

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 66

**Va'etchanan** | Social Pressure



# 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 V'etchanan

## The Wedding Present

**The** years 2020-2021 occupy a respectable place in history, and rightly so. A year in which Covid erupted and disrupted all world order... One, in particular, was the subject of weddings...

**People** are accustomed to holding weddings at night with a vast amount of people. After Covid, many weddings were held at noon with only a few people or even just close family members. We want to tell you about one of those weddings...<sup>1</sup>

**The** wedding that took place at noon was over. The few people who participated sat in their seats and were afraid to get up and dance...

**The** bride and groom shed tears... Tears of pain and disappointment. Suddenly, the groom's brother was seen arriving

at the wedding with a white donkey, two helium balloons attached to both of its ears, its back upholstered in a luxurious silk blanket, and red socks on its hooves...

**Subdued** laughter filled their bodies, "What are you doing..?"

**The** brother explained, "I knew you'd probably be upset after a wedding like this, so I decided to bring you a pet that would accompany you home..."

**The** bride and groom left the hall and started their way home, more cheerful than before, the groom riding on the donkey and the bride walking beside him.

**On** their way, a group of people suddenly passed by, pointing and laughing at them, "A good wife and a cruel husband, he

## Parashat V'etchanan - Bored to Death

rides while she walks... A man without a heart, without mercy..."

**Immediately** when the groom heard this, he got off the donkey and let his bride ride on it. They continued on their way when suddenly, another group of people passed snickering, "Today the donkey carries the woman on its back, tomorrow the husband does..."

**The** bride heard this and decided to also get off the donkey. The bride and groom continued together, walking alongside the donkey... And, of course, another group approached them... "Why does Hashem give a donkey to those who don't know how to use

it. They have a donkey, and they're walking instead of riding..."

**The** bride and groom looked at each other in despair and decided to both get back on the donkey. Again, they were approached by a group of people, rage filling their hearts, "Call the Animal Cruelty Association, two fat people riding on one poor, thin donkey!"

**Their** hearts were filled with self-pity, "How do we get people to stop talking about us?" They then decided to get off the donkey and instead carry it on their shoulders...

**Almost** instantly, another group walked by them and shouted, "Look, look, three donkeys!"

## Bored to Death

**One** of the disciples of the Chafetz Chaim was apprehended by the communist authorities for a libel plotted against him.

**KGB** interrogators had an interesting method of forcing prisoners to confess to their crimes called the "boredom method." Whenever they caught white-collar workers in any "plot," they wouldn't try to extract a confession by force

through beatings or torture. They had a completely different method. They seated the interrogator in front of the "perpetrator" with a stack of newspapers, coffee, and a pack of cigarettes.

**The** interrogator wouldn't ask the interrogee any questions or even open his mouth. He would sit and read newspapers, drink coffee, and smoke cigarettes. The

detainee would sit in front of him, look at him, and do nothing.

**Hours** would pass by in this manner. The interrogator entertained himself, and the interrogee would become extremely bored.

**Usually**, a few hours later, the detainee would erupt after he had finished counting all the tiles and fluorescents in the room and burst out at the interrogator, screaming, "Why aren't you talking?! What do you want from me?!"

**The** interrogator waited for this moment... "Just sign here that you planned a rebellion against the government, and you're out of here...."

**The** vast majority of the interrogees broke and pleaded guilty after a few hours, and even the "strongest" didn't last more than a day or two.

**All** the detainees who "admitted" were then hanged, but at least they finally got out of the interrogation room...

**The** disciple of the Chafetz Chaim sat in front of the interrogator for two or three days, and nothing happened... Two more days passed, and still, nothing happened... Another day, nothing...

**A** week later, the interrogator erupted!

**This** was the first time ever that this had happened to him...

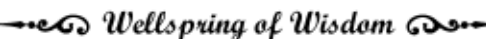
**He** burst out screaming, "Why aren't you asking me anything?! How are you not going crazy from boredom?!"

**The** disciple of the Chafetz Chaim replied, "What?! Boredom!? I just finished the entire tractate of Ta'anit, and I just started Megillah..."<sup>2</sup>

## Social Pressure

**Every** Jew must know that before any new spiritual level can be attained, they must go

through tests. However, when they reach a new level, their heart becomes filled with pure



Parashat V'etchanan - Social Pressure

joy, and a whole new world opens up for them...

**This** is precisely the reason why the life of every Jew is always turbulent and full of tests... They're always progressing from level to level...

**One** of the difficult tests that Moshe Rabbeinu and his brother Aharon HaKohen went through was "Korach's controversy."

**Korach** was a very holy man who decided to challenge the status quo of Moshe and Aharon.

**Korach** managed to recruit a large part of the nation and even achieved in making people feel that "If you're with Korach, you're worth something!" This created enormous peer pressure among Am Israel...

**Korach**, Datan, Aviram, and 250 leaders of the Sanhedrin surrounded Moshe claiming, "You care only for those close to you! You took the kingship for yourself, you gave the *Kehunah Gedolah*

(High Priesthood) to your brother Aharon, and you appointed your nephews as priests."

**Moshe** Rabbeinu, the compassionate and loving leader, only desired that every Jew live a good, enjoyable, and happy life. But, after seeing the controversy that had arisen, he was frightened! Who knows how many Jews could be harmed... He tried to stop the disaster, but nothing helped. The controversy grew, dragging many pure and good Jews into the dark abyss...

**Hashem** then revealed Himself to Moshe Rabbeinu and said, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, and I'll annihilate them in an instant" (Bamidbar 16:21).

**Moshe** Rabbeinu's heart was broken. He wanted to save them from the terrible punishment. He approached the elders who remained faithful to him and asked them to join him in confronting Datan and Aviram to reconcile with them.<sup>3</sup>

...*Wellspring of Wisdom*...

3. "**Moshe** rose up and went to Datan and Aviram, and the elders

of Israel went along after him" (Bamidbar 16:25).

