

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 26

**Toldot | Balance Between Body and Soul**



# MESILLOT

*Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating Torah teachings of  
HaTzaddik Rabbeinu **Yoram Michael Abargel** zt"l

Based on the lectures of his son  
HaRav HaGaon Rabbeinu **Israel Abargel** shlita

# ...*~* PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL *~*...

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### Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of  
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 **Parashat Toldot** 

**Where Should I Go ?**

**Once**, Rebbe Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Baal HaTanya, attended a wedding at which a drunk man rebuked all those present. He went one by one, declaring their flaws and demanding improvement.

**Suddenly**, the Baal HaTanya intervened, “Wait! You skipped me!”

**There’s** no doubt that the holy Baal HaTanya fulfilled the words of *Chazal* that one of the 48 attainments of Torah is, “To love reproof.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Who** am I to reprove the Rebbe!” the drunk man trembled.

**The** Rebbe replied, “If you didn’t reprove everyone else, then fine, but since you already did, reprove me as well!”

**The** truth is, if he hadn’t been intoxicated, he probably would’ve

been more careful with the respect of the Rebbe, but the wine did its job...

**The** drunk man began... “Well, the Rebbe is a Rebbe, and we are simple people. The question is in relation to what is the Rebbe superior to us? What the Rebbe doesn’t know, I too don’t know. In this respect, we’re equal. Also, what I do know, the Rebbe knows, so in this too, we’re equal. But, there are things that the Rebbe knows, that I don’t know! But the things that we both don’t know are far more numerous than the things that the Rebbe knows, which I don’t know! So here too, we’re equal!”

**They** then both began to weep profusely.

**The** man cried out of drunkenness, but the Rebbe cried

because he realized how much more there was to know !<sup>2</sup>

A few decades earlier...<sup>3</sup>

**At** the age of 20, after getting married, the Baal HaTanya, who was already known to all as a great Torah scholar, nevertheless felt that this wasn't enough and that he must go and learn from one of the *Gedolei HaDor* the correct path in *avodat Hashem* in order to achieve loftier heights of wisdom and *kedusha*, but, the Baal HaTanya was uncertain in where, or to whom, he should go.

**He** heard that two great luminaries illuminated the world... One being Rebbe Dov Ber, the disciple of the holy Baal Shem Tov, who dwelled in the city of Mezritch, the Maggid of Mezritch. The other was Rabbi Eliyahu, who lived in the city of Vilna, the Vilna Gaon.

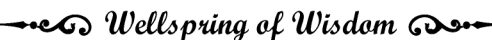
**The** main emphasis of Rabbi Eliyahu was Torah study, specifically its revealed aspects. In contrast, the main focus of the

Maggid of Mezritch was the elevation in *avodat Hashem* and *D'vekut* (clinging to Hashem), primarily through the *avodah* of *tefillah* (prayer).

**As** the Baal HaTanya's desire for Torah knowledge increased, he initially decided to go to Vilna and join the Vilna Gaon and his disciples. However, a few days after making his decision, when he was already on the road heading to Vilna, he contemplated the matter again. He thought to himself, "Baruch Hashem, I already know a little bit of how to learn. However, how to pray properly, I still don't know at all. I'll first go to Mezritch and check out their path of *avodah*, and then I will go study Torah in Vilna."

**And** that's what he did...

**When** he arrived in Mezritch, he found the Maggid sitting with his holy and wise disciples as the *Shechina* manifested on them, and said to himself, "Blessed is Hashem



2. **V'Higadeta** (Yom Kippur & Sukkot, p. 222).

3. **Imrei Noam** - Moadim (Elul, Maamar 5).

who has guided me on the true path !” From the moment the Baal Tanya tasted the sweetness of the Maggid’s path in *avodat Hashem*, he found peace for his soul and never parted from him from that day on.

**The** Maggid received him with love and brought him close. When the Maggid realized the profound wisdom of the Baal HaTanya, he chose him to be the *chavruta* (a study partner) of his son, Rebbe Avraham, also known as Rebbe Avraham HaMalach (the angel) for his immense holiness and self-denial in all matters of this world, like that of an angel.

**The** Baal HaTanya would teach Rebbe Avraham HaMalach the revealed aspects of the Torah, and then Rebbe Avraham HaMalach would teach the Baal HaTanya the secrets and hidden aspects of the Torah.

**The** Baal HaTanya, whose heart yearned to obtain the concealed aspects of the Torah, never wanted their study sessions to end. When he would notice that their time together was

coming to an end, he would then move the hands of the clock back in order to add extra time to their learning...

**Once**, while they were in the middle of learning, the Baal HaTanya suddenly got up and went to the next room. After a while, when he still hadn’t returned, Rebbe Avraham got up and went to check up on him...

**To** his surprise, he found the Baal HaTanya sitting at the table eating a bagel with butter !

**Rebbe** Avraham was puzzled and asked in bewilderment, “We were just learning the most spiritual concepts of the Torah ! How did you so quickly descend to the physicality of eating a buttered bagel ? !”

