בס"ד

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 30

Miketz | Mesirut Nefesh – Chanukah

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

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Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

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Parashat Miketz

The Run-Down Hostel

The city of Kovno was once known as one of the most important Torah centers in Europe, a city that produced numerous great Torah personalities. Of all the greatness of Kovno, one critical component was overlooked... The hostel where the poor and the beggars slept was unfit for such a great city.

The rooms were musty and full of filth. The windows were broken and allowed the vicious cold winds to whistle through the cracks. Lights were nonexistent, and the flimsy bug-infested mattresses were poor excuses for beds.

Kovno was not a wealthy city by any stretch of the imagination. Nevertheless, when word got out that the city's hostel was in need of serious renovations, Rabbi Israel Salanter expected there to be a suitable response to the appeal. To his surprise, there wasn't.

None of the necessary repairs were done, and Rabbi Israel felt that people just didn't care enough. He then decided that he was going to do something about it.

He didn't approach the Rabbis of the city and demand that they speak about it in their synagogues on Shabbat, nor did he call any of the prominent wealthy individuals of the city and demand that they renovate the hostel. Instead, he went there himself.

The students who escorted him were shocked that someone of his stature would want to spend time in such a decrepit place, but Rabbi Israel walked in with determination and sat down on the floor. Those residing there were surprised that the Rabbi had come to visit but assumed that he had come to greet them and leave. They were wrong...

As he sat on the floor, he opened his books and began to learn. It began to rain after a few moments, and the cold rain dripped in through

Parashat Miketz - The Run-Down Hostel

the roof. And yet, despite all the efforts of his students for him to leave, Rabbi Israel refused. It didn't take long before there was no place to sit that wasn't wet.

After a few hours, Rabbi Israel's "stay" in the hostel became headline news in Kovno. Soon after, a small crowd formed outside, trying to convince Rabbi Israel to leave the run-down building...

It became dark, the rain continued, and although it was freezing cold, Rabbi Israel refused and remained seated.

Finally, some of the more prominent members of the city came and asked him what it would take for him to leave. Rabbi Israel's response resonated in the souls of those present, "I'm not leaving until this place is repaired to the point where any one of us would feel comfortable staying in it. If we truly felt the pain of another Jew, we would never have let things get this bad!"

The next morning the repairs began, and Rabbi Israel finally left. In a matter of days, the hostel was in excellent condition.[1]

Someone who serves Hashem with *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice), learns Torah, fulfills mitzvot and connects themselves with all of Am Israel,[2] merits having all the blessings for all of Am Israel be drawn down through them...

On this topic, our parasha...

Wellspring of Wisdom

1. Touched by the Parsha by Rabbi Yechiel Spero (Vol. 1, Tetzaveh).

2. We are obligated to greet every Jew with a cheerful expression, even if, for the time being, they are far from doing Hashem's will...

Concerning this matter, Rabbi Meir Tzimrot shlita once recounted...

Once, a Jew with absolutely no connection to Judaism stayed as a guest for Shabbat at Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's home. I don't know how he got there or what the circumstances were for his arrival, but this is what happened...

The guest noticed that on Shabbat night, we make *kiddush* on wine. Then, we drink wine again during the meal, and at the end of the meal, after *Birkat HaMazon*, we drink another glass of wine...

His astonishment intensified when he saw the same phenomenon again at the

Save Me!

David HaMelech went through a lot in his lifetime. On the one hand, he was a beloved and revered king in the eyes of Hashem and mankind, yet on the other hand, he had many enemies who couldn't come to terms with his existence in the world...

David HaMelech knew that there was only one solution... To flee to Hashem. To stand before Him and tell Him everything he was going through. His only option was to gather all his feelings and desires, as well as his anxieties and fears, and put them into words and pour them out before Hashem...

This is how the book of *Tehillim* was created!

Chapter 121 of *Tehillim* starts with, "A song of ascents. I lift my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come?"

David HaMelech wrote this chapter while hiding in a cave from his enemies who decided to kill him. He laid there in hiding and thought to himself, "I have nowhere to turn to for help... Who can possibly help me? I have no one to turn to but Hashem!"

"My help is from Hashem, the creator of heaven and earth" – My help is only from Hashem, because only He, who created the entire world and everything in it, can save me...

One question arises though... Why precisely here did David HaMelech give Hashem the title of "creator of heaven and earth"? Many other titles would have seemed more appropriate, such

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next meal in the morning, drinking before, during, and at the end of the meal. Each time, drinking a large filled cup...

On *Motzei Shabbat*, before he left, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman asked him, "How was your Shabbat with us? How would you briefly summarize it? What did you learn?"

The guest answered, "I finally understood why religious Jews don't drive on Shabbat... But why they don't turn on electricity, I still don't understand...

He learned something in the end!... Religious Jews know how to drink!

- Doresh Tov (Purim, p. 35).

as "Helper of the impoverished" or "Supporter of the fallen"...[3]

David HaMelech's heart was broken while he was being persecuted. He felt that because of his deeds, he was unworthy of having Hashem perform a miracle for him and save him from his enemies.

Therefore, he asked for mercy, saying, "Creator of heaven and earth." Just like at the time of creation, there were no merits for the world to be created, yet Hashem in His mercy created the world out of nothing, so too, even though I have no merits to be saved, rescue me out of nothing![4]

The world was created through *chesed*. However, *chesed* alone wasn't enough. More power was needed...

The power that was needed was *shalom*. Through *shalom*, the world was created!

To understand this, we'll start with a short introduction...

Living in Harmony

In the beginning, Hashem created four elements... Fire, air, water, and earth. From their combinations, the reality we see today was created.

Pause for a moment and comprehend this... Their combination is an absolute miracle. According to nature, these four elements can't be combined. Water extinguishes fire, and earth absorbs water. The nature of fire and air is to rise, while the nature of water and earth is to fall.

Nevertheless, Hashem brought the power of *shalom*, resulting in these extreme opposites to connect and become one!

The Gemara asks[5] why the sky is called *shamayim* and answers that Hashem took two opposite and opposing elements, fire, and

3. Ashrei HaIsh (Tehillim 121:1).
4. Tapuchei Chaim on Masechtot HaShas (Siyum HaShas, 12).
5. Chagigah 12a.

water, combined them, and made the sky! All this is possible only through the power of *shalom*!

The sky is called *shamayim* after combining these two elements because the word *shamayim* is a combination of the words *esh* (fire) and *mayim* (water).[6]

Furthermore, not only was the *shamayim* created by the power of *shalom*, but all of creation, as we say in *tefillah* every day,[7] "Who makes *shalom* and creates everything" – through the power of *shalom* He created everything!

However... When the creation of the world ended, Hashem decided to take the power of *shalom* and hide it...

Connecting to Our Past

The Arizal writes[8] that all the worlds and all of creation were created through the combinations of holy names. Yet the source of all these names is one four-letter name...

When you write that name out in its entirety, the gematria (numerical value) comes out to 45. This is how it is arranged (Do not say the letters out loud!)... יו"ד, ה"א, וא"ו, ה"א.

