

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 31

Vayigash | Reaching Happiness by Becoming In Tune with Your 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

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Parashat Vayigash

Climbing the Ladder of The Niggun

On that day, the joy of the holy tzaddik, Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sassov, was beyond comprehension. If truth be told, Rebbe Moshe Leib married off many orphans. But his joy on the wedding day of these orphans was far greater than anything witnessed to that day.

Since that bitter day, about nineteen years ago, when Isaac, the poor milkman, passed away, his widowed wife and six orphaned children moved to the top of the worries of the tzaddik of Sassov, as if they were his own family. A year later, Dan, the shoemaker, passed away, leaving behind his pregnant widowed wife, who, in the year of mourning for her husband, gave birth to her daughter. Another worry added the thoughts of the tzaddik...

Many such incidences of compassion earned him the title *Ohev Israel* (Lover of Israel). But

these two orphans, the milkman's youngest son and the shoemaker's youngest daughter had been on his mind for almost nineteen years. Now, when Hashem privileged him with marrying them to one another, there was no happier person than Rebbe Moshe Leib.

It's been said by many that Rebbe Moshe rejoiced in the joy of these orphans more than he rejoiced in those of his own family.

That day was like a holiday for the city of Sassov. The joy of Rebbe Moshe Leib brought joy to all the Jews of the city. Who could stand by while seeing the Rebbe rejoice and not rejoice with him? ! If this was true with the people of the city, all the more so with his *chassidim* !

You might have thought that Rebbe Moshe married off this orphan couple like all other poor couples. But you're nothing but

wrong! Rebbe Moshe Leib didn't withhold anything from them. He didn't hold back anything that wealthy parents would have granted their son or daughter who is about to marry.

He arranged a grand feast, like that of a king's banquet. He also invited the best band in the country from the distant city of Brody, who, with all sorts of musical instruments, also required a respectable fee for their services, but nothing was too expensive to bring joy to the bride and groom.

When everything was ready, and it was time to enter the *chuppah*, the signal was given for silence, and at once, the band began playing a unique *niggun* (melody) which they saved for the most memorable events. The atmosphere was uplifting and awe-inspiring. Something transcendent filled the air...

The elation and outpouring of the soul which gripped the audience while hearing the sound of that magnificent *niggun* uplifted everyone, and its memory

remained engraved in their hearts for a long time.

Likewise, the wondrous *niggun* gripped the tzaddik. He remained motionless, listening with closed eyes. Through the lashes of his eyes, drops of tears began to reveal themselves. His face illuminated, and it was obvious to all that he was in another world...

When the musicians finished their inspirational *niggun*, Rebbe Moshe opened his eyes, his face covered in tears, and whispered, his voice trembling, "When the day arrives, I hope that I will be carried away by the sound of this wonderful *niggun*...."

The eyes of the musicians glistened with pleasure. The tzaddik's compliment surpassed anything they could have asked for. It was beyond their belief and gave them immense satisfaction. For them, that compliment made their long journey worth it.

Since that breathtaking moment, many years have passed...

The horses began to pull the loaded wagon. In it were

sitting the members of that same band from the city of Brody, accompanied by a variety of musical instruments. They were destined for a wedding, which was to take place that evening, in one of the nearby towns.

It was a cold winter day... A grey sky hovered above their heads, and a white carpet of fresh snow rested underneath them. As expected, the horses moved sluggishly in the heavy snow, and the wagon driver couldn't do much to speed up their pace.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the horses behaved uncontrollably, setting off in a gallop, taking away the breath of the passengers and driver alike.

The frightened driver began to pull at the reins with all his strength, but his efforts were in vain. The horses continued to gallop fiercely, deviating from their predetermined path. The band member sat paralyzed, unable to move from the fear.

They sat pale, staring frightenedly at the landscape rushing before their eyes.

More than once, during that insane journey, the words *Shema Israel* were heard, and deep, sincere thoughts of *teshuva* filled their hearts...

After many hours, the horses suddenly slowed down and began to stroll leisurely as if they had reached their destination. Quickly, the passengers jumped out of the wagon as if fleeing a nightmare. But even before they could recover, a terrible spectacle unfolded before their eyes.

A massive crowd of Jews, crying bitterly...

“What happened?” the musicians cried.

“The funeral of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov...” sighed one of the attendees.

“What ! ? The tzaddik of Sassov ?” replied the musicians, shocked by the news.

Without saying anything to one another, each member of the band remembered the compliment given to them by the tzaddik long

Parashat Vayigash - Climbing the Ladder of The Niggun

ago at the wedding of the two orphans.

They looked at one another, and the next move was obvious...

The leader of the band was the first to recover from the shock.

“Bring us to the community leaders!” he screamed aloud.

At first, the mourning crowd looked at him indifferently. However, when the other band members joined in, causing a commotion, the people’s attention started to change.

“Are you guys crazy? Now, in the middle of the funeral, you want to speak to the heads of the community?!” the people asked in bafflement.

“On the contrary! Precisely now! Before it’s too late! It has to do with the funeral!”

After a few moments, a path was paved through the crowd, and the band managed to reach the head Rabbis, who walked behind the body of the holy tzaddik.

The band leader opened, “We’re the members of the famous

band from Brody! Surely many of you remember, years ago, the tzaddik married off two orphans and arranged a grand wedding for them... We merited playing there, and before the *chuppah*, we played a unique niggun...”

“Yes, we remember...” they responded.

“At that time,” he continued, “Rebbe Moshe Leib expressed his wish that when the time came for his burial, that same *niggun* would be played for him!”

“Yes! We remember!” they confirmed.

“This morning,” the musician added, “we left Brody, heading for one of the nearby towns, when suddenly, the horses pulling our wagon began to bolt unexpectedly, climbing mountains, down valleys, crossing fields, and through forests until they brought us here just now...”

Whispers of shock were heard from the crowd...

“Clearly, this was brought about by Hashem! He fulfills the

will of those who fear Him. Ready your instruments and play your *niggun* as you did before the *chuppah*!”

The noise of the crowd faded until there was total silence. It seemed as if the entire universe stood still. The band took their instruments and began playing their breathtaking *niggun*...

Those carrying the body of Rebbe Moshe Leib continued walking, and the vast crowd followed them, sobbing softly. In front of them, the members of the band strode, playing their emotional and inspiring *niggun*.

Such a funeral had never taken place before...

To the sound of the *niggun*, Rebbe Moshe Leib was lowered to his resting place.

“He fulfills the will of those who fear Him” (Tehillim 145:19)...¹

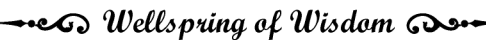
In one of the discourses of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, he explained the power of a *niggun*...²

The sounds of a *niggun* elevate you to a higher level. While playing an instrument or singing, you become entirely enclosed and sink into the sealed room of the mysteries of your soul, invisible to even yourself, for you have clung to the essence of your soul.

By means of a *niggun*, you can ascend and become drawn to divine light, revealing the essence of your soul. At least for the time being, during the *niggun*, this light repels all negative forces accumulated in your soul. The sounds of a *niggun* arouse the inner and hidden good within you, which give strength to overcome all materiality.