**The** Baal HaTanya looked up at Rebbe Avraham and answered... “Today, while we were studying the secrets of the Torah together, I felt such a spiritual transcendence and longing for Hashem until I sensed that my soul was about to leave my body. I had no choice but

to eat something to bring me back to the material world..."<sup>4</sup>

**Concern** for the health of his body caused the Baal HaTanya to stop in the middle of learning and go eat !

**This** reminds us of another story...

**Once**, the Porat Yosef yeshiva organized a two-day trip to visit the graves of tzaddikim in the north of Israel, together with the Rosh Yeshiva, HaRav Ben-Tzion Abba Shaul. On the first day, they traveled around, visiting the graves of tzaddikim to pray on them, and at night, they stayed in Meron. In the morning, they asked the Rosh Yeshiva permission to visit more graves of tzaddikim in the area.

**Rabbi** Ben-Tzion Abba Saul responded, "We have visited enough tzaddikim. From here on,

have fun in your free time before we have to return to the yeshiva !” He then took the students to exciting attractions and activities.

**On** the way, there were those who complained and said, “Why are we going to swim in the Kinneret ?! We want to visit more *kivrei tzaddikim* !”

**“Why ?”** the Rosh Yeshiva inquired, “Is it so that your prayers will be accepted, and you’ll increase your merits ?”



**“Yes, yes !”** the students answered.

**“If** so, back to the yeshiva, and immediately !”

**“Why ! ?”** They asked nervously...

**He** replied, “Because nothing increases merits like that of Torah study, and *tefillah* is received and

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 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

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**4. Don’t** think that this is a simple matter... The Chazon Ish once told how he once learned a difficult Tosafot and simply couldn’t understand it. He described that he didn’t give up and continued to toil in their words until he completely ran out of strength. He

then pounded his fist on the table and declared, “Continue on !” This cost him exponentially. He explained that he collapsed and was physically unable to learn Torah for a year and a half from extreme headaches !

- V’Higadeta (Yom Kippur & Sukkot, p. 122).

beloved in the eyes of Hashem, specifically in a place where Torah is learned.”

“**But** we need a vacation !” they exclaimed.

“**If** you need a vacation, then we’re off to the Kinneret !”<sup>5</sup>

**Our** parasha focuses on this merge between physical and spiritual...

### Twins !

**Avraham** Avinu loosened the ties from Itzchak’s hands and feet and helped him get up...

**Avraham** turns to Itzchak and says, “Go to the *beit midrash* of Shem and study Torah there until it’s time for you to get married.”

**Three** years later, Avraham Avinu calls his servant Eliezer and says to him, “Now is the time, go out and find my son Itzchak, a wife...”

**That** year, when Itzchak was forty years old, he married Rivka.

**Nineteen** years later and Itzchak and Rivka still didn’t merit having any children.



**In** all honesty, Itzchak Avinu wasn’t bothered by it at all. He had long since cut himself off from any connection to this world or to his desires, and because Itzchak did not pray for children, he didn’t receive any.

**Then** Hashem decided to instill within Itzchak the desire to have children...

**Suddenly** Itzchak began to wonder... “Why hasn’t my wife Rivka given birth?” From that moment on, he began to pray for children, and he received !<sup>6</sup>

**When** Itzchak Avinu was sixty years old, he had twins, Yaakov and Esav...

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 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

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5. **Rabbenu** HaOhr LeTzion (Vol. 1, p. 379).

6. **There** was once a chassid who had been married for more than ten years and tragically still had no children. Every year, for the holidays, he would travel to his

Rebbe, Rebbe Yehuda Aryeh Leib, also known as the Shpole Zeide, and ask for a blessing that Hashem merit them with children. Unfortunately, every year, the Shpole Zeide would deny his request for a

**Parashat Toldot - Twins !**

blessing. When he would return home, his saddened wife would ask him, “Why do you leave me alone every year on the holidays when you know that the Rebbe doesn’t want to bless us with children ?”

**The** next time the chassid came before Rebbe Aryeh Leib, he found him concentrated in prayer. Thinking that this was an opportune time, he quickly took the chance to ask for a blessing. Of course, the Rebbe rejected his request once again. This time the chassid was persistent, declaring, “I won’t move from here until the Rebbe promises me that I will have a child!” Hearing this, the Shpole Zeide became angry and announced, “I promise that you won’t have children because you interrupted me during my prayer on behalf of all the Jewish people, and you do not stop !”

**Broken** by what he had just heard, the chassid returned home and told his wife everything that had happened. Their hope of ever having children had completely vanished before their eyes...

**A** couple of years passed, and the chassid was visiting the town of Koritz on business. In a short amount of time, he had already completed a number of business deals and made a hefty sum of money. Looking for a place to celebrate the holiday of Pesach, the young Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz decided to invite him. When the chassid arrived at the Rebbe’s home on the eve of Pesach, he was perplexed to see that there was little preparation going on. The chassid asked the Rebbe’s wife if they needed any help. Confirming his fears, she had no money to buy anything for the Seder, neither wine,

matzah, or even food for that matter. The chassid told her, “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of it.” The Rabbanit gladly accepted his generous gesture.

**A** short while later, the chassid returned with a carriage full of everything they needed for Pesach. There were matzot, fine wine, meat, delicious fresh fruit and vegetables, everything needed to celebrate the holiday of Pesach. He also brought new clothes for the Rebbe and his wife, furniture for their home, and silk sheets for their beds. Last of all, he brought large candles so that Rebbe Pinchas’ home would be well lit during the Seder night.