Parashat V'etchanan - Social Pressure

**Moshe** Rabbeinu and the elders arrived at Datan and Aviram's tent and were received with utter contempt! Datan and Aviram called all the members of their family, women, children, and infants, and told them to remember the day that Moshe was removed from leadership and Korach arose... "Datan and Aviram went

out and stood at the door of their tents with their wives, children, and infants" (Bamidbar 16:27).

**Without** warning, a massive ball of fire flew down from the sky in the direction of the 250 leaders of the Sanhedrin!<sup>4</sup> At that very same moment, the ground was opened, and all of Korach's congregation was punished...

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

**4. In** the town of Brody, Ukraine, there was a Beit Midrash where Kabbalah was studied, and all prayers were according to the *kavanot* (intentions) of the Arizal. The head of the Beit Midrash was Rabbi Moshe Osterer.

**During** this time, the holy Baal Shem Tov had already been revealed to the world, and when great opposition to the Baal Shem Tov spread in Russia, they joined them too.

**As** the resistance against the Baal Shem Tov continued to grow, many emissaries came to Brody, asking them to boycott the chassidim, and they agreed.

**The** assistant of the Beit Midrash announced to the congregants, "We ask that all of you come here on Motzei Shabbat to impose a ban on the Baal Shem Tov.

**On** Shabbat, the plan of the congregants in Brody was revealed to the Baal Shem Tov from heaven.

**The** Baal Shem Tov didn't want such great men to fall in such an act, so at

*Motzei Shabbat*, he made *Havdalah* and ordered his wagon driver to set off with him. A few minutes later, through *Kefitzat HaDerech* (instant travel), he arrived at Brody and went straight to the Beit Midrash where the meeting was being held. He got there the moment after the door was closed and everyone had already gathered. The only one outside was the assistant of the Beit Midrash, guarding so that no one could get in.

**The** Baal Shem Tov approached the assistant and told him that he wanted to enter, but the assistant replied that he didn't have permission to let anyone in.

**The** Baal Shem Tov then told him, "I ask that you go in and tell them that a guest has arrived and wants to enter, and if they don't allow, tell them that he's essential to their cause!"

**The** assistant walked in and told them what he was told, and they told him to ask the man outside who he was and what his name is?

**Question:** Why does the Torah emphasize that Datan and

Aviram stood at the door of their home, "Datan and Aviram went

—*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*—

**The** Baal Shem Tov replied to the assistant, "Tell them that I am Israel Baal Shem Tov. I have just come from my home to Brody, and I want to enter so that they can pass their judgment before me.

**When** everyone heard this, they were terrified and allowed him to enter.

**As** soon as he entered, he turned to those gathered and said to them, "Know, you all amount to 250 men, and by this wrong act which you intend to do now, the 250 souls of the leaders of the Sanhedrin who participated in Korach's controversy against Moshe Rabbeinu have been instilled within you. You now stand at the same test that you did thousands of years ago, and if you fail this time too, you will enter the abyss for eternity!"

**Immediately** they took a count (according to Halacha) and saw that they really were 250 men! They were astonished yet terrified. Fear fell upon them. They couldn't open their mouths anymore to discuss this matter and realized that he was a messenger of Hashem coming to save them and asked for his forgiveness. Of course, the Baal Shem Tov immediately forgave them.

**Then**, the head of the Beit Midrash, Rabbi Moshe Osterer, rose from his chair and gave the Baal Shem Tov his new book *Arugat HaBosem*, which was

published only the week before and had not yet been released. The Baal Shem Tov received it with a smile, flipped through the whole book in an instant, and then closed it and said, "I went through the whole book and every word, from beginning to end, is absolutely true."

**Rabbi** Moshe Osterer asked the Baal Shem Tov, "It's not possible that in a few seconds, you flipped through the entire book and learned it all?"

**"I** can prove to you that I learned all of it," the Baal Shem Tov replied. "You commentated on every word correctly. Only the words *Arugat HaBosem* did you not write any commentary."

**Rabbi** Moshe Osterer was very surprised and said to the Baal Shem Tov, "I commentated on those words such and such!" The Baal Shem Tov said to him, "The book is in front of you. Show me where it's written in the book..."

**Rabbi** Moshe Osterer opened the book and saw that there was no commentary on those words. Shocked, he said to the Baal Shem Tov, "It must be a printing error!"

**All** those gathered greatly honored and thanked the Baal Shem Tov and then accompanied him out and parted ways in peace...

- Kol Sippurei Baal Shem Tov (Vol. 4, p. 35).



out and stood at the door of their tents.” If they were standing in

the garden or in the yard, would the situation have changed ?

### Up or Down

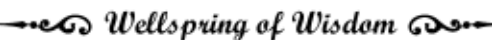
**The** Midrash says<sup>5</sup> that on the first day of creation, Hashem fashioned creations both in the upper and lower worlds. In the upper world, the heavens were created, and in the lower world, the earth was created.

**On** the second day, Hashem created the firmament in the upper world. On the third day, “Let the earth sprout vegetation.” On the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars were created. On the fifth day, “Let the waters fill with swarms of living creatures.”

**On** the sixth day, when Hashem wanted to create the primary creation, humans, He said, “I gave two days of creation to the upper world (Day 2 and Day 4), and two days of creation to the lower world (Day 3 and Day 5). If I create humans from the upper world, the

upper world will have three days and the lower world only two, and this will cause a quarrel. If I create humans from the lower world, the lower world will have three days and the upper world only two days. This, too, will cause a quarrel. Therefore, I will create them from both the upper and lower worlds so there will be peace between them.” As is said, “Hashem Elokim then formed the man, dust from the earth,” the lower world, “and He blew into his nostrils the breath of life,” the upper world (Bereshit 2:7).

**Rabbi** Chaim of Volozhin<sup>6</sup> writes that during the days of creation, Hashem created two general systems, one system of forces of *kedushah* (holiness) and one system of forces of *tumah* (impurity). The last creation that Hashem created was man. Even though he was the last creation, he is the most



5. Bereshit Rabbah 12:8.

6. Nefesh HaChaim 1:6.

**Parashat V'etchanan - Now There's Two of You ?!**

superior creation! The final integrating power for all of creation. The entire creation gave of its essence and spirit for his formation and was integrated into him. Adam HaRishon was completely pure,

made from all the worlds and forces of holiness alone, and had nothing of the forces of impurity within him.

