

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 148

**Vayakhel** | Separating Evil Through Shabbat Preparation

# 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...

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**Parshat Vayakhel**

**From the Desk of the Proofreader at  
'HaMeir La'aretz'**

**Sunday**, 23 Adar I, 5784.

**In** HaMeir La'aretz institute in Netivot, life is bustling. Everyone is busy at their stations; the media editors with the latest classes, the graphic designers with the designs of the booklets, books, and publications...

**I** too sit at my desk, there's a lot of work ahead. The next volume of Chelev HaAretz needs to be sent to print, and I need to do a final proofread...

**Needless** to say, these are important books for every Jew who seeks to rectify their soul. I read through carefully, and I encounter the following words:<sup>1</sup>

**'The** highest and primary expression of the soul itself is found in the essential pleasure of the soul. Pleasure is the source

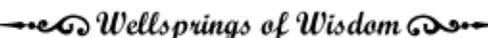
to everything that transpires in the various levels of the soul.

**This** means that what drives all human actions is the desire to feel and experience pleasure. For the sake of obtaining pleasure, a person is ready to sacrifice a lot of effort and pay a high price, so long as they achieve their share of pleasure...'

**I** paused for a moment, unable to continue reading: What does it mean that all human actions stem from the desire to obtain pleasure?

**I** suddenly recalled the discomfort I felt this morning...

**This** morning, as per my daily routine, I immersed myself in the mikveh and prayed at sunrise. Afterward, my car failed to start, despite my best attempts and the



Parshat Vayakhel - From the Desk of the Proofreader at 'HaMeir La'aretz'

assistance of my warmhearted neighbor. My car apparently decided to be at odds with me...

**After** many years of not doing so - I boarded the city bus, but it was a strange journey for me. Apart from the slow travel, the noise, and the commotion that accompanied my trip, the driver turned on the radio...

**When** I travel by car I listen to Torah lessons and Jewish music, and here different and foreign speech entered my ears and I shifted in my seat in discomfort.

**The** radio host told of news that involves abyssal pain, endless sorrow, political persecution and petty jealousy...

**These** news broadcasts told of Jews of a 'new breed' - spineless Jews, whose dispirited and meek souls are ashamed of their very existence, and worship and seek the admiration of the nations of the world...

**I** looked around, perhaps someone would let the driver know that we paid for a bus ride ticket and not for a journey through hell...

**But** no. Everyone sat quietly and peacefully in their seats, and to the contrary, many seemed to listen intently and approvingly to the news broadcast...

**The** discomfort that I felt was quite awful, and I thought to myself 'how can anyone live like this? How can one constantly live in a reality of pain and suffering, of jealousy and small-mindedness, and how can one constantly hear about self-centered characters who see others as puppets serving their will?'

**As** my thoughts thus continued to dwell and ruminate, I arrived at the stop where I was to get off, and from the bus stop to Hameir La'aretz institute I thought and thought...

**Ultimately** I convinced myself that surely those who listen to the news feel a great sense of responsibility to fix the world, and they must feel that if they do not know at every waking moment what is happening in the news - the world will cease to function...

**I** felt better now, giving them the benefit of the doubt...

Parshat Vayakhel - There Once Lived A Man

**But** now, I had just read that all human actions are sourced in the feeling of pleasure.

I thought to myself "What could possibly be the connection between listening to distressing news and feeling pleasure?"...

I got up at once from my desk,

agitated, and began to stroll among the many bookshelves in HaMeir La'aretz...

**Unwittingly**, my hand pulled out a small booklet, and I opened it and began to read.

**To** my delight, it began with the following story...

**There Once Lived A Man**

**Throughout** the week, Elad looked forward to Monday, since every week on Monday, Elad would visit his grandfather.

**During** each such visit, his wise grandfather would engage Elad in profound and thought provoking conversations, enriching him with the vast tapestry of wisdom from his rich life experiences...

**Once** again, Monday arrived, and Elad visited his grandfather. He prepared two cups of coffee and took a seat beside his grandfather.

**His** grandfather smiled at him and handed him a printed page, 'Elad, please

read to me what is written here.'

**And** Elad began to read with anticipation:

**'It** was common wisdom in those days: 'There is no city without ten idlers and no town without a town fool,' and some added as well that 'a fool who has no town to call his own is not worthy of the title 'fool'.

**Since** the town of Zhetl was blessed with a fool of the caliber of unlucky Avremaleh, it earned the right to be called a town, and Avremaleh justly earned the title of 'town fool.'

## Parshat Vayakhel - There Once Lived A Man

**From** father to son, the tales of Avremaleh's 'wisdom' was passed down, and people

never tired of retelling the events that occurred with him...<sup>2</sup>

### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**2. The** 'Village Fool' was the name given to unlucky Avremaleh by everyone. No one opposed this nickname, not Avremaleh, as he was indeed a fool, nor did those around him.

**For** the surrounding villagers, there were many substantial proofs that unanimously justified the nickname of this individual.

**One** of these proofs was a take that was transmitted and passed down even many years after he had already left the world, and a more conclusive proof couldn't possibly have been found.

**It** was in the days of spring, Avremaleh walked with great satisfaction, humming to himself some tune or song. There could not have been a better time for the town jesters to make fun of him...

**The** unofficial leader of the jesters quickly approached Avremaleh and seriously informed him that a treasure had been discovered on the hill in the outskirts of town. What the treasure was, they refused to reveal in any way, only saying that it lay inside an old, large, and black barrel, with a hoop at its bottom.

**Poor** and naive Avremaleh hurried and quickly walked toward the barrel, first ensuring that it was indeed the treasure barrel, hoop and all... black... large...

Yes, this was the barrel; but where was the treasure ?

**He** sniffed around it, and when he failed to discover anything outside it, he entered inside the enormous barrel.

**It** was for this precise moment that the jesters had been waiting.

**They** together with their combined strength, dragged the barrel, and rolled it down the hill, atop which the barrel had once been placed.

