



Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 63

Matot – Massei | Perceiving Your Own Reality



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

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

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Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

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Parashat Matot

The Deceptive Binoculars

Alex lived in a small village on the Russian steppe.¹ His life was rather dull and gray. Every day he would get up at sunrise, go out to the field near his house, and grow and harvest wheat. But despite this, Alex was happy.

His recognition of this world was relatively meager. They amounted to just a bed made of wood, a bowl of soup, and a bottle of vodka. However, since these things were always found in his home, he was content.

One morning, Alex woke up with a smile spread across his face, “I deserve congratulations. Today, I’m forty years old!”

After getting dressed, he went outside, and to his surprise, he saw his wife standing in the yard next to a horse and carriage...

Alex stuttered, “Whe... where are you going?”

His wife replied with a smile, “No, no, I’m not going anywhere, I just saved up money for a long time, and now in honor of your birthday, I decided to buy you a horse and carriage as a gift!”

Alex held his breath, “Horse and carriage?! I’ve been working in agriculture for thirty-five years, and I never had a horse and carriage...”

For several hours he wandered around drunk with joy. Then, he approached his wife and asked, “What am I supposed to do with the horse and carriage?”

His wife, who knew the IQ level of her husband, had already prepared for this question and replied, “I noticed that when you reap the crop, you carry it in your

Parashat Matot - The Deceptive Binoculars

hands to the storage house, and I felt bad for you, so I bought you a carriage. Now you can load the wheat on the carriage and carry it to the storage house.”

Alex happily went out into the field and began to reap and load on the carriage. A huge pile of wheat had accumulated on the carriage, and he began to lead it to the storage house.

He transported it very quickly, but when he reached the entrance of the storage house, the carriage got stuck in the doorway. The pile of grain reached the crossbar over the door, and Alex was unable to enter.

Out of desperation, he started beating the horse, but in vain...

Suddenly a man passed by and noticed what was going on. He then decided to have some fun with Alex...

“Why are you hitting your horse?” He asked. “Do you not see that the load is higher than the door?”

Alex replied, “I realized, but what option do I have other than hitting the horse?!”

Seeing who he was dealing with, the man approached Alex and whispered to him quietly, “I have a solution for you, but it’ll cost you five bottles of vodka.”

Alex almost fainted, “Five bottles?!” But since he realized that he had no choice, he agreed. His hands trembled as he gave over the five bottles...

The man suddenly pulled binoculars out of his bag and handed them to Alex, explaining, “These binoculars magnify everything several times over. Look upwards through them, and the opening will rise up. This way, you can insert the carriage effortlessly!”

The man took the bottles and continued on his way. Alex looked at the doorway through the binoculars, and indeed it wondrously raised up. He pulled the reins of the horse, but the carriage was still stuck...

Dumbfounded, he yelled after the disappearing man, “The

opening raised up, but the carriage is still stuck?!”

The man shouted back at him, “You fool, look at the pile of grain through the binoculars. You’ll see that it too has grown and again gets stuck at the opening!”

Alex looked at the grain through the binoculars, and indeed it grew extensively, “If so, what was the benefit?”

He cried in disappointment to the fading man, “You tricked me. Return my bottles!”

From a distance, the man’s voice was heard, “I have a solution! When you look at the grain, turn the binoculars around, and you’ll see that it returned to its original height!”

Alex didn’t know that the binoculars had another side! He flipped them around and looked at the grain. It was now tiny! He rejoiced, concentrated, and whipped the horse...

But the horse didn’t move!

He called for the man to explain what was wrong, but he had already disappeared...

Unexpectedly another man passed by and was baffled at what he saw... a carriage stuck in the doorway of a storage house, the driver looking at the entrance through binoculars, continuously turning them around and looking at the load...

He pitied him and asked, “Say, what’s your deal? Don’t you understand that the binoculars don’t actually change reality? You can’t just look through the side that’s convenient for you every time to supposedly raise the opening and lower the grain!”

Alex burst into tears, “What should I do then?!”

The man approached him and whispered, “Very simple, just remove grain from the carriage until it’s lower than the height of the opening...”

Before we continue, we’ll tell another story...

Fifty-Two Million Dollars !

Reuven and Shimon were good friends whose financial situation wasn't so great. Their debts pursued them and drove them crazy...

One day, as they walked down the street, they passed a lottery booth and saw an enormous ad, "Tonight, a jackpot of fifty-two million dollars."

They looked at each other and approached the stand... One turned to his friend and said to him, "I suggest that each of us buy a ticket, and if one of us wins, we'll split the winnings half & half..."

That night... Shimon went to bed at ten o'clock, as usual, while Reuven remained awake for the lottery.

At midnight, the lottery was held, and Shimon owned the winning ticket of fifty-two million dollars !

Reuven sat and thought, "Who knows what war awaits me..." After extended thought, his eyes lit up.

When the first rays of the sun began to shine, Reuven quickly came to Shimon's house and knocked on the door. Shimon, half asleep, opened the door and asked, "Why are you here so early ? !"

Reuven stared at Shimon with a cold look, "I came to tell you that I won the lottery and that you can dream of getting even one dollar from me !"

Shimon's drowsiness vanished in an instant. He grabbed the collar of Reuven's shirt and screamed, "What do you mean, you promised me half ? !"

Reuven answered in an indifferent tone, "I promised ? Can you show me that in writing ? Do you have witnesses ?"

"No !" Shimon replied. "I relied on your word !"

The argument grew louder, and the atmosphere became intense... After a while, they decided to go to the home of the Head Rabbi of the city.

The Rabbi heard the claims and asked, “Do you both admit that there was such an agreement between you?”

They simultaneously answered, “Yes.”

“If so,” the Rabbi turned to Reuven, “what’s your claim?”

