

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 73

Vayelech – Yom Kippur | Preparing for Yom Kippur



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 Vayelech - Yom Kippur

You're A Jew!

Benedict Radziwill was a very wealthy Polish prince. He owned vast pieces of land, forests, villages, and towns. However, Benedict rarely visited them, as he spent most of his time in France, where he grew up and was educated.

In France, he connected from an early age with one of his peers named, Pierre-Louis. It's doubtful whether the prince knew that Pierre-Louis was of Jewish descent, for he himself had forgotten that he was a Jew since his father had assimilated and was raised as a gentile.

Pierre-Louis was a perfect Frenchman in appearance and lifestyle. Prince Radziwill found in him a remarkable man and a wonderful socializer who knows how to enjoy life.

Benedict later married a woman from the Dmitrov family, a noble Russian family who owned large estates in different parts of

Russia, including palaces in Moscow. Benedict decided to move to one of his wife's family's estates, and since he didn't want to part with his friend Pierre-Louis, he brought him along to Russia. To connect him more to the Russian lifestyle, Benedict married Pierre to the daughter of one of the managers of Dmitrov's estates.

Benedict and Pierre-Louis would spend time together in Moscow and frequently go on revelry journeys in France and other countries.

Many years passed, and Pierre-Louis had reached the age of fifty-five. His Russian wife passed away, which spurred him to amplify his life of debauchery as a "free man" in the noble society, and as a close friend of Prince Radziwill, it wasn't so difficult.

It never occurred to him that there would ever be an extreme turning point in his life where

he would return to his people from whom he was completely distanced.

The town of Zarki was one of the towns owned by Benedict. Since large forests surrounded it, Benedict started visiting there to hunt. At first, it was occasional, but later, the visits became frequent. Of course, the prince didn't go alone but was accompanied by a large entourage. Its most notable individual was none other than Pierre-Louis, from whom the prince didn't leave for even a moment.

Before the hunt, and especially during the search itself, large festivities and revelry parties were held. All the area nobles were invited to these gatherings, which lasted about two to three weeks.

In both the hunting and parties, Pierre-Louis outshined everyone. Not only did the prince's admiration for him increase day by day, but all the nobles who were present became his admirers and looked up to him. No one knew, of course, that this extraordinary man was but a Jew.

Even the Zarki Jews, who had the opportunity to visit the prince and his entourage, didn't imagine that Radziwill's French companion was a Jew.

Rabbi Nissan, who was a follower of the Baal Shem Tov, lived in the town of Zarki and frequently traveled to his holy rabbi in Mezibuz.

On one of the occasions where he stayed with his rabbi before he was about to return home, the Baal Shem Tov called him to his room and said to him... It's written, "Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do labor on many waters"

(יִרְדְּי הַיָּם בְּאֲבִיזוֹת עֹשֵׂי מְלָאכָה בַּיָּם רַבִּים)
(Tehillim 107:23).

The word אָנְיָה has two meanings:

אָנְיָה – ship and אָנְיָה - mourning.

“Those who go down to the sea” (יִרְדְּי הַיָּם) speaks about the descending *neshama* to be clothed in the body, represented by the sea. As the water of the sea hides the creatures within it, so does the body hide the divine

neshama within it. For those who go down into the sea, that is, the descending *neshamot*, there are two methods of descent...

There is descent by ship, where the *neshama* descends into a body that grows up in an environment of Bnei Torah and observant Jews.

There is also descent by תאגיה ואגיה (mourning and wailing), where the *neshama* descends into a Jewish body, not in the environment of Bnei Torah and observant Jews.

Yet, there are those who “do labor on many waters” (עשי מלאכה) (במים רבים). These are the *neshamot* who descend down into the sea to save those *neshamot* that have descended through תאגיה ואגיה.

Rabbi Nissan listened to the words of his rabbi, the Baal Shem Tov, with great reverence but didn't really understand what he was trying to get at.

It turned out that the Baal Shem Tov was referring to “the Frenchman,” Pierre-Louis, the friend of Prince Radziwill. The

Baal Shem Tov told Rabbi Nissan that Pierre-Louis was a Jew whose real name was Pesach Tzvi, after his maternal grandfather, who was a pious Torah scholar.