**The** cruel prank had succeeded beyond their expectations, and Avremaleh emerged from the barrel injured and beaten to the cheers of the crowd that had meanwhile gathered at the place.

**He** rubbed his forehead in evident anger and perplexion. He could not find a satisfying explanation for the fact that while his entry into the barrel had been at the top of the hill, his exit from it was precisely at its bottom, and he hurried away in shame, not before vowing to himself that he would never enter any barrel again under any circumstances !

**But...** the jesters weren't yet entirely satisfied and promised a sequel...

**This** assisted in the form of a huge sack of great dimensions that was placed in the

Parshat Vayakhel - There Once Lived A Man

**And** the following is one such tale:<sup>3</sup>

**In** the courtyard of the study hall of Zhetl, idlers who did not know how to read or study gathered between the afternoon and evening prayers and engaged in exchanging fantasies 'if I were a Rothschild.' One said this, and another said that.

**And** unlucky Avremeleh had his own original answer:

'**If** I were Rothschild, I would command a craftsman to drive several long nails into the wall of the study hall from the inside, protruding outwards by two handbreadths.'

**Everyone** raised their eyebrows and asked: What would these protruding nails be for?

**Avremaleh** explained in a scholarly tune: It's cold in the winter, as you know. And I wear several layers of clothing, several shirts and sweaters, and of course, a tzitzit garment, and above all of these, I wear a thick winter coat.

**Now** imagine, for instance, that my back itches. Tell me, how can I reach my back, when my hand is here and my back is all the way there behind me.

**But**, if I were Rothschild, I would simply approach and stand

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

---

spot where the barrel had been. To be sure that Avremaleh wouldn't catch on to their trick, they moved the sack slightly further up the hill. But there was no need for that, since unlucky Avremaleh the fool, being a fool, while on a search for lost documents he was asked to find, went straight into the trap, and entered the sack, and once inside the sack, was mercilessly thrown down the slope of the hill...

**Avremaleh** crawled out of the sack, wailing 'how was I to know that this was a trap? After all, this time it wasn't a barrel you placed me in!'

**Indeed...** Avremaleh was a great fool...

**Back** to our issue, this is the corrupt working method of the evil inclination, whether it be a barrel, a sack, a winter coat, or a summer air conditioner... Ultimately, it succeeds in its work, but may G-d Almighty enable us to 'catch' it in the middle of its 'trick' before it succeeds... (Pirchei HaKerem

(Alexander), Issue 9, Page 26).

**3.** In "Ayin Yehudit" (Part 1, Page 50) by Rabbi Yochanan David Solomon. His words there as well are adapted into the conversation further on in this booklet.

with my back to one of the nails protruding from the study hall wall, and I would lean on the nail with my back and sway myself back and forth, up and down, and find my back being scratched as I wish. Pure bliss, a taste of heaven, concluded Avremaleh with his eyes half-closed and an aura of bliss radiating from his face at the mere thought of this great pleasure, akin to the World to Come...'

**The** first side of the page had ended, and Elad turned to the other side and continued reading to his grandfather:

**If** you think you've already gotten to know and be acquainted with the man, you apparently haven't yet heard of Avremaleh's strange request of his wife:<sup>4</sup>

**'Behold,** I have aged and become gray,' murmured unlucky Avremeleh, half to himself, half to his wife, 'and I have never had the chance to eat a honey truffle. How can I depart from this world without having tasted, even once,

this wonderful delicacy that the rich praise so much? You, my dear wife, in your youth, served in the kitchens of the wealthy. What would it bother you to prepare for me, just once, just this once, this marvelous delicacy, and I shall eat from it, 'so that my soul may bless you.'

**'Oh,** my dear husband,' answered his devoted wife, 'in your old age you have developed a sudden voracious craving for food? Where would I find the refined honey needed to make a honey truffle, or the fine white wheat flour?

**The** few coins you earn for our sustenance, are barely enough for a piece of bread and salted fish. From where shall I take all the expensive ingredients needed to make a honey truffle?

**However,** Avremaleh stood firm: 'My soul longs and pines for that wondrous dish. I'll give you some simple advice: Instead of honey - take sugar water, and

instead of fine flour - knead barley flour... As for the other ingredients, I'm sure you'll find a solution - but please, do make me the heavenly dish I so crave.'

**Since** she was a devoted wife, she fulfilled her husband's wish and baked him a 'honey truffle'.

**When** the pastry was served to Avremaleh, his eyes lit up and he broke out into a big smile.

**But** immediately upon tasting it, his face soured: 'Is it this dish that they say tastes like manna?! Is this what the rich lavish praise upon?! I see I haven't missed out on anything by not being wealthy! Bread soaked in fish brine tastes better than this,' and a smile appeared on his face, 'What do these rich people understand in delicacies anyway, to taste true bliss all one needs is 'bread and salted fish'...''

**Elad** laid the page on the table before him and looked questioningly at his grandfather.

**His** grandfather turned to him and asked: How would you

summarize these two tales of 'unlucky Avremaleh'?

**Elad** replied: There is no question 'unlucky Avremaleh' rightfully earned his title.

**One** must be really short-sighted for a limited and temporary physical satisfaction to be the peak of his aspirations, the height of his happiness on earth...

**The** grandfather listened with satisfaction to Elad's words, and then turned and said in a serious tone, 'Elad, please listen:

**There** is not a person who does not desire happiness, and this desire dictates all the challenges a person sets for himself and all the many actions undertaken to achieve them.

**It** can be said that happiness is the ultimate all-encompassing goal of mankind. Everyone toils and labors all their days to achieve happiness, each their own form of happiness, from the lowest among people, whose happiness lies in the coarse material realm, to the greatest of the great, whose happiness is in the highest

**Parshat Vayakhel - The Cries of the Lower Waters**

spiritual realm. Everyone seeks happiness and pursues it.