“I have no claim,” Reuven replied. “With your guy’s permission, I would like to clarify one more point. I didn’t receive the winning lottery ticket. Shimon did. I ask that he give me half of the winnings...”

Shimon was shocked. He said in disbelief, “I should give

you half of my winnings? No way! There’s no validity to this agreement!” He began to prove himself with 77 reasons as to why he doesn’t need to give Reuven even one dollar...²

The lesson learned from these two stories is that every person, by nature, perceives reality according to the “binoculars” that are in front of their eyes. Our job in this world is to clean the “binoculars” and perceive reality as it really is...

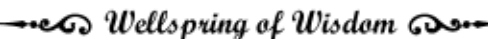
That’s our parasha.

But before we begin, let’s preface...

The Seven Firmaments

Hashem created the earth and spread one sky blue firmament above it. In our eyes, the sky looks like one immense firmament containing countless

stars and galaxies. However, *chazal* revealed to us that there are actually seven firmaments spread over our heads.³ Every firmament with its own name and purpose.



2. Be’er HaParasha (5777, p. 12).

3. **Rabbi** Mordechai Eliyahu zt”l was accustomed to quote the words of the Talmud Yerushalmi (Brachot 9:1) amazingly describing prayer...

“Hashem seems far, but there’s none closer than Him... From the earth until the [first] firmament, there is a distance of 500 years. The length of a firmament is 500 years, and from one firmament to [the

Parashat Matot - The Seven Firmaments

There are seven firmaments...⁴
Vilon, Rakia, Shechakim, Zevul,
Ma'on, Machon, and Aravot.

Vilon is the firmament that doesn't contain anything, but enters in the morning, departs in

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

next] firmament, there's also a distance of 500 years, and so on for every firmament... (The total distance of the firmaments just in the world of *Assiyah* is $15 \times 500 = 7,500$ years).

Look how far He is above His world! A Jew walks into the synagogue, stands in front of the *Aron HaKodesh*, and begins praying in a whisper... Hashem listens to every word of their prayer, as it's written, "Now Channah was praying in her heart. Only her lips moved, but her voice couldn't be heard" (Shmuel I 1:13). No one could hear her, but Hashem listened to her prayer, and she was answered. So too, every Jew prays in a whisper. No one can hear what they're saying, but Hashem can, and He's listening. How great and humble is Hashem that He comes so close as mouth to ear to His creations!"

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu would quote the words of the Talmud Yerushalmi with great excitement to his children, students, and tens of thousands of listeners, so that they too would know and appreciate the value of prayer and how close Hashem is to all who call Him.

Imagine yourself standing in a king's palace and being given permission to approach the throne and speak from your heart. But you weren't just given permission to stand before the king. Rather, you were told to whisper in the king's ear...

Is it possible not to get emotional and elevate from such a thought ?!

When Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was hospitalized, in serious condition, and in excruciating pain, he had to undergo agonizing medical treatment, after which he was in a haze due to the anesthesia. According to the doctors, he was supposed to wake up and return to his strength in the afternoon, but instead, he arose early at three in the morning. His son, Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu shlita, who was sitting next to the bed, heard the sound of his father's faint knocks on the arm of the bed and hurried towards him.

The rabbi signaled with his hands to bring him water for *Netillat Yadayim*... "Why are you waking up now and washing your hands?" asked his son.

The rabbi took a piece of paper and wrote, "*Tefillat Arvit*" (evening prayer).

As the rabbi washed his hands, his son continued to marvel, "In your situation, you're obligated to pray ?!"

The rabbi continued to write, "Is it possible to give up on prayer when you have the chance to speak directly in the ear of Hashem, and He's listening... ?!"

- Avihem Shel Israel LeYeladim (p. 183).

4. See Chagigah 12b.

the evening, and renews the creation daily.

Rakia is the one in which the sun, moon, stars, and zodiac signs are fixed.

Shechakim is where mills are erected to grind *mann* for the tzaddikim.

Zevul is where the heavenly Jerusalem, Temple, and altar are located, and there, the angel Michael stands and sacrifices offerings.

Ma'on is where groups of ministering angels recite songs at night and are silent during the day out of respect for Am Israel, to not compete with their songs.

Machon is where storehouses of snow and hail and chambers of harmful dew are located.

Aravot is the firmament that contains righteousness, justice, *tzedakah*, the treasuries of life, the treasuries of peace, the treasuries of blessing, the souls of the tzaddikim, the spirits and souls that are to be created, and the dew that Hashem will use to revive the dead.

The Gemara states that gazing at and contemplating the sky reinforces our *emuna* and brings about feelings of love and awe for Hashem. As the prophet Yeshayahu said, "Lift up your eyes and see who created these!"⁵

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

5. Rebbe Simcha Bunim of Peshischa once told his followers the following story...

"In my youth, I visited the city of "Gdańsk." There I met a young man with blessed talents, exceedingly wise, but not interested in anything but money.

I thought to myself, "It's so sad that he's wasting his magnificent talents. I need to help him connect to the Torah, and I'm sure he'll be one of the greatest of the generation."

I persisted in trying to start a conversation with him but failed. Despite my failures, I didn't give up.

One day, I noticed that he goes to a particular place every day at a specific time. I decided to follow him and see what he was doing. There, I saw him enter a casino and sit down at a table on which cards and game coins were spread out.

I went in after him, and I sat down at the table too. As I saw everyone do, I took

Parashat Matot - The Seven Firmaments

When *chazal* arranged the wording of the blessings, they wanted to thank Hashem for all the good He does for us and that He

allows us to strengthen our love and *emuna* for him.⁶ Therefore, they fixed the “Blessing of the moon.”

~ Wellspring of Wisdom *~*

money out of my pocket and laid it on the table to play.

Hashem is my witness ! I’ve never seen this game, and the rules of the game weren’t known to me at all...

