

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 67

**Ekev** | Achieving Emuna



# 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 *~*...

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Goat Problems .....	1
Don't Miss Out ! .....	3
Keep it Going .....	7
The Laws of Nature .....	10
Hashem Decides .....	12
The Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon .....	16
What - Hashem Your G-d Asks Of You .....	18
Birkat Hamazon - Remembered Hashem .....	19
Happiness Doesn't Depend On Quantity .....	20
Staying In Touch .....	22
Dependent On Only One .....	23
Birkat Hamazon .....	23
Will the Bread Fill Me Up? .....	25
<i>The Pathway</i> .....	27



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### Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

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## Parashat Ekev

### Goat Problems

A somewhat foolish couple began to save every penny. After the pennies became dollars, the wife said to her husband, "Go to one of the villages and buy a doe (a female goat) for us. The doe will give us milk, cheese, and meat. We'll even sell some of it, and money will stream in."

**The** husband listened to his wife, took the money, and went out toward the village. On his way, he stopped at an inn, ate and drank a little, and then continued on his way to the village. There, he bought a goat and journeyed back to his town. As he reached the inn again, he tied the goat to the fence and went in for a little rest. The owner of the inn saw that this man wasn't the brightest person in the world and decided to joke with him. He slipped into the yard and replaced the doe with a buck (a male goat).

**The** husband ate and drank, untied the buck, and continued

on his way. At home, he was welcomed ecstatically, and his wife hurried out, ready to milk the doe. A moment later, she returned upset and furious, "You stupid, unsuccessful man! You can't even buy a doe!"

**"I** bought!" he defended himself.

**"You** didn't buy!" she replied.

**"She's** outside!" he said.

**"It's** not a she. It's a he!" screamed back his wife.

**"I** bought a doe!" he said, puzzled.

**"You** bought a buck!" she replied angrily. The husband hurried and grabbed the buck by the horns and returned to the village. On the way there, he stopped at the inn to rest a little. He tied the buck to the post in the yard. When no one was looking, the innkeeper switched out the buck for a doe.

## Parashat Ekev - Goat Problems

**The** husband continued on his way, arrived at the village, and caused a commotion. The seller took a cup and filled it with the doe's milk. "What do you want from me?" the seller asked. "I sold you a doe!" Embarrassed and not understanding, he quickly apologized and returned to his town. On his way, of course, he stopped at the inn and arrived at his home with the replaced buck...

**We** don't have to describe the reception he received... Confused and dizzy, he dragged the buck by the horns and hurried back to the village. He didn't rest the entire way, except for a short stop at the inn. Of course, he arrived at the village with the doe. His shouting terrified the whole village. The seller brought a cup and again filled it with milk...

**The** husband became a target of contemptuous looks and sympathetic smirks. The husband said, "I don't understand what happened here! There's no denying the fact, I bought a doe. But what will I do when my wife claims that it's a buck and accuses me of being

incompetent? I know! I ask that everyone present sign a testimony for me, that this is a doe and not a buck!"

**Laughter** filled the crowd while a testimony was written and signed that this is, without doubt, a doe.

**The** husband took the doe and returned with the letter in his pocket, feeling content and full of joy. He tied the doe to the gate of the inn and entered for a cheerful drink. After a short while, he continued on his way, pulling the buck after him.

**A** few minutes after his return home, the neighbors emerged from their homes at the loud shouting that erupted from his home. Suddenly, the door flew open, from which the husband was thrown out, landing in a puddle of mud...

**The** husband got up, shook himself off, and approached his wife, "My dear wife, how long will we fight? Do you remember in the center of town, there's a house with a large sign on it that reads, "Advice for anything for only five dollars." Let's go to him..."

**Shouts** were heard in the doorway, the “adviser” came out, and the husband immediately started screaming, “Rescue me, I bought a doe!”

“**Buck!**” the woman screamed after him.

**The** husband took out the testimony... The wife took out the buck.

**The** adviser scratched his head and said, “I’ve never encountered such a complicated situation. I’ll gather all the sages of the town to try to find a solution.”

**They** sat, debated, and discussed for seven days and seven nights and finally decided unanimously, “There’s no doubt about it... Before us stands a new breed of goat. In the village, it’s a doe, and once it reaches the town, it turns into a buck...”<sup>1</sup>

**Well**, you’re probably laughing at their stupidity and pity the week they wasted from their lives. However, we all act this same way...

**We** live, focusing only on ourselves, not remembering that Hashem is watching over us, waiting for us to turn to Him and pray to Him. Occasionally, He sends us “reminders,” and instead of identifying the source of the “problem” and turning directly to the “reminder,” we decide that our situation and troubles are caused by this or that.

**Symptoms** of high fever and shortness of breath are called “Covid.” Runny nose and sneezing are called “flu.” Not finding a job is called “unemployment”...

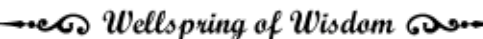
**But** the truth is that everything is called Hashem, who only asks, “Remember me, turn to me, and I’ll help you!”

**This** is our parasha.

### Don't Miss Out!

**In** the days of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, troubles and persecution

increased. Rabbi Yehuda feared that the Oral Torah would be



forgotten. Therefore, he decided to write the Mishna. To succeed, he had to gather all of the students in Eretz Israel and ask that each one recite before him the Mishnayot that they heard from their rabbis and learned by heart. Rabbi Yehuda sat, listened, questioned, corrected, inscribed accurately, and fixed the Mishnayot in the ideal order until he succeeded in publishing the *Shisha Sidrei Mishna* (The Six Orders of the Mishna).

**The** first Mishna of the Talmu deals with the laws of the appropriate time for reading the evening Kriyat Shema.

**This** is what is written...

**The** earliest time one can recite the evening Kriyat Shema is from the time the Kohanim enter to eat their *teruma*. There's also an argument until when one can recite the evening Kriyat Shema...

**According** to Rabbi Eliezer, until the end of the first *ashmura* (watch).

**According** to Chachamim (sages), until midnight.

**According** to Rabban Gamliel, until *Alot HaShachar* (dawn).

**The** Gemara states<sup>2</sup> that Chachamim are also of the opinion that one can recite Kriyat Shema until *Alot HaShachar*, as stated by Rabban Gamliel. The reason they said until midnight is only in order to distance a person from transgression.