**Now**, in all earnestness, if happiness is the ultimate goal, why then do we look at ‘unlucky Avremeleh’ with scorn... after all, he was a happy man, happy with his bread and salted fish,

**The Cries of the Lower Waters**

**5784** years ago, the Holy One, Blessed be He, created His world, so that there be a people who recognize Him and serve Him truly with a whole heart.

**The** Torah opens with the act of creation, describing how the world was created.

**On** the first day of creation, ten things were created:<sup>5</sup> heaven and earth, ‘tohu and bohu’ (formlessness and emptiness), light and darkness, wind and water, measure of day and measure of night.

**These** formless waters covered all existence, and no distinction

and would be happiest of all with the nail protruding from the wall...

**For** him, his happiness was supreme and complete...

**Alternatively:** Happiness is the goal of all of us. But what exactly constitutes true happiness ?...

was discernible between heaven and earth.

**Then** came the second day.

**On** the second day of creation, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Genesis 1:6).

**Thus** G-d created the firmament and thereby differentiated between the waters. The upper waters of the firmament became the heavens, and the lower waters became the oceans and seas.

**When** studying this superficially, one might think:

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

5. In the Talmud (Tractate Hagigah 12): “Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav,

ten things were created on the first day of creation...”

Parshat Vayakhel - Upper and Lower Pleasures...

What does it matter where the waters are, above or below, they still serve the same purpose.

**However**, our Holy Sages reveal that this separation caused great sorrow to the lower waters, and they burst into tears...

**Moreover**, they felt that they could not contain this and therefore desired and tried with all their might to ascend to the firmament as well...

**Upper and Lower Pleasures...**

**The** Holy One, Blessed be He, created four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth.

**He** gave each element a role, and to the waters, He assigned the role of providing pleasure...

**On** the first day of creation, all of existence was filled with water, and as such, the sensation of pleasure was openly and tangibly felt, and by virtue of the very essence of the Divine light that shone in them openly, the waters rejoiced in G-d with sweetness, closeness, strength of connection and an attachment ...

**This** was so, until the Holy One, Blessed be He, appeased them and promised them that they would have an important role in the sacrifices in the Temple. (The salt from the waters would accompany every sacrifice offered on the altar, as will be explained later on).

**And** thus, it is necessary to understand why the lower waters were so saddened ?...

**The** waters sang, chanted, and rejoiced to the living G-d...

**In** these waters, there were two types of pleasure, spiritual pleasures, as well as the source for the physical pleasures. These two types of pleasures were mixed together, and the difference between them wasn't so discernible.

**And** on the second day, the Holy One, Blessed be He, separated the waters. The upper waters became a source of spiritual pleasure, and the lower waters became a source of physical pleasures.

**Parshat Vayakhel - Where Are You in the World?**

**There** is no comparability or similarity between spiritual and physical pleasures, and this caused the lower waters to weep. 'How have we lost the pleasure of the feeling of closeness to the Divine?'

**After** the waters were separated from each other, G-d took the upper waters and formed four rivers from them,

and flowed them within the Garden of Eden...

**In** the Garden of Eden flowed these upper waters, as it is said: "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it parted into four heads" (Genesis 2:10).

**And** these waters were what caused the revelation of the Divine pleasure in the Garden of Eden...<sup>6</sup>

**Where Are You in the World?**

**Adam** and his wife strolled in the Garden of Eden enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence. Then, 'the wicked one' reared his head and through his influence, Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge.

**A** mighty and supreme wind began to blow in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and his wife hid.

**G-d** suddenly revealed Himself and called out to Adam: 'Where are you?' (Genesis 3:9)

**On** this matter, Rabbi Yoram Abargel once related:<sup>7</sup>

**It** is told that during one of the famous imprisonments of the Ba'al HaTanya in the notorious prison of Petersburg, a minister came to him to question him, and the Ba'al HaTanya found favor in the minister's eyes.

**This** minister was very knowledgeable in many wisdoms and also well versed in the Bible, and he said to the Ba'al HaTanya:

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

**6.** See "Likkutei Torah Torat Shmuel" (5637, Part 2, Page 851) by the great Rebbe Maharash of Lubavitch, and see "Magen

Avot" (Part 3, page 6a, section d) by Rebbe Shlomo Zalman Schneerson of Kapust.

**7.** "Imrei Noam" (Genesis - Essay 9).

**Parshat Vayakhel - Where Are You in the World?**

I have a question to ask you, can you answer whatever I ask ?'

**The** Ba'al HaTanya replied to him: 'Ask what you will ask, and I will try to answer you.'

**'What** then is the meaning of the verse "And the L-rd - G-d called unto Adam, and said to him, Where are you?" (ibid).

**Isn't** it your belief that G-d sees and knows everything. Did G-d not know where Adam was that he needed to ask him 'Where are you'?!' - asked the minister.

**Initially**, the Ba'al HaTanya answered him with Rashi's commentary that G-d merely wanted to engage Man in conversation, but the minister responded that he already knew Rashi's interpretation, but wanted to know the Ba'al HaTanya's original interpretation.

**'Do** you believe,' asked the Ba'al HaTanya, 'that the Torah is eternal, and is relevant to every time, every generation, and every person ?' - the minister

replied to him that he does.

**And** the Ba'al HaTanya explained - 'The interpretation of the verse is that at all times G-d calls forth to every person and says to him: 'Where are you?' - meaning, where are you in the world, what is your spiritual state ?

**A** specific number of days and years are allotted to a person to live in this world, and every day and every year one must only do good with G-d and mankind.

**So** reflect and contemplate where you are in your world, how many years have passed, and what have you done in all these days and years'.

**Then** the Ba'al HaTanya looked into the minister's face with a deep gaze and added: 'For example you, your honor, have lived fifty-four years; what have you accomplished in them, have you done good for anyone?!'