I saw that everyone present put money in a box, so I too put money in the box. I didn’t know if I was winning or losing, but Hashem, who wanted me to bring this young man closer to Him, helped me... We started playing, and I noticed that no one had taken out the money from the box. Suddenly, I realized that I had won, so I took out the money from the box. This repeated itself several times... I was abnormally winning and made a lot of money...

When the young man saw my unnatural success, it was clear to him that I was an “expert” in the card game, and I must have some sophisticated “trick” that I used to succeed. From that day on, this young man clung to me, trying to reveal to him my “secret,” which brought me such great success in the game.

This young man was addicted to cards and wouldn’t leave my side, day and night, unless I revealed to him my “secret.” I deliberately pushed him off for several days until I finally told him, “Come, let’s

go where no one can hear us, and there I’ll reveal to you my hidden secret.”

When we reached the green fields outside the city, a clear blue sky above us, I shouted, “Lift up your eyes and see who created these !” (Yeshayahu 40:26).

At that moment, sudden awe of Hashem fell upon the young man. The Jewish spark within him ignited, and a sacred fire began to flicker inside of him...

After I saw that the young man’s heart opened, I revealed to him that I knew nothing of the card game, and the reason for my victories was so that he could draw closer to Hashem.”

Rebbe Simcha Bunim, with his great wisdom, caused the young man to repulse the card games and realize that everything is complete nonsense and that it’s such a pity that a talented and wise young man like him will waste his days on such nonsense.

His words fell on attentive ears, and the young man began to use his blessed talents to learn Torah and come closer to Hashem...

- HaRebbe Rebbe Bunim M’Peshischa
(Vol. 1, p. 72).

6. The Rambam (Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, 2:1-2) writes, “It’s a mitzvah to love and

Anshei Knesset HaGedolah

The Gemara says⁷ that the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* (The Great Assembly) established for Am Israel blessings and prayers, *kedushot* (Kiddush of Shabbat and Yom Tov), and *havdalot* (Havdalah in tefillah and on the cup of wine).



We'll explain...

Following the destruction of the First Temple, Am Israel was exiled from their land. About seventy years later, when Ezra returned from Bavel, he assembled a large group of sages in Jerusalem. They established essential regulations to strengthen Torah and *emuna*. These sages were called "*Anshei Knesset HaGedolah*." They also arranged and composed our daily prayers and blessings.

One of the blessings that the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* affixed was the "Blessing of the Moon." They arranged this blessing specifically on the moon and not on other stars or planets because we see the moon's movements more than any other astronomical body and therefore see the actions of Hashem.

This is part of the blessing... "Who with His word created *shechakim*, and with the breath of His mouth, all their hosts. He gave them set laws and time's so that they should not alter their tasks..." That is, we are praising Hashem for creating *shechakim*.

Rebbe Moshe Yechiel Epstein zt"l asks two questions on this blessing...⁸

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be in awe of Hashem, "And you shall love Hashem" (Devarim 6:5) and, "Be in awe of Hashem" (Devarim 6:13).

What's the path to attain love and awe of Him? When one contemplates His wondrous actions and creations and sees His infinite wisdom in them, he will immediately love Him, yearning with tremendous desire to know Hashem. As David HaMelech said, "My soul thirsts for Hashem."

When you reflects on these, you will immediately stand in awe, realizing how small and limited you are before Hashem. As David HaMelech said, "When I see Your firmaments, the work of Your fingers... I wonder, what is man that You should remember Him" (Tehillim 8:4-5).

7. Brachot 33a.

8. Be'er Moshe (p. 23).

Parashat Matot - By The Sweat Of Your Brow You Will Eat

The wording “who with His word created *shechakim*, and with the breath of His mouth, all their hosts” is based on the verse, “By the word of Hashem the *shamayim* were made, and by the breath of His mouth, all their hosts” (Tehillim 33:6).

1. In the verse, the word “*shamayim*” is a general name for all seven firmaments, meaning David HaMelech praised Hashem for all seven firmaments.

Chazal, who affixed the blessing, based their words on the verse, but instead of mentioning the general name “*shamayim*,” they stated the name of a single firmament, *Shechakim*. Why?

2. Even if *chazal* wanted to praise Hashem for creating a single firmament, why did they praise Him

for creating the third firmament, *Shechakim*, and not for the creation of the second firmament, *Rakia*?

Also, the Gemara (which we brought in the previous section) says that the moon is in the second firmament, “*Rakia*.” In contrast, in the third firmament, “*Shachakim*,” there are no astronomical bodies at all, rather mills that grind *mann* for the tzaddikim.

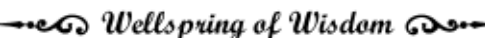
If so, in the “Blessing of the Moon,” where we praise Hashem for the creation of the hosts in general and the creation of the moon in particular, we should instead praise Him for the creation of “*Rakia*” and not for the creation of “*Shechakim*”?!

Before we answer this, we’ll first jump to *Gan Eden*...

By The Sweat Of Your Brow You Will Eat

The Zohar says⁹ that on the first day of creation, Hashem created *Gan Eden*. There, they didn’t have to labor to eat. Instead, everything was ready for them and within reach.

Five days later, on the sixth day of creation, Hashem created Adam and put him in *Gan Eden*. Adam strolled around and saw that everything was ready before him, and at that same time,



9. Tikkunei Zohar (Intro. 7a).

Parashat Matot - I Have Surely Remembered You

Hashem sent angels to him to serve him.¹⁰

The evil snake stood on the side and looked at Adam with envy. His jealousy caused him to approach Chava and persuade her to rebel against Hashem.

He succeeded...

Adam and Chava sinned and ate from the Tree of Knowledge... A wind began to blow in *Gan Eden*. Hashem revealed Himself and rebuked them, and eventually, each of them received their punishment.

Adam received ten punishments, but we'll focus on only two of them...