When you awaken the desire to ascend to the light of your inner soul, you can then climb the steps of the ladder of the *niggun*, and there, you can draw directly from the life of your soul, which is entirely good!

This is what our parasha is about...



1. **BeSod** Avdecha (Vol. 8, p. 87).

2. **Sefer** HaNiggunim (Vol. 1, p. 21).

The Difference Between Man and Animal

Shlomo HaMelech wrote, “Who knows (thinks about the fact that), the *ruach* (spirit)³ of man ascends on high (to be judged, whereas) the *ruach* of the animal (free of judgment) descends below to the earth (therefore, one shouldn’t behave like an animal which gives no thought to its deeds)” (Kohelet 3:21).

From this verse, we learn something interesting... Both man and animals have a *ruach*!



Shlomo HaMelech tells us that although both humans and animals have a *ruach*, there’s a huge difference between them, for “the *ruach* of man ascends on high,” whereas “the *ruach* of the animal descends below to the earth.”

Rabbi Moshe Kliers shlita writes⁴ that there’s a considerable difference between humans and animals. The Rambam writes that human beings are unique in that they hold something which no

other creature on earth possesses, namely, intellectual awareness and consciousness of Hashem.

Here lies hidden man’s advantage over all other creatures, for Hashem blew a *ruach* into man from Himself. Animals also have cognitive qualities, but the difference between those of a human and those of an animal is massive. Animals have many different traits. Some animals are fierce, while others are modest. Some animals show wonderful devotion and loyalty to their owners. There are also very intelligent animals. But these traits are part of their being. They have no ability to change or control their traits. They act only through instinct and not through intellect.

Human beings, on the other hand, even if they have certain innate qualities, one brave, the other stubborn, etc., the fact that they are conscious, they can act against their

 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

3. We chose to stay true to the original Hebrew and write the word “*ruach*” everytime it appears in the Mesillot. For those less versed in knowing what exactly a

ruach is, the word *ruach* can be changed out for the word “soul.” We hope this makes it easier for the reader to follow along.

4. Shalmei Moshe (Vol 2, p. 187).

Parashat Vayigash - The Difference Between Man and Animal

instinctive characteristics. Moreso, it's in our ability to act according to two completely opposite qualities at the same time. You can be loyal and insolent, clever and shy all at the same time.



Humans can act differently according to their circumstances. It's in our power to choose which path we will go down, the path of good deeds or the path of iniquity. We even have the power to suppress and control our natural tendencies.

Since the *ruach* is under our control, we have the power to progress and ascend continually.

Conversely, the *ruach* of an animal is controlled by its natural instincts, and since it's unable to progress, inevitably it descends...

When someone doesn't use their intelligence and instead follows the inclinations of their heart, they end up descending from a human *ruach* to an animal *ruach*...⁵ But there's one sin that causes even someone who has already attained lofty spiritual levels to fall from a human *ruach* to an animal *ruach*...

Before clarifying what that sin is, we'll first have to give a short introduction...

 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

5. A student at our yeshiva started going astray after bad friends influenced him negatively... I saw in his eyes that he was looking for "purpose." He was building for himself dreams of how in a few years he'll have a lot of money and "live it up."

One morning, he humbly approached me and said, "I want to talk to you Rabbi..."

I complied with his request and said, "Sure, what's on your mind?"

"Not here in the yeshiva. At the Rabbi's house..." he said.

"All right," I replied and set a time to meet with him.

The next day he arrived at my house in the Sha'are Chesed neighborhood. We sat down opposite each other, my wife brought us something to drink, and then he opened, "I have some questions that bother me, and I want to ask the Rabbi about them."

"Ask anything you'd like," I said, "But before your questions, I want to ask you only one question, and I ask that you answer me honestly. After you hear my question, think about it, and then answer confidently exactly what you think."

He happily agreed.

Parashat Vayigash - The Difference Between Man and Animal

I asked him a short question, “Who do you think is happier, humans or animals?”

He looked at me with a puzzled look on his face and said, “Humans, of course!”

“**Why** are you so sure that humans live better than animals?” I asked. He looked at me with an even more bewildered look on his face and began to explain his confident opinion, “Animals eat dirty straw and hay mixed with stones and sand, whereas humans eat delicious ice cream, chocolates, and drink soft drinks. Animals sleep on dirty ground, whereas humans sleep on thick, comfortable mattresses wrapped in pleasant blankets and rest their heads on soft pillows. Animals sleep outside in the cold and heat without clothes, whereas humans sleep in heated or cooled rooms, wearing cozy warm clothes. Humans eat delicious meat and fish and go on fun trips! I enjoy life from morning to evening...”

I smiled at him and began to emphasize the difference between humans and animals, expressed differently, “The animal that you said feels cold in the winter and hot in the summer and sleeps on the dirty ground, lives happier than you... Hashem fashioned for it a life of pleasure, without sorrow or pain. A cow raised for its milk isn’t put to work, nor is it slaughtered. It lives happily for many years in its barn. You said that an animal eats straw and hay, whereas you eat meat, fish, etc., but have you ever seen an animal that gets a stomachache after lunch, whereas you...”

You said the cow sleeps on the dirty ground, whereas you sleep on

“Simmons,” but have you ever seen a cow unable to get up in the morning from back and joint pain? You said that it walks without clothes in winter and summer, in cold and heat, whereas you’re dressed in nice, warm clothes, but have you ever heard an animal coughing with high fever and taking aspirin? Have you ever heard of a cow taking Advil twice a day?

Understand, a cow enjoys its straw and hay no less than you enjoy your ice cream. It doesn’t need to take long trips. It’s happy taking trips around the barn and in the field. It has no worries, headaches, or sorrow. It feels complete peace and calmness...”

I continued to give him a couple more examples...

That student (who today is a Talmid Hacham and serves as a mashgiach) at the time was depressed by his general situation in the yeshiva and had new plans for his life.

As I continued to expand on the differences between humans and animals, he started to become emotional until I saw tears in his eyes...

Suddenly he uttered a painful sentence, “It’s really a pity I wasn’t born an animal...”

As soon as I heard that sentence come out of his mouth, I raised my voice and said, “Fool! You don’t have to be sorry. You’re already an animal! For when you don’t use your human *ruach*, you become an animal!”

- Kol Chotzev (p. 355).

The Power of Imagination

One of the abilities Hashem created in human beings is imagination.

There are two kinds of thought processes... There are clear and focused thoughts, which express the power of the mind that directs the person in deliberate judgment. In contrast, there are also endless surges of abstract and unfocused thoughts that constantly seek to surface and cling to our consciousness, to evolve and materialize without invitation.

This “surge” is the flow of imagination, which by nature has no fixed place or vessel in which to contain it, and therefore it constantly desires to harness the human brain for its use.

The descent into animalism (animal *ruach*) is clearly expressed in the increase of imagination, which eliminates the primary characteristic of human beings, self-control. In their correct state, human beings conduct their life intellectually and logically, but when their animal impulses surface, all their life principles

become a second priority, and their imagination generates an endless number of excuses to deviate them from the straight path.

Intelligence doesn't disappear. Even when someone is fully aware that an act is forbidden, the imagination paves the way for them by various means and convinces them to distract themselves and let go of the restraint of intellectual and logical control for a moment and follow their hearts desires.