The Arizal explains that the letter יו"ד (Yud) corresponds to Avraham, the letter ה"א (Heh) corresponds to Itzchak, the letter וא"ו (Vav) corresponds to Yaakov, and the last letter ה"א (Heh) corresponds to David HaMelech.

These four *tzaddikim* make up the *Merkava* (chariot) of Hashem,[9] and Am Israel's continued and endless existence is in their merit.

Wellspring of Wisdom

6. See Maharsha (Chagigah 12a).

7. In *Birkat "Yotzer Ohr"* of *Shacharit.*

8. Likutei Torah (Bereshit).

9. Rabbi Natan Neta Shapira in his book *Megaleh Amukot* (252) writes... *Merkava Shlema* (The complete chariot) has the same gematria as "Avraham Itzchak Yaakov David".

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel writes[10] that after the sin of the golden calf, Moshe Rabbeinu needed to arouse mercy on Am Israel. To do so, he used the merit of the forefathers, saying, "Remember Avraham, Itzchak, and Israel, your servants, to whom You swore by Your Self" (Shemot 32:13). In other words, he said... Hashem, it's enough that you have the three holy forefathers. Even if their children rebel, even if they're corrupt, even if they're not trustworthy, still have mercy on them... For the sake of the forefathers...

We don't have the ability to comprehend the virtues of the forefathers... The three holy forefathers hold up the throne of Hashem! That's beyond our comprehension. Each and every one of us must connect to the roots of Am Israel, Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov.

For that reason, every Jew must pray three times a day, for, in each prayer, you literally connect to one of the forefathers. During *shacharit*, we connect to Avraham Avinu, during *mincha* to Itzchak Avinu, and during *arvit* to Yaakov Avinu. A Jew who has a connection to their forefathers is completely set in life. The forefathers prepare *bracha* (blessing) each day for every person according to that day. Every Jew must say, "When will I reach the levels of serving Hashem as my forefathers Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov?"

Avraham Avinu corresponds to the pillar of *chesed*, and therefore we must learn from him the traits of *chesed*, for this was his main task in this world.[11]

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10. Betzur Yarum (Vol. 7, p. 56).

11. In addition, Avraham Avinu was the first *tzaddik* to publicize Hashem and make His name known in the world. Since then, the *avodah* of *tzaddikim* has been to publicize His *Elokut* in the world...

Rabbi Michi Yosefi shlita told the following...

On one of the occasions when I visited my parents, my father, Rabbi Yehuda Yosefi shlita, told me a story that was told to him by the director of the Yeshivot Committee, Rabbi Moshe David Tenenbaum. This story truly touched my heart...

"One day," Rabbi Moshe David told, "while I was walking down the street to

Parashat Miketz - Connecting to Our Past

go learn at the Beit Midrash, a jeep suddenly stopped next to me, and a man, who looked like he had no connection to Judaism whatsoever, jumped out and told me that he and his friends are looking for a tenth man to make a *minyan* in order to hold a *Brit Milah* ceremony.

I agreed, of course, and we drove to his home. As soon as we arrived, the mohel started the ceremony, made the *bracha*, and fulfilled the holy mitzvah of *Brit Milah*. After we finished, the father of the child asked me to come and meet his father, the baby's grandfather, to wish him *mazal tov*. I happily obliged and walked with him towards an old Jew in a wheelchair.

I introduced myself and told him that I was a Karlin-Stolin *chassid*. He was fascinated and said, "What, you're a Karlin-Stolin *chassid ?!* I have to tell you something about your Rebbe. Decades ago, I lived in Berlin, Germany, having no connection to Judaism at all. One day, I heard that Rebbe Israel of Karlin, known as the Yanuka of Stolin, had arrived in Berlin.

For a Rebbe to come visit was a real attraction for the Jews of Germany. I was interested where the *tish* (a joyous gathering for Chassidic Jews around their Rebbe) would take place...

On Shabbat, I approached one of my friends and persuaded him to come with me. We got in the car and drove to the *tish* to see the Rebbe.

We entered the *tish* and saw the Rebbe sitting at the table. It was a very interesting experience... We had never seen anything like it.

At one point, the Rebbe began to speak, saying, "I don't normally speak at a *tish*..."

By the way, to this day, it's the custom of the Rebbe of Karlin-Stolin not to speak at a *tish*.

The Rebbe continued, "Nevertheless, in honor of the hosts, I'll say a short *D'var Torah*."

The *tish* was on Shabbat Parshat Kedoshim, and he talked about the verses, "You shall be holy... Man shall fear (תיראו) his mother and father and keep My Shabbat, I am Hashem" (Vayikra 19:2-3).

The Rebbe asked, "What's the connection between these four points ? Honoring parents, holiness, Shabbat, and Hashem...."

He said that there are several levels of connection with Hashem. There are *chassidim* for whom it's enough to say, "Be holy !" and they know what is imposed on them in *avodat Hashem*. Two words are enough, no need for more.

The second level are people who don't know what's imposed on them still and need to be told, "Man shall fear (תיראו – also meaning "look at") his mother and father." That is, look back and remember what you saw in your parents, what a beautiful Jewish way of life you witnessed.

The third level are people who didn't see anything in their parents. Thus the Torah tells them, at least, "Keep My Shabbat." Observe at least the minimum of Judaism, and keep Shabbat.

Parashat Miketz - Unseparated

Itzchak Avinu corresponds to the pillar of prayer, and therefore we need to learn *avodat HaTefillah* from him. No matter what you're going through, no matter what financial pressure you're under, no matter how much you have on your mind, when it comes time for prayer, drop everything, stop whatever you're doing, and go pray to Hashem. Even if you have a meeting with the President, it's better that he wait for you, and you not miss *tefillah*. Nothing in the world justifies or is worth missing even one prayer.

Yaakov Avinu corresponds to the pillar of Torah, and from him, we need to learn how to increase in Torah study as much as possible. We need to cling to the Torah as much as possible and be diligent in its learning. After living a long life, we'll see in heaven that the most beautiful moments of our lives were precisely those when we were privileged to sit and learn Torah...

This week we'll deal with the letter ואו of Hashem's name, which corresponds to Yaakov Avinu...

Unseparated

"This is the history of Yaakov. Yosef was seventeen years old" (Bereshit 37:2).

The Zohar says[12] that we learn from the words, "This is the history of Yaakov Yosef" that everything

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When the Rebbe got to the last level, he raised his voice, "You, the Jews of Germany, even Shabbat means nothing to you. You abandoned Shabbat as well!"

He slammed his fist on the table and said, "But at least remember... I am Hashem!"

The grandfather went on to say, "That outcry shook me to my core. Remember... I am Hashem!"

I had no connection to Judaism, and my daughter was then about to marry a gentile... As a result of that slam of the Rebbe's fist on the table together with "I am Hashem," the next day, I began to liquidate my business in Germany, and within a short period, I immigrated to Israel with my family. The fact that you witnessed the *Brit Milah* of my grandchild today is a result of the Rebbe pounding his fist on the table...