**After** the creation of man was completed, Hashem placed him in Gan Eden...

**Now There's Two of You ?!**

**Adam** HaRishon strolled around Gan Eden... All of its inhabitants trembled from his holiness, except for one, an envious snake who wanted to get rid of him...

person, but now it's clear that you're not wise at all."

**The** snake sat and thought, "There's no chance that Adam will sin by himself, for he has no evil in him. If so, I have no choice but to pressure him and make him feel that he's meaningless and unimportant..."

**"The** nature of wise people is to love wisdom and to pursue it, and here stands in front of you a tree of which all who eat from it receive wisdom. If you were really wise, you would eat from it!"

**"Once** you eat from it, you'll be as the great angels, who are wise to know between good and evil."

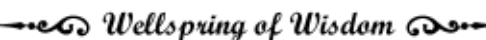
**The** snake went into action... He approached Chava, Adam's wife, and said to her, "You know, I'm very disappointed in you!"

**The** pressure from the snake worked. Chava ate and also forced her husband, Adam HaRishon, to eat!

**"Why ?"** asked Chava with feelings of distress.

**This** sin created enormous damage! Before the sin, Adam HaRishon was pure, the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) was external from him, and he had only it to

**The** snake replied, "I've always looked up to you as a wise



Parashat V'etchanan - They're Still Complaining

face. After the sin, the *yetzer hara* entered him as well, and from now on, he must deal with two evil inclinations. One external and one internal.

**The** Vilna Gaon<sup>8</sup> wrote that humans have two evil inclinations, one external and one internal. The external one is the world itself. Whenever someone puts all their effort into *avodat Hashem* (the

serving of Hashem), they're usually ridiculed. This is the external *yetzer hara*. The internal *yetzer hara* is our immoral desires and bad character traits...

**It's** worth noting that the external *yetzer hara* is the more powerful of the two... To understand this better, let's jump for a moment to the Sinai desert...

**They're Still Complaining...**

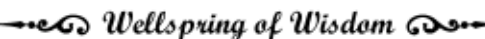
**For** a year (minus 10 days), Am Israel stood at the foot of Har Sinai. Only after all this time passed did they continue their journey toward the Promised Land - Eretz Israel.

**Hashem**, who wanted to bring them quickly into the land, hastened them and led them hurriedly. Instead of thanking Hashem for getting them there within only a few days, they complained about why they were being hastened.

**Not** long after, the *Erev Rav* continued to complain, this time

about the *mann*! "The multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then Bnei Israel once again began to cry and said, "Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all but the *mann*" (Bamidbar 11:4-6).

**The** *Erev Rav* complained that all they were eating was the *mann*, and they craved other



8. Mishlei 18:11.

## Parashat V'etchanan - Check Your Surroundings

foods instead. However, this complaint was a complete lie, for *chazal* teach us<sup>9</sup> that when Am Israel ate the *mann*, they tasted whatever food they desired and if so, there was no food in the world that was omitted from them.

**Chazal**<sup>10</sup> add that the *mann* was a great miracle, for when someone ate the *mann*, it would be completely digested and absorbed into the body, and then there would be no need to eliminate waste. Could there be

a better food than this anywhere in the world? Rather, this is the way of complainers. No matter how much good they have, they'll always find what to complain about...

**The** *Erev Rav* managed to drag Am Israel after them until they started complaining as well! As it says, "The multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then Bnei Israel once again began to cry and said, "Who will feed us meat?" (Bamidbar 11:4).

### Check Your Surroundings

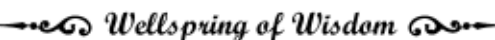
**There** are many reasons for a person's failure in spirituality, but the main reason is likely what we call "peer pressure."

**In** parashat Behaalotecha, on the verse, "The multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then Bnei Israel once again began to cry and said, "Who will feed us meat?" (Bamidbar 11:4), Rashi explains that the mixed multitude was the *Erev Rav*

that had gathered themselves into Am Israel when they left Egypt.

**The** desires of the *Erev Rav* greatly affected Am Israel.

**Am** Israel, at that time, were on a very high level. They were close to Hashem... They would see with their own eyes His love and the magnitude of His care for them. If so, how did the corruption of the *Erev Rav* affect them?!



9. Shemot Rabbah 25:3.

10. Yoma 75b.

**Furthermore**, the *Erev Rav* were very small in number. How did they manage to influence Am Israel, who were far more numerous?

**As** already mentioned, there are two evil inclinations, the inner and the external. The reason the external is considered the more powerful of the two is because even if you were to overcome it, it leaves an impression, which is not the case with the inner *yetzer hara*.

We'll explain...

**The** inner *yetzer hara* is a concealed disposition or feeling within every individual, and therefore we can overcome it. On the other hand, the external *yetzer hara* is a general notion or impulse

that encompasses the whole world. Therefore, it is almost impossible to escape it... This was revealed to us by *chazal* when they said, "The eye sees, the heart covets, and the body does the sin."<sup>11</sup>

**For** example, when one sees bad in others, the external *yetzer hara* arises within them. Hence, after the *Erev Rav* desired other food, they affected Am Israel even though they had no reason to want anything else, for when one sees and/or is immersed in bad, an impression of it is inevitable to be left on them!

**We** see this every day... Your situation depends on the environment in which you surround yourself with.<sup>12</sup> How foolish are people who think nothing can affect

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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11. See Rashi (Bamidbar 15:39).

12. **Once** Rebbe Itzchak Isaac Yehuda Yechiel, after glancing at a receipt from the local grocery store that he received from his wife, said, "The bill isn't justified..."