**Unaware** of the actions of the chassid and everything that had transpired, Rebbe Pinchas wondered to himself, “How is it that my wife left me alone, uninterrupted in my study of Torah all day? As far as I remember, we had no food, matzah, or wine... How has she not said nothing yet ?” But with true emuna and faith in Hashem, Rebbe Pinchas asked no questions.

**That** night, after finishing his prayers, Rebbe Pinchas made his way home together with his esteemed guest.

**Rebbe** Pinchas opened the door to his home and was speechless. He was expecting to see an empty table, but instead, his table was set with matza, wine, and fine food. Not only that but new furniture in his home... He was utterly shocked.

**The** Seder began with immeasurable joy. The face of the Rebbe shone as he expounded on the story of our freedom

**Parashat Toldot - Two-Faced**

**Yaakov** and Esav were born on the same day, lived one hundred and forty-seven years, and in the end, were also buried on the same day.

**When** looking back at their lives, we discover that one of the

main differences between them was their ability to balance between the physical and the spiritual.

**His** entire life, Yaakov Avinu balanced between body and soul, while his brother Esav didn't succeed in doing so...

**Two-Faced**

**At** the opening of our parasha, the Torah tells us that Rivka's pregnancy was very strange, as it says, "The children bustled within her" (Bereshit 25:22).

**Chazal** say<sup>7</sup> that when Rivka walked past a Beit Knesset or Beit Midrash, Yaakov would

try to leap out, and when she passed a place of idol worship, Esav tried to break out of her.

**Rivka** went to the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever to try to understand what was going on... There, she found out that "Two nations are in your womb" (Bereshit 25:23).

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from slavery in Egypt. During the meal that followed, Rebbe Pinchas was informed by his wife about their guest's generosity. In his uplifted state of happiness, he said to the chassid, "You have gone above and beyond for the sake of this holiday and my family! How can I repay you?"

**The** chassid recounted to the Rebbe his misfortune of not having children. Rebbe Pinchas stood up with emotion and promised him, "If I have any merit in Heaven, you and your wife should be blessed this year with a healthy baby boy!"

**At** that moment, there was great commotion in Heaven. The promises of the two tzaddikim, the Shpole Zaide and Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz, stood against one another. In the end, the Heavenly court decided that Rebbe Pinchas had never sworn during his life, even for something true. Thus, it was decided in Heaven that the promise of Rebbe Pinchas should be fulfilled. That very next year, the chassid and his wife had a baby boy, just as promised by the Rebbe.

**7. Bereshit** Rabba 63:6.

**Parashat Toldot - Esav - A Skilled Hunter**

**Rebbe** Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam asks...<sup>8</sup> Esav endeavored his entire life to display to his parents that he was a tzaddik, and in order to strengthen this image, he would ask his father questions in Halacha, “Father, how do we separate *ma’aser* (tithes) from salt and straw?” If so, why, while in his mother’s womb, did he reveal his true face by trying to break free to visit places of idol worship?

**The** reason is, precisely because Esav wanted to create an image of a tzaddik, he wanted to go to places of idol worship! He wanted to destroy all the idols and pummel everyone there!

**Chazal** knew that his desire derived from an imbalance in his soul, and said about him, “The wicked are estranged from the womb” (Tehillim 58:4).

**When** examining the lives of Yaakov and Esav, we find that

**Esav - A Skilled Hunter**

**Rabbi** Shimshon David Pincus zt”l writes<sup>9</sup> that we all recognize the

one of the main differences between them has to do with the balance/stability in their soul.

**Yaakov** Avinu was privileged with attaining a balance between body and soul. He understood that we live in a material world, and Hashem created His world in such a way that in order to exist, we require a livelihood, yet, it is still forbidden to steal or loan money and not return it. On the other hand, he fixed time and used all his strength to draw close to Hashem and purify himself. Because Yaakov possessed balance between the physical and the spiritual, he merited forming the Jewish people!

**On** the other hand, his brother Esav failed in achieving balance between the physical and spiritual, which in the end is what led to his downfall because an imbalance between body and soul is the root of all evil!



8. **Nitzotzei** HaTorah (Bereshit, p. 208).

9. **Tiferet** Shimshon (Bereshit, p. 275).

Esav is the symbol of impurity and evil. The Gemara states that Esav committed five sins on the day that Avraham Avinu passed away, including murder and heresy...

**In** contrast, Yaakov, the most highly admired of our forefathers, symbolizes holiness and purity.

**Yet**, when the Torah defines each of them, it says, “The boys grew up. Esav became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, and Yaakov was a wholesome man, a dweller of tents” (Bereshit 25:27).

**The** difference between Yaakov and Esav was that Yaakov was a “dweller of tents,” while Esav was a “man of the field.”

**Rashi** commentates, “man of the field” - Literally, an idle person.

**We** have to ask the question... Is that really the shortcoming of Esav, that he was an idle person?! What about his utter wickedness?! And Yaakov, is that really what made him great, that he was a *yeshiva bachur*, that he sat and learned in the tents of Torah?! What about his complete righteousness and piety? What about his holiness and purity?!