The Baal Shem Tov added that Pierre was born as a pure Jewish child. His mother cared for him and gave him a Jewish name after her grandfather, and even intended to raise him as a Jew. Unfortunately, her husband, the father of Pierre-Louis, had greatly deteriorated and distanced himself completely from Judaism, and it was he who had educated his son like a gentile.

The Baal Shem Tov then imposed on Rabbi Nissan a special mission in connection with Pierre-Louis...

He handed him a sealed envelope and told him, “Winter is approaching. Prince Radziwill will arrive at his forest near the hills for hunting. As always, his friend Pierre-Louis will accompany him. On the second day of their trip, open the envelope I gave you and read the letter inside, then you'll

know what to do. Then, get to know Pierre-Louis and inform him that he is a Jew and that his real name is Pesach Tzvi, after his mother's grandfather. Explain to him that *Pierre* is really *Pesach* and that *Louis* is because he is a *Levi*. If Pierre-Louis doesn't want to listen to you, come to him day after day during the entire period of the prince's stay in Zarki. Keep in mind, at the same time, what's written in the letter in the envelope."

Rabbi Nissan set off, and in the middle of the month of Kislev, he arrived at his home in Zarki.

During Prince Radziwill and Pierre-Louis's sojourn in Zarki, they would always stay at the home of the town's priest. On the second day of their trip, after a long day of hunting, Prince Radziwill tripped over a large rock and fell to the ground right before walking into the priest's home. At that moment, a bullet was fired from his gun and struck him in his stomach.

Chaos broke out on the spot. The doctor that always accompanied the prince

immediately used all necessary means to stop the bleeding but to no avail. The prince was bleeding heavily, and so too was his temperature rising. His condition became critical. The doctor immediately sent for help from other doctors from nearby towns.

The incident caused great commotion among the Jews of Zarki. They were deeply saddened. The prince was good to the Jews and generally a good human being. The Jews gathered in the Beit Knesset to pray for the prince's recovery.

At that moment, Rabbi Nissan felt that it was the correct time to open the envelope that the Baal Shem Tov gave him and read the letter inside.

Rabbi Nissan didn't believe his eyes. It wasn't a letter. It was a list of remedies and explanations on how to prepare them...

At the end of the list was written, "After you heal his wound, do not take any reward from him. Only ask that he stay

good to the Jews and provide them with a livelihood. Also, if he asks you how you knew about the remedies, tell him that you learned them from your rabbi, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov of Mezibuz, the founder of a new path in serving Hashem. And most importantly, don't forget to reveal to Pierre-Louis the secret of his Judaism..."

Rabbi Nissan hurried to the priest's house and knocked on the door...

Inside the priest's house stood the prince's entourage and doctors who had been called from the nearby towns, all with worried faces... The prince was still unconscious, and his condition worsened from moment to moment...

One of those who accompanied the prince opened the door and let Rabbi Nissan enter... His appearance, a Jew in a long coat, a beard, and *Peot*, caught the attention of all those present.

The first to notice Rabbi Nissan was Pierre-Louis, who

looked at him with bewilderment and no small amount of contempt. Although Pierre-Louis had seen similar Jews, this was the first time he had had the opportunity to talk face-to-face with a personality like Rabbi Nissan.

Had he not been saddened by the critical condition of Prince Radziwill, who was struggling for his life, Pierre-Louis would no doubt have tried to make Rabbi Nissan the laughingstock of the room. Instead, he just looked at him angrily, puzzled at his impassive appearance at this serious moment.

However, Rabbi Nissan didn't wait for questions. Since Pierre-Louis was the first to notice him, he immediately approached him and said, "I heard of the prince's condition and have come to offer remedies which I am sure that, with the help of Hashem, will produce the desired results."

Pierre-Louis almost burst out laughing, "The doctor is desperate for a cure for the prince,

and here stands a Jew who says that the cure is in his hands ! ?”

The prince’s close friend was about to order Rabbi Nissan to leave immediately, but the doctor managed to hear Rabbi Nissan’s words and, in his despair, yelled, “Let’s hear what he has. We have nothing to lose !”

The doctor began interrogating Rabbi Nissan. Rabbi Nissan displayed the medicine to him and asked to be allowed to approach the bed, “I’m sure that with the help of Hashem, I can prove to you the sincerity of my words.”

