



Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 71

Ki Tavo | Cheshbon Nefesh



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 Ki Tavo

The Pathway to Teshuva

A man arrived at the town of Lizhensk withered and pale. His thin body trembled with weakness. With the last of his last strength, he asked in a weak voice to enter the Holy of Holies, to spill his heart out before the tzaddik, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk.

When he entered, he wanted to cry, but he simply couldn't shed a tear because of his weakness and malnourishment. Instead, he wept a dry sob.

The compassionate heart of the tzaddik was torn to pieces, and tears flowed from his pure eyes. He hastened to summon his assistants and ordered them to bring the man, whose appearance proved that he hadn't eaten in days, a plate of food and a jug of water.

However, the man refused to accept it. "I will not eat! Eating and drinking are forbidden to me!

I only ask to please speak my heart before you for the sake of a little relief for my sorrowful soul!"

The tzaddik opened his eyes with a look of astonishment, gestured to those present to leave the room, and listened intently to the weak man's murmur.

"I am a terrible sinner!" the man sobbed softly. "I am full of sins and transgressions! I ask the holy Rebbe that he please review the method of teshuva that I have received upon myself and add to it as he sees fit. I will do whatever you say, as long as I have atonement for my immense iniquities!"

As he spoke, the man pulled out a piece of paper, which listed many fasts and tortures that he had inflicted on himself for the last few months and handed it over to the tzaddik.

Rebbe Elimelech stared at the list with shock on his face.

He looked up at the shriveled man standing in front of him... It was evident that the man had truly fulfilled everything that he had taken upon himself.

“I am willing to help and direct you through the process of teshuva,” the Rebbe replied. “But you must break your fast immediately. Only then will I handle your situation.”

“Heaven forbid, Rebbe!” the man jumped as he heard this. “Even a thousand fasts won’t suffice for a sinner like me! If only the Rebbe would listen to my list of sins, he would never agree to such a thing!”

“If so, go in peace, and may Hashem be with you!” the tzaddik answered him, “I cannot help you!”

The man began to sob, and in his low voice, he began to count one by one a long list of grave sins he had committed. These were indeed hair-raising and horrifying transgressions, one more serious than the other.

However, the opinion of the tzaddik didn’t change. “I told you what you must do,” the

Rebbe said. “If you eat and drink, good, and if not, go in peace, and maybe you will find salvation in another place!”

The man began to list even more sins, several times more severe than the previous ones, which he didn’t dare reveal the first time. He was sure that in hearing this, the tzaddik would instantly change his mind. However, he was wrong again. The tzaddik remained steadfast in his word.

The man realized that he was left with no choice and was compelled to taste the food before him. The tzaddik stood over him and urged him to leave nothing on the plate.

After he had finished and gained a little strength, the tzaddik sent for one of his family members and ordered them, “This man is to be under your constant care! In the next few days, you must feed him and do whatever is necessary to heal him. Make sure he receives all the rest he needs so that his lost strength will return to him. After he returns to normal,

bring him to me, and I will know what to do with him !”

The man walked out of the Rebbe’s room, dragging his feet after the person appointed to watch over him.

The man ate and drank everything that was brought before him. Muscle was finally seen on his bones, his face glowed, and his strength returned to him. He then spent most of his day in the *Bet Midrash*, studying Torah and praying.

Only one worry gave him no rest, the enormous bag of sins he carried on his back. He anxiously anticipated the moment when he would be invited to stand before the Rebbe to receive the pathway to teshuva that was promised to him.

Several weeks passed. Then, one day, after the evening prayer, the Rebbe’s assistant approached him and invited him to talk with the Rebbe.

With great excitement, the man entered the room of the tzaddik. When the Rebbe saw the man, he instantly smiled. With

fatherly love, he welcomed the man and gestured for him to sit on a chair across from him.

The Rebbe then began to express the greatness of Hashem, who sustains our world with His goodness and abundance of unceasing love and mercy. He then continued to express how much gratitude we owe to Hashem for all the good He constantly does with us !

The man was inspired by the words of the Rebbe but didn’t understand what they had to do with his atonement...

Slowly, the subject of the Rebbe’s conversation began to change color, as did the man’s face. The Rebbe started explaining the magnitude of the blemish that is caused by our sins...

The man turned white. The tears that swelled up in his eyes began pouring down his face. His sighs deepened, and his crying continued until he was unable to speak.

“Ahh !” sighed the tzaddik from the depths of his heart.

“How great is our ungratefulness towards Hashem, which in return for all of the good that He does for us, we only sin and lengthen our exile, and yet, He continues to only do good with us...”

A horrifying cry emitted from the man’s mouth...

“**Calm** down, calm down...” cried the tzaddik as he caressed the man’s hands. “Let us now say the *Vidui* (confession), for Hashem is both kind and forgiving, especially to those who return to Him sincerely and wholeheartedly. As it is said, “Someone who covers up their sins won’t succeed, but someone who confesses and leaves them will be granted mercy!” (Mishlei 28:13).

The tzaddik opened up a *siddur* to the *Vidui* and handed it to the *Ba’al Teshuvah* to read from it.

The man opened his mouth, but his voice couldn’t be heard. The fountain of his tears kept pouring with all its might. He managed to utter one word... “*Ashamnu!*” (we’re guilty).

He fainted immediately afterward from the vast amount of strain he put on his body from his crying...

The assistants were called inside. One splashed water on him, the other massaged his head, and the third helped him stand up. They took care of him until his soul returned and sat him on the chair as before.