**Rather**, the Torah specifically mentions these characteristics to tell us that precisely there lies the abysmal difference between them. Precisely in these characteristics lies the culmination of the wickedness of one brother and the climax of the righteousness of the other brother.

**The** root of Esav’s evilness was the fact that he was idle and loved leisure, fleeing from all effort and labor. Esav’s task was to engage in commerce and help his brother Yaakov learn Torah with the money he would earn (see what we wrote on this below), yet he was also required to set times for himself to engage in Torah. Instead, Esav led a disordered and unbalanced life, and as a result of his extra time, he succumbed to evil.

**On** the other hand, Yaakov Avinu placed himself in the tents of Torah to learn and complete himself with tremendous diligence and thus gained the loftiest of heights and merited being the father of the twelve tribes.

**When** we return home in the evening and relax and enjoy our

“free time” to do as our hearts desire, we become “men of the field,” idle men. Precisely at these moments do we face the greatest spiritual danger.

**However**, this wouldn't be the case if we attended a regular Torah lesson or *chavruta* in the evening, thus utilizing our entire day to its fullest until we have to go to bed and recharge ourselves for the next

day. Also, eating and sleeping shouldn't be an action that we resort to because we're bored or have nothing else to do, rather because it's time to eat or it's time to sleep! There should be no time for idleness! If we make it a habit that when we aren't busy with work, we busy ourselves with Torah and *tefillah*, then we'll be considered real disciples of Yaakov Avinu.

### **Two Nations Under One Roof**

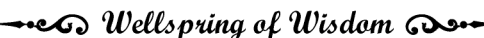
**Shem** told Rivka, “Two nations in your womb” (Bereshit 25:23) - know that you have two babies in your womb, two nations, Yaakov and Esav. When Rivka heard this, she was relieved...

**The** Gemara<sup>10</sup> tells us that the “two nations” are Antoninus, the king of Rome, a descendent of Esav, and Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, also known as “Rebbe,” a descendent of Yaakov.

**But** why did *Chazal* precede Antoninus to Rebbe? Shouldn't the virtue of Rebbe's holiness

and greatness in Torah be worthy enough to precede him to Antoninus?

**We** find two places in the Torah where Zevulun precedes Issachar... The first being in Yaakov Avinu's blessing to his sons before his death, “Zevulun will settle on seashores, he will be a harbor for ships; his border will reach Sidon. Issachar is a bony donkey, crouching between the borders” (Bereshit 49:13-14). The second being in Moshe Rabbeinu's blessing to Am Israel before his death, “Regarding Zevulun he said:



Rejoice Zevulun at your departure, and Issachar in your tents.” (Devarim 33:18).

**The** obvious question arises... Why did these two tzaddikim (Yaakov and Moshe) precede Zevulun to Issachar? After all, Issachar was the tribe most proficient in Torah. The Midrash says<sup>11</sup> that the tribe of Issachar included two-hundred Heads of Sanhedrin, and all their brothers would ask them questions in Halacha! Seemingly, it was appropriate to precede the Torah’s honor, Issachar, to Zevulun...

**Rather**, the answer to this question is found in that same Midrash... How did Issachar achieve all this? From Zevulun, who engaged in commerce and provided for Issachar, who was a *Ben Torah*.

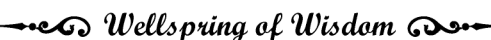
**We** find that the reason Zevulun preceded Issachar, even though Issachar was greater than him in Torah, was because the only reason that Issachar managed

to sit and learn Torah with peace of mind and joy, without the burden of earning a living, was in the merit of Zevulun who would support him and provide him with a livelihood with a happy heart and a generous hand. Therefore, it was fit to precede Zevulun to Issachar.

**According** to this, we understand why *Chazal* preceded Antoninus to Rebbe.

**Until** the era of Rebbe, it was forbidden to write down the Oral Torah.<sup>12</sup> But, because he saw that the Oral Torah was being forgotten, he received special permission to write down the Oral Torah, as well as clearance from heaven, and compiled the Mishna.

**In** order to compile the Mishna, Rebbe had to gather all the *Talmidei Hachamim* in Eretz Israel so that everyone could recite the Mishnayot that they had heard from their Rabbis. Thus, Rebbe amassed all the Mishnayot, corrected and clarified them, wrote



11. **Bereshit** Rabba 72:5.

12. Gittin 60b.

them down accurately, and arranged them until the Mishna that we know today emerged.<sup>13</sup> However, in order to achieve such an enormous task, he had to pay all these *Hachamim* a large salary for all their hard work and to provide for their families. The one who provided Rebbe with the immense sums needed to finance these massive expenses was none other than Antoninus, the Roman king.

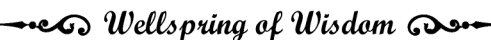
**Antoninus** loved Rebbe immensely and treated him with great respect. He humbled himself before him despite being a great king. Chazal say<sup>14</sup> that Antoninus would tend to Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi daily. He would feed him, give him to drink, and provide him with all his needs. When Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi wanted to ascend upon his bed, Antoninus would bend down in front of the bed and tell Rebbe to use him as a stepstool to ascend to his bed. When Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would abstain from doing so in honor of the

king, Antoninus would say, "If I would only merit being as a sheet under you in the World to Come!"