We slowly begin to notice that the imagination is the foremost enemy of the mind, as it evokes fantasies of falsehood and dulls the sharpness of logic !

Yet, it mustn't be forgotten that, as in any spiritual reality, there are also good aspects of the imagination.

The imagination allows us to liken one thing to another. It expands the horizons of thought and incites the mind to seek new inventions and fresh perceptions.

Moreover, the very essence of *emuna* depends on the power of imagination...⁶

Before we continue, let's learn a little about this week's parasha...

The Blessing of Children

The Gemara says⁷ that only three people are called *Avot* (forefathers), Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov.

Avraham Avinu had only one son that was a tzaddik, Itzchak.

Itzchak had only one son that was a tzaddik, Yaakov.

However, Yaakov merited having twelve sons and one daughter who were all tzaddikim!

Yaakov Avinu was the only one of the *Avot* who was privileged to pray in a *minyan*!

Of course, this wasn't the only benefit that Yaakov Avinu gained from his blessed family, for every child born is a world of blessing and infinite divine power.

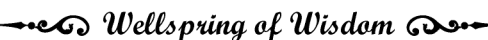
Birth, in general, is one of the wonders of this world. This

world, like creation as a whole, is limited. By nature, it slowly deteriorates. Time doesn't bring renewal, rather erosion and loss of everything we know...

Nevertheless, we witness the exact opposite, renewal, and rejuvenation, when it comes to birth.

The power of birth is in stark contrast to the nature of creation. It's infinite power, for the children born can also give birth to more children, and so on indefinitely. There is no parallel in creation to the power of regeneration of procreation. This is nothing but a clear expression of Hashem's infinite and unlimited capacity.

Generally, Hashem doesn't reveal His unlimited powers in the world. He created a limited world,



6. **Neimot** Netzach (Vol. 5, p. 325-328).

7. Brachot 16b.

determined to be governed by the laws of nature, and doesn't usually alter nature and the limitations of creation. Yet, when it comes to the power of procreation, we continuously see with our own eyes the revelation of the infinite power of Hashem. Every man and woman has the privilege of bringing to light again and again this unlimited power of Hashem.

When this power is revealed in the world, it isn't limited to the birth of a son or a daughter. Instead, it finds expression in all areas of life. Therefore, the birth of a son or a daughter brings blessing to the whole family. The blessing begins by being expressed through increasing the livelihood,⁸ health, and happiness of the parents and immediate family members and

—*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*—

8. In the town of Rivne, Ukraine, located a day's walk from the city of Talne, the residence of the tzaddik, Rebbe David of Talne, lived a simple country Jew named Israel David, the father of a large family of twelve children. But as his household grew, his livelihood wasn't enough, and he barely managed to provide his family with bread and water.

The winter of 1879 was harsher than any other winter we had seen to date... Blizzards covered the ground with a thick blanket of snow. The extreme cold made life difficult for all, and all the more so for Israel David, who made a living by drawing and supplying water to the town.

This livelihood, by nature, didn't provide him with much wealth. It was also a difficult job, requiring him to carry the heavy buckets and transport them to the people's homes. His work became even more difficult during that grueling winter, where the water froze over...

His children were literally starving.

He decided to go visit Rebbe David of Talne. When he arrived, he started to cry and said, "My wife and I are used to fasting, but what about my twelve children?"

Rebbe David listened with a caring heart and then blessed him, "May your wife soon give birth to a son!"

Israel David left the Rebbe and returned home...

"We got ourselves into a mess..." he announced aloud, "The mouths I have to feed isn't enough, but now we're adding another one!"

Summer arrived, and at its end, his wife gave birth to another child, the thirteenth child!



A few days after his birth, the boy fell ill, and his worried mother took him to the doctor. At that same time, an

ends with expanding and revealing Hashem's *chesed* to the entire world.⁹

This is also a reason for the Jewish approach, which sees children as a blessing, and holds that parents must do everything

in their power to have another boy, another girl, and many more children until each family has their own *minyan* sitting around the table...

Let's continue with Yaakov Avinu...

 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

elegant carriage stopped near the doctor's house, and a Polish nobleman and his wife got out, carrying their little child who had fallen ill...

The doctor's waiting room was particularly crowded that day, and they waited. While waiting, the noblewoman's wife noticed Israel David's baby, and he found favor in her eyes. She got up and approached him, and through the folds of the blanket, he stared at her with his blue eyes... This pure look penetrated her heart and shattered her whole personality...

She opened in conversation with his mother, slowly removing the partitions that parted them, and listened to the daily difficulties that accompanied her.

She declared, "My husband and I will pay you a visit!"

They arrived at their home and were horrified at the sight... The nobleman turned to Israel David and began to talk to him. During that conversation, friendly relations were established between them,

and he asked him, "Do you want to work for me as my personal secretary?"

Israel David happily jumped on the offer.

The nobleman gave him a lavish home equipped with the best furniture, and the money from the new job flowed in, providing him with everything he needed...

Several months later, Israel David revisited Rebbe David of Talne and told him about everything that had happened to him.

Rebbe David explained, "When you came to me the first time, I saw in heaven that you were sentenced to poverty and hunger. I looked for a way to sweeten the judgment and arouse pity on you, but I found no opening for salvation. That's why I came up with a trick to bring you another child, and this child will come into the world with the *mazal* of wealth, and in his merit, you all will enjoy!"

- Ahz Nidbaru (Issue 80, p. 45).

9. Machriyim Olam BeAchat (p. 80).

Notice What's in Front of You

All the sons of Yaakov Avinu were tzaddikim, and their righteousness was evident to all. Their *avodat Hashem* was in such a way that their external appearances and the remote inner aspects of their hearts were all consistent with one another. Anyone looking from the side had no doubts whatsoever. These were for sure tzaddikim.

However, Yosef went down a different path, hiding his righteousness and concealing under a disguise. He would wear fancy clothes, comb his hair, and always make sure that he looked good.

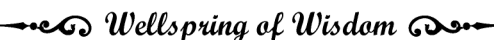
Rebbe Chaim Mordechai of Nadvorna writes¹⁰ that Yosef HaTzaddik would hide his true self from his brothers. He took the path of a hidden tzaddik, walking modestly with Hashem. His brothers didn't understand him... On the one hand, he appeared to them as a great Torah

scholar. Yet, on the other hand, he also seemed to them as someone simple with no special abilities, constantly worrying about his hair. Therefore, when his external appearance and internal desires didn't match, they thought he was trying to deceive them, and his appearance of a Torah scholar was only an illusion in an attempt to trick them.

Despite his brothers being tzaddikim of a very lofty level, Yosef still managed to hide his true self from them. They couldn't recognize his righteousness and holiness...

Rebbe Shlomo Goldman of Zvhil explains¹¹ that there are two types of tzaddikim, *Tzaddik Yesod Olam* (A tzaddik who is the foundation of the world) and *Tzaddik HaDor* (A tzaddik of the generation).

The *Tzaddik HaDor* is a tzaddik whose righteousness is known to all



10. **D'var** Chaim (Vol. 1, p. 102).