I Have Surely Remembered You

Precisely 3213 years had passed from the day Adam HaRishon descended from *Gan Eden* and was punished by having to labor for his food. At that time, another descent occurred...

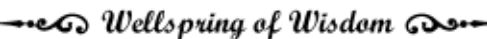
The first punishment he received was, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread" (Bereshit 3:19). Until now, you didn't have to labor for food because bread would grow directly from the ground ready to eat,¹¹ but because you sinned, the nature of the world has changed, and from now on, you'll have to work hard to eat bread.

The second punishment was, "Until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken, for dust you are, and to dust, you shall return" (Bereshit 3:19). You were supposed to live forever, but because you have sinned, you'll have to return to the earth and die.

And so, generations passed...

The Egyptians ruled over Am Israel and forced them into slavery! Am Israel began to labor, but not for themselves, for others!

In addition, there was another severe and bitter regression in the



10. The Gemara says that Adam HaRishon would dine in *Gan Eden*, and the angels would roast meat and make

wine for him. The snake glanced at him and was jealous of him." (Sanhedrin 59b)

11. See Maharsha (Sanhedrin 102b).

Parashat Matot - I Have Surely Remembered You

Egyptian exile... Am Israel came to terms with their situation !

“The Egyptians enslaved Bnei Israel with hard work” (Shemot 1:13).¹² *Chazal* interpreted “hard work” (בְּפָרָךְ) as “with a soft mouth” (בְּפִה רַךְ).¹³

The Egyptians accustomed Am Israel to work like slaves so that they would completely forget that they were the children of the holy forefathers, Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov, and not the children of slaves, for if they felt that they weren’t slaves in their roots, they would cry out to Hashem with the bitterness of their hearts...¹⁴

Am Israel, as slaves in Egypt, didn’t feel at all their humiliation and inferiority.

Although they felt the whippings of the cruel Egyptians throughout their limbs and cried from pain, it was but a physical cry, not stemming from any

sadness or depression due to their situation...¹⁵

Like this, Am Israel continued for many years...

Finally, when the hour of redemption arrived, Hashem sent Moshe Rabbeinu to remind them, “Hashem, the G-d of your fathers appeared to me... saying, I have surely remembered you (פָּקַד פְּקֹדֹתַי), and seen that which is being done to you in Egypt” (Shemot 3:16).

With these words, Hashem awakened their spirits, reminding them that they’re the children of Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov, and that there’s a watchful eye over their suffering and distress...

Thus, the repetition of the words פָּקַד פְּקֹדֹתַי. One for the mental slavery and one for the physical slavery.

Precisely then, after they began to feel that they were part of the chosen nation¹⁶ and began to

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

12. **The** original Hebrew –

”וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרָךְ”

13. Sotah 11b.

14. Beit Yaakov (Bechukotai, 91).

15. Divrei Yair (p. 84).

16. The Gemara (Pesachim 116a) says that

ponder, “Wait, we, the children of Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov, will be slaves to the Egyptians?!” the subjugation strengthened...

Paraoh called for all of his overseers and instructed them, “It seems like Am Israel has free time on their hands, dreaming of rights and liberation. Overwhelm them with more labor, and busy them with more useful things!”

The Egyptians increased their demands, and the officers of Am Israel came to Moshe, claiming, “You have made us detestable in the eyes of Paraoh and in the eyes of his servants, putting a sword in their hands to kill us” (Shemot 5:21).

“You, Moshe and Aharon, killed us! Until now, we had no

mental exertion. Then you came and elevated our morale, elevated our self-importance, informed us of the redemption, and... You did nothing! Now Paraoh is killing us! From now on, Paraoh wants to double the oppression unimaginably, not only physically but also spiritually, to humiliate and make us inferior, for which until now he wasn’t able to do because we didn’t feel ashamed!”

The end is known. Paraoh was greeted with a series of ten plagues and begged Am Israel, “Do me a favor... Leave!”

Am Israel took pity on him and agreed to leave... But before leaving, Hashem commanded them to do a “round” in the neighborhood...

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

everyone should read the Pesach Haggadah on the Seder night, which begins with disgrace and concludes with glory...

Once, during Pesach night, the *Chiddushei HaRim* of Gur interpreted the words “begins with disgrace.”

The redemption began when Hashem showed Am Israel their disgrace, revealing to them that they were lowly slaves. They

realized that they were immersed in the lowest place possible. Only then did they cry out to Hashem with all their hearts, and they were saved by the power of their cry.

He then concluded... This occurs with every individual and at all times. Only after one feels their deficiency and realizes their lowliness can they be saved...

Rewind

Am Israel merited ascending from their previous situation. From now on, they don't have to labor for others, for they're free!

Not only that, but Am Israel also returned to the level of Adam HaRishon in *Gan Eden*, where he didn't have to labor, even for himself.

They warranted this in two stages.

Stage one: Before their exodus from Egypt, Hashem commanded them, "Every woman shall borrow from her neighbor, and from the woman living in her home, articles of silver and gold, and clothing" (Shemot 3:22). The abundant possessions that they acquired that same day resulted in them becoming exceedingly wealthy.

In addition, Am Israel took with them an excess of sheep and cattle (this detail is important) as the verse says, "Moreover, a mixed

multitude went up with them, as well as flocks and cattle,¹⁷ a great deal of livestock" (Shemot 12:38).

Stage two: The Midrash¹⁸ says that Am Israel walked in the desert for 40 years, and as is well known, it's very difficult to survive in the desert, but against all odds, Am Israel traveled through the desert, men, women, and children, and they lacked nothing! "Hashem Elokecha has been with you these past forty years. You have lacked nothing" (Devarim 2:7)!

"You have lacked nothing" – Am Israel only had to ask, and they would immediately receive!

I want *mann* – "I will rain down bread for you from the sky" (Shemot 16: 4).