Rabbi Nissan began treating Radziwill, smeared his abdomen with ointments, and dripped a special liquid into the prince’s mouth. Shortly after Rabbi Nissan’s treatment, a change in the prince’s condition was felt, and an hour later, the patient opened his eyes, and at the same time, his fever dropped, and the color returned to his body...

The doctors, along with those present, including Pierre-Louis, were overjoyed. With their own

eyes, they saw a visible miracle. “He’s going to live !” the doctor announced with great joy. It was clear that the crisis had passed.

“I was sure of it from the first moment,” said Rabbi Nissan.

“How were you so confident ?” the doctor asked astonishingly.

“From the fact that my teacher and holy rabbi gave the remedies, and it’s he who had instructed me to use them,” explained Rabbi Nissan.

“Who is this holy rabbi whom you speak of with such great admiration ?” the doctor inquired in a friendly tone.

“His name is Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, who revealed a new path in the service of the Creator of the world,” Rabbi Nissan replied.

Rabbi Nissan, who felt confident, now turned to Pierre-Louis and said he wanted to talk to him privately. Pierre-Louis accompanied him into the next room.

Rabbi Nissan opened, "As I said, the miracle you just witnessed stems from my teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. Now I want to pass on a message to you from the rabbi... You are a Jew, and your real name is Pesach Tzvi, after your mother's grandfather. The Baal Shem Tov also asked me to tell you that you have walked on a wrong path thus so far, and you must return to Hashem immediately!"

Rabbi Nissan said his goodbyes, leaving Pierre-Louis alone with his thoughts, allowing him to thoroughly digest everything he had just heard.

On the third day, *erev* Shabbat, Prince Radziwill, had regained enough strength in order to sit up, and on *motzei* Shabbat, he was already able to stand on his feet and walk.

He sent for Rabbi Nissan and began interrogating him about the nature of the remedies he used to heal him so wonderfully. He was also interested in knowing more about the Baal

Shem Tov and the new Chassidic way. Rabbi Nissan explained everything to him in detail.

"What reward can I give you?" asked Radziwill.

"I don't want any reward. I only want you to do good to the Jews and provide them with opportunities to earn a living," Rabbi Nissan answered.

A few days later, Prince Radziwill had healed entirely, and he and his companions, including Pierre-Louis, left Zarki.

It wasn't long until Pierre-Louis arrived back in Zarki... This time, though, he went straight to Rabbi Nissan's home.

"From the day I left this town," he said, "I've found no rest for my soul. I wasn't capable of eating unkosher food and couldn't stay amongst gentiles anymore. My heart began pulling me towards the Jews. Something inside of me pushed me to return to my faith and religion. I revealed my thoughts and feelings to Prince Radziwill, and he told me that despite his strong desire that I

Parashat Vayelech - Yom Kippur - Help Me Up

not part from him, he believes that I should do as my heart tells me.”

Pierre-Louis, or Pesach Tzvi as he preferred to be called, decided to live among the Jews of Zarki. First and foremost, he wanted to study Judaism, so he sought an *avrech* to teach him Torah. Pierre-Louis learned the letters of the *aleph-bet* and continued his studies eagerly and willingly, until a short time later, he already knew how to study Chumash by himself...¹

The Baal Shem Tov revealed to Rabbi Nissan that Hashem created souls who “do labor on many waters,” thus, He gave them the power to help the souls of Am Israel return in complete teshuva to their Father in Heaven.

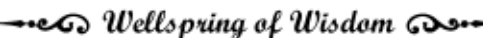
Hashem, who desires the teshuva of Am Israel, created ten days in the year that He gave the power to help and assist Am Israel to do teshuva. These are the Ten Days of Repentance...

Help Me Up...

Rabbi Acha and Rabbi Yehuda were once walking on their way,² when suddenly Rabbi Yehuda said, “Amos HaNavi prophesized ‘The maiden of Israel has fallen, not to rise again’ (Amos 5:2), and every time I arrive at this verse I become frightened. Can it be that Am Israel will not rise again?!”