**Because** of the immense love that Antoninus had for Rebbe, he supported him with all his might and fortune, and in his merit, Rebbe succeeded in compiling the Mishnah, which includes all the laws of the entire Oral Torah. Because it was only thanks to the enormous financial support of Antoninus that Rebbe was able to compile the Mishnah, Chazal preceded Antoninus to Rebbe, similar to how Yaakov and Moshe preceded Zevulun to Issachar.

**According** to this, we can understand the matter of the birth of Yaakov and Esav in a new light, as well as what Shem informed Rivka that from her will come to nations, Antoninus and Rebbe, and that when she heard that, she was relieved.

**The** will of Hashem and His intention in the forming of Yaakov



13. See Rashi on Bava Metzia 33b.

14. **Avodah** Zarah 10b.

and Esav in the womb of their mother was that Yaakov Avinu would sit and engage in Torah all his days, “A wholesome man, a dweller of tents.” At the same time, Esav would work and earn a living with dignity, “a man of the field,” and support his brother Yaakov from his wealth so that he can engage in Torah unhindered. However, although Hashem’s intention was fulfilled by Yaakov Avinu, for he sat and engaged in Torah, his brother Esav did not fulfill it. Instead of supporting his brother Yaakov, he went down evil paths.

**This** is what Shem informed Rivka, that even though that at the moment Hashem’s intention will not be fulfilled by Esav, in the future, in the days of Antoninus and Rebbe, it will be. Antoninus will fulfill Esav’s purpose in this world and will generously support *Bnei Torah*, the descendants of Yaakov.

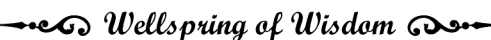
**From** all of the above, we learn how enormous the virtue of those who financially support

*Bnei Torah* with a generous hand and a happy heart so that they can sit and engage in Torah with peace of mind and joy truly is

**Those** that have been merited with the privilege to support those *Bnei Torah* should know that the Torah that those *Bnei Torah* learn protects them and their families from all harm, “It is a tree of life to those who hold on to it, and its supporters are fortunate” (Mishlei 3:18).<sup>15</sup>

**It** is also important to keep in mind that the reward of those who support Torah scholars is no less than the reward of Torah scholars themselves, as the Midrash says...<sup>16</sup> In the future, Hashem will make canopies for *Baalei Tzedakah* next to *Bnei Torah* in Gan Eden as it says, “For wisdom canopies with wealth canopies” (Kohelet 7:12).

**That** is, next to the canopies that Hashem will make for *Bnei Torah* in Gan Eden as a reward for their Torah study, He will also



15. See Vayikra Rabba 25:1.

16. Ibid. 25:2.

make canopies for all those esteemed Jews who supported those same *Bnei Torah* with their wealth, and in their merit, they were able to sit and engage in Torah

with a happy and unworried heart. The same reward that those Torah scholars earned will be the same reward that those who supported them will earn.<sup>17</sup>

### **For Whom Was the World Created ?**

**On** the sixth day of creation, man was created, “Hashem *Elokim* formed the man, dust from the earth, and He blew into his nostrils a soul of life, and man became a living soul.” (Bereshit 2:7).

**The** verse explains that man is composed of two parts...

1. Dust from the earth.
2. A living soul, a holy soul.

**This** is an absolute miracle, for the body and the soul are two complete opposites. The body is naturally attracted to materiality, food, money, honor, etc. Whereas the soul is naturally pulled toward *ahavat Hashem*, longing to escape materiality and cling to Him with absolute *D'vekut*.

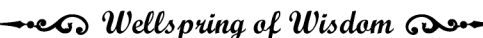
**It** turns out that in every moment of a Jew's life, a war for existence

takes place within them ! The body desires its pleasures, while the soul is disgusted by all the things the body loves and yearns to dispose of all physicality and nullify itself to Hashem. Alone stands man, torn between two worlds, searching, looking for the true path, “Who's the primary existence? Who's foremost? Where should I invest most of my time and effort, in my body or my soul ?”

**One** might think, “Obviously, the soul is primary, and we should deal only with it !”

**But**, is this, in fact, true ?

**Hashem** created all the souls of every generation already at the time of the creation of the world. The souls stand in heaven and wait many long years until they are privileged to descend into this



world and be clothed within a physical body, for the soul knows that as long as it stands in heaven, it has no ability to fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah, for most of the mitzvot of the Torah can only be fulfilled by the body, tefillin, tzitzit, tzedakah, tefillah, etc...

**If** so, it isn't accurate to say that the soul is primary.

### Proper Balance

**The** Gemara conveys one of the conversations that Antoninus had with Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi as follows...

**One** of the foundations of *emuna* is that after a person passes away, they'll have to face Hashem, the Creator of the world, and specify their deeds. For good deeds, they'll receive a reward, and for bad deeds... I don't understand, how can you punish man?! I'll explain... Hashem will turn to the body and ask, "Why did you sin?" The body will answer, "I didn't sin, the soul did! I have proof! Since the day the soul departed from me, I am like a silent stone in the grave,

**However**, it's certainly not accurate to say that the body is primary, for when the soul leaves the body, the body is of no use, and it's thrown into a pit in the middle of a cemetery.