I want water – "He struck the rock and waters flowed, streams gushed forth" (Tehillim 78:20).

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

17. During the plague of "Pestilence," Am Israel bought abundant sheep and cattle from the Egyptians for really cheap. - HaEmek Davar (Shemot 12:38).

18. Yalkut Shimoni (Devarim, 808).

I want meat – “If sheep and cattle be slaughtered for them, would that be sufficient for them? If all the fish of the sea would be gathered for them, would that be sufficient for them?” (Bamidbar 11:22).

Since Am Israel saw how Hashem provided for them in the desert,¹⁹ they began to praise Him.

Not only *mann*, water, and meat did Hashem provide for them, but all of their needs!

The Midrash asks,²⁰ “When Am Israel left Egypt, what did they wear for forty years in the desert?”

Rabbi Shimon replied that they wore the garments of the angels, “I clothed you with embroidered garments” (Yechezkel 16:10). Rabbi Elazar then asked, “And they didn’t wear out?” To which Rabbi Shimon answered no! “The garments upon you did not wear out” (Devarim 8:4).”

—**Wellspring of Wisdom**—

19. The very basis of Am Israel is to live with Hashem every day, all day! When we live in such a way, there are no worries of “what will we eat,” for we’ll cast our burden on Hashem, and He’ll sustain us.

To strengthen this foundation, *chazal* established (Shulchan Aruch 1:5) that we mention daily the miracle of the *mann* that Hashem performed for Am Israel in the desert. They arranged the following in the *siddur* (after the morning prayer)... “For the sake of the unification of the Holy Blessed One and His Shechina, I hereby come to perform the mitzvah of the Ten Remembrances, which must be remembered every day, and they are the Exodus from Egypt, and the Shabbat, and the *mann*...”

One of the verses recited in *parashat HaMann* is, “When they measured it with an *omer*, **the one who had taken**

more had no extra, and the one who had taken less, was not lacking.”

We learn from this verse that wealth won’t be explicitly attained by someone who’s a “go-getter!” - “The one who had taken more had no extra.” Nor will wealth be prevented from someone who isn’t a “go-getter” and devotes some of their time to studying Torah “at the expense of” work - “and the one who had taken less was not lacking!”

Livelihood depends solely on Hashem’s blessing! So, what’s imposed upon us? “**Cast your burden on Hashem, and He’ll sustain you**” (Tehillim 55:23). We must only make some sort of effort, and trust in Hashem, who nourishes and provides for us with grace, kindness, and mercy, and the rest is up to Him.

20. Yalkut Shimoni (Tehillim, 691).

Parashat Matot - In The Merit of Moshe

Their clothes would grow with them.

Rabbi Elazar asked again, “Didn’t their clothes smell from not changing them?” Rabbi Shimon replied that the well of Miriam would bring up various kinds of flowers and fragrances, and they would wave their garments in them, as is said, “The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Levanon... spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon” (Shir HaShirim 4:11-14).

From the Midrash, it’s understood that while Am Israel was in the desert, the curse of Adam HaRishon, “By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread” (Bereshit 3:19), ceased, and they didn’t have to deal with the affairs of this world at all.

Instead, they were free to engage in the study of Torah, and so, the Torah entered their hearts...

In The Merit of Moshe

On the last day of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai’s life on earth, he called his closest students and revealed to them the “*Idra Zuta*.”²¹ This is part of what he said...²²

Hashem creates everything and is the source of all life and blessing, and without his blessing, it’s impossible to exist.

Hashem created the order of descent, through which blessing

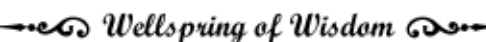
descends. In general, blessing descends through three places...

The first – the *Partzuf* of *Keter*.

The second – the *Partzuf* of *Zeir Anpin*.

The third – the *Partzuf* of *Malchut*.

When the blessing descends from the top down, it descends from the *Partzuf Keter* to *Zeir*



21. Zohar (Haazinu 287b).

22. Zohar (Haazinu 292b).

Anpin, from *Zeir Anpin* to *Malchut*, and from *Malchut*, it reaches our world.

So it was, and so will we continue to receive blessing from the *Partzuf Malchut* until the coming of *Mashiach*.

Nevertheless, we find one period in history that it wasn't so... the period of the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu!

Moshe Rabbeinu's merit was so immense²³ that he was able to draw blessing directly from *Reisha DeZeir Anpin*, and it descended into this world in the form of *mann*.

Apart from the immense spirituality hidden in the *mann*, there is also hidden the "secret of existence..."

Am Israel was nourished from that same lofty place, *Reisha DeZeir Anpin*, and ate the *mann* for the entire forty years of the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Despite all this, Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeschitz zt"l²⁴ wrote that Am Israel wasn't satisfied by the *mann*. Instead, they preferred to slaughter livestock for meat, resulting in a significant decrease in the herd and flock that they had...

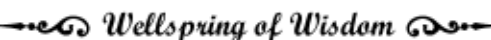
But there were two tribes, the tribe of Reuven and the tribe of Gad, who preferred the *mann* and didn't slaughter their livestock at all, which caused them to "drag" huge herds of cattle and flocks of sheep with them...

Let's continue to this week's parasha...

The Request...

The tribes of Gad and Reuven approached Moshe... "Moshe, you know that we have hundreds of thousands of sheep and cattle. We,

therefore, request that instead of the land that we deserve in Eretz Israel, you give us land from what we conquered here in the land of



23. **The** Gemara says that the *mann* came in the merit of Moshe. (Ta'anit 9a).

24. Tifferet Yehonatan (Matot).

Parashat Matot - You Fool!

Sichon and Og.²⁵ True, we've made a great effort to reach Eretz Israel over the last forty years, but now we've realized that the most suitable place for us is here! Here we can make a living. Let us stay..."