**That** is, if someone is given such a large time interval, until dawn, they would rely on the time that they still have and would be negligent in reciting Kriyat Shema and lose out on the mitzvah altogether. Thus, they said the time for reciting Kriyat Shema is until midnight.

**These** are the words of the Gemara...

**The** sages made a safeguard to their words so that no man should come from the field in the evening

and say, "I'll go home, eat a little, drink a little, sleep a little, and after that, I'll read Kriyat Shema and pray," for he may become tired and fall asleep for the entire night (and not recite Kriyat Shema at all).

**But** since the sages made a safeguard to their words and limited the time until midnight, when a man comes from the field in the evening, he'll immediately enter the synagogue. If it's still not yet time to recite Kriyat Shema, he shouldn't sit idle... If he's accustomed to learn Tanach, he should learn there in the Beit Knesset, and if he's accustomed to learn Mishna, he should learn there.

**Then**, as soon as it reaches the time for Kriyat Shema and prayer,

he should recite Shema and pray. Then he should go to his home and eat his bread and bless Bikart HaMazon (the after blessing on bread). And, whoever transgresses the words of the sages, or mocks their words, or doesn't believe in the regulations of the sages, or disagrees with the rulings of the *Beit Din*, is deserving of death by the hands of heaven, as it's said, "He who breaches a fence will be bitten by a snake" (Kohelet 10:8).<sup>3</sup>

**Simply**, the Gemara says that the sages affixed that when a man returns from work in the evening, he should enter the synagogue, study Torah, and pray. Also, someone who blatantly disregards the instructions of the sages and

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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**3. In** the year 1800, a terrible fire broke out in the city that lived Rabbi Akiva Eiger and destroyed most of the residents' homes. Rabbi Akiva didn't delay. He immediately took on the task of reconstructing the homes... Funds were collected, and foreign contractors were hired who immediately began constructing.

**The** speed of construction was at the forefront of the minds of the residents, who were left homeless, and temporarily

living in the houses of other family members or neighbors.

**Rabbi** Akiva gathered all the city people and said to them, "I understand the need for rapid construction, but know that even if the contractor is a gentile, he isn't allowed to build on Shabbat. That is why I ask that you stipulate with the contractors who are building your homes that they will not work on Shabbat, and I request that this stipulation be written in the contract."

## Parashat Ekev - Don't Miss Out!

**On** the first Shabbat, after construction began, the residents were appalled to see a gentile contractor working on the construction of the house of the wealthy man of the city, Shimon.

**Shimon's** neighbors approached the contractor and scolded him, "How dare you work on Shabbat? You signed a contract that states that you're forbidden to work on Shabbat!"

**The** gentile contractor smiled and replied, "Shimon didn't write that stipulation in the contract. On the contrary, he hastened me to finish the work quickly, and about an hour ago, Shimon passed by here and was overjoyed when he saw the rapid progress on the construction. He even promised me that if I finished the house within three months, he would increase the amount he would pay me."

**The** neighbors left with great sorrow in their hearts for the *Chilul Hashem* (desecration of Hashem's name) caused by Shimon.

**Despite** being the Torah giant of his generation, Rabbi Akiva Eiger was well immersed in the life of his community and soon heard of Shimon's actions. He immediately sent a messenger from the *Beit Din* to warn Shimon. However, Shimon just mocked the messenger and sent him away.

**Before** the following Shabbat, Rabbi Akiva wrote a letter of warning, in which he explained the severity of the prohibition of employing foreign contractors on Shabbat, and he ended his remarks with the

words... *Chazal* said (Shabbat 110a), "He who breaches a fence will be bitten by a snake!"

**On** Shabbat night, the letter was read in the synagogue to the congregation, but it didn't affect Shimon at all. The following Shabbat, too, it was read... This time, though, Shimon got up and shouted, "Shut your mouth before you regret it!" The entire congregation was shocked at the insolence of Shimon, who knew no bounds.

**After** Shabbat, Rabbi Akiva called the messenger and said to him in a confident voice, "Shimon forbade you from reading the warning aloud. Instead, go to his house and give it to him in writing."

**The** messenger went to Shimon and held the letter in front of his face. Shimon pulled out a pen from his coat and crossed out the words, "He who breaches a fence will be bitten by a snake!"

**When** the messenger returned to Rabbi Akiva and told him what had occurred, the rabbi said, "I warned him three times. Now the entire responsibility falls on him alone!"

**Shimon** continued to build his house as if the rabbi's words weren't intended for him. A few weeks later, his home was finished, and he moved back in, staring at his neighbors, who were still homeless, with his head held high.

**Not** long had passed when one day Shimon sat at his dining table, together with his family, and a squealing sound was suddenly heard, and boom! The beams of the roof of his home fell right by his side, almost crushing him...



Parashat Ekev - Keep it Going

doesn't do so isn't in a good situation...

**Another** element added by the Gemara is, "Eat his bread and bless Bikart HaMazon."

According to this, part of the sage's instructions was to eat bread in the evening and bless Birkat Hamazon...

**Our** question is, why?

### Keep it Going

**Hashem** created the world through speech. Our entire reality was created with Ten Utterances.

By these utterances, all of creation, in the upper and lower worlds, were made.<sup>4</sup> This is understandable

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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**With** a cry of panic, Shimon fled his home, his terrified family members running after him.

**"Indeed,** the words of the contractor were correct," thought Shimon. "The worms only ate the beams of my house."

**An** expert builder was immediately called in to inspect the wooden beams from which the house was built. He stated that the beams were all rotten and filled with worms, "There's no choice but to demolish the house and rebuild it!"

**Suddenly,** Shimon remembered the words of the letter sent to him by Rabbi Akiva, "He who breaches a fence will be bitten by a snake!" "Indeed," he thought to himself, "I breached the fence and was punished, fortunately not with my body but with my money. I must hurry and ask forgiveness from Rabbi Akiva Eiger."

