them into idle talk, which can lead to forbidden subjects such as jesting and slander. Who would possibly turn his heart to vanity on this holy night, let alone defile his mouth with idle talk, business matters, mockery, and slander ?

**12.** Strengthen yourself like a lion to stay on guard with eyes wide open to push away sleep and not doze off at all, for our master, the Arizal, placed great emphasis on sleep on this night, even more than on the night of Hoshana Rabbah, as mentioned in Shaar HaKavanot in the discourse of this night.

**13.** It is appropriate to specifically study the arranged study order on this holy night, as printed in the book "Keri'ei Moed" for the night of Shavuot.

**One** should not deviate from this and engage in studying Talmud or similar texts, as this study order is arranged according to the teachings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the

holy Zohar and according to the teachings of our master, the Arizal. There is a great secret in studying this order specifically.

**14.** Towards the end of the night, one should go to the mikveh again.

**Know** that this immersion, at the dawn of Shavuot, is the most important immersion all year; fortunate is he who is meticulous about it.

**After** completing the study order of this holy night, one should immediately pray the morning (Shacharit) and additional (Musaf) prayers with great enthusiasm and alacrity, to avoid being overtaken by sleep in the middle of prayer and making a mistake.

**15.** One must exert extra effort in the morning and additional prayers, since it is through them that a person reaps the fruit of his labor during the fifty days of counting of the Omer, for everything follows the conclusion.

**In** merit of this, may all our divine service throughout this holy night be accepted favorably before G-d !



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| City        | Candle Lighting | Shabbat Ends | Rabbeinu Tam |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| New York    | 8:11 pm         | 9:20 pm      | 9:41 pm      |
| Miami       | 7:55 pm         | 8:53 pm      | 9:26 pm      |
| Los Angeles | 7:48 pm         | 8:51 pm      | 9:19 pm      |
| Montreal    | 8:27 pm         | 9:43 pm      | 9:57 pm      |
| Toronto     | 8:43 pm         | 9:56 pm      | 10:13 pm     |
| London      | 9:01 pm         | 10:34 pm     | 10:32 pm     |
| Jerusalem   | 7:31 pm         | 8:21 pm      | 9:18 pm      |
| Tel Aviv    | 7:28 pm         | 8:18 pm      | 9:14 pm      |
| Haifa       | 7:29 pm         | 8:19 pm      | 9:15 pm      |
| Be'er Sheva | 7:26 pm         | 8:19 pm      | 9:15 pm      |

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*From the Words of*

**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*One who has the power to study Torah without interruption and distractions, must know that G-d stands upon him and that at that moment he is entirely united with G-d and protected from all harm.*

*Since the Torah 'protects and saves' (Sotah 21a), one mustn't worry about anything in the world, for Torah scholars are closest to G-d.*

*Indeed, we pray that our descendants will all be Torah scholars and involved all their lives in Torah study for G-d's sake.*



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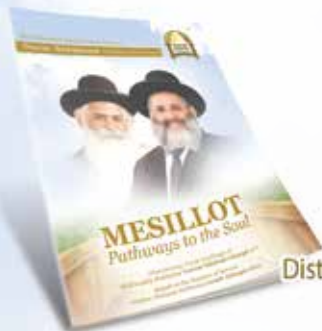
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