**Rather**, the correct conclusion is that the body and the soul are one whole, a complete entity, and one cannot do without the other!

**Confused?!** Keep reading...

and do not sin!" Hashem will then turn to the soul and ask, "Why did you sin?" The soul will respond, "I didn't sin, the body did! I have proof! Since the day that I departed from the body, I fly in the air like a bird, incapable of sin!" If so, you can't punish man!

**Rabbi** Yehuda HaNasi listened and then said... I will tell you a parable to what this is comparable. A certain wealthy man had a fine orchard, and in it, there were beautiful fig trees. He stationed two guards in the orchard, one lame and one blind. The lame said to the blind man, "I see ripe fruits on a fig tree. Come and place me upon your

shoulders. I will guide you to the tree, and we will together, take the figs.” The lame rode upon the shoulders of the blind man, and they took the figs and ate them. Sometime later, the wealthy owner of the orchard returned and asked the guards, “What happened to the fruits of the fig tree?!” The lame said, “Do I have working legs with which I would be able to walk and take the figs?” The blind man said, “Do I have any working eyes with which I would be able to see the way to the figs?” What did the owner of the orchard do? He placed the lame upon the shoulders of the blind man just as they did when they stole the figs, and he judged them as one.

**So** too, does Hashem bring the soul on the day of judgment and casts it back into the body, as they were when they sinned, and He judges them as one, as it says, “He will call to the heavens above and to the earth that He may judge His people” (Tehillim 50:4).

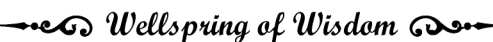
**“He** will call to the heavens above” - this is the soul, which is heavenly. “and to the earth that He may judge His people” - this is the body, which is earthly.

**But** what’s the resemblance between the lame and the blind man to the body and the soul? The holy Arizal explains<sup>18</sup> that the soul is considered lame because, without the body, it would be impossible for the soul to walk in this world. Thus, we also understand that the body is considered blind.

**The** Zohar HaKadosh says<sup>19</sup> that when the body is strong, the soul is weak, and when the body is weak, the soul is strong.

**Over** the generations, people understood from this Zohar that the body is the primary enemy of man. Therefore, it must be deteriorated by means of fasting and asceticism...

**Thus**, throughout the generations, anyone who lived



18. **Shaar** Maamarei Razal (Maamar Pesiotav Shel Avraham Avinu).

19. **Parashat** Vayeshev 180b.

**Parashat Toldot - How To Obtain The Torah**

ascetically was perceived as holy in the eyes of all.

**Everyone** believed that this was the correct path to take in the battle between body and soul until one day Hashem had sent the holy Baal Shem Tov to this world to reveal that this path is not the will of Hashem!

**People** asked the Baal Shem Tov, “What’s the main *avodah* in our world? For our ancestors told us that there were *tzaddikim* who fasted from Shabbat to Shabbat, and you came and eradicated that path! You said that any person who fasts would be held accountable because they are considered sinners for

tormenting their souls! Therefore, tell us what is our main *avodah*?”

**The** Baal Shem Tov answered, “In my opinion, a person needs to work on three things... *Ahavat Hashem*, *Ahavat Israel*, and *Ahavat HaTorah*. There is no need to for asceticism.”<sup>20</sup>

**After** the Baal Shem Tov passed away, his disciple, Rebbe Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, continued on the same path teaching his disciples that this way is not Hashem’s will.



**The** general principle is that one must maintain the proper balance between body and soul, between spiritual and physical...

## How To Obtain The Torah

**Hashem’s** greatest creation is the Torah! But to attain it, one

needs to climb a forty-eight-step ladder.<sup>21</sup>

---

... *Wellspring of Wisdom* ...

---

**20. Baal Shem Tov** on the Torah (Mishpatim, 17).

**21. At** the steps of the home of Rabbi Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman zt”l, stood an elderly Jew weeping bitterly... A Jew passing by ran towards him and asked worriedly, “What happened?”

**The** elderly Jew quickly replied, “You can’t help me.”

**“Tell** me... Maybe anyways, I’ll find a way to help.”

**The** elderly Jew looked at the helping man and said, “During World War II, I lived in Switzerland. One night, I couldn’t fall

**Parashat Toldot - How To Obtain The Torah**

**The** Mishna says<sup>22</sup> that the Torah is greater than the *Kehuna* (priesthood) and greater than royalty, for royalty is attained through thirty virtues, and *Kehuna* through twenty-four, but the Torah is attained through forty-eight!

**The** twentieth attainment is “Minimizing conversation.”



**The** following are the words of Rebbe Eliezer Shlomo Schick, the Maharosh, in his book *Torat Avot*...<sup>23</sup>

**Whoever** wants to attain the Torah must accustom themselves to minimize conversation, for there is nothing that interferes with attaining

Torah like meaningless conversation, which is very difficult to escape. One should guard themselves not to be pulled into trivial conversations, especially pointless and unimportant arguments. During that time, one can finish another chapter of Mishna, another page of Gemara, another few sections in Shulchan Aruch...