11. **Tzaddik** Yesod Olam (p. 123).

and whose glory and splendor spread throughout the world.

Tzaddik Yesod Olam is a hidden tzaddik whose righteousness is concealed from the eyes of all, as the foundation of the building is hidden underground.

Since Yosef managed to thoroughly hide his true self, his brothers were sure that he was useless and irresponsible. They told him, “On our level, with the

spiritual powers that Hashem has granted us, we see that you need to do teshuvah and fix your inner ways...”

Yosef heard their words and continued on his own path... When they saw that he was refusing to change, hatred filled their hearts...¹²

Their hatred eventually led to them selling Yosef into slavery... Wait...! What do we tell our father?!

I Think We Got Into A Problem...

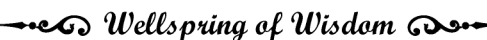
The brothers sat by the pit and frowned, “What do we do?” Issachar got up and advised, “We’ll take Yosef’s coat, tear it, drench it in blood, stomp on it, and then send it to our father... He’ll understand on his own!”

The brothers agreed... They sent Naftali with the coat and told him to tell Yaakov that they gathered the flock and headed towards Shechem when they

found this coat in the sand drenched in blood...

Naftali set off... When he got home, he gave his father the coat and told him what his brothers instructed him. Yaakov realized that it was Yosef’s coat and instantly fell to the ground in shock.

When he gathered the strength to get on his feet, he cried out, “It’s my son’s coat. A wild beast has devoured him. Yosef has been torn to pieces” (Bereshit 37:33)...¹³



12. See Bereshit 37:4.

13. **Sefer** HaYashar (Parashat Vayeshev).

Chazal has a saying...¹⁴ An animal doesn't attack someone unless they appear to it as an animal!¹⁵

That is, as long as someone guards their *Tzelem Elokim* (divine image), no animal can get close to them. However, when someone sins, their *Tzelem Elokim* departs from them, and the appearance of an animal manifests upon them in its place. At that point, an animal is

capable of attacking them because, to it, they too look like an animal.

Yaakov arrived at the conclusion that a wild animal attacked Yosef, and thus it was considered as if he had accepted *lashon hara* about Yosef!

Yaakov then tore his clothes and mourned Yosef indefinitely responded...¹⁶ Before we continue, we'll give a short introduction...

The Punishment of a Slanderer

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel wrote the following in his book *Imrei Noam*...¹⁷

David HaMelech said, "Who is the man that desires life? Who

loves seeing good days?" (Tehillim 34:13).

That is, the desire for life is the strongest desire, and it's not called life unless it's a good and

❧ Wellspring of Wisdom ❧

14. Shabbat 151b.

15. **One** of the great granddaughters of the "Hacham Tzvi" once traveled by wagon, loaded with passengers, as she sat by the window.

On their way, they passed through a thick forest. Abruptly, a lion ran out of the forest towards the wagon...

The wagon driver fainted on the spot! The rest of the passengers were covered in a cold sweat...

The lion approached the woman and put its paw on her knee. She stared at it and noticed a nail protruding... Slowly, she removed the nail, tore her handkerchief, and bandaged its paw...

The lion bowed its head before her as if expressing gratitude and returned to the forest...

- Mordechai Avraham (Vol. 2, p. 37).

16. **See** Bereshit 37:34.

17. **Imrei** Noam (Devarim, 6).

Parashat Vayigash - The Punishment of a Slanderer

pleasant life. But we see that not everyone merits that, rather there are lots of suffering...

David HaMelech reveals to us that the only way to prolong life and live a good and pleasant life is by guarding one's mouth, "Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit" (Tehillim 34:14).¹⁸

That is, the day you stop speaking slander about people and become the boss of your mouth, all your troubles will immediately cease, and you'll live a joyous life.

Life's success depends on the guarding of your speech. As Shlomo HaMelech said, "Death and life are in the hands of the tongue" (Mishlei 18:21). The Metzudat David comments that both death and life are in the power of the tongue. If one speaks *Divrei Torah*, they'll live, but if they speak *lashon hara*, they won't...

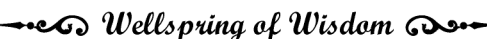
When someone speaks *lashon hara* or *rechilus* (gossip) about another, they lose their *Siyata Di'Shemaya* (help from heaven) in all

areas of life. They won't succeed in *chinuch* (educating their children), neither in *Shalom Bayit* (marital peace), nor in *parnasa* (livelihood), or any other field.

It says in the book of Iyov, "He will save you from six troubles, and in the seventh, no evil will touch you" (Iyov 5:19). The commentators clarify this verse by explaining that it's possible for a person to transgress all six orders of the Mishna and yet Hashem will save them from all troubles, and even if they aren't meticulous in the observance of the seventh day, *Shabbat Kodesh*, it's possible that Hashem will tolerate them and not let anything bad touch them.

However, there's one sin that causes Hashem's tolerance to cease immediately. Regarding this sin the verse says, "Hide from the whip of the tongue" (Iyov 5:21).

That is, if *chas ve'shalom*, you sinned and spoke *lashon hara* and beat others with the whip of your tongue, it's highly recommended that you quickly



18. **The** next verse.

hide from the calamity that's about to come upon you, because from that moment onwards, Hashem removed His protection from you and you're vulnerable.

Over the years, I observed many people who were accustomed to speak *lashon hara* about others, and I saw that every single one, without exception, paid heavily for it in the end. When these types of people come and ask me why they're suffering so terribly, although I don't explicitly remind them when and about who they spoke *lashon hara* so as not to embarrass them, I do, on the other hand, hint to them, saying, "Learn the laws of *Shmirat HaLashon* (guarding your tongue), it'll be very helpful in bringing you closer to salvation." Whoever understands the hint and completely removes themselves from the sin of *lashon hara* merits escaping all the troubles that were meant to befall them and their families...

When someone speaks a lot of *lashon hara*, their financial situation suddenly becomes very difficult, their house gets foreclosed, they suddenly don't get along with their spouse, all types of people from the past pop out of nowhere and harass them, etc. This ends up continuing until their peace of mind is completely shattered.

They start wondering, "What changed all of a sudden? Everything had been quiet until now?" The answer to this is as long as they were silent and didn't speak *lashon hara* about anyone, Hashem also kept their life quiet. But as soon as they began to make noise with the words of *lashon hara* and beat people with the whip of their tongue, Hashem also awakened all the noise of this world and threw it on them...

But the worst thing caused by the sin of *lashon hara* is...

Before we continue, a warning...

Five Challot

We are entirely incapable of grasping the magnitude of

the tzaddikim of the early generations with our meager

minds. What is considered a sin, pertaining to them, due to the enormity of their greatness, is considered a mitzvah pertaining to our insignificant selves!

The tzaddik, Rebbe Israel Itzchak Kalish of Warka, tells that one year, Rebbe Ze'ev Wolf, the Chief Rabbi of Lizhensk, accompanied Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk to say *Tashlich* on Rosh Hashanah. When Rebbe Elimelech bent over a little bit in order to shake the hem of his garment, as is the custom, Rebbe Ze'ev Wolf hurried after him and said, "Let me see where the Rebbe throws his "transgressions" so that I can apply them to myself. For what is considered in the eyes of the Rebbe to be a sin is considered a great mitzvah for me!"¹⁹

There was a certain incident regarding two people who were walking down the street, one holding three *challot* and the other holding two. They were eventually joined by a pedestrian who had nothing in his hands. They later

invited him to sit and eat with them, sharing their bread with him. They ate, were satisfied, and then parted ways with the pedestrian. Before he left, he gave them five gold coins as payment for the food he ate.