**When** the minister heard the words of the Ba'al HaTanya he was astounded. The Ba'al Tanya had articulated his precise age. Overwhelmed

**Parshat Vayakhel - The Great Loss of Pleasure**

by what had transpired, the minister placed his hand on the shoulder of the Ba'al HaTanya and said to him: 'Bravo !'...

**The** question 'Where are you?' is thus not just a question that G-d asked Man a few thousand years ago, but is a profound and everlasting question that echoes at all times of day and is directed towards every person: 'Where are you?' - What is your spiritual state

today, is it better than yesterday ?

**Have** you already managed to grab a few minutes for the study of the Talmud or a chapter of Mishnah today ?

**Have** you already managed to do a good deed for another Jew today ?

**And** one must strive to have an adequate answer to this begging question...

**The Great Loss of Pleasure**

**As** a result of the sin, Adam was expelled from the Garden of Eden to this world, to a world where there is a constant struggle between holiness and impurity.

**Adam** was expelled to a world where the lower waters flow, a world where four rivers

of the impure powers flow, namely: Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Edom.

**These** rivers are the source of all kinds of physical pleasure, and they are the ones that cause the evil inclination to lust after the pleasures of this world...<sup>8</sup>

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

**8. After** the First Temple was destroyed, the Babylonians captured the people of Israel and brought them down to Babylon. And there, by the Euphrates river of Babylon (as stated in Pesikta Rabbati - Piska 28), they sat and wept, as it is said: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and also wept, when we remembered Zion" (Psalms 137:1).

**The** 'Tzemach Tzedek' of Lubavitch, explained as follows (Sefer HaLikutim - vol. 2, page 328):

**The** cause for weeping was the fact that during the exile, Israel received its life force from the lower waters, called the 'rivers of Babylon', which cultivate physical pleasures.

Parshat Vayakhel - From a 'Heart of Stone' to a 'Heart of Flesh'

**And** from that time and on, mankind began to yearn for physical pleasures, for coarse and material pleasures.

**Indeed**, there is no end to the multitudes of kinds of physical pleasures, which are enjoyed by each person according to the composition of their elements and the structure of their soul, to the extent that some even enjoy listening to a news broadcast ...

### From a 'Heart of Stone' to a 'Heart of Flesh'

**Rabbi** Yitzchak Ginsburgh wrote the following ('Hanefesh' - Page 21):

**'Our** Sages said that 'the lower waters cry "we want to be before the King"' - the lower waters weep over being lowly, and demand that they too be before the Holy King like the upper waters.

**This** cry of the lower waters goes almost entirely

**However**, we must always remember that all these various kinds of pleasures are physical pleasures that are very far from the lofty concept of true pleasure...

**And** yet, despite the darkness that covered the earth, there were seen and revealed sparks of yearning and desire to merit and feel the lofty and Divine pleasure...

**Over** the generations, the call of the Jewish soul was heard...

unnoticed by all the worldly creations.

**Only** the Jewish soul feels this cry, for it too does not forget its current lowly state and does not adapt to it.

**The** soul, despite living in the physical world below the heavens, is aligned with the heavens above, and therefore recalls the upper waters and longs for them.

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**This**, unlike during the Temple times when they received from 'the waters of Shiloach', waters that cultivate the upper

pleasure of G-dly love with delights - "A river whose streams make glad the city of G-d" (Psalms 46:5)...

Parshat Vayakhel - From a 'Heart of Stone' to a 'Heart of Flesh'

**This** cry softens the hardened ego and turns one's heart from a 'heart of stone' to a 'heart of flesh'.

**This** softened heart which cries out in longing for G-d, serves as a mirror of the divine light. This spiritual cry removes the coarseness and materialism that covers the soul, and turns its presence into one that truly connects and binds one to the Divine.

**Indeed**, the cry of the soul elevates the worldly reality as well. When the soul cries over the loss of sensation of the divine pleasure, it causes the worldly pleasures with which it engages, to be a springboard to the attainment of divine pleasure.

**When** the soul cries over its distance from the Divine and the fear that it might 'drown' and 'disappear' in the muddy swamp of this world, this very act of crying itself purifies the world and brings it closer to the divine.

**And** in the broader sense, in relation to the whole of reality, the tears of the soul connect one

to the upper world - they rise up without any hindrance, for 'the gates of tears are never locked', and upon each ascent they widen the bridge between above and below, and even purify the firmament, until it transforms from being a divider between the upper and lower waters to being a connector of the waters...

**For** this reason, the service of the Jewish soul in the world of 'lower waters' is characterized by a balance between crying and joy - 'Tears are lodged in one side of my heart while joy is in the other' - the soul cries over being bounded by the physical dimension, and these very tears bring it closer to the Divine, which awakens joy and happiness in the heart...

**And** this was how it was in the world until we were commanded the mitzvah of offering salt on every sacrifice, which became the way to achieve and experience divine pleasures...

## Upon All Your Sacrifices Offer Salt

**In** Parshat Vayikra we were commanded: 'Every meal offering that you offer to G-d shall not be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, as a fire offering to G-d... Salt all of your meal offerings with salt, and the salt of the covenant of your G-d shall not be lacking from your meal offering; upon all your sacrifices offer salt' (Leviticus 2:11-13) -

**The** Torah commands us not to offer leaven or honey on the altar, and immediately afterwards, the Torah commands us to put salt on every sacrifice (whether an animal or a bird sacrifice or a meal offering).

**The** inner meaning of these commandments teach us how to draw ourselves nearer to G-d and how we can merit to enjoy divine pleasures...

**And** thus said Rabbi Yoram Abargel (Imrei Noam, Vayikra - Article 8):

**'As** is known, the whole concept of sacrifices is to express the person's desire to draw closer to his Creator, and therefore it is called 'korban' - from the word

'kiruv' closeness. Therefore, in all the laws of the sacrifice, one can and should find hints and advice for the person who desires to draw close to his Creator.