Rabbi Acha listened, then replied, “I once felt the same. This verse was very challenging to me

because it instills despair of redemption. I felt very uneasy, so I dropped everything and went to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I spilled my heart out before him, and told him that I just don’t seem to understand this verse. It happens (occasionally) that husband and wife fight, and sometimes the wife leaves the house, but does that mean that she has no way back, that she’ll never return to her



1. Sefer HaZichronot (Vol. 2, p. 15) by The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe.
2. Zohar (Vayikra 6a).

husband?! Why did Amos HaNavi prophesize that Am Israel, who were exiled, would no longer be redeemed, “The maiden of Israel has fallen, not to rise again...?!”

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai listened to his words with great sincerity, then looked at him with a desire to help and replied...

From time immemorial, five exiles were decreed on Am Israel. The exile of Egypt, Bavel, Madai, Greece, and Edom. For the first four exiles, Hashem affixed a time limit, and when that time came, Am Israel got up of their own accord and returned to their land. But, in the last exile, the severe exile of Edom, Hashem didn't fix a time limit... I'll explain to you with a parable...

There was once a king who got angry at his wife, the queen, and expelled her from his palace for thirty days. The queen dwelled in one of the houses in the city and eagerly awaited the time of her redemption... On the thirtieth day, she returned to the palace and appeared before the king.

The queen didn't learn her lesson, and at record speed,

managed to upset the king once more. Again, the king expelled her for a certain period of time, and when that time came, the queen returned to the palace.

And so it was, time and time again...

One day, the king decided to expel her from the palace indefinitely... Years passed, and the king's longing for his wife became unbearable. He then decided to return her home...

He immediately called his ministers and servants and ordered them, “Get organized quickly, we're going to return the queen...”

The king and his people went out on a journey to find the queen. An extensive group of knights on horseback led the mission.

Suddenly, the caravan exited the city's paved roads to the dirt paths between remote farms. The king turned in wonder to his minister and asked, “Where are we going?”

The minister replied, “According to intelligence that we've

received, the queen is in a remote village near the border.”

The caravan entered the village imposingly... All the villagers left their homes to see what this was all about...

The king got off of his chariot, and his minister led him to a worn-down house with broken windows. In front of a dark brown broken door stood the king, with tears in his eyes. Carefully, he opened the door, and before his eyes laid the queen, sleeping on a mound of dirt...

The king reconciled with his wife, lifted her up in his arms, and brought her back to his palace. There, he swore to her that he would never part from her again...

Am Israel went through exile after exile, and after every one of them, when the time came, they would return to the King... In this last exile, Am Israel was expelled indefinitely, and the *Shechina* lay in the dirt, and Am Israel is

trapped without the ability to return to the palace on their own...

This is what Amos HaNavi meant when he said, “Fallen, not to rise again.” In all the exiles, Am Israel had risen by themselves and returned to the palace. But in this exile, they are incapable of rising on their own. Instead, Hashem Himself will need to lift them up, “On that day, I (Hashem) will lift up the fallen *Sukkah* of David (the *Shechina*)³, and I will repair their breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and build it up as in the days of old” (Amos 9:11).

At that time, Hashem will reconcile with Am Israel and comfort them. He will then reveal to them their immense virtue, and this is the honor of the Maiden of Israel and her praise, that she will not rise on her own, rather Hashem Himself will lift her up...

After hearing the words of Rabbi Acha, Rabbi Yehuda said, “Thank you, you truly comforted me !”

In order to reach that day, we must do one thing... Stay Alive...

Take Life Into Your Own Hands

Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah.⁴ One of *reshaim gemurim* (completely wicked), one of *tzaddikim gemurim*, and one of *benonim*, whose good and bad deeds are equally balanced.

The *tzaddikim gemurim* are immediately written and sealed for life.

The *reshaim gemurim* are immediately written and sealed for death.

Only *benonim* are left with their judgment suspended from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit (by means of mitzvot fulfilled during this period), they are written for life, and if they don't merit, they are written for death.

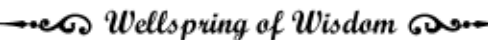
It's clear from the Gemara that the judgment of the *Benoni* depends on the teshuva that they do on the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If they merit and

spend these days doing teshuva and to draw near to Hashem, then, on Yom Kippur, they'll be written and sealed for life.

In a *shiur* given by HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l he said the following...