“**Go** back to the house and rest,” the tzaddik said to him peacefully. “Heal your body that was weakened today from your exertions. Afterward, we will find you a path to teshuva and atone for your sins...”

The man, dizzy and weak, was accompanied by the assistants back to the house.

Several days passed, and the *Ba’al Teshuvah* returned to his healthy self after his first lesson with the tzaddik. He calmed his soul from the storm it went through, and his body also gathered strength from the hearty meals that were served to him. Then, one evening, the man was again called to come before the tzaddik as before.

Parashat Ki Tavo - Bringing of the First Fruits

The illustrative talk he had that evening, and the cascade of tears that poured from his eyes during it was sealed by the word “*Bagadnu*” (we rebelled) from the *Vidui*. Immediately afterward, the man again fell to the ground and fainted...

After another few days of rest, the man was invited into the Rebbe’s room for the third time. This time, too, he didn’t have enough strength to say more than one word, “*Gazalnu*” (we stole), before he fell helplessly to the ground.

The tzaddik dealt with the man for a few weeks until he had finished saying the entire *Vidui*. Then, the tzaddik patted

his back with affection and said with joy, “You’ve made it! Your sins were removed and have been atoned for!”

The man returned to his home healthy and strong, both physically and spiritually.

For many years, he would return to Lizhensk and thank the Rebbe who helped him finally draw close to Hashem...¹

When we make a real *Cheshbon Nefesh* (an accounting of the soul) with ourselves, we ultimately heal our souls and generate true joy within them.

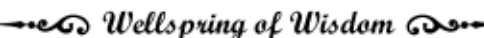
This is what we learn from our parasha...

Bringing of the First Fruits

At the beginning of our parasha, Moshe Rabbeinu, in his last days, taught Am Israel the mitzvah of *Hava’at Bikurim* (bringing of the first fruits).

There are actually two mitzvot in the mitzvah of *Bikurim*:

1. Bringing the first fruits.
2. Declaration of the first fruits.



1. Besod Avdecha (Vol. 4, p. 25).

Parashat Ki Tavo - Bringing of the First Fruits

These two mitzvot are considered two separate mitzvot, each one in and of itself.²

We'll explain the first mitzvah, the mitzvah of bringing the first fruits.

Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 91) writes that Eretz Israel is praised for its seven species: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates.

After a person plants one of the seven species and then goes into the field and sees the first fruit that grew, they must tie them and say,

”הָרִי אֵלוֹ בְּכֹרִים”

(These are the first fruit).

The *Bikurim* are then placed in a *Tenne* (a special basket made specifically for the *Bikurim*). The wealthy made them from gold

and silver, and the poor made them from willow plants.

Everyone that brought their *Bikurim* would gather in the central city of their district, rest there on the city street (from fear of impurity inside the houses), and early in the morning proclaim, “Arise ! Let us go up to Tzion to Hashem Elokenu !” (Yirmiyah 31:6).

At the head of the procession walked a bull whose horns were plated with gold and a crown of olives on its head. Accompanied by flute playing, they ascended to Yerushalayim. As they approached Yerushalayim, Kohanim and Levi'im went out to greet them, and all of them entered Yerushalayim together until the *Har HaBayit* (Temple Mount).

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

2. The 125th mitzvah that we are commanded to keep is to separate the *Bikurim* (first fruits) and bring them to the Beit HaMikdash.

The source of this mitzvah is the verse, “The choice first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of Hashem Elokecha” (Shemot 23:19).

This mitzvah applies only in the times of the Beit HaMikdash, as

understood in the verse. The fruit that can be brought are only fruit from the seven species. Also, only fruit from Eretz Israel, Syria, and the east side of the Jordan may be brought. The details of this mitzvah are explained in *Masechet Bikurim*, and there, it is explained that the *Bikurim* are property of the Kohen.

Parashat Ki Tavo - War

All that came to fulfill the mitzvah of *Bikurim* would enter the *Azarah* (main courtyard) carrying their baskets on their shoulders and say the verse, “I declare this day to Hashem Elokecha that I have come to the land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give us” (Devarim 26:3). They would then give the basket to the Kohen, who waved it before Hashem, placed it beside the altar, bowed down, and left. The Kohanim would receive the fruit of the *Bikurim* and eat them, for they are one of the 24 *Matanot Kehuna* (gifts of the Kohen).

But before the Kohen placed the basket beside the altar, there was one more mitzvah to fulfill, the declaration of the first fruit. He would recite several verses that briefly recount Am Israel's history and all that happened to them over the many years, from Lavan's pursuit of Yaakov Avinu,

and the deterioration of Am Israel in Egypt, to the construction of the Beit HaMikdash.

Moshe Rabbeinu concludes the laws of the mitzvah of *Bikurim* and says, “And you shall rejoice in all the good that Hashem Elokecha has given you and your household; you, the Levi, and the stranger in your midst” (Devarim 26:11).

One question... Why did the Kohen who placed the first fruits beside the alter have to mention the entire process of growth of Am Israel, from slavery to the construction of the Beit HaMikdash?

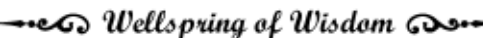
Also, why specifically here does the Torah promise, “you shall rejoice in all the good”?

But before we answer, let's preface...

War

The war between Sichon and Moav that is written in the Torah

is also called parashat *Cheshbon Nefesh*.³



3. Three days after my son was born, the doctors discovered a growth

located in the main artery of his heart.