He was grateful and thought he was doing a good deed, but instead, he created a loud argument...

An intense dispute broke out between them on how to divide the five coins between the two. The one holding three *challot* claimed that he deserved three gold coins because he had three *challot*. The one holding two *challot* claimed that the money should be divided equally since the guest ate from both of them equally and wasn't conscientious in eating more from the one holding three *challot*. The disagreement intensified...

Onlookers were startled and brought them before the town's Rabbi...

He listened to both sides of the argument and ruled, "The one holding the three *challot* will receive four gold coins, and the

Parashat Vayigash - Stop Imagining!

one holding two *challot* will receive one!”

The verdict was publicized and became a laughingstock...

“**Where** did this Rabbi get such a ruling from?! Even the one holding the three *challot* didn’t dare to demand such a sum!”

During that time, by *Hashgacha Pratit* (divine providence), Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra passed through that same town and heard laughter erupting in the marketplace...

He was curious and asked, “What happened?” The people told him about the incident...

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra sighed, “Unfortunately, I’ve met a lot of people like you... Let me

explain his ruling to you. There were five *challot* and three people eating. Let’s consider how much each one ate. Each challah was divided into three parts, creating fifteen parts of challah. Hence, each person ate five parts.

Thus, the one holding two *challot* (which equals six parts) ate five parts and gave the guest his one remaining part. The one holding three *challot* (which equals nine parts) ate five parts and gave the guest his four remaining parts.

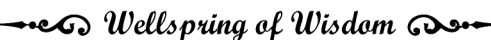
Therefore, the one holding three *challot* deserves four gold coins, and the one holding two *challot* deserves one gold coin.²⁰

This story is enough to realize that “not understanding” is just a lack of knowledge and comprehension...

Stop Imagining!

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov writes²¹ that someone who speaks *lashon hara* is punished

with having their imagination rule over them, and they’re no longer able to see the truth!



20. **Me’am** Loez (Devarim - Vol. 4, p. 1284).

21. **Likutei** Moharan I 54:5.

Rabbi Chaim Menachem Kramer explains²² that this punishment is *Middah Keneged Middah* (measure for measure). Reality proves that *lashon hara* is built greatly on imagination, for even when you speak the truth about your friend, it's never the whole truth.

Our perception of what happened may be quite accurate in relation to external details of the story but completely false in regard to what the person being talked about thought at the time. People who speak *lashon hara* give their

imagination complete freedom to increase the guilt of others, thus inflicting serious damage to their sight...²³

When someone transgresses the terrible sin of *lashon hara*, they fall instantly into the dark abyss of their imagination, and it doesn't matter at all what spiritual level their on!

Because Yaakov Avinu "accepted" *lashon hara* about Yosef, the power of imagination overcame him, and the *Shechina* departed from him!

And it didn't end there...

Living the Happy Life

Many years passed by in sorrow and mourning for Yaakov Avinu, "All his sons and

all his daughters arose to console him, but he refused to be consoled. He said, I will go

Wellspring of Wisdom

22. Ne'imot Netzach (Vol. 5, p. 326).

23. The meaning of this is that, for example, when someone comes to drink from a cup of water and they didn't bless before drinking, it isn't because they forgot to bless, rather the reason is that they, in their deep consciousness, don't believe in Hashem. In their minds, there is no need to bless. Therefore,

they slowly begin to lose their mind, for they damage it every time they don't bless. The same goes with every limb and organ according to its own aspects. Therefore, when someone sees something and then goes and creates in their imagination an entirely unrealistic scenario that they "allegedly" saw, they end up damaging their eyesight.

down to the grave mourning over my son..." (Bereshit 37:35).

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar writes in his commentary, *Ohr HaChaim*,²⁴ that although the verse says that Yaakov's children consoled him, the Torah doesn't detail the actual words of consolation that were said.

It seems that they didn't console him at all! Rather when they noticed that their father continued mourning for an exceedingly long period, they thought that this behavior was appropriate for someone who lost an only son or one of relatively few children. But since Yaakov had many children, he should've remembered what he still had instead of only dwelling on what he had lost...

His children thus brought this to their father's attention without uttering a word by surrounding him with their presence, all eleven sons and eleven daughters and all their children, hence letting Yaakov console himself for it wasn't fitting for someone who

has so many children to grieve to such an extent...

This is the meaning of the verse, "All his sons and all his daughters arose." They arose together in the hope that all of them, together, is what will console him after he sees the many sons and daughters that he has...

Sometimes, as parents, we're preoccupied with raising and educating our children that we don't take the time to contemplate the great blessing inherent in every child. Often, only after children grow up and mature do we realize how wise a choice it was not to settle for a few children but to bring many children to the world.

When the time comes for children to leave their parent's homes, get married, and build a family for themselves, many parents get left alone. They sit at home feeling "on the side," longing to visit their children, to see their grandchildren grow up, and to rejoice in their happiness.

Parashat Vayigash - Living the Happy Life

Parents who limited themselves to one or two children have no choice but to settle for a visit from their children twice a year. The rest of the time, they're forced to sit at home thinking about the days when their children were still young and would be home with them. They also can't visit their children whenever they want... After all, their children have their own lives and families, and parents can't but in whenever they want. These parents are forced to remain alone at home without anyone to talk to, someone to share experiences with, etc...

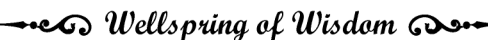
On the other hand, if these parents didn't limit themselves to having few children and ignored the small-minded thoughts of income and luxuries, "We first need to be financially stable," they would have had the privilege of raising many children and avoid all these worries. They could stay a few days with one child, then visit for Shabbat at the home of another

child, and so on and so forth, continually visiting their many children, without having to worry of being a nuisance or overstepping boundaries with anyone...

Their children, together with their grandchildren (and if they're lucky and get married while they're still young, also great-grandchildren), will also come to visit them from time to time. They'll have big family gatherings, sitting together at the table and enjoying everyone's company. They, the grandparents, will then be able to draw immense *nachat* (pleasure) and joy from their children and grandchildren!

By having many children, parents guarantee themselves many years of happiness and satisfaction and save themselves lots of sorrow and remorse because of worthless calculations...²⁵

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* continues²⁶ and says that Yaakov, however, refused to be consoled, saying that the reason he would



25. **Machriyim** Olam BeAchat (p. 81).

26. **Bereshit** 37:35.

Parashat Vayigash - The Search Begins

continue mourning Yosef is that he was one of a kind and there's no substitute for him...²⁷

Twenty-two years passed... And Yosef's brothers went down to Egypt...

The Search Begins...

The brothers regretted selling Yosef to slavery and finally decided to go down to Egypt to search for him and return him to his father... "Yosef's ten brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt" (Bereshit 42:3).

write down their name as well as their father's name, and at the end of the day bring the names before me."