We must not hold ourselves as a *reshaim gemurim* that are written and sealed on Rosh Hashanah for death, for *Chazal* say,⁵ "Don't be a *rasha* in your own eyes." Every Jew does *mitzvot* and good deeds, as *Chazal* state,⁶ "Even the emptiest of Am Israel are full of mitzvot like a pomegranate [which is full of seeds]."

Although in the world, it's normal that when someone has a judgment, they wear clothes of mourning, don't get a haircut, and aren't happy because they don't know what their sentence will be. Our custom is to get a haircut on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, wear





4. Rosh Hashana 16b.

5. Avot 2:13.

6. Brachot 57a.

special clothes, and eat and drink with joy on Rosh Hashanah. Rabbi Asher ben Yaakov⁷ explains that the reason for this is “Because they (Am Israel) know that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* does miracles for them and tilts their judgment favorably, and tears apart their verdict.”

But at the same time, we mustn’t be mistaken and hold ourselves as *tzaddikim gemurim* that are written and sealed on Rosh Hashanah for life, as *Chazal* say,⁸ “Even if the entire world tells you that you are a *tzaddik*, be in your own eyes like a *rasha*.”⁹

 Wellspring of Wisdom 

7. HaRosh’s commentary on Rosh Hashanah 4:14.

8. Niddah 30b.

9. **In** Pirkei Avot 4:13 it says, “Don’t be a *rasha* in your own eyes,” and in Niddah 30b, it says, “Even if the entire world tells you that you are a *tzaddik*, be in your own eyes like a *rasha*.” The Baal HaTanya explains that there’s no contradiction, but first, we must explain a few concepts:

1. There are *tzaddikim*, *benonim*, and *reshaim*.
2. Every Jew has a *Nefesh HaElokit* and a *Nefesh HaBehemit*.
3. The *Nefesh HaBehemit* derives from *Klipat Nogah*, which is a mix of good and evil.
4. *Tzaddikim* completely transformed the evil in their *Nefesh HaBehemit* to be completely good. Thus, they no longer need to battle with evil and, of course, don’t sin.
5. *Benonim* still have a mix of good and evil within their *Nefesh HaBehemit*,

constantly battling with evil, but they succeed in completely ruling over evil without exception, and don’t sin.

7. *Reshaim* have a mix of good and evil within their *Nefesh HaBehemit*, constantly battling with evil, sometimes overcoming and sometimes falling.

After this little introduction, we can now understand how there’s no contradiction between the two statements of *Chazal*...

In truth, don’t be a *rasha* in your own eyes, for it impedes you from serving Hashem joyfully. On the other hand, even if the whole world, which judges you by your actions and sees that you don’t sin, calls you a *tzaddik*, don’t believe them that you’re a *tzaddik*, that you completely transformed the evil within you to good. Rather, consider yourself *like* a *rasha*. That is, don’t consider yourself as an actual *rasha*, but rather *like* a *rasha*, or in other words, a *benoni*, meaning that you still have a mix of good and evil within you and must battle with evil just like the *rasha*. For if you consider yourself a *tzaddik* and believe that you’ve completely transformed the evil within you into good (if

For that reason, we should hold ourselves as *benonim*, whose judgment is suspended from Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur.¹⁰ Therefore, our strengthening in *avodat Hashem* during these ten holy days is most significant and necessary.

As a result, it's customary for all of Am Israel to increase in *tzedakah*, *chesed*, and *mitzvot*, from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur, more so than the rest of the year. So too, it's customary to wake up during the early morning hours while it is still dark, go to the

~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~

you're mistaken), you will inevitably stop battling the evil within, thus resulting in a severe downfall and ending up as a *rasha*.

10. What's the difference between a *tzaddik* and a *chassid*? The simple answer is... A *tzaddik* is someone who behaves in accordance with the *Shulchan Aruch*, without exception. A *chassid* is someone who takes upon themselves more than the *Shulchan Aruch* demands.

The Kotzker Rebbe gave a wonderful answer to this...

A *tzaddik* is someone who doesn't deceive his friend. A *chassid* is someone who doesn't deceive himself either, especially in matters of *Yirat Shamayim*.

Understand this well...

There's a well-known story about the *Pnei Yehoshua*, who one morning went out for prayer, adorned in his *tallit* and *tefillin*, and saw that the streets were empty. He didn't understand what had happened. Suddenly, he saw a lion down the street staring at him. He then understood very well why the streets were empty.