12. Vayeshev 182b.

that Yaakov attained, so did Yosef, and everything that happened to Yaakov also happened to Yosef.[13]

The Zohar continues and explains that the hidden meaning of this is that the letter וא״ו written out in its entirety contains twice the letter ו, one for Yaakov and one for Yosef, and the letter א in the middle. So too, the letter ו can't be pronounced unless another ו comes with it. Therefore, these two 14's are never separated from each other.

We already mentioned above that the letter וא״ו of the name of Hashem corresponds to Yaakov

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13. These are the words of the Midrash Rabbah 84:6...

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said, "This is the history of Yaakov Yosef." This is difficult for Reuven was the firstborn. The verse should've said, "This is the history of Yaakov Reuven." Rather it comes to teach you that everything that happened to this one (Yaakov) happened to that one (Yosef).

This one (Yaakov) was born circumcised, that one (Yosef) was born circumcised. This one's (Yaakov) mother was barren, that one's (Yosef) mother was barren. This one's mother bore two sons, so too that one's mother bore two sons. This one's mother had difficulty giving birth, and that one's mother had difficulty giving birth. This one was hated by his brother. That one was hated by his brothers.

Just like this one's brother sought to kill him, that one's brothers sought to kill him. This one was a shepherd, and that one was a shepherd. This one was despised, that one was despised. This one was stolen twice, and that one was stolen twice. This one was blessed with wealth. That one was blessed with wealth. This one left Eretz Israel, and that one left Eretz Israel. This one married a woman outside Eretz Israel, and that one married a woman outside Eretz Israel. This one fathered children outside Eretz Israel, and that one fathered children outside Eretz Israel.

This one was accompanied by angels, and that one was accompanied by angels. This one was made great through a dream. That one was made great through a dream. This one was the source of blessing for his father-in-law's house. That one was the source of blessing for his father-in-law's house. This one went to Egypt, that one went to Egypt. This one ended a famine, and that one ended a famine. This one satisfied others, that one satisfied others. This one commanded, that one commanded.

This one died in Egypt. That one died in Egypt. This one was embalmed. That one was embalmed. This one had his bones taken up to Eretz Israel. That one had his bones taken up to Eretz Israel.

Avinu, and now the Zohar reveals to us that Yaakov Avinu corresponds to the first ו, while Yosef corresponds to the second ו, and because they are always connected, thus the verse says, "This is the history of Yaakov Yosef."

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov writes[14] that the ו of Yaakov corresponds to the pillar of Torah, while the ו of Yosef corresponds to the pillar of *Shalom*.

The Gemara says[15] that *Talmidei Hachamim* increase *shalom* in the world.

The Gemara is coming to tell us that *shalom* is most evident in *Talmidei Hachamim*. From this, we can now understand the Zohar, that since Yaakov Avinu was the pillar of Torah, he merited having Yosef HaTzaddik, the pillar of *shalom*, attached to him.

Before we continue, let's clarify what "*shalom*" is...

Shalom – Uniting Opposites

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov goes on to say[16] that *shalom* is one of the greatest virtues. As chazal taught, "Hashem found nothing more suitable to contain blessing than *shalom*."[17]

But what is *shalom*?

Simply... *Shalom* is the uniting of opposites.

As the Zohar[18] clarifies the verse, "He makes *shalom* in His heights" (Iyov 25:2) – The angel Gavriel is made of fire while the angel Michael is made of water. Even though they are opposites, since water extinguishes fire, Hashem makes *shalom* between them and unites them.

14. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 80).
15. Brachot 64a.
16. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 80).
17. Mishnah Uktzin 3:12.
18. Vayikra 12b.

Parashat Miketz - True Shalom

In simpler terms, one of the most basic ideas in Kabbalah is the knowledge that every spiritual thing that descends from heaven needs a vessel that will contain it... When there's no vessel capable of containing it, the descending *shefa* (abundance of blessing) brings no benefit !

The Baal Shem Tov was accustomed to say that the suffering that is sent to someone from heaven is also a spiritual entity and too requires a vessel to contain it. That vessel is sadness ![19]

Therefore, someone who is always happy is immune to suffering ![20]

Let's return to our topic...

A Jew is composed of a body and a soul. Subsequently, we receive from heaven two kinds of *shefa* (spiritual sustenance), spiritual *shefa* for the soul and material *shefa* for the body.

The *shefa* for the soul includes new Torah insights, the onset of feelings of love and awe for Hashem, etc...

The *shefa* for the body includes within it health, livelihood, successful children, etc...

Hashem wants every Jew to have only good and happiness. Thus, He showers on us everything we need, resulting in the *shefa* descending and seeking vessels in which it can be contained.

The vessel that has the ability to contain every type of *shefa* is none other than "*shalom*," as chazal said,[21] "Hashem couldn't find a vessel to hold the blessings for Am Israel other than *shalom* !"

True Shalom

Every person has the desire to have *shalom* with others.

Yet, *shalom* isn't running to your friends with a smile or

19. See our book *Chelev Haarets* (Vol. 3, p. 1).

20. These are the words of the Baal Shem Tov... Hashem doesn't send suffering to someone unless He first sends them sadness...

- Degel Machane Ephraim (Parashat Ekev).

21. Devarim Rabbah 5:15.

buying them a gift for their birthday.

That's called developing a friendship, not *shalom*.

Shalom means connecting two opposites.

Rabbi Natan of Breslov writes[22] that the true meaning of *shalom* is to connect two opposites. After truly understanding this, you shouldn't be bothered when you come across someone who thinks the exact opposite of you. Don't assume that you'll never be able to live in *shalom* with them. Likewise, if you see two people who are complete opposites, don't say that it's impossible to bring *shalom* between them. On the contrary, the main achievement of *shalom* is to make *shalom* between two opposites, just as Hashem makes *shalom* in His heights between fire and water...

There's no greatness in living in *shalom* with someone who has the same opinions and interests as you. Precisely when you're with someone who opposes your opinions and everything you stand for, yet you live with them in *shalom*, that's real greatness.

Every one of us has the ability to achieve this, so long as we continue down the right path leading to *shalom*.

Men and women, who by nature are two complete opposites, must carry one another, and the primary *avodah* of a husband is to be in oneness with his wife with love and *shalom*, precisely then allowing the *Shechina* to manifest between them.

Women live in a world of emotion! On the other hand, men are far from the emotions and feelings that women find so special...

For example... What does he care whether the picture will be hung on this wall or that wall? Where on the table will the flowerpot sit?... In his eyes, all this is trivial!

22. Likutei Etzot (Shalom, 10).

But his wife cares !

Like so, in thousands of other little things concerning the management and arrangement of the home, if you belittle them, you belittle her and her feelings. If this is true concerning such things like these, how much more so in more personal and important matters... One misplaced word doesn't just hurt her feelings but can make her feel like it's the end of the world...

Who knows how many nights she spent crying because you didn't pay attention to her feelings or ignored something she wanted !

In the realm of emotion, there are phenomena that men just don't understand. Not once do we encounter female logic that doesn't seem like logic at all.