Parashat Ki Tavo - War

The first king of Moav ruled over his vast kingdom with an aggressive and assertive hand.

However, in the 36th year of Am Israel's stay in the desert, the

first signs of a civil war were noticed in the kingdom...

“A fire went forth from Cheshbon, a flame from the city of Sichon. It has consumed Ar (a

—*~* Wellspring of Wisdom *~*—

They said it was a very rare case and that he should stay under close supervision, for if the growth enlarges or moves, it will immediately block his artery, and his life will be in serious danger.

Of course, I was broken.

My husband immediately called HaRav Yoram Abargel. He comforted me and reassured me that everything would be okay and that I just needed to stay happy. Then, he added something that seemed completely unrelated to me at that moment. HaRav Yoram said, “In the merit of Yerushalayim, everything will pass.”

At the time, I didn't know much about HaRav Yoram, so his words didn't calm me down, but the sentence that the rabbi said wouldn't stop to echo in my head. I tried to understand its relation to the whole situation, but I just couldn't figure it out.

I did a *Cheshbon Nefesh* with myself, and suddenly I remembered that during the pregnancy, I was in Yerushalayim with my sister-in-law, and I told her that I hated the city.

Immediately, I understood the sentence the rabbi had told me. I wounded the heart

of Hashem, Yerushalayim. Thus Hashem wounded the heart of my child.

At that moment, I said to Hashem, “If what I understood is true, give me a sign through some verse from the Torah in this room.”

I searched the entire room of the hospital and found a verse about *Brit Milah* (circumcision)...

I got chills all over my body and asked forgiveness from Hashem, and I vowed to go with the child to the Kotel (Western Wall) to ask for forgiveness.

With Hashem's help, I was able to go to the Kotel, and I cried and promised Hashem that I would not speak or think anything bad again about the Holy City of Yerushalayim.

When we went back for an examination by a pediatric cardiologist, the doctors were in shock, “There's nothing! The growth disappeared. His heart is clean...”

Baruch Hashem, we merited a great miracle thanks to our Rabbi, HaRav Yoram Abargel.

- Imrei Noam (Parashat Devarim).

Parashat Ki Tavo - Cheshbon Nefesh

city of) Moav, the holders of the heights of Arnon” (Bamidbar 21:28).

The Ibn Ezra comments...

“**A** fire went forth from Cheshbon” - This refers to the people of Cheshbon who conspired against their king.

That is, the inhabitants of Cheshbon sent a message to Sichon saying, “We’re fed up with the first king of Moav! We ask of you to go to war against him, and we’ll help you from within...”

And so it was... Sichon defeated the king of Moav and conquered all his territory, “For Cheshbon was then a city of

Sichon, King of the Emorites, who had waged war against the first king of Moav, and took all his land from his hand, as far as Arnon” (Bamidbar 21:26).

This verse, seemingly, is enough to understand what happened. However, the Torah goes on to state a number of other verses, the first being,

”עַל כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ הַמְּשָׁלִים בְּאוֹ חֶשְׁבוֹן תִּבְנֶה וְתִכּוֹנֵן עִיר סִיחּוֹן”

(So said the Moshelim, Come to Cheshbon, may it be built and established as the city of Sichon) (Bamidbar 21:27).

These verses make up what is called parashat *Cheshbon Nefesh*.

Let’s explain further...

Cheshbon Nefesh

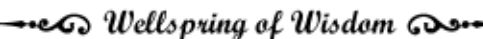
The Gemara⁴ says that these verses deal with the war of Sichon against the first king of Moav, in which Bilam and his father, Beor, prophesied that Sichon would defeat Moav and take all his land from him.

But, seemingly, the Torah didn’t have to lengthen and write all of this.

For this reason, *chazal* said that here that the Torah wrote for us parashat *Cheshbon Nefesh*.

This is how Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman in the name of Rabbi Yochanan explained the verses...

”עַל כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ הַמְּשָׁלִים בְּאוֹ חֶשְׁבוֹן תִּבְנֶה וְתִכּוֹנֵן עִיר סִיחּוֹן”



4. Baba Batra 78b.

Parashat Ki Tavo - Discovering Your True Self

"על כן יאמרו המשלים" - These are the tzaddikim, המשלים (who rule over) their yetzarim (evil inclinations) and overcome them.⁵

"באו השבון" - Let's take an account, that is, let's weigh the "loss" of fulfilling a mitzvah (what you lose from your strength or income by fulfilling the mitzvah) against its reward (in this world and the next), and the "reward" of a transgression

(honor, wealth, pleasure, etc.) against its loss (in this world and the next).

"תבנה ותכונן" - If you do so and weigh the loss against the reward, then you will תבנה (be built) in this world, ותכונן (and be established in the next world).⁶

The Gemara continues and explains the rest of the verses. But, for our sake, this is enough. Instead, let's continue on our way...

Discovering Your True Self

The purpose of a *Cheshbon Nefesh* is to help us discover and

reveal the hidden matters within our souls. To acknowledge our

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

5. It was a dark, cold winter night. A strong wind blew, striking the windows of the home...

Rebbe Baruch of Mezibuz awoke at midnight, as usual, and began to do *Cheshbon Nefesh*.

He cried to himself about how he promises to do real teshuva yet never keeps it. He then said, "This time, I truly want to do teshuva, a complete teshuvah!"

He decided that before he does teshuva, he should purify himself and immerse in a mikvah. He put on his coat, grabbed an ax to break the ice of the mikvah water that had frozen over from the extreme cold, and got ready to leave.