**Filled** with rage, Shimon turned to the foreign contractor and yelled at him, "Liar! Why did you scam me and build my house with rotten wood?! Give me my money back right now!"

**With** his head held down and a shameful face, he went to the rabbi's home to ask for his forgiveness. His actions soon became known throughout the city, and the faith in reward and punishment was strengthened in everyone's hearts.

**"Calm** down," the contractor replied calmly. "The homes of everyone in the city were built from the same lumber and cut down from the same forest. Did the houses of your neighbors also rot like your house? Look around and see... After all, all the other houses are standing strong."

- Netivot Yosher (Vol. 2, p. 221).

**4. Rabbi** Shneur Zalman of Ladi, in his book *Tanya* (Shaar HaYichud V'Emuna, Ch. 1), asks how we can say that the entire creation

## Parashat Ekev - Keep it Going

to anyone who looks at the first chapter in Bereshit.

**Thousands** of years passed from the creation of the world until David HaMelech was born.

**David**, since his childhood, received innumerable humiliations and struggles. He genuinely went through everything, loneliness, rejection, humiliation, persecution, and slander. But the most horrible feeling of all - No one loves me !

**David** could have blamed everyone, his father, his mother, his family, and all of civilization. But David knew that no one had the power to harm him in any way and

that everything he went through was only from Hashem. He ran only to Hashem, spoke only with Hashem, and told only Hashem everything he was going through, both spiritual and physical.

**This** belief, that "אין עוד מלבדו" (there's nothing beside Him), and that everything is done only by Hashem raised him to the loftiest of heights and he merited authoring the Book of Tehillim, which everyone can find themselves within.

**Hashem**, who saw his amazing *avodah* (serving of Hashem), was so glad and said, "I have found my servant, David" (Tehillim 89:21),

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### *~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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was created from Ten Utterances? If we observe the Ten Utterances, we see that only certain things are mentioned, such as light, vegetation, sun, etc... Where did all the other things not mentioned come from?

**He** answers that the Ten Utterances consist of the 22 letters of *Lashon HaKodesh*. There are many ways of connecting the letters, which the *Sefer Yetzira* calls "231 gates."

**The** letters of the Ten Utterances were connected until various combinations were formed, from which all of existence was created.

**This** is what he wrote...

**“Although** the word אבן (stone) isn't mentioned in the Ten Utterances, nevertheless, life-force flows to the stone through combinations of the letters which are rearranged in the 231 gates, either in direct or reverse order, as is explained in the *Sefer Yetzira*, until the combination of the word stone descends from the Ten Utterances, and is derived from them, and this is the life-force of the stone. And so it is with all of existence...

and anointed him king over all of  
Am Israel!

**The** longest chapter in the Book of Tehillim is chapter 119, which contains 176 verses. In the 89<sup>th</sup> verse, he wrote, “Forever, Hashem, Your words stand in the heavens.” The Baal Shem Tov explains<sup>5</sup> that this verse describes another stage in the act of creation...

**Until** now, anyone who had studied the first chapter of Bereshit could have misunderstood and thought that Hashem created the world in six days, and since then, it stands alone. David HaMelech came and shouted, “It’s forbidden to think so !”

**“Forever,** Hashem, Your words stand in the heavens !” For the world to exist, Hashem must recreate it at every moment !

**At** the beginning of creation, the third utterance said by Hashem was, “Let there be a firmament” (Bereshit 1:6). This must be said by Hashem at every moment anew,

“Let there be a firmament... Let there be a firmament... Let there be a firmament... etc...” By this utterance being said continuously, it exists at every moment anew. If Hashem were to cease, even for a second, from saying this to the firmament, immediately, the firmament would return to absolute nothingness as it was before it was created.

**Our** lives also depend on the utterance of Hashem, who said at the beginning of creation, “Let us make man” (Bereshit 1:26), and at every moment, Hashem says to each and every one of us, “Let us make man... Let us make man... Let us make man... etc...” By this, Hashem creates and renews us at every moment...

**For** this reason, the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* arranged the wording of the prayer, “Who renews, with His goodness, daily, continuously (at every moment) the acts of creation.” If Hashem ceases to sustain reality

## Parashat Ekev - The Laws of Nature

even for a fraction of a second, immediately all of reality will return to absolute nothingness as it was before it was created.

**This** goes for every being and every detail in creation, whether inanimate, vegetative, or living...

**The Laws of Nature**

**The** explanation of the Baal Shem Tov on the verse, “Forever, Hashem, Your word stands in the heavens,” reveals a new element in the interpretation of the verse, “*Shema Israel, Hashem Elokenu, Hashem Echad.*”

**The** meaning of the words “*Hashem Echad*” isn’t limited only to the fact that there’s no other G-d besides Hashem, but furthermore, He’s the one and only existing reality, and there’s no other reality besides Him.

**All** of existence is nothing but what’s being created at every moment by Hashem, *Yesh MeAyin* (something from nothing), and apart from that, it has no existence of its own.

**That** is the meaning of the verse, “אין עוד מלבדו” (there is nothing beside Him)...

**Once** a competition was held between a group of artists, to see who the best was. After much thought, they decided that all the artists would paint a picture of vegetables and then take them and put them in a field. The painting that was attempted to be eaten by the birds would be chosen as the best, and the artist would receive the coveted title, “Artist of the Year.”

**Who** won the competition? Who was the best artist? The one who managed to mislead the birds to come to eat from their painting! This means that the best artist was the best bluffer, the best liar...

**It’s** written, “אין צור כאלהינו” (There is no rock [tzur] like Elokenu) (Shmuel I 2:2).

**The** Gemara asks...<sup>6</sup>  
?מאי אין צור כאלהינו?

**What's** the meaning of "There's no rock [tzur] like Elokenu?"

**The** Gemara continues and says that we shouldn't say *tzur* (rock) but *tzayair* (artist). Hashem created a world that is governed by the laws of nature. There are reasons for everything. Everything that happens has a cause and effect. For example, gravity. Anything that isn't being held will fall down. Or if someone puts their hand in a fire, they'll get burnt.