Feelings seemingly have no grip on reality at all, for common sense completely disregards them ! But yet, women cling to them... No matter what argument you make, nothing is successful in convincing her that she made a mistake. It won't help to get angry. She'll stand her ground ! Every man needs to come to terms with this ! Take this as a lesson in "Theory of Female Logic."

Men and women have many opposing characteristics. Women were blessed with an abundance of emotions, and men must understand their wife's world, what the essence of her life constitutes. When you understand her and how she "works," it will undoubtedly be easier for you to see her in a better light and forgive her for all her for anything she may have done.[23]

Understanding the other is to forgive !

When you manage to live in *shalom* with your wife, although she thinks completely different from you, you create a strong and pure vessel that holds all the blessing of your livelihood. As

23. Alufenu MiSubalim (Vol. 1, p. 163).

chazal said,[24] "Honor your wife so that you will become wealthy."

Before we continue, we'll bring another short introduction...

Shalom – Mesirut Nefesh

When the power of *shalom* is revealed within us, we then have the power to stand firm against all tests sent to us from heaven.

This is because, when the power of *shalom* is revealed within us, the second ו of the letter ואו of Hashem's name is revealed in us and illuminates our entire being...

Rebbe Nachman continues[25] and says that the light of the letter ו illuminates and is revealed in every Jew precisely when others try to uproot them from their *emuna*! Just as we've seen in every generation, even the furthest Jews become awakened and are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of Hashem.

We saw this during the Crusades, during the pogroms, during the Holocaust, etc... When Jews were presented with two options, either convert to Christianity or die, they all chose, without exception, to be slaughtered, burned alive, and tortured to death, and not deny Hashem's existence even for a moment!

Am Israel arose in Hashem's thoughts even before creation.[26] Thus, should anyone attempt to sever them from "Israel," which is the aspect of ו', as is known, and cannot be pronounced without the second ו', immediately the aspect of *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice) is awakened in them.

Now, let's return to Yaakov Avinu...

Lavan Wanted to Uproot It All

Lavan had four daughters, Rachel, Leah, Zilpa, and Bilha.

Like any normal father, he looked for a good young man to

24. Bava Metzia 59a.
25. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 80).
26. Bereshit Rabba 1:5.

set them up with. One day, out of nowhere, from the faraway land of Israel, Yaakov Avinu arrived. A kind and compassionate man with a loving and sympathetic heart.

Lavan jumped on the opportunity and married his daughters to Yaakov.

Like any soon-to-be grandfather, Lavan was eager for his daughters to give birth to beautiful children...

He received his heart's desire beyond expectation ! He witnessed twelve births ! Seven from Leah, two from Zilpa, two from Bilha, and one from Rachel.

Not only that, but with every birth,[27] a twin was born.[28]

Lavan was filled with joy !

However, the Haggadah of Pesach reveals to us what was really going on... "See what Lavan HaArami sought to do to Yaakov Avinu. Pharaoh only decreed (death) on the males, but Lavan sought to uproot the entire nation. Lavan wanted to uproot everything, to kill all the sons of Yaakov !"

What did Lavan do that he's remembered in such a manner for generations ?

The explanation is that surely, Lavan loved his grandchildren. But, his love for them was expressed in the wrong way !

Their father, Yaakov Avinu, engaged his entire life in Torah, in which he saw human perfection. The pinnacle of Yaakov's aspirations was to see his sons become true *Bnei Torah*, such that their whole lives revolve around *avodat Hashem*, learning Torah, and the fulfillment of mitzvot.

But this didn't find favor in the eyes of Grandpa Lavan. "What will become of them if they learn Torah all day ? How will they make a living ? How will they move forward in life if they don't have a college degree ? That's why I suggest," Grandpa Lavan

27. Excluding Leah's seventh birth, in which her daughter, Dina, was born.
28. See Rashi (Bereshit 35:17).

cunningly told his grandchildren, "that you invest yourselves in studying other topics, get a degree, and study at a university. If you still feel attracted to spirituality, you can also study philosophy or bible studies!"

The Haggadah screams, "Lavan is worse than Pharaoh!" Pharaoh wanted to kill our bodies, that's dreadful, but at least we'll die as Jews! Our souls will stay alive and inherit eternal life in the next world!

But Lavan wanted to uproot everything! He wanted to uproot Judaism! To defile our souls and cause them to die without any signs of Judaism, allowing them to suffer terribly in the next world until they reach their *tikkun*!

Yaakov Avinu went to war against Lavan. He invested all his divine, lofty intelligence in the education of his children, and he won... All his sons turned out true *Bnei Torah*![29]

Then, at the first opportunity that he saw, he got up and fled Lavan's house...

Lavan's Message to Yaakov

The time of redemption had come. Yaakov Avinu took his family and everything he had and set out...

At the time he fled, Lavan wasn't in the city, but nevertheless, he found out that Yaakov had fled...

As long as Yaakov was in Lavan's house, the city's well overflowed with water. Immediately when he fled, the well dried up.

That day, the shepherds gathered at the well to let their flocks drink but found no water. They realized that Yaakov had fled and, without delay, sent to inform Lavan...

It took the messenger three days to reach Lavan. After Lavan heard the news, he went mad and quickly returned to the city...

29. Sefer HaSichot BeLashon HaKodesh (Vol. 3, p. 84).

Parashat Miketz - Lavan's Message to Yaakov

The shepherds in Charan sat on the floor biting their nails nervously, "It's been six days since our sheep drank water..."

In the distance, clouds of dust arose. Lavan jumped off his horse and declared, "Gentleman, ready yourselves for war!"

Immediately, everyone gathered and got on their horses, "Lavan, where should we direct the horses?" Lavan replied, "To Mount Gilad, there Yaakov is stationed..."

After a full day of pursuing, they arrived near Mount Gilad and stopped for the night...

There was chaos in heaven, "What will be with this evil Lavan?!" The angel, Michael, landed near Lavan and said to him, "Watch yourself, don't overdo it, or else...!"

The next morning, Lavan caught up to Yaakov and said, "It's within my power to harm you, but the G-d of your father said to me last night, Guard yourself not to speak to Yaakov either good or evil" (Bereshit 31:29).

We won't go into depth on what happened there, but their meeting finished with them setting up a stone monument and sitting down together to eat one loaf of bread as a sign of brotherhood...[30]

They weren't content with only erecting the monument, rather they also named it, "Lavan called it Yegar (יְגַר) Sahaduta, and Yaakov called it Gal'ed" (Bereshit 31:47).[31]

The holy Kabbalist, Rabbi Natan Neta Shapira, explained Lavan's words as follows...[32]

Yaakov, there's nothing left to say. You beat me in educating your children! Your sons have *emuna* both in Hashem and in *tzaddikim*. They remained innocent without any audacity to criticize the *tzaddikim* of the generations...

Yet, don't think that I don't know about the decree of *Brit*

Wellspring of Wisdom

30. Bereshit 31:51-52.
31. Avoteinu (p. 141).
32. Megaleh Amukot (Ophen 66).

Ben HaBetarim, and about the control of the nations over the bodies of Am Israel.

Although this won't affect their souls, just wait...