**His** wife went back to the grocery store and told the store owner what her husband, the Rebbe, had said. The owner of the grocery store calculated again and again, but the bill

came out the same. She went back home and told her husband, but the Rebbe again said, "The bill isn't justified..."

**When** the grocery store owner heard this again, he decided to go to the Rebbe himself. He went into the Rebbe's room and sat with him for a few hours.

**When** he left, the grocery store owner hurried to sell everything in his store,

**Parashat V'etchanan - Stranger Danger**

them... The Torah clearly reveals to us that even those of the generation of the desert were affected by their surroundings. What can we, who live in a world filled with heresy and lust, say?! Whoever doesn't try to live in an environment of

Torah and holiness, surely their surroundings will influence them!<sup>13</sup>

**Peer** pressure is the primary cause of sin and immorality. Hashem, who only wants the best for us, gave us advice on how to escape it...

### Stranger Danger

**After** the Vilna Gaon revealed to us that every Jew has two kinds of evil inclinations, he went on to write, "About the external *yetzer hara*, it is said, "Sin is waiting at the entrance" (Bereshit 4:7). Therefore a mezuzah is fixed on the doorpost of a Jew's house to protect them when they leave!"

**That** is, by fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah, Hashem

gives us the strength to save ourselves from negative peer pressure!

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l said in one of his lectures<sup>14</sup> that a mezuzah has the power to protect our home's from various spiritual afflictions and from all kinds of negative influences. That's why the mezuzah's place is in the doorway of the house

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

sold the grocery store itself, and moved to the city of Lemberg, where he sat and learned Torah without disruption and served Hashem with all his strength.

**The** Rebbe explained later on that when the store owner was young, he was highly proficient in Torah. He knew all of *Shas* and *Poskim*. Unfortunately, he connected with bad friends, and they corrupted him. He then moved to Germany, where he completely deteriorated from all of Judaism.

**When** he heard the words of the Rebbe that "The bill isn't justified," he felt a desire to enter into the Rebbe and hear his words, but he suppressed his will. But when he heard it once more, he decided to go to the Rebbe, and there he realized that the Rebbe's words of "The bill isn't justified" meant something completely different...

**13.** Ohr Yechezkel – Middot (p. 284).

**14.** Imrei Noam (Parashat Bo, Maamar 3).

from the outside, to protect the home from outside troubles.

**When** someone walks down the street, various negative influences and spirits, which are on the streets due to the negative deeds that are done there, the profanity that is said there, the lack of modesty that is there, etc., stick to them whether they like it or not. If *chas v'shalom* those negative influences and spirits enter their homes with them, they'll devour all holiness of the home and its occupants.

**For** this reason, Hashem commanded us to affix the mezuzah in the doorway of the home so that it would remove all negative influences and deny them from entering the house.

**But** remember, for every spiritual level in holiness, there's a level of impurity that stands against it. This is a general rule in everything, and so it is with the mezuzah...

**But** before we clarify the level of impurity in the "mezuzah," a little introduction...

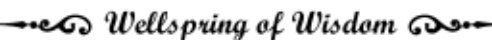
## **The Mitzvah of Mezuzah**

**In** our parasha, the Torah commands us to affix a mezuzah on the doorpost of our homes, "Write them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gateposts" (Devarim 6:9).

**The** mezuzah is comprised of two passages from the Torah written on one parchment, and they are parashat "שְׁמַע" (Shema) until "וְעַל-הָאָרֶץ" (Over the earth), and

parashat "וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמַעְתָּ" (Should you thoroughly heed) until "עַל-הָאָרֶץ" (Over the earth).

**HaRav** Ovadia Yosef zt"l writes<sup>15</sup> that every moment that there is a mezuzah on the house, one fulfills a mitzvah. The *Shulchan Aruch* says<sup>16</sup> that one should be very vigilant in the mitzvah of mezuzah, and anyone who is vigilant in it



15. Yabia Omer (Vol. 8, p. 427).

16. Shulchan Aruch - Yoreh Deah (Siman 285:1).

will merit long life, them and their children.

**The** words of the *Shulchan Aruch* are an explicit verse, “Write them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gateposts. In order that you and your children may endure, in the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers to give them, like the years of heaven over the earth” (Devarim 11:20-21).

**But** in addition to this promise, there’s another promise in the verse, that in the merit of observing the mitzvah of mezuzah, Am Israel will merit living in Eretz Israel in peace, as it says, “In order that you and your children may endure, in the land...”

**Let’s** explain what exactly the connection is between the mitzvah of mezuzah and living in Eretz Israel...

### Sichon and Og

**Am** Israel left Egypt and began to stride through the desert toward the Eretz Israel... When they finally arrived near the land, they couldn’t enter it...

**The** Land of Israel was guarded by Sichon and Og, who sat on the border and defended it from the arrival of Am Israel.

**Sichon** and Og, who were the

mezuzah for the side of the *Klipah*, had a mission of keeping all holiness from entering Eretz Israel.

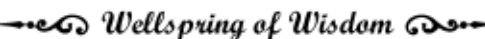
**Am** Israel had no choice but to wage war and set a mezuzah of holiness in place of Sichon and Og.

**Thus**, after doing so, they gave the land of Sichon and Og to the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half the tribe of Menashe.

### The Power of the Mezuzah

**The** Rambam wrote:<sup>17</sup> Every person must be careful with the

mitzvah of mezuzah... The first sages said, “Whoever has tefillin



17. Rambam – Halachot Mezuza (6:13).



on his head and arm, tzitzit on his garment, and a mezuzah on his door, it is certain that he won't sin."<sup>18</sup>

**On** the outside of the mezuzah is written one of the holy names of Hashem, *Shaddai*. The name *Shaddai* plays a very central role in the existence of the world...

**The** Gemara says that when Hashem said the words, "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth" (Bereshit 1:1), the heavens and the earth were instantly created from one point and began to stretch endlessly in opposite directions. They continued to stretch and stretch until finally, Hashem stopped them at precisely the points we know today!<sup>19</sup>

**The** Gemara continues and reveals to us that the act of stopping the creation and giving it borders was done by the holy name "*Shaddai*."