This is how the world works.

**Our** world is full of beautiful creations. Beautiful mountains, oceans, rivers, valleys, etc. So what's the truth? The truth is that everything is a bluff. It's all just a painting of Hashem. "There's no artist like Elokenu." The truth of the world is that Hashem animates and sustains it at every moment.

**When** someone suffers from severe headaches, they take Advil, and the headache goes away. People think that Advil took away their headache! It's just a chunk of powder made up of molecules, made up of atoms,

made up of protons, neutrons, and electrons, that are made up of... nothing! It's all Hashem. He's the only One that healed them! He "disguised" Himself as Advil. Advil in and of itself is nothing!

**When** someone's unaware of the verse "אין עוד מלבדו", they think that the world behaves according to the laws of nature, but that's a terrible mistake. Hashem creates and renews nature and all of reality at every moment, including gravity. Gravity has no independent force. The fact that a stone falls when it's thrown in the air is because at that exact moment, Hashem wills it to fall! Things float in space because Hashem wills it that the moment one reaches a certain point outside of the earth, they'll float. The same goes with water...

**Nature** and the laws of nature are basically a big bluff. It's all a painting of Hashem, "Who renews, with His goodness, daily, continuously the acts of creation." If He didn't, this world would be nothing, as if it never was. It's all a fantasy. All of reality is just divine life-force! We don't feel this truth now during our exile because

**Parashat Ekev - Hashem Decides**

we're surrounded by lies and fabrication, but when Mashiach comes, we won't only feel this truth, we'll see it...

**Once**, a woman who wasn't observant of the Torah came to the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe and asked him, "What will the world look like when the Mashiach comes?"

**The** Rebbe said to her, "If someone wants to walk through a wall, will they succeed? No. Why? Because it's a law of nature. If someone wants to not put on Tefillin, can he? Of course... The question arises, how is it possible? After all, Hashem commanded us to put on Tefillin. How is it possible that a Jew not put on Tefillin? This is a miracle! Hashem said, 'Do not steal,' and yet, we hear of people stealing... How can it be? How do they have the strength to even move their hand?"

**The** answer is that the will of Hashem is that everyone will have choice and free will, and this is truly the greatest miracle that can be!

**However**, this is only temporary. Our state during the exile. But, when the Mashiach comes, the situation will be exactly the opposite. The will of Hashem will become a law of nature, and it will determine the laws of the world.

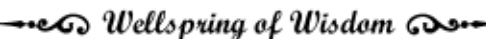
**If** someone gets up in the morning and decides not to do *Netillat Yadayim* (ritually wash their hands), they won't be able to move their arms... If someone wants, heaven forbid, to light a fire on Shabbat, they won't be able to move their hand...

**The** laws of nature, whose entire essence are to conceal, will be abolished, and... we'll also be able to walk through a wall..."<sup>7</sup>

**Hashem Decides**

**Our** parasha, parashat Ekev, is full of advice on gaining and

strengthening our emuna (faith) in Hashem...



**Before** focusing on the advice presented in the parasha, we want to expand a little on the explanation of the mitzvah written in our parasha, “Remember that it is Hashem Elokecha who gives you the power to acquire wealth” (Devarim 8:18).<sup>8</sup>

**We** must know and believe that all of our success and possessions, both physical and spiritual, are not because of “our strength and the power of our hand,” rather, they are 100% gifts from Hashem, and it’s He who has given and gives us strength to acquire wealth!

**It’s** customary to mention this remembrance every morning immediately after *Shacharit* (the morning prayer).

**Rabbi** Chaim Yosef David Azulai, the *Chida*, wrote a longer version than the common wording in the Siddur. These are his holy words...

**“I** hereby keep what is written in the Torah, “Remember that it is Hashem Elokecha who

gives you the power to acquire wealth.” I hereby believe that everything comes from Him, and all the good we have, whether physical or spiritual, everything is from Him, may He be blessed, who has increased His grace and goodness with us in all His righteousness and mercy.”

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel expanded on the words of the *Chida* and said...

**How** can someone think and believe, and all the more so, say aloud that by their own power and might, they succeeded in what they succeeded and achieved what they achieved?! **For even to exist for one moment on their own power without the influence and sustenance of Hashem, they’re incapable!** Can it be that they succeed in attaining wisdom, wealth, respect, and the like on their own?! Whoever is capable of thinking in such a way is considered a fool like no other...

8. Sefer Charedim (12:51)

**Therefore**, the parasha warns us by saying, “Take care lest you forget Hashem Elokecha, to not guard His commandments, His laws, and His statutes that I am commanding you today. Lest you eat and be full, and build good houses and live [in them.] And your cattle and your sheep multiply, and silver and gold multiply for you, and everything you own multiplies. And your pride increases, and you forget Hashem Elokecha... And you think, ‘My strength and the power of my hand have acquired this wealth for me’ (Devarim 8:11-17). Rather, “Remember that it is Hashem Elokecha who gives you the power to acquire wealth” (Devarim 8:18).

**On** this, it’s said, “You have been shown that Hashem alone is Elokim. There is nothing beside Him” (Devarim 4:35). Meaning that there is no other power in the world but the power of Hashem, and He gives it to whomever He wants. To one He gives wisdom, to one He gives might, and to another He gives wealth. But never forget, everything is, His. For this reason, we should never boast that we’re

wise, mighty, or rich... “Thus said Hashem: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; Let not the strong man glory in his strength; Let not the rich man glory in his riches” (Yirmiyahu 9:22) because everything belongs to Hashem!

**If** someone is mistaken and forgets that Hashem is the One who gives them the power to acquire everything, Hashem will, in one moment, take everything from them.

**The** Ramban, in his famous letter, wrote...

**And** now, my son, understand and observe that whoever feels that they are greater than others, is rebelling against the Kingship of Heaven... What cause does one have for pride? Perhaps their wealth? “Hashem impoverishes and enriches” (Shmuel I 2:7). Perhaps their honor? It belongs to Hashem, as it is written, “Wealth and honor come from You” (Divrei HaYamim I 29:12). So how could one adorn themselves with Hashem’s honor? And one who prides themselves in their wisdom surely knows that Hashem “Takes away the speech



of assured men and reasoning from the sages” (Iyov 12:20). Thus, all are equal before Hashem, since with His anger, He lowers the proud, and when He wishes, He raises the low. So, humble yourself, and Hashem will raise you up!”