In the process, he began to ponder... Does the Torah not say, "Take great caution for your souls" (Devarim 4:15). Am I even allowed to walk in such a dangerous cold just to immerse in a mikveh?! He then began to list all the reasons why it's forbidden for him to go to the mikveh...

At that moment, a second thought came to his mind... Why is it that I never remember what I learn, and only in situations like this do I remember? The *yetzer hara* must be reminding me what I've learned to stop me from doing true teshuva! He hurried, took the ax, ran to the mikvah, and immersed!

- Admorei Belz (Vol. 3, p. 147)

6. Chelev Haarets (Vol. 2, p. 183)

shortcomings and negative character traits, which are the root of all sins, as well as recognizing our virtues and gifts endowed to us by Hashem.

To make this happen, we need to set a time in which we completely leave the rat race of life and allow ourselves a couple of minutes of silence, which is the basis for an accurate *Cheshbon Nefesh*.⁷ Next, we need to clear our minds and attain calmness, free from any trouble, stress, fear, worry, or anything that causes distraction...

In order to achieve calmness, it's necessary to set time for *Hitbodedut* (self-solitude). This will assist in quieting our surroundings which prevents us from entering our subconscious and discovering what needs to be corrected...

When doing this consistently, we'll merit revealing the light of Hashem within us.

In addition to this, *chazal* have written many other virtues in which a person who sets time daily for *Hitbodedut* and does a true *Cheshbon Nefesh* merits.

Here are some of them:

1. Their hearts draw close to Hashem.
2. They discover their purpose in this world.
3. They identify what needs to be corrected within their souls.
4. They accomplish true *teshuva*.
5. They achieve complete *teshuva* from love, which has the power to turn even intended sins into merits.

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

7. There are many people who fly to distant, primitive places, where there's no reception or even water faucets...

But, precisely there, in such primitive places, do they do *teshuva*. The reason for this is that there, in such a reality of

life, where there is no connection with the noisy and fast-paced world, they learn to discover themselves. Sometimes, it's exactly in these places that the furthest people begin to discover the inner light within them and draw close...

Parashat Ki Tavo - The Key to Progress

6. They distance themselves from all sadness and merit genuine happiness.

7. They remove all barriers that separate them from Hashem.

8. All their Torah learning, prayers, mitzvot, and other good deeds, reach their source in heaven.⁸

Let's now go into detail...

The Key to Progress

There's no such thing as a business that doesn't maintain a balance sheet, usually created at the end of the year...

In order to make the balance sheet, business activity is reduced. This is astonishing! Isn't it a shame for the business to lose so many customers?! The answer is no. It's not a shame at all. Closing the store for two or three days is what sustains the business for the whole year.

There's a business that reels in tens of millions of dollars, and at the end of the year, the accountant tells the owner, "Listen, this year you're in a loss of four million dollars." "What?! How is that possible? Half a billion dollars flows through this business every year." He tells him, "True, you reeled in half a

billion, but after all of the expenses, you lost four million."

There's another store that seems to do nothing. They barely have any business. The accountant says to the owner, "Listen, this year, you profited two million dollars." This is called an accurate assessment, an accounting that puts the business in a true light.

Every Jew should live with the same principle. We need to set a special time, according to our strengths, to create a balance sheet and assess whether we've profited or whether we're at a loss with our *avodat Hashem*...

Every day, before going to bed, is a great time to invest in a few minutes of thought... "What did I do today? I was privileged to fulfill a few mitzvot... I wrapped

Parashat Ki Tavo - Do Not Enter

tefillin, prayed on time, slowly and with intent, and then read *Chok L'Israel*. On the other hand, I also committed a few transgressions... On the way to work, I didn't guard my eyes as I should, and during the day, I spoke a little *lashon hara*..."

This type of *Cheshbon Nefesh* (even just in thought) is a great way to purify ourselves and separate the *kelipot* from our souls.

Then, when we fall asleep, and our souls ascend, no harmful forces can approach them. On the contrary, they merit reaching the *Kisse HaKavod* (throne of glory), and in the morning when we awake, we arise refreshed, full of joy, and with renewed strength. Wherever you'll be, you'll succeed. In every deal you make, you'll make a profit.

Someone who can't do a *Cheshbon Nefesh* every day should at least try to do it once a week and assess their profits and losses.

Experience shows that those who do *Cheshbon Nefesh* with themselves become much more refined and improve themselves and their behavior in every way. If the first time they did *Cheshbon Nefesh*, they found that they had committed a hundred sins that day. In a few days, they will find only forty, sixty percent less. If they continue in this manner, they'll eventually reach a state where they'll find only three, the next day one, the next day only a trace of sin. After a month, they're no longer familiar with the concept of sin. But, whoever doesn't enter the world of *Cheshbon Nefesh*, and doesn't start working on it, will never get there !

Cheshbon Nefesh has the power to weaken the *yetzer hara* until, slowly, it becomes completely separated from us. There's no room for the *yetzer hara* to dwell in someone who engages in *Cheshbon Nefesh*...

However, one more detail needs to be added...

Do Not Enter

After doing a *Cheshbon Nefesh*, it's important to also do

teshuva on all that you may have sinned during the day and take

it upon yourself not to do them again.

Teshuva is a great *tikkun* (correction) for our souls.

We must emphasize one important detail.