**This** secret was given to Avraham Avinu by Hashem when he was ninety-nine years old, "Avram was ninety-nine years old, and Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him, 'I am *El Shaddai*, walk before me and be complete" (Bereshit 17:1).

**"I am *El Shaddai*"** - I am the one who told the world, "Stop!"

**The** Maggid of Koznitz, Rebbe Israel, added and said,<sup>20</sup> "It's known that Hashem continues and re-creates the world at every moment and moment, for in every moment, Hashem gives life to every creation.

**And** since the world is re-created at every moment, there must also be a force that limits the creation from spreading out of its boundaries even now, and that is by the power of the name *Shaddai*.

**Thus**, at every moment and moment, the name *Shaddai* shines.

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*❧ Wellspring of Wisdom ❧*

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**18.** Every Jew who surrounds himself with these three commandments, tefillin, tzitzit, and mezuzah, is guarded and has constant protection from above, and Hashem sends holy angels who rescue

him from all sin and make sure that no trouble befalls him.

**19.** See Chagiga 12a with the commentary of Schottenstein.

**20.** Avodat Israel (Parashat Vaera).

**This** holy name has been written on the outside of the mezuzah, and *it* is what

awakens within us the desire to sanctify ourselves more and more...

## Guarding Our Sanctity

**When** Abraham Avinu was ninety-nine years old, Hashem appeared to him and said, “I am *El Shaddai*. Walk before me and be complete” (Bereshit 17:1). Rashi interpreted, “Walk before me in the commandment of circumcision and in this matter be complete....”

**Rashi's** holy words are based on the words of *chazal*,<sup>21</sup> who learned from the verse above that “The mitzvah of circumcision is so great, that all the commandments performed by Avraham Avinu didn't cause him to be “complete” until he circumcised himself.”

**Why** does the Torah mention the mitzvah of circumcision with the name *Shaddai* and not with another name of Hashem?

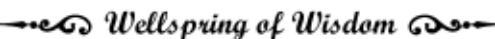
**Chazal** said<sup>22</sup> that when Hashem created the world, the

world continued to expand until Hashem said stop...

**According** to the words of *chazal*, the name *Shaddai* signifies contentment. That is, what was created until now is enough, and there's no need for more.

**After** all, the source of all desires and lusts stems from our desire and pursuit of “more” and by not being satisfied with what Hashem has already given us. When a man is circumcised and the name *Shaddai* is engraved on his body, he can achieve contentment and receives the strength to overcome his desires and to tell them, “Stop !”

**Just** as on the doorway of a home, there is a mezuzah on which the name *El Shaddai* is written, and it protects the home from harm, so



21. Nedarim 31b.

22. Chagiga 12a.

**Parashat V'etchanan - Hashem Will Protect You From All Harm**

too on the body of man, as long as this name stays sacred and pure and protected from any sin, it protects the person from all danger, and no harm in the world, physical or spiritual, can come close to him.

**Rebbe** Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin wrote that the reason that Og was saved from the flood is that he didn't defile his covenant like the

rest of that generation and therefore earned such a great miracle.

**Every** parent is therefore obligated to look after their children with great vigilance concerning these matters and to pray to Hashem that all their descendants merit maintaining their sanctity properly and not ruin it in any way.

**Let's** now continue with the words of the Rambam...

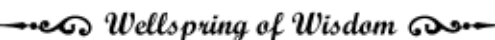
**Hashem Will Protect You From All Harm**

**The** Rambam wrote<sup>23</sup> that every person must be careful with the mitzvah of mezuzah... Every time they enter their home, office, or just go from room to room, there's a mezuzah on the doorway of each room. Whenever they encounter it, they remember that Hashem stands and sees, watches and looks out, and even "if a man hides in secret" (Yermiyah 23:24), Hashem sees him.

**There's** no limit to the love that Hashem has for every Jew...

**Rabbi** Chanina said,<sup>24</sup> "Come and see that Hashem is unlike man... A king sits inside his palace, and all the people he rules over protect him from outside. However, with Hashem, it isn't so. Rather, Am Israel sit inside their homes, and He protects them from outside.

**In** the days of Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi lived a very important and respected Jew named Arveon, and he admired Rabbi Yehuda with all his heart.



23. Rambam – Halachot Mezuzah (6:13).

24. Menachot 33b.

**Parashat V'etchanan - How To Act With The Mezuzah**

**One** day Artevon sent a messenger to Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi with a closed box in his hand. Rabbi Yehuda opened the box, and a gentle and soft light broke through and illuminated the surroundings. Rabbi Yehuda reached into the box and took out a large and well-polished diamond...

**The** precious gift was accompanied by a letter, "Our Holy Rabbi, I ask of you to send me something as important as this."

**Rabbi** Yehuda told the messenger to wait a minute... In the meantime, he went into his room, opened his closet, took out a mezuzah, put it in a box, and handed it to the messenger...

**When** it arrived at Artevon, he excitedly opened the box and found... a mezuzah.

**He** immediately sat down and wrote a letter. "I don't understand what's going on here. I sent you a precious diamond

valued at millions of dollars, and you sent me a mezuzah?!"

**Rabbi** Yehuda, who was waiting for this question, had already written a reply. When the messenger arrived, he handed it directly to him without even reading the letter from Artevon.

**This** is what he wrote. "I saw how great your love is for me, and I was very grateful. Therefore, when you asked me to send you something as important as what you sent me, I couldn't find anything more important than teaching you "the secret of the mezuzah!"

**"Know,** the secret of the mitzvah of the mezuzah is an extremely lofty one, and all the silver and gold in the world is nothing compared to it.

**And** more so, you sent me something that I have to constantly watch and protect, and I sent you something that guards and protects you..."