**Both** the righteous and the wicked are nothing before Hashem. The only difference is that the righteous recognize that they’re nothing before Hashem, and therefore they annul all of their desires before Hashem’s will, while the wicked are mistaken and think they’re strong and have the power to succeed on their own.

**When** we remember that while acquiring anything, it isn’t by our strength but rather by the power that Hashem has given us, Hashem will then help us, and we won’t stop succeeding.

**Therefore**, anyone who’s been endowed with wealth by Hashem must be very careful not to become arrogant and think that because they’re wealthy, they’re allowed to belittle others... He

who made them wealthy can in one moment take all of their wealth away from them...

**We** must always behave with humility. Whenever anyone comes before us and asks for *tzedakah* (charity), we must treat them with respect and give them generously and with a smile on our faces. Wealth is only a deposit from Hashem. As long as it serves as a channel for *tzedakah*, with generosity and a generous hand, it will stand as a good reason for Hashem to continue the downpour of wealth.

**Sometimes** Hashem gives a person certain strengths to carry out a particular mission in life. This person should remember that they are nothing more than a messenger.

**Hashem** alone is the only existence, and without Him, nothing exists. Therefore, the more someone feels that they are nothing, it’s a sign that they’re beginning to progress and draw near to Hashem.

**The** Gemara says<sup>9</sup> that once a question was sent from Bavel to Eretz Israel, asking, “What are the

## Parashat Ekev - The Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon

criteria for the privilege of receiving a place in the next world?" They then received the following answer, "One who is modest and humble, who bows and enters and bows and exits. Who studies Torah regularly, and who doesn't take credit for themselves."

**In** other words, when they enter the synagogue, no one notices, and when they leave the synagogue, no one notices. All the while, their lips never stop from reciting words of Torah. And, above all, that they don't hold highly of themselves. They don't see themselves as worth something, and by virtue of this, they receive a place in the next world.

### The Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon

**In** our parasha, the Torah commands us, "You will eat and be satiated, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 8:10). In simpler terms, to bless Birkat Hamazon (The blessing after a meal). What is unique about this blessing is that it is the only one commanded by the Torah.

**Birkat** Hamazon, which consists of four blessings, is actually not entirely commanded by the

**When** we begin to truly understand to the full extent that Hashem fills the whole world and "there's nothing beside Him" (Devarim 4:35), no people, no buildings, no furniture, nothing but Hashem, without a doubt, we won't have any reason to be sad anymore, for we'll have no more fears and we'll no longer be offended by anyone. Inevitably, we'll live a life of complete and total happiness, happy with everything we have and everything we don't have. We'll be in peace with everyone around us and know that everything is for our own good because it's from Hashem...

Torah, but rather, the first three blessings are commanded by the Torah, while the fourth blessing is obligatory by *DeRabanan* (Our Sages).

We'll explain...

**As** we already mentioned, Birkat Hamazon consists of four blessings, and they are... The blessing of nourishment, the blessing of the land, the blessing of the building of Jerusalem, and the blessing of the good and the beneficent.

**The** Gemara says<sup>10</sup> that when the *mann* descended for Am Israel in the desert, Moshe Rabbeinu established the blessing of nourishment.

**When** Am Israel entered the Land of Israel, Yehoshua bin Nun established the blessing of the land.

**Many** years passed, and when David HaMelech and Shlomo HaMelech arrived, they established the blessing of the building of Jerusalem. David HaMelech established to say the words “Upon Israel Your people and upon Jerusalem Your city.” After Shlomo HaMelech built the first Temple, he added the words “Upon the great and holy house.” These are the three blessings that are commanded by the Torah.

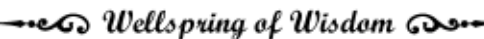
**Later**, in the time of the sages of the Mishna, the fourth blessing, the blessing of the good and the beneficent, was established, and therefore its obligation is only by *DeRabanan*.

**The** Gemara tells<sup>11</sup> that in those years, there was a custom that

when a son was born, his parents would plant a cedar tree for him, and when a daughter was born, a Juniper tree was planted for her. When the children grew up and decided to marry each other, each child’s parents would cut down the tree they had planted for them when they were born, and together they would make them into a beautiful canopy for the wedding.

**One** day, a royal chariot carrying the daughter of the Roman emperor passed through the city of Beitar. Suddenly, one of the chariot wheels broke, and to repair it, the emperor’s soldiers cut down a cedar tree planted for a boy who had recently been born. The Jews saw this and attempted to stop the soldiers...

**On** the side stood a “whistleblower” who immediately ran and informed the emperor that the Jews of Beitar were rebelling against him. The Roman emperor, who was furious by what he had just heard, immediately came to Beitar with an army of eighty



10. Brachot 48b

11. Gittin 57a

**Parashat Ekev - What - Hashem Your G-d Asks Of You**

thousand soldiers and killed every Jew who lived there, men, women, and children... He didn't stop until their blood flowed all the way to the sea, which was a far distance away from the city.

**Nonetheless**, even though he slaughtered them all with typical Roman cruelty, his filthy mind hadn't yet cooled, and he even forbade burying their bodies.

**For** seven years, the bodies of the dead laid in the fields and in the streets without anyone allowed to touch them !

**After** the seven years had passed, permission was granted to bury them on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av of the seventh year (Ta'anit 31a).

**On** that day, *chazal* established the fourth blessing, the blessing of the good and the

beneficent... "The good," for the miracle that happened to them that their bodies didn't stink or rot during those seven years, "And the beneficent," for the permission that was given to bury them.

**The** *Shulchan Aruch* ruled (Orach Chaim 189:1) that in this blessing, we must say three forms of kingship...

"Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, **King** of the universe."

"G-d, our Father, our **King**."

"The good **King**."

**Three** forms of good...

"He has done **good** for us, He does **good** for us, and He will do **good** for us."