In the 213th year (יג"ר in gematria = 213) of the Second Temple, Antiochus will enter the Beit HaMikdash and slaughter a pig on the altar, and then the *kelipah* will strengthen, and Greek wisdom will penetrate the hearts of your children..."

His laughter echoed for generations...

Yaakov prepared for the war against Antiochus... But before we continue, we'll add one detail that we didn't mention...

Yosef's Flame !

Yaakov Avinu lived in Lavan's house for 14 years, and during the last year, he had his 11th son, Yosef. When Yaakov saw Yosef, he immediately approached Lavan and said, "Send me to my homeland !"

"When Rachel had given birth to Yosef, Yaakov said to Lavan, 'Send me on my way, that I may go to my place and to my homeland" (Bereshit 30:25).

When Rabbi Chelbo learned this verse, he asked Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachmani...[33]

The wicked Esav pursued Yaakov in order to kill him, and as a result, Yaakov fled to Lavan. For 14 years, Yaakov felt that the danger of Esav still existed and therefore remained at Lavan's house. But when Yosef was born, Yaakov realized that the danger of Esav had passed, and so he wanted to return to his parents' home. What changed when Yosef was born ?

Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachmani replied, "Esav is like straw. When there is unnecessary straw, the simplest solution is to light it on fire."

33. Bava Batra 123b.

Yaakov Avinu was like fire and could easily deal with Esav. Nevertheless, he knew that his power wasn't yet strong enough. However, Yosef HaTzaddik had the secret of the flame hidden within him...

Thus, when Yosef was born, Yaakov Avinu understood that he was now protected from Esav! Even if he comes across Esav, Yosef's flame will burn him!

"The House of Yaakov is a fire, and the House of Yosef is a flame, and the House of Esav is straw. They shall burn it and devour it, and no survivor shall be left of the House of Esav for Hashem has spoken" (Ovadia 1:18)...

Standing Strong!

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov continues...[34]

Shalom unites two opposites. This power was innate, in completion, in Yosef HaTzaddik.

By means of the power of *shalom,* the flame of *mesirut nefesh* burned inside Yosef HaTzaddik, for *mesirut nefesh* stems from the connection of two opposite *middot*, *chesed* and *gevura*.

When a Jew needs to sacrifice themselves for Hashem, initially, the *middah* of *chesed* awakens in their heart, and they become inspired by love for Hashem. Afterward, the *middah* of *gevura* awakens in their heart, and they overcome their *yetzer* and surrender their soul to sanctify Hashem's name.

This power of *mesirut nefesh* lies in every Jew, and it awakens in every Jew when they feel that the essence of their Judaism is being taken away from them.

No one can stand against the *mesirut nefesh* of a Jew. Even the immense power called "Esav" is like straw that burns up and disappears in its wake...

Yaakov continued on his way to the Land of Israel...

34. Likutei Moharan (Torah 80).

Yaakov Remained Alone...

Esav hears that Yaakov is on his way to Eretz Israel, and feelings of anger arise within him. He readies for war...

Yaakov hears about this and gets ready for his meeting with Esav. The night before the meeting, Yaakov decides to cross the Yabuk River with his family. They arrive at the riverbank and realize that there's no possibility of crossing. Yaakov decided to carry them across the river himself. He carried his wives, his eleven children, and all his belongings, one by one, across the river.

Only one small jug of oil remained across the river, and Yaakov Avinu went back to get it... Yaakov Avinu stood alone across the river with the small jug in his hand...

Chazal say,[35] "Yaakov remained alone" (לְבַדּוֹ) (Bereshit 32:25) – Don't say לְבַדּוֹ (alone) rather לְכַדּוֹ (for his jug)...

When Esav's ministering angel saw that Yaakov was left alone, he immediately came down and fought with him...

Rabbi Moshe Farhand writes...[36] The Torah says, "Yaakov remained alone" – Yaakov remained alone without the merit of Yosef. Therefore, Esav's ministering angel thought that since Yaakov didn't have the power of Yosef's flame, he would be able to defeat him.

Ultimately, Yaakov's fire overpowered and defeated him.

Yet, why was it so important for Yaakov Avinu to return for a small jug of oil ?

To answer this question, we'll need to go back a bit...

The Jug of Oil - A Gift from Heaven

Yaakov Avinu left Be'er Sheva and went on his father's mission to Charan to get married. On his way, he passed through the

35. **Da'at** Z'kenim (Bereshit 32:25).
36. **Ohel** Moshe (Moadim Drashot Likutim - Vol. 2, p. 216).

city of Beit El. He stopped there and stood in prayer before Hashem.

When he finished praying, he wanted to continue on his way, but Hashem caused the sun to set, and darkness filled the earth...

Yaakov Avinu retired for a night's sleep, and during that sleep, he merited that, "There Elokim was revealed to him" (Bereshit 35:7).

"Yaakov arose early in the morning and took the stone that he had placed at his head, and he set it up as a monument, and poured oil on its top" (Bereshit 28:18).

Chazal ask, "Where did Yaakov get oil? At that time, Yaakov was destitute. Eliphaz, Esav's son, robbed him on his way and left him with nothing...."

The answer...[37]

At the same time that he erected the stone monument, he was sent a jug of oil from heaven and poured it on the stone... In his bewilderment, he noticed that the jug refilled itself with oil. Yaakov knew that it was blessed, so he took it with him. He guarded it closely for twenty years while he was with Lavan...

Now, when he finished moving all his belongings across the Yabuk River, he realized that he had forgotten the jug of oil across the river...

Yaakov knew the risk involved but thought, "I know that the time will come when Antiochus will defile all the pure oil in the Beit HaMikdash, and the Chashmonaim will not have oil. If I sacrifice myself now and bring the jug of oil, the Chashmonaim will find it in that generation, and it will burn for eight days!"[38]

Thus, he risked his life and brought it. This was the first *tikkun* in his war against Antiochus. However, Yaakov Avinu knew that the power to overthrow Antiochus was only in the hands of Yosef HaTzaddik. Thus, he made every effort to raise and preserve his spiritual stature.

Wellspring of Wisdom

37. Siftei Kohen on the Torah (Parashat Vayishlach).
38. Birkat Shmuel (Parashat Miketz).

Guard Him with Your Life

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel writes...[39]

Parashat Vayeshev opens with the story of the love Yaakov Avinu had for his son Yosef, as it says, "Israel loved Yosef more than all his sons" (Bereshit 37:3). The Torah explains that the reason that Yaakov loved Yosef in particular was "because he was the son of his old age" (ibid.).

Rashi brings Onkelos that translates the verse, "because he was the son of his old age," as "because he was a wise son to him," and Rashi explains that everything Yaakov had learned from Shem and Ever, he taught to Yosef.

Yaakov handed down all the mysteries of the world and secrets of the Torah to Yosef, his son... But Yaakov wasn't content with only that. He also made Yosef a "coat of fine wool" (ibid.).

This was no ordinary coat, though... It was one of a kind.

Yaakov Avinu had a very deep intention in making it specifically for Yosef.