Someone tripped on the sidewalk and scraped their arm. The sleeve of their shirt was full of blood. A medic who happened to be nearby ran to them, disinfected the cut, and bandaged it. Two days later, the wound began to heal. A normal person will allow the wound to heal by itself and not touch it.

But, someone who has no patience begins to pick at the scab until it begins to bleed again, and they again need to have it bandaged... Everyone knows not to touch a wound after it starts to heal. Don't touch it, "don't mention it." When you pick at a wound, you create a scar, and scars can't be removed.

So too, when doing teshuva. When deciding to teshuva on something we may have done during the day and taking on ourselves not to do it

again, we must remember that after doing teshuva, forget about it! Teshuva, real teshuva, erases everything. You sinned, did teshuva, forget about the sin! Don't think about them anymore. As if they never were! Dwelling in the past only causes scars...

This sometimes happens between spouses. When an occasional argument occurs, they start bringing things up from the past. This isn't right. What's from the past, leave in the past. Learn to move on. Whoever doesn't want to let go of the past doesn't want to fix their future. You have to learn to forgive and forget...

Rebbe Aharon Rata, the author of *Shomer Emunim*, writes that even when someone does *Cheshbon Nefesh* and remembers a certain sin that they made, they shouldn't think about the details of the sin. Trying to remember all the details of the sin is like going into a sewer to fix a problem and expecting to come out without any bad smell. It's impossible to enter a sewer and not smell...

Parashat Ki Tavo - The Danger of Sadness

It's enough that you understand and know what the problem is. You don't need to go inside! One of the ways of the *yetzer hara* to bring us down is to tell us, "Go inside!" Don't

listen to him. He's the *yetzer hara*. Cleaning off from a sewer can take a long time...

The *yetzer hara's* main way of bringing us down is to bring us to sadness...

The Danger of Sadness

Rebbe Eliezer Shlomo Shik, the *Moharosh*, writes⁹ that if a Jew knew the greatness of their soul, they would dance all day with joy, "*SheLo Asani Goy!*" Even if they had no good in them, the very fact that their soul is part of Hashem and that they're a Jew is a reason to rejoice.

For this, the *yetzer hara* works overtime. He wants that every Jew forget their true roots, that they're part of Hashem. As soon as a person forgets the sanctity of their Jewishness, they fall into depression, sadness, bitterness, etc., and this is the root of all sin...

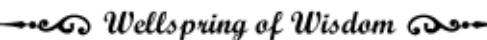
Then, they arrive at an "understanding" that they are the worst person in the world, the

biggest disappointment and failure, and that their life is sad and full of despair and bitterness. They then come to another "understanding," "Someone like me must be hated..." and then they hate themselves and think that everyone else also hates them...

The Torah cries out, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart" (Vayikra 19:17), it is forbidden to hate a Jew, and someone who hates a Jew transgresses a prohibition every moment... But more than this, it's forbidden to hate, humiliate, or say *lashon hara* about yourself!

You have to take your life in your hands and wake up!

Rebbe Nachman of Breslev says¹⁰ that a Jew must do



9. Asher BaNachal (Vol. 78, p. 180); Sichot Moharosh (Vol. 13, p. 114)

10. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 282)

Parashat Ki Tavo - Every Jew is a Diamond!

Cheshbon Nefesh every day. They must recognize their sins and resolve not to do them again. Keep in mind, though, *Cheshbon Nefesh* isn't just regretting your sins. Rather, the purpose of *Cheshbon Nefesh* is to uncover your

strengths and hidden abilities. Therefore, every day you have to take time and contemplate the good points in yourself and truly know that they are what make you, you, and even more so, what makes you a Jew.

Every Jew is a Diamond!

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l once said...¹¹

“We must know that in the essence of every Jew, no matter who, there is a holy and pure divine spark that cannot be blemished by any sin in the world. As *chazal* say,¹² “A Jew, even though they sinned, is still a Jew.”

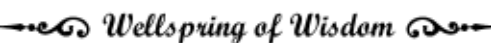
The Baal Shem Tov was accustomed to say that Hashem

loves every Jew. Even the most sinful person among Am Israel, just as parents love their only child born to them after many years of anticipation, so does Hashem love them. In truth, with all due respect to the love of these parents for their only child, their love doesn't even come close to the love that Hashem has even for the most sinful person in Am Israel...¹³

Why Do We Avoid Cheshbon Nefesh?

We have one question... If *Cheshbon Nefesh* is so great, why do we find it so hard to actually sit down and do it?!

The kabbalists write that one thing that deprives us of doing *Cheshbon Nefesh* is *Middat HaGa'avah* (the trait of arrogance



11. Betzur Yarum (Vol. 6, p. 138)

12. Sanhedrin 44a



13. On a side note, the Baal Shem Tov was accustomed to say that someone who has true *Ahavat Israel* (Love for every Jew), their descendants will never sin.

Parashat Ki Tavo - Why Do We Avoid Cheshbon Nefesh ?

and haughtiness). This trait is what causes us to forget the reality of Hashem and takes away all trace of closeness to Hashem from our hearts, as it says, “Lest your heart grow haughty and you forget Hashem Elokecha” (Devarim 8:14).

There’s no bad character trait that makes us forget Hashem, like

arrogance. Instead of being busy with *avodat Hashem*, an arrogant person is busy building up and worshipping only themselves... There can never be two centers to one circle... An arrogant person is constantly occupied by thoughts of themselves,¹⁴ which causes a great lack of emuna in Hashem within them.