Every evening Yosef would go through the lists of names waiting to see the names of his brothers...

Seemingly, the verse should've said, "The sons of Yaakov went down to buy grain from Egypt..." Rather the verse teaches us that at first, they didn't treat Yosef like a brother and sold him to Arabs, but ultimately, they did teshuvah and went to search for him for they knew their mistake.²⁸

Finally, they arrived...

Yosef immediately called for the officer in charge of the sale of grain and said to him, "When these people come to you, seize them and bring them to me!"

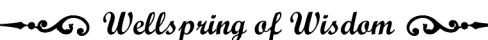
But Yosef knew about their plan...

Three days passed though, and they didn't show up. Yosef decided to enforce Pharaoh's army and instructed them to search for them...

Yosef knew that his brothers were coming to Egypt to buy food. What did he do? He placed guards at the gates of every entrance to the country and told them, "Every person who enters to buy food,

Armed forces were deployed throughout the entire country, and the search began...²⁹

Ultimately, the brothers were found and were brought before Yosef...



27. **See** Zohar Vayeshev 182b which explains the reason for this.

28. **Midrash** Tanchuma (Parashat Miketz, 8).

29. **VaYeveK** Yosef (p. 15).

The Meeting

Our parasha begins in the midst of the meeting between “the missing brother,” Yosef, and his righteous brothers...

David HaMelech describes that meeting as follows, “Behold, the kings have assembled, they advanced together” (Tehillim 48:5).

The midrash says³⁰ that when the brothers saw Yehuda step forward in Yosef’s direction, the rest of the brothers stood aside and said, “Let them settle it on their own...”

The argument intensified...

Yehuda immediately said to Naftali, “Go and find out how many marketplaces there are in Egypt!” Naftali ran and returned³¹ and told Yehuda that there were twelve. Yehuda told his brothers, “I’ll wipe out three of them, and each of you wipe out one.” His brothers replied,

“Yehuda, Egypt isn’t like Shechem. If you destroy Egypt, you’ll destroy the whole world!”

At that moment, Yehuda roared so loudly that every wall in Egypt collapsed, every pregnant woman in Egypt miscarried, Yosef and Pharaoh fell from their chairs, and the teeth of all the soldiers who stood before Yosef fell out...

At that moment, “Yosef couldn’t contain himself... and he cried out... Remove everyone from my presence!” (Bereshit 45:1).

Yehuda turned to Yosef and said, “From the beginning, you falsely accused us! The first time we met, you called us spies. The second time you said that, we’ve come to see where the land is most exposed. The third time you accused us of stealing your goblet. I swear by the life of my righteous

❧ Wellspring of Wisdom ❧

30. Midrash Tanchuma (Vayigash, 4).

31. It is said of Naftali, “Naftali is a gazelle let loose” (Bereshit 49:21). That is, he was as fast and agile as a gazelle. We also find in Midrash Kohelet Rabbah

(9:11) that says, “Asael was light on his feet, like the gazelle of the field” (Shmuel II 2:18) – Asael was so fast that when he ran in the fields, the grass didn’t even have time to bend...

father that if I draw my sword from its sheath, I'll pile up corpses throughout all of Egypt." Without hesitation, Yosef responded, "If you draw your sword from its sheath, I'll wrap it around your neck!" Yehuda asked Yosef, "What do you want us to tell our father!? We promised him!..."³²

When Yosef realized that his brothers unanimously agreed to destroy Egypt, he said to himself, "Better that I reveal myself to them and not let Egypt get destroyed..." Yosef turned to his brother and said, "Didn't you say that one of your brothers is dead? He isn't dead, for I purchased him! You want to see him?"

He began to call out, "Yosef ben Yaakov, come here! Yosef ben Yaakov, come and speak to your brothers who sold you!" The brother began to look in every direction, waiting for their brother to enter. Yosef said to them, "Why are you looking all around? He's standing right in front of you... I'm your brother, Yosef!"

When Yosef saw that they were embarrassed and couldn't move, he called them over and embraced them...

The reunion was truly emotional... But short-lived...

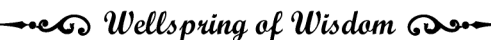
Once again, the question arose, "What will we tell our father?"

The Power of Sacred Melodies

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov continues and says...³³

The way to subdue the imagination is through the hands, "By the hand of the *nevi'im* many imaginations." (Hoshea 12:11). And the hands represent joy, as in, "You

shall rejoice in all to which you put your hand" (Devarim 12:7). This is done by musical instruments that are played with the hands, by means of which *nevuah* (prophecy) would rest on the *nevi'im*, "Bring me a musician..." (Melachim II 3:15).



32. See there for the rest of the argument.

33. Likutei Moharan I 54:7.

The instrument gathers the *ruach*, which is mixed with good and evil. There's a *ruach* of sadness, a *ruach* of depression, an evil *ruach*... as it's said of Shaul HaMelech, "An evil *ruach* tormented him" (Shmuel I 16:14). There's also a good *ruach*, "Your good *ruach* will lead me on the straight path" (Tehillim 143:10). This is the secret of *Ruach HaNevuah* (the *ruach* of prophecy).

But when someone is mixed with good and evil, they're incapable of receiving true prophecies. Thus, it is said of Shaul, "He himself prophesied... and he fell down naked" (Shmuel I 19:24).

Rashi comments that the Targum Yonatan translates "and he fell down naked" as "וּנְפַל בְּרִשְׁוֹ", which in Arabic means insane.

Shaul was encompassed by a *ruach* of folly, a *ruach* of sadness...

The person playing the instrument with their hands collects and gathers the good *ruach*, *Ruach HaNevuah*, from within the *ruach* of sadness. For this reason, they must be a skilled musician and

know how to collect, gather, and find the elements of the *ruach* one by one to build the *niggun*, the joy.

Thus, when the prophet hears this *niggun* from a skilled musician, they receive *Ruach HaNevuah*, which the player gathered with their hand from within the *ruach* of sadness. This is, "He will play music with his hand, and it will be good for you" (Shmuel I 16:16), precisely, "it will be good for you," because one extracts the good from within the evil.

The primary gathering and building up of *Ruach HaNevuah* is by means of the hands, because precisely there (in the hands of Hashem) the *ruach* is deposited, as it says, "Into Your hands, I deposit my *ruach*" (Tehillim 31:6), and, "In His hand is the *ruach* of all living things and the *ruach* of all mankind" (Iyov 12:10). And this is, "When the musician began to play, the hand of Hashem came upon him" (Melachim II 3:15).

By playing a musical instrument with one's hands, we find that you can extract the good *ruach* from the evil *ruach*, which is the aspect of *Ruach HaNevuah*, as explained

above. All this is the act of subduing the imagination, which is the evil *ruach*, a foolish *ruach*, that wishes to impair and obscure the good *ruach*, the *Ruach HaNevuah*. The imagination is subdued and nullified through the joy derived from the one playing music with

their hands, as explained above, for the power of the imagination stems from sadness which obscures the good *ruach*, the *Ruach HaNevuah*...

Therefore, it's impossible to receive *Ruach HaNevuah* other than by means of joy, which is done by playing music with the hands...