To clarify this, we'll bring a story from *Chazal*[40] that tells about a man who heard that there was a certain place where one can defile their soul with women... Since he heard this, his *yetzer hara* burned inside him like a wildfire, charring his heart while its thick smoke blinded his eyes...

With a lusting heart, he boarded a ship and sailed there. When he arrived, he was informed that the payment was 400 *zehuvim* (gold coins)![41] But at the last moment, when he was about to fall, his four *tzitziot* slapped him in the face, causing him not to sin.

Wellspring of Wisdom

39. Imrei Noam (Vayeshev, Maamar 1-3).

40. Menachot 44a.

41. A *Ketubah* is 200 *zuz*, which is worth today about 44 kilograms of pure silver (Igrot Moshe – Vol. 4, Simanim: 91-92).

Rabbi Ishaiah Tarani, the Tosefot Rid, in his book *Sefer HaMachria* writes that 200 *zuz* is worth 8 *zehuvim*.

Thus, 400 *zehuvim* is worth 10,000 *zuzim*, which is worth 4,850 pounds of pure silver! (About $1,850,000).

This account reveals that the mitzvah of *tzitzit* has a special power to guard the Jew wearing it from all sin.

This can be explained according to the brilliant words of Rabbenu Bachya[42] that the *tzitziot* correspond to the *Merkava*. Just as the *Merkava* consists of four *Chayot HaKodesh* who carry the *Merkava*, and each *Chaya* has 64 wings, amounting to a total of 256 wings,[43] so too the *tzitzit* has four כְּנָפוֹת (wings), each wing containing eight strings, and each string in and of itself consisting of 8 intertwined threads, amounting to a total of 256 threads.

Thus, when a Jew wears *tzitzit*, it illuminates the light of the *Merkava* in him, and the immense *kedusha* of that light guards and saves him from anything that might impair his *kedusha*.

Therefore, when Yaakov Avinu saw that his son Yosef was "handsome in form and appearance" (Bereshit 39:6), he wanted to guard him so that he wouldn't be lured to sin by means of his handsomeness. Thus, he made him a fine wool coat and inserted a special *kedusha* comparable to the *kedusha* of the *tzitzit* in it so that its immense *kedusha* will protect Yosef from all harm when wearing it.

And not only from spiritual mishaps did Yaakov guard Yosef, but also from the hatred of his brothers. When Yosef told his brothers about the dreams he had, and his father saw that these dreams caused his brothers to hate him in their hearts, he immediately rebuked him, saying, "What's this dream that you dreamed ? !" (Bereshit 37:10). He did all this to remove the jealousy of his brothers...

Ultimately, Yosef's brothers sold him into slavery, and he arrived in Egypt...

The Danger to Yosef Continues

While Yosef was in Egypt, difficult tests were thrown at him from all directions. However, he stood against every test and won !

42. Bamidbar 15:38.
43. According to Targum Yonatan.

The immense light of the letter י' radiated from Yosef's heart, tremendous *mesirut nefesh* hovered in the air, and Yosef remained steadfast in his inner world !

Thirteen years after the sale of Yosef, he was appointed ruler of Egypt, and nine years later, his brothers came to Egypt to buy food in the wake of a famine...

Yosef ensures that their lives be made bitter !

When the brothers arrived, Yosef accused them of being spies. The brothers had to apologize and explain that their only purpose in coming to Egypt was to buy food, and incidentally mentioned that they're a family of twelve brothers... One brother (Yosef) is gone, while their little brother (Binyamin) stayed with their father in the land of Canaan.

In response, Yosef imprisoned Shimon and demanded that the rest of the brothers return to the land of Canaan and bring before him their younger brother Binyamin. Only then would he believe them that they weren't spies, release Shimon, and agree to sell them food, as it says, "Bring your youngest brother to me, and then I will know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will return your brother to you and permit you to do business in the land" (Bereshit 42:34).

The brothers returned to their father in sorrow and told him about the man's wrongdoings...

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk writes[44] that Yaakov Avinu hesitated in sending Binyamin to Egypt. Seemingly, Yaakov Avinu could've cursed the ruler of Egypt who was giving them problems causing the ruler to drop dead instantly...

However, Yaakov Avinu didn't do so. On the contrary, he sent him gifts and blessings.

Because Yaakov didn't curse the ruler of Egypt, who was

44. Lehavot Kodesh (p. 32).

actually Yosef, his son, Yosef remained alive. And in that, the outcome of the war against the Yevanim was determined...

As a side note: From here, we can learn how much we need to guard ourselves and overcome everything we go through and never get angry !

The Kingdom of Yavan

Am Israel lived a beautiful and flourishing life in the Holy Land during the period of the Second Temple. Everything was wonderful, both physically and spiritually. After years of sorrow and hardship, the Jewish people thought they had finally reached the long-awaited days of serenity.

But to their dismay, they were very wrong...

The descendants of Esav started trouble. The Kingdom of Yavan started to take over the world !

The Yevanim had a fierce army. They conquered country after country. They were virtually unstoppable, and the citizens of the occupied lands were forced to accept the Greek culture.

It was a luring culture. The Yevanim advocated bodybuilding and set up gymnasiums so that the youth could exercise to strengthen themselves and build muscle mass. In addition, they adored poetry and science...

Under its influence, they conducted scientific investigations, invented technical inventions, developed various branches of art, and more. But these positive influences were overshadowed by their negative influences. By means of the Greek culture, pagan worship was aroused exponentially, worship of the body increased, lawlessness and lust were positive and desirable practices, and human morality deteriorated greatly.

In the year 3585 from creation (175 BC), Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power. Antiochus Epiphanes saw himself as the guardian of Greek culture, and he generously distributed funds for the construction of buildings and statues in greek cities.

With his help, Greek culture spread throughout the world...

His goal was that the Jews would also accept their culture. At first, he didn't try to achieve this by force, rather indirectly. He established stadiums and cultural centers in Eretz Israel and organized evenings of singing and dancing...

Naturally, lighthearted Jews were infected with this filth and began to be attracted to Greek culture. Slowly, like the venom of a snake, it penetrated their souls, and they abandoned the Torah and mitzvot. These Jews were called the *"Mityavnim."*

Antiochus Epiphanes rejoiced in every Jew that he managed to trap. He raised the status of the *Mityavnim* by appointing them as governors, ministers, judges, and police officers...

He sat and waited for the completion of operation "Conquer the Minds of the Jews."

However, it didn't go well for him. Most of the Jews remained faithful to Hashem, Creator of heaven and earth !

In the year 3616, he called for his deputies, Nicanor, Yavan, and Ptolemy, and said to them, "Throughout all the battles that I've conducted in my life, I have never encountered such a stiff-necked people, with such self-sacrifice ! I ask that you go to the Land of Israel and force the Greek culture upon them !"

The mighty army of Yavan arrived in Eretz Israel and began assassination operations. The Jews who didn't agree to give up the Torah were tortured to death...

Many Jews fled to the deserts and hid in caves, and with true *mesirut nefesh,* they continued to serve Hashem.

At some point, the Yevanim realized that the Beit HaMikdash is what gives strength to the Jews, and they decided to desecrate it...