Moshe, frustrated by their request, answered, "Your intentions might be to earn a living, but the rest of the nation will interpret your actions as weakness! They'll think that you've probably found out that our enemies have prepared a surprise attack against us, and so you want to stay here to save yourselves. Just as the spies frightened the nation and made

them cry and complain, so will you with your request!"

The tribes of Gad and of Reuven, terrified, replied, "Heaven forbid! That's not our intention! On the contrary, we'll prove to Am Israel that there's no danger in entering the land! We're willing to be the first to cross the border and lead Am Israel into the land, but first, give us this land so that we can "build enclosures for our flocks here and cities for our children" (Bamidbar 32:16).

Their response only aggravated Moshe Rabbeinu more...

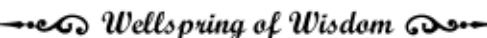
You Fool!

"Forty one years I've accompanied you... The ten plagues, the parting of *Yam Suf*, Har Sinai...

For 40 years, I've been teaching you Torah while you eat the food of angels and drink water from a stone... and now, after this long and arduous journey, you stand in front of

me and say, 'Give us this land, and we'll arrange a place for our sheep and cattle, and we'll build something for our children as well...'

Is that what you learned these 40 years?! To worry about your cattle before your own children?!..."



25. See Mesillot - Parashat Balak - "War History".

Parashat Matot - You Fool!

The Midrash says,²⁶ “A wise man’s heart is to his right, but a fool’s heart is to his left” (Kohelet 10:2). “A wise man’s heart is to his right,” that’s Moshe, “but a fool’s heart is to his left” those are the tribes of Reuven and Gad, who made the essential, secondary, and the secondary, essential, for they adored their possessions more than Jewish souls. They proposed, “We’ll build enclosures for our flocks here and cities for our children” (Bamidbar 32:16), and Moshe refuted, “[First] build cities for your children, [and afterward] enclosures for your flocks” (Bamidbar 32:24).

The tribes of Gad and Reuven understood their mistake and immediately apologized, “Your

servants will do as my master instructs” (Bamidbar 32:25).

But nonetheless, they were punished. The Midrash continues and says that Hashem said to them, “You adored your money more than Jewish souls. I swear, there will be no blessing in your efforts.” Like what’s written, “An estate acquired in haste at the outset, won’t be blessed in the end” (Mishlei 20:21), “Don’t toil to gain wealth. Have the sense to desist” (Mishlei 23:4).

Also, “Who is wealthy? One who is happy with his lot,” as it says, “From the labor of your hands you shall eat.²⁷ You shall be happy, and you shall prosper” (Tehillim 128:2).

—*~* Wellspring of Wisdom *~*—

26. Bamidbar Rabbah 22:9.

27. **In** our book *Chelev Haarets*, we wrote the following with the help of Hashem...

Hashem’s will in creating Am Israel was that part of the nation would sit and engage in Torah study the entire day – such as the tribe of Levi. While the other part would engage in work – like the rest of the tribes of Am Israel (nonetheless, they too must set times for Torah study).

David HaMelech, in the verse, “From the labor of your hands you shall eat” (Tehillim 128:2), teaches us the true way one should work.

Precisely “From the labor of your hands,” and not the labor of your mind. Our hands should be busy with work, but our minds should be occupied with Torah. (Obviously, our intention is to a worker whose work doesn’t require extensive thought, for if they require

Even after this explanation, there's still a lack of understanding

of the words, "a fool's heart is to his left."

Inside Out

"**A** fool's heart is to his left" comes to define a situation in which all parts of the heart are healthy, functional, and with no defect whatsoever. Everything is great, except for the fact that it's "on the left side" - in the wrong place... !

Imagine a person ordering a suit from an expert tailor. The

suit fits perfectly and looks even better than what he imagined. The man pays for it, takes it home, examines it, and suddenly notices the shiny inner silk lining...

He continues observing, and after a few moments, he's convinced... the inside is nicer !

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

extensive thought, they must know that their mind is also "employed" by the boss, and they should be cautious of stealing time away from their work.)

Tzaddikim of every generation acted in this manner. Even when they were forced to work for their livelihood, they would do so only with their limbs, but their hearts and minds burned with love and awe of Hashem. Their pure thoughts were unceasingly cleaving to Hashem, resulting in their minds being absorbed in the study of the Holy Torah without being distracted.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 29a) says that every father is obligated to circumcise his son, redeem him (if he is a firstborn), teach him Torah, marry him off to a

woman, and teach him a trade. And some say a father is also obligated to teach his son to float in water (swim).

The Baalei Musar of Novardok said that the intention of "And some say a father is also obligated to teach his son to float in water" wasn't to add another requirement but to clarify the last obligation of "teach him a trade." Just as someone who floats in water, their hands, feet, and body are underwater, but their head is above water, to inhale the air which gives them life, so too (in this manner), a father should teach his son a trade. Even if his hands and body are engaged in work, his head should be elevated above it, immersed in Torah and *avodat Hashem*, the "air" that gives him life...

Parashat Matot - Free Will

He turns the entire suit inside out and goes outside... We don't need to explain how ridiculous he looked and what type of reactions he received.

The entire suit is finished. It's precisely fitted to his shape. It's exactly how he wanted.

But, it's "on the left side." It's out of place - inside out.

He took the beauty of the suit and turned it into wasted "lining." The inner, hidden lining became external and strange...

"Don't we need to worry about enclosures for the flocks, just as we need to

worry about cities for the children?"

True. But everything is "on the left side."

How do you speak about "enclosures for the flocks" before speaking about "cities for the children"?

"Both are needed, though! Why's it important what was said first?"

Correct. Everything is needed, and yet, it's "on the left side," out of place...

"A fool's heart is to his left." Even a fool's heart is needed and is important, yet it's out of place, "on the left side"...²⁸

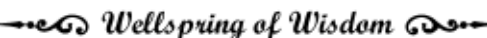
Free Will

Free choice is what separates and elevates man above the rest of creation...