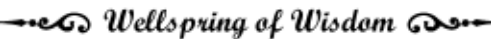
**And** three forms of bestowment...

"He has **bestowed**, He **bestows**, and He will forever **bestow**."

**What - Hashem Your G-d Asks Of You**

**The** Torah states, "Israel, what, Hashem your G-d asks of you?"

(Devarim 10:12).<sup>12</sup> Meaning that Hashem only asks of us for "what."



**12. The** original Hebrew –

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַמֶּךָ כִּי אִם לִירְאָה אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּכָל דְּרָכֶיךָ  
וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ וְלִעֲבֹד אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל גִּפְשֶׁךָ

**The** way of the world is to eat two meals each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. On Shabbat, though, we have to eat three meals. It turns out that in total we eat fifteen meals each week.

**After** each meal, we must bless Birkat Hamazon, which has three blessings from the Torah and one by *DeRabanan*.

**If** we take only the blessings established by the Torah and multiply them by the fifteen meals that we eat each week, we get forty-five, which is the *gematria* of the word “what” (מה).<sup>13</sup>

**This** is what the Torah teaches us... If you want to merit the foundation of Judaism, which is complete faith, make sure during the week to bless fifteen times Birkat Hamazon, which has forty-five blessings from the Torah.<sup>13</sup>

**On** a side note: G-d forbid should anyone disregard the fourth blessing, the blessing of the good and the beneficent, and think that because it's only required by *DeRabanan* that it's less important, for all of Judaism stands on the belief in Hashem and his servants, and someone without the faith in our sages, has nothing!

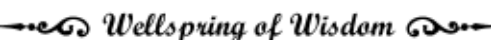
## **Birkat Hamazon - And You Remembered Hashem Your G-d**

**One** day, Rabbi Yechezkel Levinstein zt”l stood before a crowd and told over the following story...<sup>14</sup>

**This** morning, after eating my bread, I blessed Birkat Hamazon.

While reciting the words, it suddenly became completely clear to me that there's no reality in the world other than Hashem!

**These** are the words that caused me to understand that...



13. See Megalei Amukot (Parashat Ekev).

14. Ohr Yechezkel – Emuna (p. 65).

**Parashat Ekev - Happiness Doesn't Depend On Quantity**

**“Who** sustains the entire world, with His Goodness, with Grace, and with Kindness. He Provides bread to all.” - Hashem is the one who gives bread to all, and without His will, there’s no possibility of obtaining bread or food.

**“For** He prepares sustenance & food for all His creations that He created.” - Hashem, Himself, prepares the food, and it’s He who gives us food.

**Happiness Doesn't Depend On Quantity...**

**In** the previously mentioned verse, the Torah reveals that even though, in our eyes, it seems that human life depends on food and drinks, we must know that the truth isn’t so. Rather, all of human life depends solely on the spiritual power that Hashem puts into the food! To prove this... Am Israel, in the desert, lived off the *mann*, which was completely spiritual!

**With** this, we’ll understand an important foundation...

**Since** everything comes only from the hands of Hashem, it’s obvious that everything depends on the blessing of Hashem. Like what’s said in our parasha, “So you shall know, that man does not live by bread alone, but rather by, whatever comes forth from the mouth of Hashem does man live” (Devarim 8:3). In this verse lie all the secrets of our creation, existence, life, and livelihood...

**One** of the most incorrect beliefs in the world today is that happiness depends on the amount of money you have. The more money you have, the happier you’ll be...<sup>15</sup>

**But** deep down, everyone knows that this is a grave mistake. Happiness doesn’t depend on the amount of money you have but rather on the blessing that Hashem has given it...

**How** does someone receive this blessing? By making it

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

**15. The** world has turned money into a cult, an idol. All day long we talk about

money, with our spouse, children, friends, acquaintances, and even with ourselves...

clear to themselves that Hashem is the source of all life and that He gives each person life, livelihood, and talents...

**Believe** me, no matter what someone earns a living from, whether from selling shoes or toys, working in high-tech, or sweeping the streets, it really doesn't matter. What matters is that you connect to the root of your livelihood! And if you do so, you can make gold from nothing.

**There** are very simple people that if you were to check their IQ, if there is anything below zero, they've already gotten there a long time ago... yet they have endless amounts of money...

**On** the other hand, there are many people with high-level education, computer programmers, doctors, and professors, yet despite all this, they file for unemployment...

**The** reason for all this is because everything depends on

the blessing of Hashem, and if Hashem opens a door for someone, no one in the world can close it. The root of everything is our knowledge of Hashem.

**When** someone comes to the clear conclusion that everything is from Hashem and believes with complete faith that all their livelihood depends solely on Hashem, this faith will lead them to pray to Hashem for everything, and He will send them blessing...

**This** is why Hashem created us in such a way that we would need to eat and drink... so that we would constantly remember Him and pray to Him for our needs.

**Our** sages<sup>16</sup> wanted to remind us of this, so they established that each blessing would open with the word "בְּרִיךְ" (Blessed), which is an acronym for "רֵאשׁ וּמְקוֹר כֹּל בְּרִכּוֹת" (The beginning and source of all blessing).

**Hashem** longs and desires that his beloved children turn only to him...

## Hashem Wants To Stay In Touch With His Children

**There** was once a couple who tried to have children, yet thirty years passed, and they still didn't succeed. They thought dozens of times about separating, but they weren't ready to give up on the love they had for one another...

**Miraculously**, after thirty years of waiting, Hashem blessed them with a baby... intelligent, talented, good-looking, and with two adorable dimples on his cheeks...

**The** hearts of the new parents soared with endless love and enjoyment... As the child grew a little, he tasted candy for the first time, and of course, he enjoyed it. The boy approached his father and asked in his squeaky voice, "Dad, more candy!"

**His** father smiled, took another piece of candy out of his pocket, and handed it to him. When the young boy finished eating it, he went again to ask his father for more, and his father gave him another little piece...

**The** boy's mother, who stood to the side and watched the father's actions, was puzzled, and with maternal compassion, she said to her husband, "Give him more, come on, give him all he wants, not just a small piece!"