On the 25th of Kislev, in the year 3621, the 213th year since the building of the Temple, the Yevanim entered the Beit HaMikdash.

The sight as the Yevanim ran up the ramp to the *Mizbeach* and placed statues on the altar was absolutely horrific...[45]

The Merit of Yosef HaTzaddik

At that time, a spiritual flame kindled in Matityahu ben Yochanan the Kohen Gadol's heart, "The House of Yaakov is a fire, and the House of Yosef is a flame, and the House of Esav (Kingdom of Yavan) is straw. They shall burn it and devour it, and no survivor shall be left of the House of Esav for Hashem has spoken" (Ovadia 1:18).

Yosef (יוֹסֵף) has the same gematria as King of Yavan (מֶלֶךְ יָוָן) and as Antiochus (אַנְטִיוֹכֶס).

That is, the only force that was able to stand against Antiochus, the King of Yavan,[46] was precisely the flame of Yosef.

Mesirut Nefesh burned in their hearts... Chashmonai and his sons, as well as Matityahu, the Kohen Gadol, arose and began to fight back against the Greeks. When Gorgias, the general of King Antiochus, saw all the victories of the Chashmonaim, he came before Antiochus and said to him, "Even if you assemble your entire army to wage war against the Chashmonaim, you won't be able to beat them... Take my advice, mobilize a massive army from all the lands of your kingdom, and then you might have a chance to defeat them."

He managed to organize 10,600,000 soldiers... One division of soldiers riding on elephants, one division of snipers on horseback with hunting dogs by their sides, another division of commandos, and a massive infantry.

When they arrived in Eretz Israel, they sent a dispatch to the Chashmonaim saying, "You fools !

45. Lehodot VeLehallel (p. 25, 34), Yemei HaHanukkah BaHalacha UbaAggadah (p. 12), Encyclopedia LeBeit Israel (Vol. 3, p. 80).

46. Antiochus was a Greek Hellenistic king of the Seleucid Empire, thus considered a King of Greece.

You want to wage war against us? You have no chance of victory!"

After Am Israel heard the message, they employed the most powerful weapon in their arsenal... *Bitachon!*[47]

At that moment, Hashem grasped all the ministering angels in charge of the nations of the world and bound them with a flaming rope, and said to them, "All of you must kill your people, and if one man will stay alive, it's your life instead of his!" Fear and trembling took hold of all the angels, for this was the most unprecedented event that they've witnessed since the creation of the world. Without delay, all the angels flew down, seized the Greeks' weapons, and stabbed them in their hearts, fulfilling the verse, "Their swords shall enter their own hearts, and their bows shall be broken" (Tehillim 37:15).

Since the Chashmonaim were *Kohanim*, it was forbidden for them to take the spoil from the corpses. Instead, the angels came and stripped the soldiers' corpses and brought all the spoils to the Jews. Gorgias, too was killed, and Antiochus fled the war.

Wellspring of Wisdom

47. Rabbenu Bachya ibn Pakuda in his book *Chovot HaLevavot* writes, "One who trusts in Hashem has a calm spirit and a relaxed heart regarding bad decrees, for they know that Hashem will guide them only to good, both in this world and the next. As David HaMelech said, "My soul waits in silence only for Elokim, for my hope is in Him" (Tehillim 62:6). But one who doesn't trust in Hashem, even when they're successful, they're always distressed and in a state of continual anxiety. During good times they suffer because they're never satisfied with their situation, and in bad times because things go against their desires."

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov writes (Likutei Moharan I, Torah 76), "This is the virtue of *bitachon*. *Bitachon* is the aspect of looking and hoping only for Hashem and trusting only in Him... Looking with *bitachon* creates a vessel of dimension and time. *Bracha* constantly descends from heaven but without a fixed time. On occasion, the thing one needs at the moment will arrive in only two or three years. However, by looking with *bitachon*, one gives the *bracha* dimension and time so that the *bracha* comes at the exact time that one needs it."

The Miracle

The Chashmonaim entered the Beit HaMikdash and purified all the vessels. Later, when they sought to light the *Menorah*, they found only one jug of oil, which was enough to light the *Menorah* for one day, but a miracle was performed for them, and it stayed lit for eight days.

Rabbi Aharon Yehuda Leib Steinman asks...[48] After all, finding the jug of oil in and of itself was a miracle, for the Greeks raided the Temple and contaminated everything. It would seemingly be preferable for Hashem to perform a smaller miracle and let the Chashmonaim find enough oil for eight days, for Hashem prefers that the world act according to nature. If so, why did Hashem let them find enough oil for only one day and need to perform a new miracle every day?

He answers that Hashem wanted to show Am Israel the magnitude of His love for them! He wanted to show how much He appreciates them and their *mesirut nefesh*.

The *mesirut nefesh* of the Chashmonaim had the power to start a revolution in Am Israel, raising them from their low spiritual state. And undeniably, the miracle of the jug of oil showed that Am Israel changed, ascended to a higher level, and were no longer *Mityavnim*. Rather they returned to their purity.

The Lights of Chanukah

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel writes[49] that Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov said[50] that he received from his Rebbe's that Yaakov Avinu was buried in the month of Kislev during Chanukah.

That is, tradition holds that Yaakov Avinu passed away on

48. Umatok HaOhr - Chanukkah (Vol. 1, p.151).

49. Imrei Noam (Hanukkah, Maamar 4).

50. Bnei Issachar (Maamarei Kislev/Tevet 1:1).

the 15th of Tishrei, the first day of Sukkot, as implied in the verse, "Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot" (Bereshit 33:17), and all of Egypt mourned his passing for 70 consecutive days as it says, "The Egyptians wept for him for seventy days." (Bereshit 50:3). Only after the 70 days of weeping had ended did Yosef and his brothers carry his holy body to the land of Canaan and bury him in the *Me'arat HaMachpela* (as explained in the following verses).

According to this, the burial of Yaakov Avinu occurred in the midst of the holy days of Chanukah.

This teaches us that the special light of Yaakov Avinu shines in the world during the holy days of Chanukah, and it's an auspicious time for learning from his ways and holding true to his holy traits.

It's known that the three pillars on which the world stands, Torah, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut* Chasadim,[51] correspond to the three holy Avot, each of whom conducted themselves in an extraordinary manner, according to one of the three pillars. Avraham Avinu excelled in the pillar of *Gemilut Chasadim*, Itzchak Avinu excelled in the pillar of *Avodah*, namely *Avodat HaTefillah*, and Yaakov Avinu excelled in the pillar of Torah. Given that the light of Yaakov Avinu shines during Chanukah, we learn that this is an opportune time to strengthen oneself in Torah study and merit attaining the wisdom of the Torah.