Let's see how it works...

Suppose, before you, are two opposing options, and you

must choose between them. Seemingly, the act of free will is very simple... Of two positive (desirable) options, the greater of the two will be chosen, and of two negative (undesirable) options, the lesser of the two will be chosen.



Let's try to illustrate this point. During the repetition of the *Amidah*, a Jew debates whether it's worth leaving the synagogue before "*Aleinu LeShabeach*" to stop at the grocery store early before coming home. He knows very well that it's better to stay in the synagogue until the end of the prayer, yet, he also needs to bring food home for his family as early as possible. These two options are placed on the balance scale, and, of course, the greater deed weighs down more.

The same with two bad deeds. For example, leaving the synagogue before the end of the prayer or ignoring a crying baby who's waiting at home for milk. Both deeds will be weighed... Yet, it's clear that we'll always choose the less unpleasant option. So, where is our free choice? After all, our choice is automatic and simply depends on the extent of the good or the reduction of the bad!

No one will choose to lose more when it's possible to lose less, and no one will give up a large profit for a small profit. If so,

the choice is nothing but a simple calculation of which is the greater or lesser of the two options...

So, how do we know which act is greater or worse? No two Jews see the same action in the same way. One Jew, pale and shaking because he inadvertently violated a Rabbinic prohibition, while another Jew is lenient from the outset, saying, "It's only *DeRabbanan*!"

The answer is simple. The significance of an action as it appears to the choosing person isn't an integral part of the action itself but rather depends on the reality and perspective of the person performing it. They themselves create the magnification or minimization of the deed while observing it mentally and emotionally.

For example, the degree of sensitivity toward the prohibition *muktzeh* depends on the amount of knowledge of the laws of Shabbat, an understanding of the commandment to not deviate from whatever *chazal* instruct us, recognition of the greatness and wisdom of *chazal*, appreciation

of the Oral Torah, and a firm striving for perfection according to the will of Hashem and the guidance of the Torah.

It's the intellectual and emotional investment of a Jew in all these areas that creates the recognition towards *chazal's* prohibition and strengthens the importance of keeping it.

Let's imagine for a moment that the balance scale is the one that automatically "chooses" between the two deeds. Nonetheless, who is it that determined the weight of the deeds... ?

It's likely that at the moment that free will was initiated,

the "chooser" didn't weigh the deeds standing to be chosen. Rather, their experiences and thoughts that preceded the moment of free will are what determined the weight of the options before them and are what caused the choice of one or the other.

Just as activating the zoom on a camera before taking a picture is what determines the size of the subject in the image, so too, the moment of free will depends on what we did with our "spiritual zoom" long before we reached the moment of choice. ²⁹

Now we'll return to the tribes of Gad and Reuven...

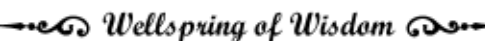
Our Real Life Journey

The mistake made by the tribes of Gad and Reuven began then and continues to this day...

Many good Jews preoccupy themselves all day with their pursuit of a livelihood. Due to the

stress³⁰ of work and panic for income, they forget entirely about the needs of their children...

They must know that they're holding the "binoculars" upside down...



29. B' Ayin Yehudit (Vol. 2, p. 134).

30. "Stress" – is a mental agony. People who constantly live under stress,

throughout the week and even on Shabbat, at work and during times of rest, when there is money and when there isn't,

Parashat Matot - Our Real Life Journey

Instead of realizing that the central part of their life is their spiritual life and that most of a person's greatness is measured by the children they leave behind, they believe that "time is money..."

On this, the Torah in our parasha shouts, "These are the journeys of Bnei Israel who went out of Egypt in organized groups under the leadership of Moshe and Aharon" (Bamidbar 33:1).

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l told us³¹ that Rebbe Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov (the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov) writes,³² "I heard from the holy Baal Shem Tov, that there were a total of forty-two journeys, and

every Jew must go through those same journeys in their lifetime!"

Life is a constant journey from place to place, and we must remember to invest in our purpose and primary place – the eternal life of the next world.

Since all of life is only a journey to our place in the next world, we don't have to be so consumed by our physical affairs, for this world is only temporary. Just like someone traveling home wouldn't be so consumed by every detail of their temporary stops, so too, all of life is only a temporary brief stop on the journey to our home in the next world. We must learn to make do

...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

when everything is calm and in times of difficulty – they should know that they're not living!

They think they are alive... They feel as if they have a good job, a house, a spouse, children, etc. But truly, they've been deceived by their own imagination. They haven't even begun to experience real life!

Such a person wakes up in the morning, and even breathing is a burden for them. They don't have a second to enjoy the clear skies or beautiful

sunshine. They're unable to stand before Hashem and speak to Him innocently before they already find themselves stuck in traffic...

Everything they do just doesn't work out...

We don't want to continue about how awful their lives are... Rather we just wanted to make one thing clear... It is absolutely forbidden to be stressed!

31. Imrei Noam (Parashat Massei, Maamar 1).

32. Degel Machanei Ephraim (Massei).

Parashat Matot - Renewed Like The Moon

with what we have and not get caught up with what we don't...

Let's now go back to the "Blessing of the Moon."

Renewed Like The Moon

During the entire duration of our exile among the nations, it's incumbent on every Jew to refine and purify their "binoculars." A day will come where Hashem will renew the world...

We're not implying that the world itself will change... the world will continue running as usual. Rather, only the "binoculars" will be refined. Thus, everyone will merit seeing G-dliness in the world, as it's said, "The Presence of Hashem shall appear, and everyone together shall see, that Hashem has spoken" (Ishiah 40:5).

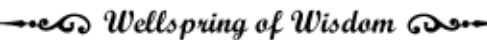
This renewal will be brought about by the descent of "dew" from *Reisha DeZeir Anpin* on the graves of Am Israel, resulting in their resurrection.