**The** Torah commands us not to offer before G-d leaven or honey, because leaven symbolizes arrogance and haughtiness, and it sours the dough and puffs it up.

**Sweet** honey symbolizes the pleasures of this world and its delights.

**The** Torah thus teaches us that if we want to draw closer to G-d, we must distance ourselves from these two things - arrogance and the desire of pleasures.

**G-d's** desire is to dwell specifically with people who have humility and a lowly spirit, as it is said: 'I dwell in the lofty and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit' (Isaiah 57:15). However, regarding the arrogant, G-d says: 'He and I cannot dwell in the world' (Sotah 5a).

**Therefore,** anyone who desires closeness to G-d must

## Parshat Vayakhel - Upon All Your Sacrifices Offer Salt

remove from within himself the feeling of pride and haughtiness, the aspect of 'leaven' in his heart, and to feel his own insignificance before G-d.

**Likewise**, one must decide in his heart to forgo all the 'honey' and pleasures of this world for the sake of G-d.

**For** the service of G-d requires much toil and effort, sacrifice and dedication - all of which are the complete opposite of the natural desire of the body and the animal soul to indulge in worldly pleasures and to live a material life.

**In** contrast to the prohibition of leaven or honey in the sacrifices, the Torah commands to put salt on every sacrifice, since salt symbolizes bitterness and suffering (Berachot 5b).

**The** Torah hints that anyone who wishes to draw close to G-d must be prepared to at times accept pain, bitterness, difficulties, obstacles, and suffering, all in order to merit closeness to Him.

**All** beginnings are difficult, especially when a person wants to

approach the divine service, and it is obvious that the side opposing to holiness will create many difficulties and mount great obstacles from within and without in order to deter him from the path of sanctity, but a person must strengthen himself with all his might and be prepared to accept many sufferings of the world to merit closeness to G-d. And certainly, after overcoming all the obstacles and difficulties in his path with all his might, in the end, the obstacles will transform into pleasures, the bitter into sweet, and the darkness into a great and wonderful light.

**The** obligation to put salt on all sacrifices also symbolizes the attribute of accepting the yoke of Heaven and the service of G-d. That is, a person must accept upon himself to serve his Creator not only at a time when he feels sweetness and pleasure in his service, but also at a time when his heart is closed and sealed and he feels no pleasure at all in the service of G-d, and he must strengthen himself to serve his Creator with complete acceptance of the yoke.

Parshat Vayakhel - A Wonderful Gift Named Shabbat

**This** is what the people of Israel said before receiving the Torah: 'We will do and we will listen' (Exodus 24:7). "We will listen" symbolizes the times in a person's life when the words of the Torah enlighten his heart, and he has a great desire to learn them and he tastes their sweet flavor.

'**We** will do' on the other hand, symbolizes the times in a person's life when he does not feel pleasure in learning the Torah and performing the commandments, yet he does it out of acceptance of the yoke, because this is what the King of the world commanded him.

**A Wonderful Gift Named Shabbat**

**In** Parshat Ki Tisa, G-d commanded Moses:

'**Speak** to the children of Israel, saying, surely you shall keep my Shabbat: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the L-rd that sanctifies you' (Exodus 31:13).

**Therefore**, the people of Israel prefaced 'we will do' to 'we will listen', to indicate that they are prepared to accept upon themselves the Torah and its commandments under any circumstances, even if they do not feel any pleasure in it, but only out of acceptance of the yoke...

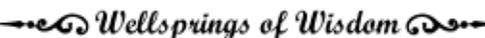
'**But** grandpa' - Elad burst out - 'it is so hard, who has the strength to give up materialism?!'

**If** only I could receive pleasure in the divine as a gift!...

**The** grandfather smiled, and said: If you desire this gift, please incline your ear and listen...

**The** Talmud (Shabbat 10b), expounds upon these words: 'G-d said to Moses, I have a wonderful gift in my treasury, named Shabbat, and I wish to give it to the people of Israel, go and inform them...

**Rabbi** David Cohen, the head of the Hebron Yeshiva, once explained as follows:<sup>9</sup>



9. His words were brought in 'Yeshurun' (Volume 17 - Page 585).

**Parshat Vayakhel - Six days You Shall Work**

**Before** the initial sin of Man, pleasure flowed and descended from the upper waters.

**Before** the initial sin, divine service and its lofty reward happened consequently each time, every commandment caused a sensation of pleasure and attainment of closeness to the Divine...

**But**, as a result of the sin of the tree of knowledge, we lost this natural pleasure, and from then on, anyone who desires it must toil hard in refining their materiality and

**in** the study of the Torah for its own sake.

**From** the time of the sin, a very long process began, a process of thousands of years that will end only in the days of the Messiah - a process of work and purification, a path that anyone who wants to achieve Divine pleasure must walk.

**Six days You Shall Work**

**Our** Torah portion opens with the commandment about observing Shabbat, as it says:

**And** then G-d revealed Himself to Moses and said to him:

**I** cherish my people of Israel very much and therefore want to give them a gift: one day a week in which the Divine pleasure will be felt without exertion or great effort, I will gift them with the day of Shabbat.

**On** the day of Shabbat, holiness shines of its own accord, and from it, we receive the gift of Divine pleasure !

**'And** this is the wonderful gift named Shabbat.

**Even** after the initial sin of Adam, we did not lose the pleasure of the divine entirely, we rather received Shabbat, which G-d gave us as a gift in this world; Shabbat that is a foretaste of the World to Come...

**And** now, after understanding this idea, let us move on to this week's Torah portion...

**"And** Moses assembled the congregation of the children of Israel, and said to them, these

Parshat Vayakhel - Six days You Shall Work

are the words which G-d has commanded you to do.

**Six** days shall work be done, but the seventh day shall be for you a holy day, a day of rest to the L-rd; whoever does work in it shall be put to death.