 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

14. In 1979, the revolution in Iran against the secular regime that ruled the country took place. Iran’s ruler was overthrown, and the sheik Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution, was put in charge. Following the revolution, diplomatic ties between Israel and Iran were severed, making Israel Iran’s greatest enemy.

A few years later, a woman appeared in a *Beit Din* (Rabbinical Court) in Eretz Israel and related the following, “I fled Iran after my husband converted to Islam and was unable to live with him. Before I said goodbye to him, I begged him to give me a *get* (document of divorce), but he was stubborn and refused by all means.”

The Dayanim (Judges) sat in several *Beitei Dinim* and dealt with her case, but they all raised their hands in despair, unable to find a solution. The *Dayanim* shed tears. Their hearts ached for the young woman who wouldn’t be able to get a divorce.

Once the case reached the *Beit Din HaGadol*, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was asked to review it. He didn’t delay. He immediately grabbed an official letterhead and hurried to write a letter to Rabbi Yedidya Shofet, the Chief Rabbi of Tehran, Iran. In the letter, he exceedingly praised Ayatollah Khomeini (The new leader of Iran) and wrote that he was a wonderful man, a warrior, and a servant of G-d. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu asked Rabbi Yedidya Shofet to please go to Khomeini and ask for his help, as a man who believes in G-d and certainly will not let this injustice happen.

The letter made its way to Iran and, of course, fell into the hands of the regime, who meticulously read every line, word, and letter and were amazed at the praise that the rabbi bestowed upon their revered leader. The letter was rapidly delivered to its destination, not to Rabbi Yedidya Shofet, but to the hands of Ayatollah Khomeini himself.

Parashat Ki Tavo - Why Do We Avoid Cheshbon Nefesh ?

The Gemara says¹⁵ that any person who has arrogance within him, Hashem states, “He and I cannot dwell together in the same

world.” Any person who has arrogance within them will not awake at the time of the resurrection of the dead. Any

—*~* Wellspring of Wisdom *~*—

The next day, a group of soldiers were sent to summon the Chief Rabbi of Tehran to the palace of the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic. Rabbi Yedidya Shofet was terrified and thought that his end had come, and they wanted to take him to the gallows. He asked for a few minutes to get organized and hurried to one of the rooms, where he put on shrouds under his clothes.

When Rabbi Yedidya was ushered into the great hall, the leader, Khomeini, turned to him and asked, “Do you know Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu of the State of Israel ?”

After answering in the affirmative, he was asked, “Is he great in the eyes of the Jewish sages ?” “Of course,” he replied, “Rabbi Eliyahu is distinguished in the eyes of all of the rabbis, and they are willing to do whatever he says.”

Khomeini pulled out the letter, waved it proudly, and announced, “Look what your great rabbi wrote about me !”

Khomeini asked the Chief Rabbi of Tehran what should be done to get a *get* out of the hands of the husband, and he explained that first and foremost, he must consent to divorce his wife, according to *Halacha*. Khomeini ordered a unit of

soldiers to go and find the husband. In the meantime, Rabbi Yedidya Shofet sat and waited for them to return. Within a few hours, they had already found the husband and brought him to the palace. When they arrived, the Chief Rabbi of Tehran sat with the husband and spoke to him about the importance of giving a *get* to his former wife. In any case, the man realized that he had no choice, for his life depended on it.

When the man’s consent was given, Rabbi Yedidya asked to call Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu in Yerushalayim. This conversation took place as a conference call through France. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu immediately understood that there were more listeners on the line, so he gave hints when instructing Rabbi Yedidya Shofet on all the details of the laws regarding sending a *get* from an enemy state. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu added the woman to the call, and he instructed her on how to appoint the Chief Rabbi of Tehran as a messenger to receive the *get* from her husband. After a few days, a formal *get* had been sent by mail to Israel, allowing the woman to remarry and establish a new home in Eretz Israel...

- Avihem Shel Israel L’Yeladim (p. 67).

15. Sotah 5a

person who has arrogance within them, the *Shechina* cries over him. Any person who has arrogance within them will ultimately fall. Any person who has arrogance within them, even the slightest wind disturbs them. Any person who has arrogance within them, it is as if they worship idols. Any person who has arrogance within them, it is as if they have denied the belief in Hashem. Any person who has arrogance within them is called a *Toevah* (abomination). Any person who has arrogance within them dies before their allotted time...

The Ramban writes¹⁶ that if the Torah prohibited even the king, who is elevated above and rules over the entire nation, from being arrogant of heart, for it says, “His heart shall not rise above his brothers” (Devarim 17:20), how much more so everyone else...

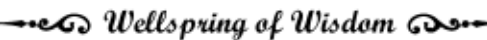
Even Yoravam ben Navat, who was greater than all of the sages of his generation (except for Achiya HaShiloni),¹⁷ was punished

and deprived of this world and banished from the next world only because of his arrogance...

Arrogance is the source of many sins, both *Ben Adam LeMakom* (between man and Hashem) and *Ben Adam LeChavero* (between man and his friend). *Ben Adam LeChavero*, causes hatred towards others, resulting in *lashon hara*, lying, anger, etc. *Ben Adam LeMakom* causes one to forget Hashem, which is one of the most severe sins, for they then live without the understanding that there is a higher power above them.

Therefore, every person should remove from themselves any trace of *Middat HaGa'avah* (the trait of arrogance) and stay away from it by all means.