Even after the resurrection, the "dew" will continue to descend

from *Reisha DeZeir Anpin* to the firmament called "*Shechakim*," where it'll be ground and prepared as food for the tzaddikim. As the Gemara says,³³ "*Shechakim* – where mills stand and grind *mann* for the tzaddikim." Then, they'll merit seeing G-dliness (through purified binoculars due to the *mann*)...

In the blessing of the moon, we praise Hashem for His creation, and in addition, we plead for the renewal of the world (purification of our binoculars), as is written in the blessing, "To the moon, He said that it should renew itself as a crown of beauty..."³⁴

This is the reason why we specifically mention the firmament "*Shechakim*," where the *mann* is ground and by which it's possible to obtain truly refined "binoculars," which is the purpose of all of creation...



33. Chagigah 12b.

34. Be'er Moshe (p. 23).

The Pathway...

1. Every person, by nature, perceives reality according to the “binoculars” that are in front of their eyes. Our job in this world is to clean the “binoculars” and perceive reality as it really is... Am Israel’s redemption from Egypt began when Hashem showed them their disgrace, revealing to them that they were lowly slaves. They realized that they were immersed in the lowest place possible. Only then did they cry out to Hashem with all their hearts, and they were saved by the power of their cry. This occurs with every individual and at all times. Only after one feels their deficiency and realizes their lowliness can they be saved.

2. The very basis of Am Israel is to live with Hashem every day, all day ! When we live in such a way, there are no worries of “what will we eat,” for we’ll cast our burden on Hashem, and He’ll sustain us. Many good Jews preoccupy themselves all day with their pursuit of a livelihood. Due to the stress of work and panic for income, they forget entirely about the needs of their children. They must know that they’re holding the “binoculars” upside down. Instead of realizing that the central part of their life is their spiritual life and that most of a person’s greatness is measured by the children they leave behind, they believe that “time is

money...” On this, the Torah in our parasha shouts, “These are the journeys of Bnei Israel who went out of Egypt in organized groups under the leadership of Moshe and Aharon” (Bamidbar 33:1).

3. The Baal Shem Tov said that there was a total of forty-two journeys in the desert, and every Jew must go through those same journeys in their lifetime ! Life is a constant journey from place to place, and we must remember to invest in our purpose and primary place – the eternal life of the next world. Since all of life is only a journey to our place in the next world, we don’t have to be so consumed by our physical affairs, for this world is only temporary. Just like someone traveling home wouldn’t be so consumed by every detail of their temporary stops, so too, all of life is only a temporary brief stop on the journey to our home in the next world. We must learn to make do with what we have and not get caught up with what we don’t...

4. Stress is a mental agony. People who constantly live under stress, throughout the week and even on Shabbat, at work and during times of rest, when there is money and when there isn’t, when everything is calm and in times of difficulty – they should know that they’re not living ! They think they are

The Pathway...

alive... They feel as if they have a good job, a house, a spouse, children, etc. But truly, they've been deceived by their own imagination. They haven't even begun to experience real life! Such a person wakes up in the morning, and even breathing is a burden for them. They don't have a second to enjoy the clear skies or beautiful sunshine. They're unable to stand before Hashem and speak to Him innocently before they already find themselves stuck in traffic. Everything they do just doesn't work out. We must remember one thing... It's absolutely forbidden to be stressed!

5. Hashem's will in creating Am Israel was that part of the nation would sit and engage in Torah study the entire day, such as the tribe of Levi. While the other part would engage in work, like the rest of the tribes of Am Israel (nonetheless, they too must set times for Torah study). David HaMelech, in the verse, "From the labor of your hands you shall eat" (Tehillim 128:2), teaches us the true way one should work. Precisely "From the labor of your hands," and not the labor of your mind. Our hands should be busy with work, but our minds should be occupied with Torah. Tzaddikim of every generation acted in this manner. Even when they were forced to work for their livelihood, they would do so only with their limbs,

but their hearts and minds burned with love and awe of Hashem. Their pure thoughts were unceasingly cleaving to Hashem, resulting in their minds being absorbed in the study of the Holy Torah without being distracted.

6. Free choice is what separates and elevates man above the rest of creation. Suppose, before you, are two opposing options, and you must choose between them. Seemingly, the act of free will is very simple... Of two positive (desirable) options, the greater of the two will be chosen, and of two negative (undesirable) options, the lesser of the two will be chosen. No one will choose to lose more when it's possible to lose less, and no one will give up a large profit for a small profit. If so, the choice is nothing but a simple calculation of which is the greater or lesser of the two options. So, how do we know which act is greater or worse?

7. No two Jews see the same action in the same way. The significance of an action as it appears to the choosing person isn't an integral part of the action itself but rather depends on the reality and perspective of the person performing it. They themselves create the magnification or minimization of the deed while observing it mentally and emotionally. It's the intellectual and emotional investment of a Jew in all areas of life that creates the recognition towards the choices that surround them

The Pathway...

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Shabbat Shalom !





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2nd of Av, 5782

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:56 pm	9:00 pm	9:26 pm
Miami	7:50 pm	8:45 pm	9:20 pm
Los Angeles	7:38 pm	8:37 pm	9:08 pm
Montreal	8:08 pm	9:17 pm	9:37 pm
Toronto	8:25 pm	9:33 pm	9:55 pm
Jerusalem	7:27 pm	8:17 pm	9:11 pm

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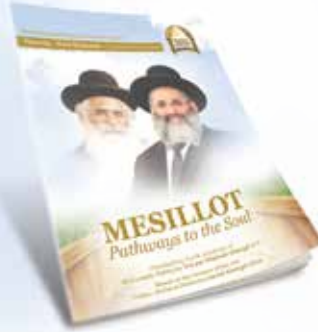
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