**You** shall not kindle a fire throughout your dwellings on the day of Shabbat" (Exodus 35:1-3).

**The** famous question arises: why did the Torah need to tell us what to do during the six weekdays? The commandment is about observing the Shabbat, so of what use is it to mention that on "Six days shall work be done"?

**An** additional difficulty: why does the Torah first include all the different types of work forbidden on Shabbat under one category ("but the seventh day shall be for you a holy day, a day of rest to the L-rd; whoever does work in it shall be put to death."), but then specifically single out the prohibition of kindling a fire on Shabbat ("You shall not kindle a fire throughout your

dwellings on the day of Shabbat") and detail it in an exceptional way?

**The** answer to both questions is:

**The** Torah is teaching us that Shabbat is a high and exalted light.

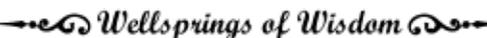
**Its** immense light is revealed in the world every Shabbat, yet every Jew receives its illumination in varying intensities, 'for the light of Shabbat reveals and rests upon every Jew in various degrees, according to the vessels they possess'.

**The** Torah thus tells us:<sup>10</sup>

**All** week one needs to prepare himself for the coming of Shabbat, for it is inconceivable to come to Shabbat as a guest from outside, yet expect to derive from its wonderful holiness.

**One** cannot suffice with merely polishing one's shoes as preparation for the Shabbat.

**When** we prepare extensively for Shabbat, we are privileged to taste the flavor of Shabbat.



10. 'Divrei Musar' (5741-5745, Page 115) by Rabbi Moshe Yehoshua Hager of Vizhnitz.

**And** to this spiritual preparation, the Torah refers to as 'work' ('Six days shall work be done').

**And** then there will be: 'a day of rest to the L-rd' - the holiness of Shabbat day will illuminate intensely, and the feeling of pleasure and the sweet delight of Shabbat will fill our entire existence...

**This** also is the reason why the Torah specifically highlighted the prohibition of kindling a fire over all the other prohibited labors.

**Although** the simple meaning of the prohibition of kindling is not to light a fire, allegorically, it alludes to the sanctity of a person.

**The** Torah thus says: Know that on Shabbat, holiness is natural, and there is no need 'to kindle' one's holiness on the day of Shabbat.

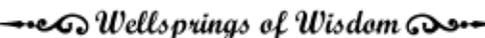
**However,** a person is required throughout the week not to corrupt his ways, for if he does,

the sanctity of Shabbat will not rest upon him, and he will need to exert himself on Shabbat 'to kindle' the fire of enthusiasm and holiness!

**In** the words of the 'Chatam Sofer' of blessed memory:<sup>11</sup>

**"You** shall not kindle a fire throughout your dwellings on the day of Shabbat' - It is fitting that throughout the week the fire of love and devotion to G-d should burn in one's heart through the study of Torah and the service of G-d, so that when Shabbat comes, the flame will rise by itself and on its own, and cleave to the 'flame of the L-rd'.

**For** this reason, we were commanded to work for six days, such that the seventh day will be holy of itself, and not that we spend the entire week each in his vineyard and his olive grove, and then on Shabbat to need to start kindling the G-dly flame from anew, to ignite a spark of fire in the dull coals.



11. Chatam Sofer on the Torah - Exodus (Vayakhel - 562, "Do not kindle a fire").

**Parshat Vayakhel - With the Strength of Man**

**This** then is the meaning: throughout your dwellings on  
'You shall not kindle a fire the day of Shabbat'.

**With the Strength of Man**

**Until** now we have explained that on every Shabbat there is an illumination that shines in the world, but in order for a person to feel it, they must prepare themselves. And every person, according to their preparation, will merit the illumination of Shabbat.

**Regarding** the preparations for Shabbat, much has been written, including in the 'Ben Ish Chai' (Year 2, Parshat Lech Lecha), where Rabbi Yosef Chaim elaborates greatly on the preparations for the Shabbat.

**To** quote from our book Chelev Ha'aretz (Part 6 - Page 47):

**The** holiness of the day of Shabbat is so great and lofty, such that human intellect alone cannot comprehend even a fraction of its pure light.

**G-d** glorifies over the fact that on this day He renews His world.

**On** this sanctified day He spreads a spirit of supreme

holiness, spiritual elevation, and divine presence over all of creation.

**From** the surplus of the spiritual influence of this day, all six days of creation are nourished.

**Therefore,** the Al-mighty commanded His beloved children - the children of Israel - to properly prepare themselves to greet Shabbat as one who awaits a queen who will stay in their home.

**Thus** we can be sure that when the queen arrives to dwell among us, she will bestow the glory and splendor of Her Majesty on our soul - which is a part of G-d from above - that pulsates and animates every part within us.

**For** this reason, we find that the Sages of the Talmud were very earnest in their preparations for the Shabbat, as elaborated at length in the Talmud (Shabbat 119b) and in the writings of the halachic authorities.

**And** if they troubled themselves with these physical

preparations so meticulously, how much must we toil and strive with all our strength to honor the Shabbat.

**Indeed**, a person is required to prepare extensively for the Shabbat, and this includes cleaning the house, cooking, baking, laundering, ironing, bathing and other physical preparations.

**There** are many spiritual preparations as well related to bathing and immersion, and getting dressed for Shabbat among other things, all of whose purpose is to prepare oneself for the illumination of Shabbat.

**This** illumination rests upon a person's nefesh, ruach, and neshamah, (three aspects of his soul) and from it one draws spiritual power for all the six days of the week...

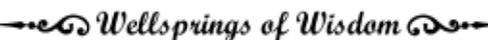
**The** great Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Luria transmitted to his faithful disciple, Rabbi Chaim Vital<sup>12</sup> that in order for a

person to merit that his nefesh, ruach, and neshamah be illuminated by the holiness of Shabbat, he must prepare himself with all the preparations needed in honor of Shabbat.