**In** our book, *Chelev Haarets*,<sup>24</sup> we brought the following in the name of the Vilna Gaon...

**Chazal** detailed all forty-eight qualities in which the Torah is attained, and one of them is “minimizing conversation.” Seemingly, it would’ve been more accurate to write “silence.” However,

— *Wellspring of Wisdom* —

asleep, and I decided to get up from my bed to take a walk... It was very late... There was a cold wind outside, and white snowflakes were falling softly... In the distance, I saw a flickering light from the synagogue, and I decided to go and see what it was. There sat a young man dressed in rags, studying Gemara, completely mindful and alert...

**I** couldn’t hold myself back. I approached him and asked, “Do you know what turmoil the world is going through? The earth is falling apart... Crumbling to pieces... What are you studying for?! What will you get out of it? Who will look at you?”

**The** young man looked at me with his good eyes and replied, “I’m learning to be a chariot for the Shechinah!”

**Years** have passed since then, and today I discovered that the young man was Rabbi Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman! For that, I cry. What came out of him and what came out of me!

**22. Pirkei Avot** 6:6.

**23. Torat Avot** 6:6.

**24. Chelev Haarets** (Vol. 1, p. 306).

**Parashat Toldot - No One Left Behind**

whoever truly wants to attain Torah, must have conversations with friends and family, for if they learn diligently for many hours without taking a break, their minds will become blurred from the constant strain which they put on it. Therefore, in order to retain one's learning, one requires cheerful conversation from time to time!

**This** is the intention of the Mishna in saying, "minimizing conversation." It doesn't intend in the negative, meaning to diminish conversation. Rather the intention is, on the contrary, to require a minute amount of conversation!

**However**, one must not only be careful from this...

**No One Left Behind**

**A** familiar phenomenon. A married couple with the same worldviews, identical meanings to life, and suddenly, one of the spouses, let's say the husband, decides to do *teshuvah* and quickly leaps forward, leaving behind his spouse and children...

**Suddenly** he doesn't see his wife, doesn't see his children... What happened? Did you forget about her?! Twenty-five years, she's been by your side, loyal to you, your true life partner. She takes care of you. She thinks about you twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Her entire life is... You! Suddenly you don't

recognize her... She's the mother of your children. She's going to be the grandmother of your grandchildren.

She's part of you!

**While** he lives in the clouds... He grows *peyot* as thick as ropes... He escapes the home early in the morning until after midnight to the Beit Midrash... His intense desire may lead to destruction...

**After** such a leap, the nosediving stage is bound to arrive... But, when it does, he doesn't fall back to the place from which he started, rather ten times lower. If he started at negative ten, then after nosediving, he'll plummet to negative one-hundred...

**Therefore**, one who has been strengthening in observance must not leap too far too quickly !

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt”l interpreted the words of the Mishna,<sup>25</sup> “He ascended the ramp and turned to the surrounding ledge,” as follows... Your spiritual ascent (“He ascended the ramp”) and your *teshuvah* should be calculatedly and be done gradually, not quickly, just as one who ascends a ramp slowly and carefully (unlike ascending stairs where one ascends quickly), and at every step in your ascent and spiritual progress, you should monitor your family and the rest of your surroundings (“and turned to the surrounding ledge”) that they too will succeed in ascending together with you and not be left behind.

**The** main goal is that every person elevates themselves and all of their family members as one !

Slow, gradual, steady progression, step by step. Slowly but surely, is, in fact, slower, but it is the surest way to guide yourself and your family to the purpose of life.

**By** going down this path, you merit balance of your soul, emotional stability, peace of mind, and progress is made in the soul and body simultaneously.

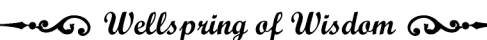
**However**, when one hurries, recklessly ascending the spiritual ladder before processing the step they stand on, trying to leap two steps forward, very quickly they lose control, and before they know it, they’ve already created an emotional tornado within them and started a war between body and soul, and in the end, they crash and fall...

**Now** we can clarify the words of the Zohar...

### Conversations of Tzaddikim

**On** the 10th of Adar I, 1973, Rebbe Issachar Dov Rokach shlita, the Belzer Rebbe,

visited Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe.<sup>26</sup>



25. Zevachim 5:3.

26. **Tzintzenet** HaMan (Vol. 4, p. 211).

**The** Lubavitcher Rebbe told the Belzer Rebbe that he had once met with his uncle, the previous Belzer Rebbe, Rebbe Aharon, and perceived that he had almost reached an entirely spiritual form, completely dissociated from his body.

**The** Belzer Rebbe then replied... In the book *Keter Shem Tov* that you recently reprinted, I saw that you brought a footnote in the name of the Maggid of Mezeritch, that “A small hole in the body, is a big hole in the soul.” It would seem that that contradicts the words of the Zohar, “When the body is strong, the soul is weak, and when the body is weak, the soul is strong?!”