Quickly, he raised the *tallit* from over the *tefillin* on his head. When the lion saw the *tefillin*, he fled, as it's written, "All the peoples of the earth shall see that the name of Hashem is called upon you, and they shall fear you" (Devarim 28:10), and the *Pnei Yehoshua* chased after it until it ran into the forest.

I, too, went out this morning for prayer adorned in *tallit* and *tefillin* and passed by a garbage can. Suddenly a cat jumped out, and when it saw me, it ran away... At that moment, I remembered the story of the *Pnei Yehoshua* and tried to liken it to my situation... Isn't a lion from the cat family? Maybe I'm from the family of the *Pnei Yehoshua*. Who knows...?

This is what the Kotzker Rebbe meant...

"You shall not deceive... fear Elokecha [who knows your intentions]" (Vayikra 25:17) – Don't deceive yourself that you're on such a high level of *Yirat Shamayim*...

Hold yourself as a *benoni*...

- VeMatok HaOhr - Vayikra (Vol. 2, p. 527).

Beit HaKnesset, and say *selichot* and pray to Hashem until dawn...

But, certainly, in order for our request for forgiveness to be accepted, it must be a result of remorse over the past and resolving to truly do better in the future...

The Chafetz Chaim explained this in a parable...¹¹

There was once a business owner who had to travel to a distant country for work purposes. He called over his employee and gave him a piece of paper, which he ordered him to read every day until he got back.

Written on the paper was a detailed list of instructions... What his tasks are in the store, who to contact, what to order, where to store the merchandise, how to market them, etc. He warned him again, “Don’t forget to read the list every day so that nothing will be forgotten, heaven forbid!”

A month later, he returned. He found the store closed with a smell as if something was rotting inside.

He hurried to his employees’ house and found him lounging there. When the employee saw his boss, his face glowed with happiness. He got up from his lounge chair and greeted him with a smile, “I did as you requested!” he announced. He spent an entire month at home but didn’t forget to read the page of instructions every day! He even added that he got up early for that purpose, and it was the first thing he did every day...

The Chafetz Chaim went on to say, “*Selichot* are like a page of instructions. They instruct us to ask forgiveness – truthfully, to regret our mistakes – truthfully, to improve ourselves – truthfully, to do *Cheshbon Nefesh* - truthfully!

But, whoever reads the *selichot* and continues on the same path and routine of life, is like that same employee...

Therefore, when saying *selichot*, we should awaken ourselves to do teshuva and hope for the gates of repentance to open...

But honestly, whoever does true teshuva, there's no way that

the gates of repentance won't open!

Knock, Knock...

Shlomo HaMelech said, "My beloved knocks, open for me" (Shir HaShirim 5:2)... but he didn't say how much to open.

Fortunately, our sages did...¹² "Hashem said to Am Israel... My children, open for me one opening of teshuva the size of a needlepoint, and I'll open for you openings large enough for chariots to enter."



There seem to be several allusions in this statement...¹³

First of all, *Chazal* wanted to imply to each of us that not only for big and serious sins should we

do teshuva, rather even for very small ones like the point of a needle. The higher your spiritual sensitivity is, the more you'll feel the pain inflicted on your soul, even by the most minimal sin.

Someone who's immersed in the materiality and vanity of this world won't feel the distress of their soul even when committing the most serious of sins...¹⁴

Another reason that *Chazal* likened the beginning of the *avodah* of teshuva to the point of a needle is to imply that just as the point of a needle, despite being

 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

12. Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:3.

13. Imrei Noam (Yom HaKippurim, Maamar 3).

14. **An** old man came before Rebbe Issachar Dov of Belz and said to him, "Rebbe! I've reached old age, and Baruch Hashem, I lack nothing, but I ask of the Rebbe to instruct me in teshuva for what I sinned in my youth." The Rebbe said to him, "If you have complete remorse for them, this is your teshuva."

"What level of remorse do I need?" the old man asked. The Rebbe replied, "I'll answer through a story..."

One merchant hurried and planned to arrive early at the great city fair. He loaded carriages full of products that were in high demand. The day he arrived, it began to rain, and the rain didn't cease for a few days. This caused all the other merchants with the same goods to be unable to arrive at the fair.