**These** preparations are (as elaborated in 'Meitav Ha'aretz'):

1. Reading the weekly Torah portion twice and the Targum once
2. Cutting one's nails
3. Bathing in warm water
4. Preparation of the flame
5. Cleaning one's hands and feet before immersion
6. Immersion with the proper intentions
7. Wearing Shabbat clothes with the proper intentions.

**The** purpose of these preparations is to separate the impure powers that cling to a person throughout the weekdays and to prepare his nefesh, ruach,



12. (as recorded in Pri Etz Chaim, Gate of Shabbat - Chapters 3-4, and Sha'ar

HaKavanot, Discourses on the Order of Shabbat, Discourse 1)

Parshat Vayakhel - The Importance of Two Torah Laws at Every Meal

and neshamah to receive the holiness and illumination of the Shabbat.

**However**, if a person reduces one of these above-mentioned preparations, the impure powers inevitably are not completely

separated from their soul, and consequently, they are precluded from receiving the additional illumination of Shabbat to their Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshama...'

**For** further details, see 'Chelev Ha'aretz' there at length...

**The Importance of Two Torah Laws at Every Meal**

**One** of the great sayings of our Sages is written in the Jerusalem Talmud (Berachot 1:5):

**'Shabbat** is equal in weight to the entire Torah'.

**When** the great Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein studied these words, he was filled with immense awe and declared: 'Shabbat is equal in weight to the entire Torah - meaning that one who observes Shabbat according to its laws is regarded

in Heaven as a Jew who has fulfilled the entire Torah!<sup>13</sup>

**Therefore**, it is obvious and certain that one must learn properly and know the laws of Shabbat, for without knowing the laws of Shabbat, it is impossible to observe Shabbat !'

**As** Rabbi Yonatan Eibeschutz wrote in Ya'arot Devash (Part 2 - Discourse 2): It is utterly impossible in reality to be saved from violating Shabbat unless one learns all of its laws thoroughly...<sup>14</sup>

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

13. "Ohr Yechezkel" (Elul and High Holidays - Page 329).

14. In the year 1978, six of Jerusalem's beloved sons were killed in a murderous terrorist attack that occurred on bus line

12, among them was the nephew of Rabbi Sholom Schwadron, the holy Aharon Meir Auerbach, may G-d avenge his blood.

**During** the thirty days of mourning, the residents of Bayit Vegan organized a

**Parshat Vayakhel - The Importance of Two Torah Laws at Every Meal**

**These** words apply to every Jew, even one who knows a lot of Torah, 'without learning the laws of Shabbat - one does not know how to observe the Shabbat'.

**All** the more so for someone who is not learned in Torah and does not know how to observe the Shabbat.

**Therefore**, each and every one must learn and teach his sons, daughters, and household the laws of Shabbat, which are common and frequently encountered laws that one may easily stumble upon.

**To** sharpen the point:

**When** we say that one must teach his household the laws of Shabbat, we are not referring to

—*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*—

memorial and awakening gathering, and of course, the highlight was expected to be Rabbi Shalom's speech. Hundreds of people gathered to hear his words.

**As** was his custom, Rabbi Shalom allowed the other rabbis to speak before him.

**He** asked the organizers beforehand what area needed to be strengthened and an awakening in the neighborhood. They told him with pain about the highway passing through the center of the neighborhood with public desecration of Shabbat.

**Rabbi** Shalom didn't call for the public to protest against the desecration of the Shabbat; listen and hear the content of his short and heartening sermon...

**When** he began to speak, the crowd was excited and tension was palpable. They all wondered what Rabbi Shalom would say about the difficult event, and also how he would respond to

combat the phenomenon of Shabbat desecration.

**Rabbi** Shalom stood and said aloud: I ask everyone to repeat my words, every word after me: 'I - I'... undertake - and the crowd responded 'undertake', 'upon myself to study every Shabbat for a quarter of an hour the laws of the Shabbat'. The surprised crowd repeated word after word what Rabbi Schwadron had said.

**And** with that, he concluded his fiery speech!

**This** was only followed by the recitation of the verses of accepting the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, said at the end of the Neilah prayer.

**The** encouragement was immense. To this very day, many residents of the Bayit Vegan neighborhood continue every Shabbat to adhere to this enactment and study as was initiated on that day!...

('Haggadat Reb Sholom', page 269).

**Parshat Vayakhel - The Importance of Two Torah Laws at Every Meal**

the act of studying alone, but primarily to the understanding.

**The** goal is for our children to understand and absorb the laws, so that when they encounter a particular situation, they will know how to act.

**Therefore,** one must prepare himself before the meal, so that the laws he wants to convey are clear, and so that he knows how to convey them.

**He** should also strive to convey them in a good way that leaves everyone with a good taste and a will to learn more.

**At** the very least, one should learn with his household two laws at each meal, two laws at the Friday night Shabbat meal, and four during the two daytime meals.

**Thus,** every week over the course of Shabbat, his household

will learn six new laws, and over time, they will achieve a proficiency in the laws of Shabbat.

**By** properly observing Shabbat, they will merit the spiritual delight and lofty pleasure of Shabbat and connect themselves with an unbreakable bond to the Creator !...

**Elad** smiled happily and said to his grandfather, "Thank you, Grandpa, for sharing all this with me, thank you for making me wiser..."

**In** the distant city of Netivot, the proofreader smiled and ended his journal entry:

**“With** satisfaction and clarity, having understood the role that pleasure has in our lives, and the proper and lofty pleasure we must all strive for, I closed the booklet and reverently returned it to the bookshelf...”

**Shabbat Shalom!**



### Summary and Practical applications

**A.** The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, "I have a wonderful gift in my treasury named Shabbat, and I wish to give it to Israel..."

**Before** the initial sin of Man, every commandment caused a sensation of pleasure and an attainment of closeness to the Divine. Following the primordial sin however, we lost this subliminal natural pleasure, and henceforth, one who desires it must labor with much effort in purifying their materiality and in the study of Torah for its own sake.