**How To Act With The Mezuzah**

**The** custom of our ancestors is that whenever we go out

or enter through the doorway of our homes, we should

place our hands on the mezuzah.<sup>25</sup>

**In** addition, Rabbeinu Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l was always careful to enter the house with his right foot. Whenever he left the house, he would stand on the doorstep with his face to the home, put his right hand on the mezuzah, and say, **ה' יִשְׁמַר צְאֲתָנוּ וּבֹאֲנוּ לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם מִצְּתָהּ וְעַד עוֹלָם.**

**It's** also a great mitzvah to educate our children before going to school, to take a penny (or three) and put it in the tzedakah box. Also, to stand at the door and kiss the mezuzah. These are the things that will accustom them to holiness and to mitzvot that will protect them wherever they'll go.<sup>26</sup>

**It's** also very important to exercise respect and extreme caution in the sanctity of the

*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

**25. One** of the chassidim close to Rabbi Elazar Abuhatzera zt"l told me the following story...

**It's** known that from the Rabbi's house, he has a tunnel that leads to the nearby synagogue. One day I merited accompanying the Rabbi through this tunnel on his way to the synagogue.

**For** those who know the tunnel, it has many openings that require a mezuzah... I saw the rabbi stop at every doorway, kiss the mezuzah, bow, and continue.

**I** was amazed and asked, "Rabbi, to such an extent? To stop at every mezuzah?!"

**The** Rabbi answered me... "Every mezuzah is a divine revelation, an enlightenment from Hashem. How can one pass by a mezuzah and remain indifferent?!"

**26. A** few years ago, a few months after my father, HaRav Yoram, passed away, one of the people who knew him approached me and asked me to come and set a mezuzah in his house. I agreed and happily came.

**He** was very happy and gave me a tour of all the rooms in the house, and at the end of the tour, he took out one mezuzah and handed it to me.

**I** asked him in amazement, "I looked at your house and saw that you have ten places that must have a mezuzah. Why did you only bring one mezuzah?!"

**He** answered me, "I loved your father with all my heart. At all stages of construction, I envisioned the Rabbi, your father, coming to my house and placing the mezuzot. And now, unfortunately, he has passed away!"

**Parashat V'etchanan - How To Act With The Mezuzah**

mezuzah. The Zohar writes<sup>27</sup> that when washing the house, one

should be very careful not to delay the dirty water near the mezuzah

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**I** decided to set only one mezuzah in the living room and leave the rooms to the Rabbi, your father, to set.”

**I** said to him, “My father?! He passed away...”

**He** replied, “No, the Rabbi is alive and well.”

**I** said to him, “True, the righteous in their death are called alive, but, you know, there’s no chance that he’ll come to set your mezuzot!

**I** saw there was no one to talk to... I set a mezuzah in the living room’s doorway, and before I left, I warned him again. It is very dangerous to live in a house without mezuzot! The Zohar says that the reason they are called mezuzot is because they remove death from the house.

**He** didn’t listen...

**Shabbat** morning, not long after, he returned from the synagogue, made kiddush with his wife, and then said to his wife, “I’m going to rest for a few minutes on the couch.” He rested on the couch, and she went to sleep in the bedroom.

**He** got up at eleven-thirty to wake her up, but she had passed away..! We buried her on Saturday night... I said to him, “Didn’t I tell you the words of the Zohar? He replied, “I’m waiting for the Rabbi to return.” I said

to him, “Still!?! Human life isn’t a game...”

**He** slept in the living room where there was a mezuzah, and he merited waking up. His wife, though, slept in a room without a mezuzah. She didn’t wake up. Is that not transparent enough? This is a great danger...

**In** addition, the mezuzah also saves from having to go through a cesarean section. There’s a phenomenon that sometimes occurs in women before childbirth (about three percent of all pregnancies), that the baby is still in a “breech state.” Instead of the baby’s head tilted downwards, it’s upside down, a phenomenon that could pose a danger at birth, and if not turned over, they would have to deliver the baby via surgery...

**If** you want to avoid the surgery, go home immediately and check the mezuzot. If there’s an upside-down mezuzah, that’s the cause of the upside-down baby. Therefore, when you return the mezuzah to its proper position, the baby will also return to its upright position.

**An** upside-down mezuzah can mean one of two things... Either it was placed upside-down inside the housing, or that the person who rolled the mezuzah wasn’t proficient enough in halachot and rolled the mezuzah from right to left instead of from left to right.

**27.** Zohar Devarim 265b.

and be careful not to place the trash can next to the mezuzah either.

**Also**, the *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez* writes<sup>28</sup> that a person who is careful with the mitzvah of mezuzah properly, their house is protected from all.

**These** are things that sound simple, but someone who is careful

with these things, the evil inclination will never be able to cause them to stumble. These simple things keep us from every harm, physical or spiritual, and thus we're safe and secure at all times.

**And** because the power of a mezuzah is so great, we must be careful...

### Where To Buy A Mezuzah

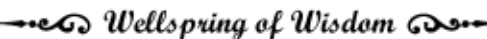
**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l once said...<sup>29</sup>

**In** *Petach Eliyahu*, it is stated that the *middah* of *Chessed* is directed contrary to the right arm. Thus, every Jew who engages daily in *Gemilut Chassidim* (acts of kindness) bestows on themselves kindness from above.

**Every** Jew, when giving charity or doing kindness, must take into account that at the very moment they give, Hashem's light descends on them, hugs

them very strongly, and connects them directly to Hashem. A good hug is precisely when it's from all directions, as the Clouds of Glory hugged Am Israel.

**The** *Targum Yonatan* on the verse "His left arm under my head" (Shir HaShirim 8:3) says that these are tefillin, "and his right arm hugs me" (ibid.), this is a mezuzah. The *Shlah HaKadosh* asks,<sup>30</sup> the mezuzah hugs a person? ! If he had said a tallit that wraps the whole body or tefillin, which covers the entire arm, it



28. Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez – Devarim II (p. 579).

29. Betzur Yarom – Iggeret HaTeshuva (Ch. 10, p. 148).

30. Shnei Luchot HaBrit (Chulin, 8).

**Parashat V'etchanan - Shalom in the Home**

would have been understood, but a mezuzah doesn't hug...