**The** Lubavitcher Rebbe answered, “The understanding of the Zohar is that the force of bodily desires and pleasures are what cause weakness to the soul, whereas the intention of the Maggid of Mezeritch is that lack of bodily health is very harmful to the health of the soul. Additionally, this connects well to the words of his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, on the verse, “If you see the donkey of

your enemy lying under its burden, and you wish to refrain from helping him, you shall surely help him!” (Shemot 23:5):

**“If you see the donkey** (חמור) - when you look closely at your materiality (חומר), i.e., the body, you will see **“your enemy”** - for the body hates the soul which longs for spirituality and holiness.

**You** will also see the body **“lying under its burden”** - for Hashem gave the body Torah and mitzvot in order to purify itself, but the body is lazy in its fulfillment.

**So**, you might **“wish to refrain from helping him”** - from enjoying its desires. Rather you want to bring it to fulfill its purpose. Thus, you begin practicing asceticism in order to diminish its materiality...

**Thus** know, that this is not the way of the Torah. Instead, **“you shall surely help him!”** - uplift the body and purify it and not deteriorate it through asceticism.

**Indeed**, as is the custom today, people look for a source in the revealed aspect of the Torah for everything, for example,

in Halacha. Thus know, that healthy and wholesome body  
this is an explicit Halacha in is among the ways of (*avodat*)  
the Rambam,<sup>27</sup> “Maintaining a Hashem!”

### Shabbat Shalom!



## *The Pathway...*

1. Every person should have the desire to grow and transcend in their *avodat Hashem*, whether in Torah study, prayer, or anything else that increases their connection to Hashem. But, sometimes out of our many desires, we forget an important part of our *avodat Hashem*, and that is the balance between body and soul.

2. The body and the soul are two complete opposites. The body is naturally attracted to materiality, food, money, honor, etc. Whereas the soul is naturally pulled toward *ahavat Hashem*, longing to escape materiality and cling to Him with absolute *D'vekut*.

3. It turns out that in every moment of a Jew's life, a war for existence takes place within them... The body desires its pleasures, while the soul is disgusted by all the things the body loves and yearns to dispose of all physicality and nullify itself to Hashem. Alone stands man, torn between two worlds, searching, looking for the true path, "Who's the primary existence? Who's foremost? Where should I invest most of my time and effort, in my body or my soul?"

4. One might think, "Obviously, the soul is primary, and we should deal only with it!" But, is this, in fact, true? Hashem created all the souls of every generation already at the time of the

creation of the world. The souls stand in heaven and wait many long years until they are privileged to descend into this world and be clothed within a physical body, for the soul knows that as long as it stands in heaven, it has no ability to fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah, for most of the mitzvot of the Torah can only be fulfilled by the body, tefillin, tzitzit, tzedakah, tefillah, etc...

5. If so, it isn't accurate to say that the soul is primary. However, it's certainly not accurate to say that the body is primary, for when the soul leaves the body, the body is of no use, and it's thrown into a pit in the middle of a cemetery. Rather, the correct conclusion is that the body and the soul are one whole, a complete entity, and one cannot do without the other!

6. In previous generations the body was treated as the enemy of man and therefore it was broken by fasting and asceticism and the like. However, in later generations a new approach was brought about by the Baal Shem Tov in which there was no need to torture the body, for it is ultimately harmful to the soul and to our *avodat Hashem*.

7. Balance of the body and soul is done by taking the time to contemplate on what we are currently doing and what we need to do.

*The Pathway...*

Learning Torah is obviously a great thing, however, sometimes it is required of us to take a break and talk a little bit with our friends or family. Someone who wants to grow in their *avodat Hashem* shouldn't forget those around them.

**8.** On the other hand, not every time that we have free time should it be used to sit around lazily or to eat and sleep. When coming home in the evening don't sink straight into the couch and call it a day. Rest a little, eat a little and then fill the rest of your time with Torah and prayer.

This is a great way to keep balance between body and soul.

**9.** The main goal is that every person should elevate themselves and all of their family members as one! Slow, gradual, steady progression, step by step. Slowly but surely, is, in fact, slower, but it is the surest way to guide yourself and your family to the purpose of life. By going down this path, you merit balance of your soul, emotional stability, peace of mind, and progress is made in the soul and body simultaneously.





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# Shabbat Times

## Parashat Toldot

Kislev 2, 5782



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:37 pm	6:36 pm	6:58 pm
Miami	6:23 pm	7:15 pm	7:48 pm
Los Angeles	5:45 pm	6:40 pm	7:08 pm
Montreal	5:27 pm	6:29 pm	6:47 pm
Toronto	5:54pm	6:54 pm	7:14 pm
Jerusalem	4:31 pm	5:20 pm	5:56 pm

### Pathways to the Heart

From the Holy Words of HaRav Yoram zt"l

Where is wisdom found? With whoever makes themselves as nothing and nullifies themselves to Hashem. We must habituate our children to the traits of humility and modesty, and by doing so, we open for them all the gates of wisdom.

Humility = Success



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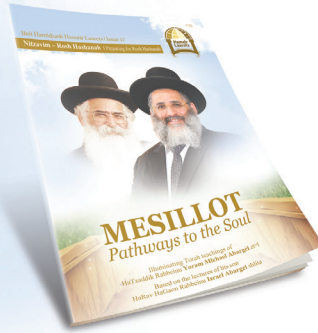
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