Parashat Vayelech - Yom Kippur - Knock, Knock

tiny, is strong and steady, so can the beginning of our coming close to Hashem be, through small, good choices. However, these choices must be extremely strong and steady, in such a way that nothing in the world can move us from those good choices.

Another point that *Chazal* wanted to imply is that not everyone knows how to thread a needle, and certainly, whoever tries to thread it with agitation and nerves will not succeed, for it takes a lot of patience. So too in the *avodah* of teshuva...

Above all, *Chazal* likened the beginning of the *avodah* of teshuva specifically to the point of a needle, to imply that just as the point of a needle can sew and repair various

tears made in a garment and return it to how it was before, so too our *avodah* of teshuva is capable of mending all the tears made in our souls by our sins and restore it to its initial perfection.

Therefore, we should never despair, no matter our situation. Even if someone has already blemished their soul, they can mend the tears and restore them to how they were before by doing true and thorough teshuva from the depths of their hearts, and most importantly, with much patience and humility.

Although *Cheshbon Nefesh* and true teshuva are vital steps in this process, nevertheless, we must beware of our great enemy, *Yeush* (despair)...

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

Everyone at the fair came straight to him, for he was the only one with the merchandise that they needed. Seeing that he had so many customers, he decided to deny them from purchasing in an attempt to increase the price of his goods. He continued this for the entire duration of the rain, and the prices of his goods skyrocketed.

Suddenly, after a few days, in the middle of the night, the rain stopped, and the next day, early in the morning, the fair was already full

of other merchants who were selling the same products. Undoubtedly, the price of his products dropped tremendously."

The Rebbe concluded, "If the remorse for the sins of your youth is the same as that of the merchant when he saw what inflating the price of his goods cost him, know that your remorse is the teshuva for your sins..."

- Imrei Noam (Ten Days of Repentance, Maamar 2).

Never Give Up

One day Rabbi Elazar ben Padat fell ill, and Rabbi Yochanan decided to visit him.¹⁵ When Rabbi Yochanan arrived, he saw that Rabbi Elazar was lying in a dark room. He noticed that Rabbi Elazar was crying and asked him, “Why are you crying? If it’s because you didn’t study much Torah, we already learned that it’s not the amount that matters but that your heart be directed to Heaven. If it’s because you lack money, not everyone merits wealth and Torah. If it’s because your children died, ten of my sons died...”

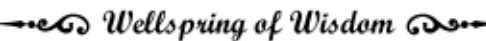
Rabbi Elazar turned to Rabbi Yochanan with the last of his strength and said, “I’m crying over your beauty that will decompose in the earth after your death.”¹⁶ They then cried together...

Then, Rabbi Yochanan asked him, “Are your sufferings precious to you? (For the merit received by suffering is enormous). Rabbi Elazar replied, “Neither them nor their reward.” Upon hearing this, Rabbi Yochanan said to him, “Give me your hand.” Rabbi Elazar gave him his hand, and Rabbi Yochanan healed him...

When Rabbi Yaakov Israel Kanievsky zt”l, the *Steipler*, read this Gemara, he asked, “Why did Rabbi Yochanan ask so many questions? Why didn’t he immediately ask, ‘Are your sufferings precious to you?’ Why did he have to interrogate him beforehand?”

He then answered...

If he had started with the question, “Are your sufferings



15. Brachot 5b.

16. **The** Maharsha writes that the people of Yerushalayim who lived during the Temple period were very beautiful, but after the destruction of the Temple this beauty disappeared from the world, and remained

only with Rabbi Yochanan. Thus, when Rabbi Yochanan would die, the last remnant of the beauty of Yerushalayim would disappear... That’s why Rabbi Elazar wept... Over the extinction of the last memory of the Temple period...

precious to you?” Rabbi Elazar would reply, “Leave me to die!” For the reason that he was depressed and despaired of life was that he was tormented by the fact that he didn’t excel in Torah according to his desire, he was subjected to abject poverty, and because he was going to die alone... Life didn’t have any meaning for him, and now, on top of all, he’s sick. Why get healed? It’s preferable to just die and be done with everything...