Who is greater than Moshe Rabbeinu, who learned Torah directly from Hashem and ascended to heaven three times for forty days and forty nights, and yet, he wasn't praised for anything other than his



16. Ramban on the Torah (Devarim 17:20)

17. Sanhedrin 102a

Parashat Ki Tavo - The History of Our People

Middat HaAnavah (the trait of humility), as it says, “And the man Moshe was extremely humble more than any other person on the face of the earth” (Bamidbar 12:3)! From here, we learned that there is no *middah* greater in Hashem’s eyes than *Anavah* (humility)!

This is the correct path to *Cheshbon Nefesh*... To cling to the pure humility that Hashem loves, acknowledge our smallness, and return to Hashem

with all our hearts, allowing us not to think that we’re better than any other person but rather credit our successes to their true Owner. By doing so, we will come to a correct and profound *Cheshbon Nefesh*, out of recognition and clear knowledge of our true place, and inherit a good and happy life in this world and the next.

Let’s now go back to the first question we asked...

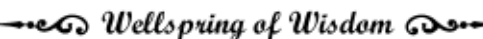
The History of Our People

At the beginning of our conversation, we asked, “Why did the bringer of the first fruits have to mention the entire process of the growth of Am Israel, from slavery to the construction of the Beit HaMikdash?”

The Rambam writes¹⁸ that every farmer knows the feeling of the beginning of growth in their fields. The scents of the flowers, the beauty, the movement of the leaves with the wind. This feeling

intensifies as they reach the stages of harvesting and gathering, and their imaginations start working overtime on how to use the profits...

The Torah feared that those who become wealthy and comfortable, as is generally the case, will fall into the negative *middot* of rebelliousness, arrogance, and the abandoning of all true principles, as it says, “Lest you eat and be sated, etc., and your heart be lifted, and you forget Hashem Elokecha”



Parashat Ki Tavo - Rejoice In All the Good

(Devarim 8:12). This arrogance will cause them to abstain from doing *Cheshbon Nefesh*.

The Torah knew that a Jew without a set time for *Cheshbon Nefesh* is a Jew that's "stuck," with nowhere to go.

The Torah, therefore, commanded us to read the verses of the *Mikra Bikurim* (declaration of the first fruits), which tell the history of our people. The hard times of slavery and the blessed times of redemption, and most likely, the reader would contemplate on all these periods, and it would become clear to them that there is justice in the world, and everything is done

accurately according to Hashem's Divine Providence. For when Am Israel sinned, they had to endure suffering, and when they kept Hashem's will, they were successful in every way.

Presumably, this understanding would penetrate their hearts, and they would remember everything that they went through, both the periods of their success and the periods of their downfalls. Then, when they would do *Cheshbon Nefesh*, their arrogance would diminish, and they would return to being *Baalei HaCheshbon*...

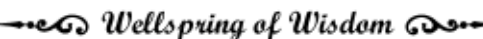
Let's continue to the second question...

Rejoice In All the Good

We asked... Why is it precisely here that the Torah promised, "you shall rejoice in all the good" (Devarim 26:11)?

Rabbi Shmuel of Slonim writes¹⁹ that every Jew must rejoice in the good parts within them and hate the bad parts

within them, and then they will be part of the "Lovers of Hashem, hate evil!" (Tehillim 97:10). By loving the good parts of ourselves and hating the bad parts, we merit the continuation of the verse, "He guards the lives of His loyal ones" (Tehillim 97:10).



Parashat Ki Tavo - Shabbat Shalom!

Hashem helps us remove our negative traits, and this is what's meant by the verse, "you shall rejoice in all the good." You shall rejoice in every good part that you have, even the smallest part, and by this, you will also merit rejoicing afterward in the true good. That is, you will be entirely good, for you have already fixed your bad.

In simple words...

When we merit recognizing our good deeds and notice our bad deeds, through *Cheshbon Nefesh*, we progress forward and reach the stage where we love the good parts of ourselves and hate the bad part within us. In the merit of loving all the good within us, Hashem blesses us that we will be entirely good... and then we can fulfill, "you shall rejoice in all the good."

Shabbat Shalom !



The Pathway...

1. We are now entering the days of Teshuva... Teshuvah is a great *tikkun* for our souls. One way to get to teshuva is by doing *Cheshbon Nefesh* (an accounting of the soul). When we make a real *Cheshbon Nefesh* with ourselves, we ultimately heal our souls and generate true joy within them. The purpose of ***Cheshbon Nefesh* is to help us discover and reveal the hidden matters within our souls.** To acknowledge our shortcomings and negative character traits, which are the root of all sins, as well as recognize our virtues and gifts endowed to us by Hashem.

2. To make this happen, we need to set a time in which we completely leave the rat race of life and allow ourselves a couple of minutes of silence. Next, we need to clear our minds and attain calmness, free from any trouble, stress, fear, worry, or anything that causes distraction... *Hitbodedut* will assist in quieting our surroundings which prevents us

from entering our subconscious and discovering what needs to be corrected... **Every Jew should set a special time to create a balance sheet and assess whether we've profited or whether we're at a loss with their *avodat Hashem*...**

3. Every day, before going to bed, is a great time to invest in a few minutes of thought... "What did I do today? I was privileged to fulfill a few mitzvot... I wrapped *tefillin*, prayed on time, slowly and with intent, and then read *Chok L'Israel*. On the other hand, I also committed a few transgressions... On the way to work, I didn't guard my eyes as I should, and during the day, I spoke a little *lashon hara*..." Someone who can't do *Cheshbon Nefesh* every day should at least try to do it once a week and assess their profits and losses.