The War Against Sadness

Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick wrote the following words to one of his students...³⁴

The primary purpose of our existence in this world is to nullify ourselves³⁵ and be one with Hashem, and this is only possible through happiness. Your happiness should be so great that it causes you to dance from the feeling of joy that you experience. Only then will you experience true *emuna* and clearly perceive that the entire world, everything, and anything, is only Hashem.

The reason why we don't see the true reality is that our

imagination, which rules over our minds, doesn't allow us to see the revelation of Hashem and actualize His existence, and the power of the imagination is formed using *lashon hara* and *rechilus*.

The way to fix this is through happiness. Rebbe Nachman writes³⁶ that you can remove yourself from the realm of imagination and enter the realm of intellect through the power of joy.

See what's waiting ahead of you, and don't wait or belittle yourself! Great things await you! Just stay happy, and that will in

~ Wellspring of Wisdom *~*

34. Asher BaNachal (Vol. 10, p. 1137).

35. By nullifying our personal wants and desires and not thinking about "what will

I get out of this," rather, "I am only doing this because Hashem commanded."

36. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 25).

Parashat Vayigash - The Ruach of Yaakov Comes to Life

itself be the cure to all your troubles!

But you should know, this is more difficult than any other *avodah*. The *yetzer hara* can tolerate everything except for happiness, so don't despair and give it everything you have!

I once heard from a great and holy man that the mitzvah of happiness needs true *mesirut*

nefesh. You never truly finish with the mitzvah of happiness. Happiness is infinite, and for every level of happiness that you'll achieve, there will always be a higher level that can be attained. As the Zohar HaKadosh says,³⁷ "Happiness draws even higher happiness..."

Raise your spirits, and remind yourself to always be happy...

The Ruach of Yaakov Comes to Life

After the brothers parted from Yosef, they hurried to tell their father the wonderful news that Yosef was alive.

When they approached their father's home, Serach, Asher's daughter, walked towards them. Her uncles called her over and told her to play her violin before Yaakov, softly singing, "My uncle, Yosef, is alive! My uncle, Yosef, is alive! And he's the ruler of Egypt!"

The moment Serach agreed to their request and entered Yaakov's home with a violin in her hand, the

Shechina again rested on Yaakov Avinu. The reason for this is that when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, they lifted the ban they had imposed, forbidding anyone from revealing to their father what they had done. Once the ban was lifted, *Ruach HaKodesh* returned to Yaakov, for that entire time, prophecy departed from him.

Serach sat down, took her violin, and sang what her uncles asked of her. Her singing and violin playing was to Yaakov a cure for his aching heart. He felt a delightful calmness filling his whole body,

and the *Ruach* of Hashem, which was taken from him since the sale of Yosef, dwelt upon him once again.

His *ruach* rejoiced within him.

After Serach finished singing, Yaakov joyfully laid his hand on her head and blessed her, “My daughter, since you brought my *ruach* back to life, and imparted me with endless joy and serenity, I bless you that you will merit eternal life!³⁸

While Yaakov blessed his granddaughter, to his amazement, he unexpectedly saw his sons approaching him, sitting in magnificent chariots, dressed in

royal attire, and many servants walking before them. Yaakov was taken aback by the sight. His sons entered his home, their faces radiating with joy.

The sons approached their father, lovingly hugged and kissed him, and said, “We have good news! We saw your son, Yosef, in Egypt, and he’s the ruler of the entire land...”

They then showed him everything that Yosef had sent him and began to tell him about Yosef’s greatness... “He reigns over all of Egypt, and that the entire kingdom moves according

 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

38. In a discourse given by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, he said the following...

Serach bat Asher told Yaakov Avinu that his son, Yosef, was still alive, and as a result, enlivened Yaakov’s *ruach*, and he, in turn, blessed her that she would enter *Gan Eden* alive.

But what does it mean that she entered *Gan Eden* alive, for the body needs food to exist, where, in *Gan Eden*, will she find food for her body?

Rather, certainly, her body became utterly purified, leaving no materiality

whatsoever. She merited all this, *Middah Keneged Middah*, for after reviving the *ruach* of Yaakov Avinu, she merited ascending so high and purifying her body until it became entirely *ruach*.

In this, we can also clarify the words of the Gemara (Pesachim 3b) that it is said of one who is a bearer of bad tidings, “One who utters slander is a fool” (Mishlei 10:18), because by bearing bad tidings one causes depression to the *ruach* of the listener’s heart!

- Sha’arei HaZmanim (Chanukah, p. 174).

Parashat Vayigash - In the Merit of Serach

to his word!" But Yaakov wasn't at all interested in that. He only asked them, "How is he conducting himself in Egypt?! Is he still walking in the way of Hashem and keeping His mitzvot? Only knowing this will make me happy..."

"Don't worry father" his sons answered, "Yosef is just as much a tzaddik as he ever was!"

After hearing this, Yaakov became relieved. He rose from his chair to give thanks to Hashem for not removing His *chesed* from

him and returning his son's body and soul intact. Yaakov then put on the garments Yosef had sent him and made a big feast in honor of the joyous occasion...³⁹

All the lofty spiritual attainments that Yaakov had achieved before Yosef was taken from him then returned, as it says in the verse, "They told him all the words of Yosef which he had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to take him. The *ruach* of their father, Yaakov, was then enlivened" (Bereshit 45:27)...

In the Merit of Serach

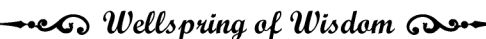
This story took place about 450 years ago, during the reign of the Persian sheik, Abbas, who was known for his tyranny and hatred of Jews...

From time to time, he would make decrees against the Jews and joyously listen to the cries of suffering from the people he hated. One of his humiliating decrees required the Jews to wear dunce hats and different colored shoes and

affix a patch to their chests revealing their religious affiliation...

He crossed all lines...

One day, Abbas went on a hunting trip with his entourage. From a distance, they noticed a deer. The sheik, who was very eager to catch it, ordered everyone to surround the deer and close in on it. He then added that if the deer manages to escape, the person



through whom it managed to escape has to run after it until they catch it. They all accepted the challenge. They began to encircle the deer and narrowed around it. When the deer noticed that it was trapped, it looked for a way to escape and then suddenly jumped over the sheik with astonishing speed.

Now forced to capture it himself, the sheik quickly jumped on his horse and chased after the deer. The sheik pursued it into the mountains, down hills, and through dense forests, when unexpectedly...

The deer ran into a cave as the sheik enthusiastically leaped off his horse and sprinted after it. Immediately after entering, the cave closed behind him, and thick darkness encircled him. Petrified, the sheik froze in fear, not knowing what to do. He stood there for two days without moving, when suddenly...

A powerful light filled the cave. The sheik tightly closed his eyes from its intensity... When he finally managed to open them, he saw a beautiful woman standing in front of him...

The woman looked at him and said, "I'm the deer you chased after. My name is Serach, the daughter of Asher and the granddaughter of Yaakov, the forefather of the Jews. Your behavior towards the Jews has crossed the line, and therefore, you will never leave this cave. Here you will die, and here you will be buried!"