**The** father replied, "No, I'm purposely giving him only a little at a time. If I give him all the candy at once, he'll only come back to me after a long time when he finishes all the candy. But now that I only give him a little piece, he has to come back to me every couple of minutes and ask, "Dad, I want more." His very request is what makes me happy and what I'm waiting for."

**Am** Israel are called the children of Hashem... "My firstborn child, Israel" (Shemot 4:22), "You are children of Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 14:1), "Beloved are Israel before Hashem, that they were called children" (Avot 3:14)... There's nothing that Hashem wants more than for us to come and talk to Him and ask Him for our needs...



## Dependent On Only One

**When** someone talks to Hashem and is reminded that they're dependent only on Him, Hashem sends them blessing, and then their view of the world changes to be one of faith and emuna.

**In** addition, this allows them to realize that they're only a channel through which Hashem transmits blessing so that they can distribute it to the people who depend on them. If you're the head of a family - you are the channel through which blessing comes to your home.

**There** are times that it feels like we need a million dollars just to finish the month, and there are times, such as the beginning of the school year, holidays, etc.,

that feel like even a million dollars isn't enough...

**As** our families grow, so too do the expenses grow. As our children grow, so too do the expenses along with them... What seems like a never-ending cycle...

**For** that reason, we must always remember that the blessing depends on only one thing, our perception of the reality of Hashem. A father who can easily stand up and say, "Yes, whatever is missing, we'll buy," isn't because he has 300 million dollars laying on the side. Rather it's because he has two things, endless faith in Hashem and a good eye on others. How will he pay for it all, though! ? - Leave that to Hashem...<sup>17</sup>

## Birkat Hamazon

**In** our parasha, the Torah commands, "You will eat and be

satiated, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 8:10).

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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**17. Every** person should strive to be a "channel" to spread to others instead of focusing only on themselves and being immersed only in their own reality. If a person will be "real" with themselves,

Hashem will test them and send a sum of money to divide among others. If they're honest and don't try to just hide the money, Hashem will increase the amount, and so will this continue without limit...

When we look closely at this verse, we find that before the Torah commands us to bless after eating, it precedes and commands us, "You will eat and be satiated," implying that, in fact, eating is a mitzvah.

**Because** of this, we'll bring some proper conduct everyone should have before and while eating...

**Washing** your hands before eating is a *segula* for wealth.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the acronym of

"צֶל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם"

is "צָנֵי", implying that someone who despises washing their hands will come to poverty. On the other hand, "מַיִם" is an acronym for "מְעַשֵּׂר מְתוּנֹת יָדַיִךְ", implying that someone who washes their hands with a lot of water will become rich.

**Therefore**, when arriving at a meal, whether a wedding, bar mitzvah, or any other occasion, don't be lazy. Get up, wash your

hands, eat, and bless Birkat Hamazon with happiness, and thanks to this, Hashem will bestow great wealth upon you.

**Also**, dipping the bread three times in salt before eating it is also a *segula* for wealth.

**It's** also very important to say words of Torah on the table. Even one Mishna or one halacha, or for someone that doesn't know a Mishna or halacha, can even say one verse from the Torah.

**This** is what we wrote about Birkat Hamazon in our siddur *Kol Rina Ve'Yeshuah...*<sup>19</sup>

**HaRav** Yoram used to say that one Birkat Hamazon is equal to a thousand times the closing prayer of Yom Kippur. Therefore, we must all be careful when saying Birkat Hamazon. A good habit is that everyone that ate blesses together out loud, especially with the younger children...

— *~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~* —

**18. For** all of the following, we are referring to the ritual washing of the hands required by the Torah before eating bread.

**19.** The Hameir Laarets edition – p. 700.

**Parashat Ekev - Will the Bread Fill Me Up ?**

**As** stated, the abundance of everyone's wealth depends on the amount of intention they invest in Birkat Hamazon. According to this, it's understood why the Torah commanded the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon after the verse, "A land

in which you will eat bread without scarcity, you will lack nothing in it" (Devarim 8:9), to imply to us that thanks to the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon, Hashem will bestow wealth and nourishment without end - "You will lack nothing in it."

**Will the Bread Fill Me Up ?**

**Rebbe** Chaim Mordechai of Nadvorna sat down and recounted...<sup>20</sup>

**Outside** the door of Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadigora's room stood an old chassid crying. Tears flowed down his face and soaked into his white beard...

**The** door opened, and the chassid entered the room. The Rebbe looked at him with his kind and loving eyes.

**The** chassid started to pour out his heart... "Rebbe, lately I feel as if I have no strength for *avodat Hashem*... Help me..."

**The** Rebbe closed his eyes and sank into thought. He then opened his eyes and asked the chassid to describe his day before him.

**The** Rebbe listened, contemplated, and then asked, "Do you eat bread at dinner?"

**The** chassid replied, "No, I only eat a little bit of fruit."

**"I** know the reason for your spiritual down!" exclaimed the Rebbe.

**Surprised**, the chassid asked, "Rebbe, what's the connection?"

**"I'll** explain," said the Rebbe. "You should know that we receive life-force from the observance of the mitzvot. And, since many mitzvot can't be done at night, our spiritual life force at night is very minimal.

**If** you were to eat bread at dinner, you would merit saying Birkat

Parashat Ekev - Will the Bread Fill Me Up?

Hamazon, and by doing so, you would draw down a great amount of life force upon your soul and keep yourself in spiritual balance.

**However**, because you don't say Birkat Hamazon, your spiritual balance was disturbed, and you lost all feeling for *avodat Hashem*.

**Therefore**, take it upon yourself to eat bread every evening with your dinner and say Birkat Hamazon, and everything will return to normal..."

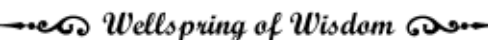
**Rebbe** Chaim Mordechai continued and said...

**“In** the Gemara they said...<sup>21</sup> The sages made a safeguard to their words so that no man should come from the field in the evening and say, “I’ll go home, eat a little, drink a little, sleep a little, and after that, I’ll read Kriyat Shema and pray,” for he may become tired and fall asleep for the entire night (and not recite Kriyat Shema at all).