Therefore, we set up the oil and candles on the 24th of Kislev (כ"ד בְּכִסְלֵו) in the evening in order to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the first Chanukah candle on the 25th of Kislev (כ"ה בְּכִסְלֵו). When we add 24 (כ"ד) (כַּד הַשֶּׁמֶן - jug of oil) to 25 (כ"ה) (**כ"ה** בְּכִסְלֵו - 25th of Kislev) we get 49, corresponding to what the Talmud Yerushalmi says...[52] The Torah is expounded in 49 facets of impurity and 49 facets of purity. When we add the 49 facets of impurity and 49

51. Pirkei Avot 1:2.
52. Sanhedrin 4:2 (21b).

facets of purity together, we get 98 (צ״ח) to hint, that by toiling in Torah, we are protected from the 98 curses mentioned in Parashat "Ki Tavo," shoot a bow (ח״ץ) at all of our persecutors, eliminating them all, and cling to Hashem as is said, "My beloved is pure (צַ״ח) and ruddy, distinguished among myriads" (Shir HaShirim 5:10).

Similarly, the miracle of Chanukah was done precisely through olive oil because olive oil symbolizes the wisdom of the Torah.

As the Bnei Issachar explains...[53] The Greeks wanted to abolish the wisdom of the Torah and increase foreign wisdom, Greek philosophy. At the time of salvation, "The Jews had light" (Ester 8:16) - this refers to the Torah.[54] Hashem performed the miracle through oil which alludes to the wisdom of Torah. As chazal say,[55] "Yoav sent (a messenger) to Tekoa to bring a wise woman from there" (Shmuel II 14:2). He sent specifically to Tekoa because the oil in Tekoa was second to none, and wherever olive oil is found, wisdom is found.

In addition to this, the primary virtue of Yaakov Avinu, for whom he is considered the most admired of the forefathers,[56] is that he merited that all his sons were *tzaddikim*, as the Midrash says,[57] "Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah came from Avraham. Esav and all the chiefs of Edom came from Itzchak. But, Yaakov merited that all his sons were *tzaddikim*."[58]

Therefore, according to what we mentioned above, that the light of Yaakov Avinu illuminates during the days of Chanukah, we learn that this is also an auspicious time for *Chinuch* (children's education). This is implied by the very name of the holiday, Chanukah (חֲנוּכָּה), which comes from the word education

Wellspring of Wisdom

53. Maamarei Kislev/Tevet 7:1.
54. Megillah 16b.
55. Menachot 85b.
56. Zohar (Vayetze 150a).
57. Vayikra Rabba 36:5.
58. See also Shir HaShirim Rabba 4:15, Shabbat 146a.

(חִינּוּךְ), to indicate that Chanukah is an auspicious time to achieve success in the matter of *Chinuch*, just as Yaakov Avinu did.

This is also implied through the words of *Chazal*,[59] "The mitzvah of Chanukah is one candle for each man and his household." That is, the primary purpose of the Chanukah candles is to draw down tremendous strength and help from heaven to each person in *Avodat HaChinuch* for their household and for their dear children.

Consequently, chazal say,[60] "One who is meticulous in lighting candles on Chanukah (and Shabbat) will be rewarded with children who are Talmidei Hachamim."[61] That is, since, during the holy days of Chanukah in general, the Chanukah candles in particular, and the light of Yaakov Avinu who merited all his sons being *tzaddikim* illuminates, anyone who is meticulous in lighting Chanukah candles merits that light of Yaakov Avinu illuminate within them, and by virtue of this, they'll merit all their sons disseminate the light of Torah.

Therefore, we as parents should make very good use of these holy days by pouring our hearts out before Hashem through thousands of prayers that we merit all our sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, and all our descendants for all generations, follow the footsteps of our holy forefathers and foremothers, and illuminate the world with Torah and *Ma'asim Tovim*, Amen, may it be His will!

Shabbat Shalom!

Wellspring of Wisdom

59. Shabbat 21b.
60. Ibid. 23b.
61. See "Rif" Shabbat 10b (Rif pages), "Rosh" Shabbat 2:13.

The Pathway...

1. Chazal have said, "Hashem couldn't find a vessel to hold the blessings for Am Israel other than *shalom*!"

2. One of the most basic ideas in Kabbalah is the knowledge that every spiritual thing that descends from heaven needs a vessel that will contain it... When there's no vessel capable of containing it, the descending *shefa* (abundance of blessing) brings no benefit! Chazal taught, "Hashem found nothing more suitable to contain blessing than *shalom*."

3. What is exactly is *shalom*? Simply... *Shalom* is the uniting of opposites. *Shalom* is to connect two opposites together. After truly understanding this, you shouldn't be bothered when you come across someone who thinks the exact opposite of you. Don't assume that you'll never be able to live in *shalom* with them. Likewise, if you see two people who are complete opposites, don't say that it's impossible to bring *shalom* between them. On the contrary, the main achievement of *shalom* is to make *shalom* between two opposites ...

4. There's no greatness in living in *shalom* with someone who has the same opinions and interests as you. Precisely when you're with someone who opposes your opinions and everything you stand for, yet you live with them in *shalom*, that's real greatness. Every one of us has the ability to achieve this, so long as we continue down the right path leading to *shalom*.

5. Men and women, who by nature are two complete opposites, must carry one another, and the primary *avodah* of a husband is to be in oneness with his wife with love and *shalom*, precisely then allowing the *Shechina* to manifest between them. Women live in a world of emotion! On the other hand, men are far from the emotions and feelings that women find so special...

6. Men and women have many opposing characteristics. Women were blessed with an abundance of emotions, and men must understand their wife's world, what the essence of her life constitutes. When you understand her and how she "works," it will undoubtedly be easier for you to see her in a better light and forgive her for all her for anything she may have done. When the power of *shalom* is revealed within us, we then have the power to stand firm against all tests sent to us from heaven.

7. Someone who serves Hashem with *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice), learns Torah, fulfills mitzvot and connects themselves with all of Am Israel, merits having all the blessings for all of Am Israel be drawn down through them...

8. As parents, we should make very good use of these holy days by

pouring our hearts out before Hashem through thousands of prayers that we merit all our sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, and all our descendants for all generations, follow the footsteps of our holy forefathers and foremothers, and illuminate the world with Torah and *Ma'asim Tovim*, Amen, may it be His will!

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Shabbat Times

Parashat Miketz

Kislev 30, 5782

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:12 pm	5:14 pm	5:42 pm
Miami	5:14 pm	6:09 pm	6:44 pm
Los Angeles	4:26 pm	5:25 pm	5:56 pm
Montreal	3:55 pm	5:02 pm	5:25 pm
Toronto	4:24pm	5:30 pm	5:54 pm
Jerusalem	4:20 pm	5:10 pm	5:42 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Holy Words of HaRav Yoram zt"l

Despite the victory of the Chashmonayim over the Greeks, the "Greek Culture" hasn't gone away.

The dismal material culture is trying any and every way possible to enter our homes... Through our phones, in the media, shopping centers, and fashion styles.

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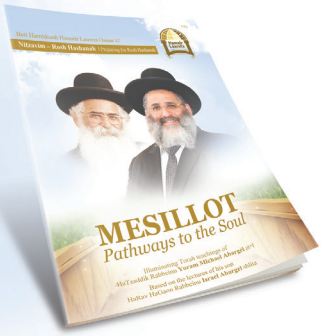

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