**The Shlah** answers that when the mezuzah is kosher and *Mehudar*, a beam of light comes out of it, and it hugs the person who just walked out of the door. We don't see the light, but those who need to see it, see. They know that if they try to harm this person, they'll be harmed.

**For** that reason, it's essential when buying mezuzot to only buy from G-d fearing individuals and not from someone that just "writes nice...."

*A sofer*<sup>31</sup> who writes a mezuzah without the proper sanctification, the mezuzah becomes useless and doesn't have the power to protect anyone! This mezuzah will only cause problems in the home and do no good!

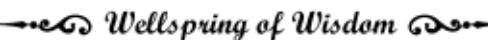
**A sofer** has to know that he isn't allowed to speak during writing or listen to the radio or anything else that distracts him from concentrating fully on the writing. Therefore, anyone who needs to buy a mezuzah, and sees that the scribe doesn't look one-hundred percent according to these standards, shouldn't buy from them.

**Tefillin** also protects the person for his entire life, as well as his sons and grandsons. Don't be neglectful of these things. When it comes to tefillin, mezuzot, or any other mitzvah, you shouldn't think about the price too much. If it's good, it's worth every dollar, and if it isn't good, it's not worth even one cent. Hence, if it's good, it's worth investing in it.

**Shalom in the Home**

**The** kabbalist Rebbe Yaakov Kapil wrote the following...<sup>32</sup>

**David** HaMelech said, "The wicked watches for the righteous



31. Someone who writes mezuzot, tefillin, and sifrei Torah.

32. Siddur HaAri – Kol Yaakov.



and seeks to put him to death”  
(Tehillim 37:32).<sup>33</sup>

**One** of the creations of Hashem is the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). In Hebrew, it's called הנחש which in gematria is <sup>34</sup>הנחש (snake). Under the *yetzer hara* are assigned soldiers who carry out its evil plans... One of these soldiers is called רי"ב (argument/fight).

**Together**, נחש (358) and רי"ב (212), who receives its strength from רשע become נחש (570) (the wicked).

**On** this (רי"ב), David HaMelech intended when he said, “The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.” It stands behind the house door, watches the home, and seeks to provoke fights and arguments between husband and wife until the entire family becomes spiritually dead (Due to divorce and the moving of the children between homes).

**Hashem**, who has sympathy for us, gave us the mitzvah of

mezuzah, which prevents רי"ב from harming us !

**And** so, we must know, peace in the home is all thanks to the mezuzah !

**Korach** managed to cause peer pressure among Am Israel and make people feel that only if they belonged to his group, they were “in.”

**Moshe** Rabbeinu immediately recognized this and rushed to stop it from happening !

**Moshe** Rabbeinu knew that all the peer pressure in Korach's controversy stemmed from רי"ב, which at the time was in the tents of Dan and Aviram.<sup>35</sup>

**Since** Moshe Rabbeinu knew the secret of the mezuzah, which has the power to eliminate all social peer pressure, he knew that if he wanted to put an end to רי"ב, he must enter the tents of Dan and Aviram and kiss the mezuzot of their homes.

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33. The original Hebrew – “צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו”

34. Together with another 1 for the word itself.

35. Imrei Noam (Parashat Korach) by Rebbe Meir of Dzikov.

**Parashat V'etchanan - The Mezuzah That Saved My Home**

**However**, Datan and Aviram, who were very wise, immediately caught on to Moshe's plan and attempted to thwart it. Therefore, they left their tents and stood outside ! By waiting for him outside, they prevented him from entering their tents to kiss the mezuzot. In the

end, רי"ב wasn't expelled, and the rest of the story is already known...

**But** from this whole story, we have gained something essential, and that is that thanks to the fact that we keep the mitzvah of mezuzah, we merit permanent and true peace in our homes !

**The Mezuzah That Saved My Home**

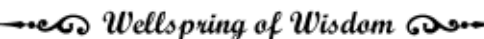
**One** of the best scribes in Ramat Elchanan told Rabbi Itzchak Zilberstein shlita the following story that he heard directly from Dr. Orlin, Director of the blood bank in the Mayanei Hayeshua Hospital in Bnei Brak.<sup>36</sup>

**Until** only a few years ago, Dr. Orlin lived in California and met with many doctors, including religious and non-religious Jews. A few years ago, after already moving to Israel, he and his wife visited California and decided to bring a gift to three of their friends there, all high-ranking Jewish doctors.

**What** gift does a Jew bring to his friend ? Religious articles.

**This** time, Dr. Orlin chose fancy mezuzot... He approached a well-known scribe and asked for the fanciest mezuzot that he had. He paid the full requested price and placed the mezuzot in his suitcase in order to bring them as a gift to his colleagues in California.

**When** he arrived in the United States, before beginning his business and arranging his own affairs, Dr. Orlin visited his friends, the doctors. After a little bit of catching up, Dr. Orlin presented them with their gifts, the mezuzot, which he placed each in a most elegant bag.



36. Tuvcha Yaviu (Vol. 2, p. 288).

**The** three doctors each responded differently.

**One** looked at the mezuzah with great contempt and disrespect and returned the gift to Dr. Orlin. "I'm not interested in such gifts," he said scornfully. Though not showing such disgraceful treatment, the second refused to set the mezuzah on the doorpost of his house. The third doctor thanked Dr. Orlin from the bottom of his heart for the beautiful gift, kissed the mezuzah, and placed it on the doorpost of his home without delay.

**Two** weeks later, California was hit by a terrible hurricane that hadn't occurred there for many years, destroying large parts of the huge state. Tens of thousands of people were left homeless in a heavy disaster, considered one of the worst in America's long history.

**The** three doctors all lived next to each other, within a radius of a few yards...

**The** first doctor, who showed blatant treatment of the mezuzah, lost his home completely. Not one stone of his home was left unturned. The house of the second doctor, who acted uninterested, was also damaged, but relative to what happened to his colleague's home, he came out with a miracle. However, the third doctor, who was enthusiastic about his new mezuzah and placed it on the doorpost of his house, came out untouched by the hurricane.