**Instead**, a man should come from the field in the evening and enter a synagogue. If he’s accustomed to reading Torah, he should read. If he’s accustomed to studying, he should study. Then he should read *Shema* and pray. After that, he should eat bread and bless Birkat Hamazon. And, whoever transgresses the words of the Sages is worthy of death...

**Certainly**, whoever doesn’t eat bread at dinner in order to bless Birkat Hamazon most probably will fall into a “spiritual down,” and the Zohar<sup>22</sup> says that anyone who falls from his spiritual level is called dead... Hence, they said, whoever transgresses the words of the sages is worthy of death.

**With** this, we can interpret the verse, “You will eat and be satiated, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 8:10). When does someone’s soul become satiated from eating, when “and you shall bless Hashem your G-d.” By blessing Birkat Hamazon, we merit



21. Brachot 4b

22. Zohar Idra Rabbah 135b

### *The Pathway...*

filling our souls with the spiritual life-force that gives us the strength

to ascend in the virtues of the Torah and in *avodat Hashem*.”

### Shabbat Shalom !

### *The Pathway...*

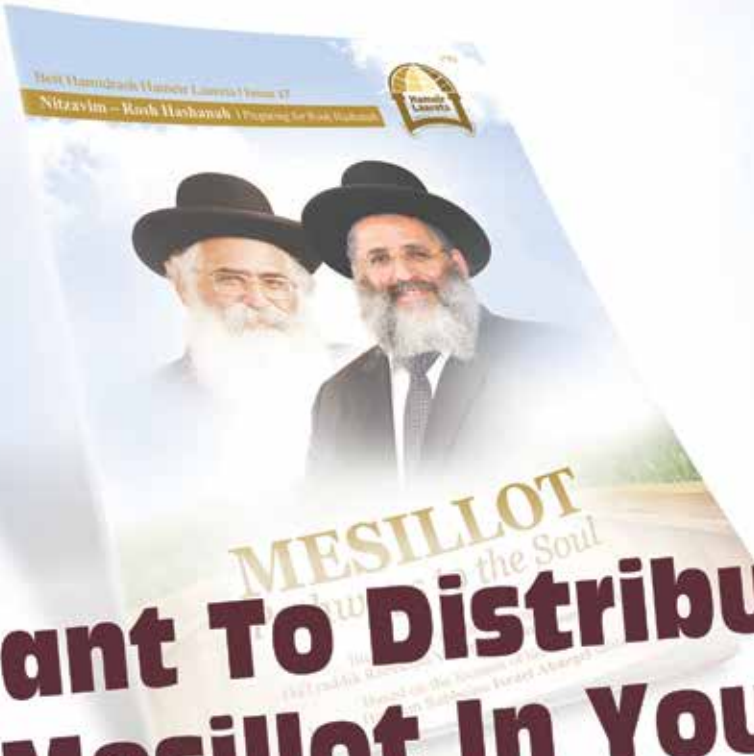
1. We live, focusing only on ourselves, not remembering that Hashem is watching over us, waiting for us to turn to Him and pray to Him. Occasionally, He sends us “reminders,” and instead of identifying the source of the “problem” and turning directly to the “reminder,” we decide that our situation and troubles are caused by this or that. But the truth is that everything is from Hashem. **Our job is to remember and believe that everything is truly from Hashem and that nothing happens by chance.** No matter what we go through, we must turn only to Hashem. **This is the meaning of the word *Emuna*.**

2. We must know and believe that all of our success and possessions, both physical and spiritual, are not because of “our strength and the power of our hand,” rather, they’re 100% gifts from Hashem, and it’s He who’s given and gives us strength to acquire wealth! If someone is mistaken and forgets that Hashem is the One who gives them the power to acquire everything, Hashem will, in one moment, take everything from them. When we remember that while acquiring anything, it isn’t by our strength, rather by the power that Hashem has given us, Hashem will then help us, and we won’t stop

succeeding. Therefore, all who have been endowed by Hashem with wealth must be very careful not to become arrogant and think that because they’re wealthy, they’re allowed to belittle others... He who made them wealthy can in one moment take all of their wealth away from them...

3. When we understand to the full extent that Hashem fills the whole world and “there’s nothing beside Him” (Devarim 4:35), no people, no buildings, no furniture, nothing but Hashem, without a doubt, **we’ll have no reason to be sad anymore**, for we’ll have no more fears and we’ll no longer be offended by anyone. **Inevitably, we’ll live a life of complete and total happiness**, happy with everything we have and everything we don’t have. We’ll be in peace with everyone around us and know that everything is for our own good, because it’s from Hashem...

4. One way to strengthen our *emuna* is by saying Birkat Hamazon. By blessing Birkat Hamazon it becomes clear that there’s no reality of existence in the world other than Hashem. This is more understood through these words of Birkat Hamazon... “Who sustains the entire world, with His Goodness, with Grace,



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# Shabbat Times Ekev

## 23<sup>rd</sup> of Av, 5782



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:30 pm	8:30 pm	8:59 pm
Miami	7:34 pm	8:28 pm	9:04 pm
Los Angeles	7:17 pm	8:13 pm	8:46 pm
Montreal	7:37 pm	8:41 pm	9:06 pm
Toronto	7:56 pm	8:59 pm	9:26 pm
London	7:59 pm	9:08 pm	9:25 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*

*Every father must take on himself, with all his strength, the responsibility of educating his children. Fathers who don't find time to sit down with their sons and help them go over their learning shouldn't be surprised if suddenly, they don't find any one of their children still by their side after a few years.*

*We must invest all of our efforts in order to merit that our blessed children never leave us, G-d forbid.*



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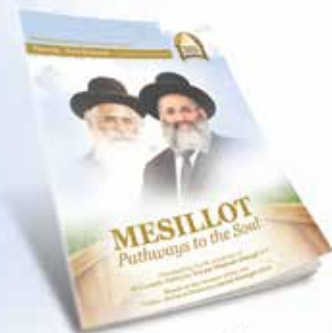
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