4. Experience shows that those who do *Cheshbon Nefesh* with themselves become much more refined and improve themselves

The Pathway...

and their behavior in every way. If the first time they did *Cheshbon Nefesh*, they found that they had committed a hundred sins that day. In a few days, they will find only forty, sixty percent less. If they continue in this manner, they'll eventually reach a state where they'll find only three, the next day one, the next day only a trace of sin. After a month, they're no longer familiar with the concept of sin. But, whoever doesn't enter the world of *Cheshbon Nefesh*, and doesn't start working on it, will never get there! ***Cheshbon Nefesh* has the power to weaken the yetzer hara until, slowly, it becomes completely separated from us.** There is no room for the *yetzer hara* to dwell in someone who engages in *Cheshbon Nefesh*...

5. When deciding to teshuva on something we may have done during the day and taking on ourselves not to do it again, we must remember that after doing teshuva, forget about it! Teshuva, real teshuva, erases everything. You sinned,

did teshuva, forget about the sin! Don't think about them anymore. As if they never were! **Dwelling in the past only causes scars...**

6. The *yetzer hara's* main way of bringing us down is to bring us to sadness... The *yetzer hara* works overtime in order for us to forget our true roots, that they're part of Hashem. As soon as a person forgets the sanctity of their Jewishness, they fall into depression, sadness, bitterness, etc., and this is the root of all sin... You have to take your life in your hands and wake up!

7. Rebbe Nachman of Breslev says that a Jew must do *Cheshbon Nefesh* every day. They must recognize their sins and resolve not to do them again. Keep in mind, though, *Cheshbon Nefesh* isn't just regretting your sins. Rather, the purpose of *Cheshbon Nefesh* is to uncover your strengths and hidden abilities. Therefore, every day you have to take time and contemplate the good points in yourself and truly know that

The Pathway...

they are what make you, you,
and even more so, what makes
you a Jew.

**8. Never forget... “A Jew,
even though they sinned, is still a
Jew!”**





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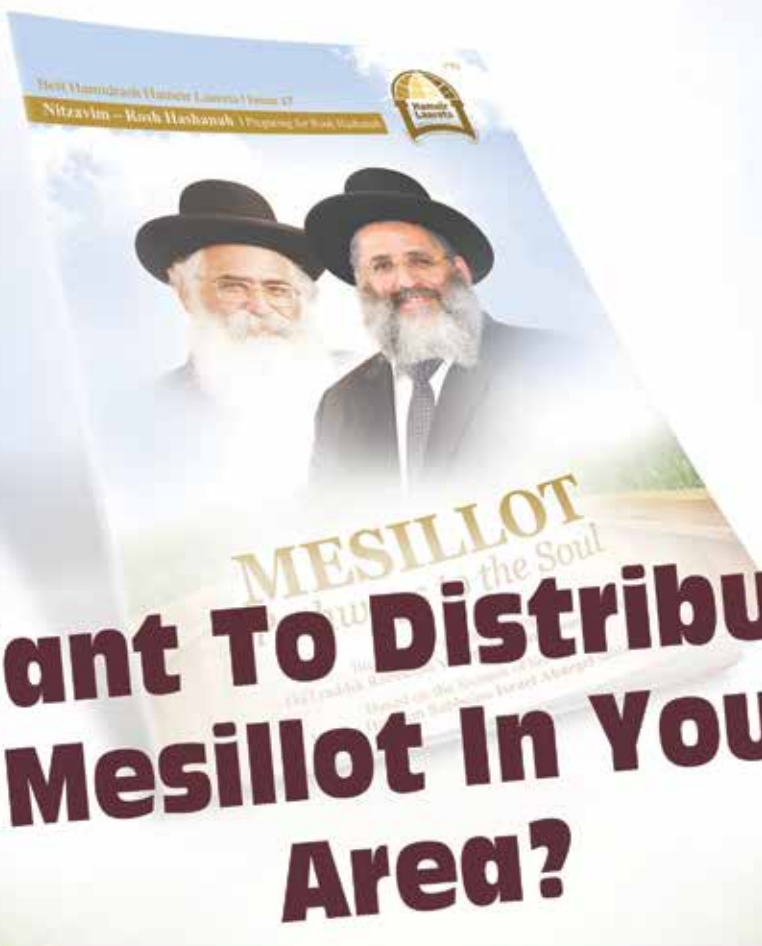
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Ki Tavo

21st of Elul, 5782

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:45 pm	7:43 pm	8:14 pm
Miami	7:05 pm	7:57 pm	8:35 pm
Los Angeles	6:39 pm	7:34 pm	8:09 pm
Montreal	6:45 pm	7:46 pm	8:14 pm
Toronto	7:07 pm	8:07 pm	8:37 pm
London	6:57 pm	8:01 pm	8:23 pm
Jerusalem	6:28 pm	7:17 pm	8:02 pm
Tel Aviv	6:25 pm	7:14 pm	7:58 pm
Haifa	6:25 pm	7:13 pm	7:57 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:25 pm	7:14 pm	7:58 pm

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

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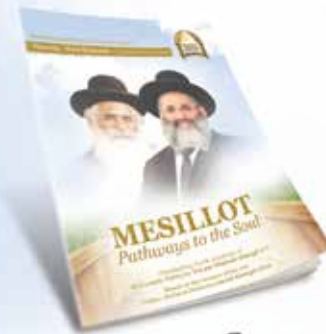
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