Abbas was terrified and began to cry uncontrollably as he pleaded for his life and swore that he would be good to the Jews from now on. Realizing that he didn't change her mind, he added to his promise that he would turn the cave into a synagogue where all the Jews could come to pray...

He continued crying and begging, promising and swearing...

Finally, Serach agreed, and the cave opened.

Abbas returned to his palace, annulled all his decrees, and granted rights to the Jews. He also stood by his promise and built a synagogue that existed for three hundred years...

Afterward, someone who despised Am Israel started inciting

hatred against the Jews and their synagogue...

That same night, the instigator suddenly began to suffer severe abdominal pain, and even the best doctors who were called to his bedside were unable to alleviate his terrible misery. Suddenly, the man fell asleep, and Serach appeared to him. She scolded him for his actions, rebuked him for preventing the Jews from praying in the synagogue, and informed him that as a consequence for his actions, he would die...

He, too, regretted his actions...⁴⁰

This cave is located near Isfahan, Iran, and is known as *Jalah Kunah* or “The Cave of Serach bat Asher.”

The cave became a pilgrimage site for many Jews from all over the world. A hostel was built near the cave for the many Jews who came to pray in it all year round, especially before the High Holidays. Rafael Chaim HaKohen, a learned Jew from Shiraz, Iran, who wrote a book about the Persian Jewish community, writes about the festivities that took place near the cave. Hundreds of Jews who sang and danced near the cave participated in these festivities. Many candles were lit in the cave itself, and Jews sat in it and prayed for their welfare and the welfare of their families. The wording of the prayer was, “Serach bat Asher, pray for us and for all of Israel...”⁴¹

Shabbat Shalom !



~ **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*

40. Umatok HaOhr (Bereshit Vol. 3, p. 426), Ma’ase HaGedolim (Vol. 4, p. 467).

41. Am HaTorah MiSaviv LaOlam (Vol. 1, p. 56).

The Pathway...

1. The sounds of a *niggun* elevate you to a higher level. While playing an instrument or singing, you become entirely enclosed and sink into the sealed room of the mysteries of your soul, invisible to even yourself, for you have clung to the essence of your soul. By means of a *niggun*, you can ascend and become drawn to divine light, revealing the essence of your soul. At least for the time being, during the *niggun*, this light repels all negative forces accumulated in your soul. The sounds of a *niggun* *arouse the inner and hidden good within you, which give strength to overcome all materiality. When you awaken the desire to ascend to the light of your inner soul, you can then climb the steps of the ladder of the niggun*, and there, you can draw directly from the life of your soul, which is entirely good!

2. Man's advantage over all other creatures is that Hashem blew a *ruach* into man, from Himself. Both humans and animals have cognitive qualities, but there are enormous differences between them. The traits of animals are part of their being. They have no ability to change or control their traits. They act only through instinct and not through intellect. Human beings, on the other hand, are conscious. They can act against their instinctive characteristics. Humans can act differently according

to their circumstances. It's in our power to choose which path we will go down, the path of good deeds or the path of iniquity. We even have the power to suppress and control our natural tendencies...

3. Since the *ruach* is under our control, we have the power to progress and ascend continually. Conversely, the *ruach* of an animal is controlled by its natural instincts, and since it's unable to progress, inevitably it descends... When someone doesn't use their intelligence and instead follows the inclinations of their heart, they end up descending from a human *ruach* to an animal *ruach*... But there's one sin that causes even someone who has already attained lofty spiritual levels to fall from a human *ruach* to an animal *ruach*...

4. The endless surges of abstract and unfocused thoughts that constantly seek to surface and cling to our consciousness is called our imagination. The descent into the animal *ruach* is expressed by the increase of imagination, which eliminates the primary characteristic of human beings, self-control. In their correct state, human beings conduct their life intellectually and logically, but when their animal impulses surface, all their life principles become a second priority, and their imagination generates

The Pathway...

an endless number of excuses to deviate them from the straight path. Even when someone is fully aware that an act is forbidden, the imagination paves the way for them by various means and convinces them to distract themselves and let go of the restraint of intellectual and logical control for a moment and follow their hearts desires.

5. When someone speaks a lot of *lashon hara*, their financial situation suddenly becomes very difficult, their house gets foreclosed, they suddenly don't get along with their spouse, all types of people from the past pop out of nowhere and harass them, etc. This ends up continuing until their peace of mind is completely shattered. They start wondering, "What changed all of a sudden? Everything had been quiet until now?" The answer to this is as long as they were silent and didn't speak *lashon hara* about anyone, Hashem also kept their life quiet. But as soon as they began to make noise with the words of their *lashon hara*, Hashem also awakened all the noise of this world and threw it on them...

6. Reality proves that *lashon hara* is built greatly on imagination, for even when you speak the truth about your friend, it's never the whole truth. Our perception of what happened may be quite accurate in relation to external details of the story but completely

false in regard to what the person being talked about thought at the time. Someone who speaks *lashon hara* is punished with having their imagination rule over them, and they're no longer able to see the truth!

7. Sometimes, as parents, we're preoccupied with raising and educating our children that we don't take the time to contemplate the great blessing inherent in every child. Often, only after children grow up and mature do we realize how wise a choice it was not to settle for a few children but to bring many children to the world. When the time comes for children to leave their parent's homes, get married, and build a family for themselves, many parents get left alone. They sit at home feeling "on the side," longing to visit their children, to see their grandchildren grow up, and to rejoice in their happiness.

8. Parents who limit themselves to one or two children have no choice but to settle for a visit from their children twice a year. The rest of the time, they're forced to sit at home thinking about the days when their children were still young and would be home with them. They also can't visit their children whenever they want... After all, their children have their own lives and families, and parents can't but in whenever they want. These parents are forced to remain alone at home without anyone to talk to, someone to share

Parashat Vayigash - The Pathway...

experiences with, etc... If these parents didn't limit themselves to having few children and ignored the small-minded thoughts of income and luxuries, "We first need to be financially stable," they would have had the privilege of raising

many children and avoid all these worries. By having many children, parents guarantee themselves many years of happiness and satisfaction and save themselves lots of sorrow and remorse because of worthless calculations.





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Shabbat Times

Parashat Vayigash

Tevet 21, 5782



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	4:10 pm	5:15 pm	5:41 pm
Miami	5:12 pm	6:09 pm	6:43 pm
Los Angeles	4:25 pm	5:25 pm	5:57 pm
Montreal	3:52 pm	5:01 pm	5:23 pm
Toronto	4:22 pm	5:29 pm	5:53 pm
Jerusalem	4:20 pm	5:11 pm	5:42 pm

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From the Holy Words of HaRav Yoram zt"l

Every father is required to learn with his children and help them with their homework every single day. A father who doesn't learn with his children isn't only ignoring a mitzvah from the Torah, but also causes his children to grow up missing valuable knowledge that they could have had.

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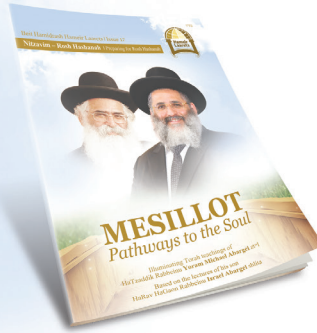
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