**However**, out of love for His people, G-d granted them the gift of the day of Shabbat, in which the divine light shines openly, and when the souls of Israel palpably feel this light.

**B.** The supreme light of Shabbat is lofty and exalted. It reveals itself in the world every Shabbat, and every Jew is privileged to receive this light in varying intensity, 'for the light of Shabbat reveals and rests upon every Jew to a different degree, each according to the vessels they prepare and possess'.

**C.** All week one needs to prepare himself for the coming of Shabbat, for it is inconceivable to come to Shabbat as a guest from outside, yet expect to derive from its wonderful holiness.

**When** we prepare extensively for Shabbat, we are privileged to taste the flavor of Shabbat. Then, the holiness of Shabbat day is intensely felt, and the feeling of pleasure and the sweet delight of Shabbat fills our entire existence.

**D.** To be worthy of this holiness, one must maintain righteous conduct throughout the entire week. However, if one strays from the right path during the week, they will not experience the sanctity of Shabbat, and they will have to put in extra effort on Shabbat to ignite the spark of enthusiasm and holiness within them.

**E.** Throughout the six days of work, a person is immersed in the vanities of this world and its desires. As such, even without intention, the impure powers cling to him, and prevent him from attaining closeness to G-d, and His love and fear.

**If** that were not enough, as soon as these impure powers find a place to rest within a person, it derives nourishment from his Torah study, prayers, and performance of the commandments. Almost nothing remains untouched by it, both in spiritual matters and in physical matters. And it is these powers that prevent him from all the achievements and progress that are due to him.

**Parshat Vayakhel - Summary and Practical applications**

**However**, on Shabbat, all the worlds are elevated in their essence, and the impure powers that exist in this world, despite their best efforts, are not allowed to rise but are completely separated and removed.

**Moreover**, they are also thrown into the depths of the abyss, and bound in chains of iron until the completion of Shabbat. Therefore, every person needs to prepare himself extensively for the holiness of Shabbat...

**F.** The preparation for Shabbat on the eve of Shabbat involves the three aspects of thought, speech, and action, and is performed by seven practices:

1. Reading the weekly Torah portion twice and the Targum once.
2. Cutting one's nails.
3. Bathing in warm water.
4. Preparation of the flame.
5. Cleaning one's hands and feet before immersion.
6. Immersion with the proper intentions.
7. Wearing Shabbat clothes with the proper intentions.

**The** purpose of all these preparations is to separate the impure powers that cling to a person throughout the weekdays and to prepare his soul to receive the holiness and great light of

the Shabbat. However, if a person diminishes from these preparations, they consequently, diminish from the additional levels of soul (Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama) of that Shabbat.

**G.** "Shabbat is equal in weight to the entire Torah." Meaning that anyone who observes Shabbat according to its laws is considered in Heaven as a Jew who has fulfilled the entire Torah !

**Therefore**, it is clear and certain that one must learn and know the laws of Shabbat, for without knowing the laws of Shabbat, it is impossible to properly observe Shabbat !

**It** is utterly impossible to be saved from violating Shabbat unless one learns all its laws thoroughly.

**This** applies to every Jew, even one knowledgeable in Torah, and all the more so for someone who has not learned Torah and does not know how to observe Shabbat. Therefore, each person must learn and teach his sons, daughters, and household members the laws of Shabbat, which are common and frequently encountered laws that one might easily stumble upon.

**H.** When we say that one must teach his household the laws of Shabbat, we are not merely referring to the act of studying itself, but to the understanding. The goal is for the children to understand and absorb the

**Parshat Vayakhel - Summary and Practical applications**

laws, so that when they encounter a particular situation, they will know how to act. Therefore, one must prepare himself before the meal, so that he himself is clear about the laws he wants to convey, and knows how he wants to convey them.

**He** should also strive to convey them in a good way that leaves everyone with a good taste and a desire to hear more. At the very least, he should learn with his

household two laws at each meal, two laws at the Friday night Shabbat meal, and another four during the two daytime meals. Thus, every Shabbat, his household will learn six new laws, and over time, they will achieve proficiency in the laws of Shabbat.

**By** observing Shabbat, they will merit the delight of Shabbat and attach themselves with an unbreakable bond to the Creator of the World!

**Shabbat Shalom!**





bs"d

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29<sup>th</sup> of Adar I, 5784



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:38 pm	6:37 pm	7:09 pm
Miami	6:08 pm	7:01 pm	7:39 pm
Los Angeles	5:38 pm	6:34 pm	7:09 pm
Montreal	5:34 pm	6:37 pm	7:05 pm
Toronto	5:58 pm	6:59 pm	7:29 pm
London	5:54 pm	6:45 pm	7:07 pm
Jerusalem	5:27 pm	6:17 pm	6:59 pm
Tel Aviv	5:24 pm	5:14 pm	6:55 pm
Haifa	5:23 pm	6:13 pm	6:54 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:24 pm	6:15 pm	6:55 pm

**Pathways to the Heart**

*From the Words of*

**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*Be sure to wear a nice and large kippah, and to wear it even at night when going to sleep. From age three train your son to put on a kippah, and to not remove it at any time. If it falls from their head, call them over to immediately put it back on and tell the boy 'sweetheart, you are already a big boy, put on a kippah, you're a smart kid'.*

*Children should be taught to wear a kippah while sleeping at night. I have observed that many well-behaved and pure children share this practice. Upon investigation, I discovered that their parents consistently ensure these children sleep with a kippah. And if it happens to fall off during sleep, they promptly return it to their head.*



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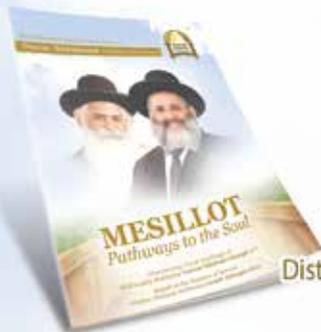
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