**Rescue** crews who arrived at the scene couldn't believe their eyes. This doctor's home was the only one that showed no signs of being touched by the hurricane. The strong winds seemed to have just passed over the house...

**Shabbat Shalom !**



## *The Pathway...*

1. Before the sin, Adam HaRishon was pure, the *yetzer hara* was external from him, and he had only it to face. After the sin, the *yetzer hara* entered him as well, and from now on, he must deal with two evil inclinations. One external and one internal. The internal *yetzer hara* is our immoral desires and bad character traits, and the external one is the world itself, or what's better known as "peer pressure."

2. The inner *yetzer hara* is a concealed disposition or feeling within every individual, and therefore one can overcome it. On the other hand, the external *yetzer hara* is a general notion or impulse that encompasses the whole world. Therefore, it's almost impossible to escape it, for when one sees and/or is immersed in bad, an impression of it is inevitable to be left on them!

3. How foolish are people who think their surrounding won't affect them... The Torah clearly reveals to us that even those of the generation of the desert were affected by their surroundings. What can we, who live in a world filled with heresy and lust, say?! Whoever doesn't try to live in an environment of Torah and holiness, surely their surroundings will influence them!

4. One of the things that can protect us from being affected by our

surroundings and from social pressure, is the mitzvah of mezuzah. By fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah, Hashem gives us the strength to save ourselves from negative peer pressure!

5. The Torah commands us to affix a mezuzah on the doorpost of our homes. Every moment that there is a mezuzah on the house, we fulfill a mitzvah. One should be very vigilant in the mitzvah of mezuzah, and anyone who is vigilant in it will merit long life. In addition, Am Israel will merit living in Eretz Israel in peace.

6. Every person must be careful with the mitzvah of mezuzah... The mezuzah is what awakens within us the desire to sanctify ourselves more and more... The first sages said, "Whoever has tefillin on his head and arm, tzitzit on his garment, and a mezuzah on his door, it is certain that he won't sin."

7. On the outside of the mezuzah is written one of the holy names of Hashem, *Shaddai*. The name *Shaddai* plays a very central role in the existence of the world... The Gemara revealed that the act of stopping the creation and giving it borders was done by the holy name *Shaddai*. The name *Shaddai* signifies contentment. That is, what was created until now is enough, and there's no need for more.

*The Pathway...*

8. The source of all desires and lusts stems from our desire and pursuit of “more” and by not being satisfied with what Hashem has already given us. When a man is circumcised and the name *Shaddai* is engraved on his body, he can achieve contentment and receives the strength to overcome his desires and to tell them, “Stop!” Just as on the doorway of a home, there is a mezuzah which the name *El Shaddai* is written on, and it protects the house from harm, so too on the body of man, as long as this name stays sacred and pure and protected from any sin, it protects the person from all danger, and no harm in the world, physical or spiritual, can come close to him.

9. Every person must be careful with the mitzvah of mezuzah... The custom of our ancestors is whenever we go out or enter through the doorway of our homes, we should place our hands on the mezuzah and kiss it. It’s also very important to exercise respect and extreme caution in the sanctity of the mezuzah, such as not leaving any garbage next to the doorway. These are things that sound simple, but someone who’s careful with these things, the evil inclination will never be able to

cause them to stumble. These simple things keep us from every harm, physical or spiritual, and thus we’re safe and secure at all times.

10. It’s essential when buying mezuzot to only buy from G-d fearing individuals and not from someone that just “writes nice...” A *sofer* who writes a mezuzah without the proper sanctification, the mezuzah becomes useless and doesn’t have the power to protect anyone! This mezuzah will only cause problems in the home and do no good!

11. A *sofer* has to know that he isn’t allowed to speak during writing or listen to the radio or anything else that distracts him from concentrating fully on the writing. Therefore, anyone who needs to buy a mezuzah, and sees that the scribe doesn’t look one-hundred percent according to these standards, should not buy from them.

12. There is a *Klipah* stands behind the house door, watches the home, and seeks to provoke fights and arguments between husband and wife. The mitzvah of mezuzah, which prevents this *Klipah* from harming us! Thanks to the fact that we keep the mitzvah of mezuzah, we merit permanent and true peace in our homes!



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# Shabbat Times Va'etchanan

16<sup>th</sup> of Av, 5782

| City        | Candle Lighting | Shabbat Ends | Rabbeinu Tam |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| New York    | 7:39 pm         | 8:41 pm      | 9:09 pm      |
| Miami       | 7:40 pm         | 8:34 pm      | 9:10 pm      |
| Los Angeles | 7:24 pm         | 8:22 pm      | 8:54 pm      |
| Montreal    | 7:48 pm         | 8:54 pm      | 9:17 pm      |
| Toronto     | 8:07 pm         | 9:12 pm      | 9:37 pm      |
| London      | 8:13 pm         | 9:29 pm      | 9:39 pm      |
| Jerusalem   | 7:11 pm         | 8:00 pm      | 8:51 pm      |
| Tel Aviv    | 7:08 pm         | 7:57 pm      | 8:47 pm      |
| Haifa       | 7:08 pm         | 7:57 pm      | 8:48 pm      |
| Be'er Sheva | 7:06 pm         | 7:56 pm      | 7:46 pm      |

### Pathways to the Heart

*From the Words of  
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

*We must raise our children with a lot of humility. If you act arrogantly, none of your children will pay any attention to you. But, with humility, all of your children will love, respect, and honor you.*

*Every person that has the trait of humility, Hashem bestows grace on them, "To the humble, he bestowed grace" (Mishlei 3:34), and in return, they find favor in the eyes of others.*



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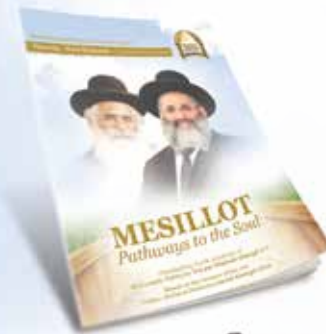
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