Rabbi Yochanan knew this, so he approached wisely and overcame obstacle after obstacle. If you’re sad over Torah, everyone has their portion. No more is required of you. If you’re sad about poverty, be joyous and grateful that your share is in the Beit Midrash, and not everyone merits both wealth and Torah. If you’re unhappy about being alone, what would you say to comfort me? Be happy with what you do have. Now, what’s left? Just the sufferings, are they precious to you?

Rabbi Elazar was encouraged and said, “Neither them nor their reward.” Without a doubt, their reward is tremendous, but they interfere with *avodat Hashem*... Then, when Rabbi Yochanan managed to arouse in Rabbi Elazar’s heart a desire to be healed, Rabbi Yochanan was then able to reach out and heal him!

Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky zt”l quoted the words of the *Steipler* and went on to say...¹⁷

We sit down and do *Cheshbon Nefesh*... Not even three minutes later, we despair. “Where should I start?! *Tefilla* without intention, Torah study without concentration, *mitzvot* without enthusiasm, Shabbat without holiness. There’s no way I’m capable of fixing everything from their foundation, so I’ll just stay the same...”

Rabbi Yochanan taught us a lesson that we all need to remember... Sometimes we feel sad and discouraged about our shattered ambitions and failed expectations.

We wanted the feeling of *Elokut*, love and awe, holiness and purity to be revealed within us. To increase in Torah study, to create *chidushim*, and write books...

When this happens, we must remember one thing, “One who does more is the same as one who does less, as long as his heart is directed to Heaven.” With perseverance in Torah study and fulfillment of *mitzvot*, your heart will open, emotions will arise,

your eyes will light up, and you will achieve the attainments you were looking for. It’s impossible to change everything at once ! Forget about that ! Instead, focus on what most urgently needs improvement, even the smallest thing, and fix it !

Then move on to the next...

In the meantime, we’ll continue with the *avodah* of Yom Kippur. Let’s start with a number of important Halachot...

Preparation for Yom Kippur

1. It’s a mitzvah from the Torah to eat and drink on the eve of Yom Kippur, “You shall afflict yourselves on the ninth day of the month at evening. From evening to evening you shall rest, on your day of rest” (Vayikra 23:32). The Gemara asks on the verse...¹⁸ Don’t we fast on the tenth of Tishrei ? Rather, this verse comes to tell you that one who eats and drinks on the ninth day of Tishrei, in preparation for the fast the next day, it’s as if they fasted on both the ninth and the tenth of Tishrei.

In any case, although there’s a *mitzvah* to eat a lot, care should be taken not to eat things that warm the body so that one doesn’t get into a dilemma during Yom Kippur.

2. It’s a good custom to eat fish on the **morning** of the eve of Yom Kippur. The fish’s eyes never close. This hints that we ask Hashem to always watch over us with a watchful eye, an eye that never closes.

3. It’s also customary to perform *Pidyon Kaparot*. In the

past, most of Am Israel would perform *Kaparot* with chickens. Whoever acts according to *kabbalah* makes sure to perform the *Kaparot* specifically with a white chicken and on the morning of the eve of Yom Kippur.¹⁹

Today, many people perform the *Kaparot* with money.

The Ben Ish Chai writes²⁰ that when circling the *Kaparot* (whether a chicken or money) around your head, you should say,
 "זו הליפתי, זו תמורתך, זו כפרתי"
which has the acronym of the holy name חת"ך.

It's also very important to do teshuva at that moment...

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

19. This is according to the holy Arizal in *Shaar HaKavanot* (Derushei Yom HaKippurim, Introduction)...

My teacher (the Arizal) was very careful to observe the custom mentioned in the books of the *Geonim*. He would take one white rooster for each of the male members of the household and one white hen for each of the female members of the household.

The time for slaughtering them is on the eve of Yom Kippur before dawn after

The *Kaparot* should then be given to the poor or to institutions of Torah. There's nothing that benefits a person on the Day of Judgment more than being a *Baal Tzedakah*, especially with Torah scholars that learn *Leshem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven).

This is also a great *tikkun*.

During the time of the Beit HaMikdash, if someone sinned, they would bring a sacrifice and confess, and then their sin would be atoned for. This is what we do on the eve of Yom Kippur. The *Kaparot* is our sacrifice, and during the *Kaparot*, we do teshuva, which is our confession.

In the Beit HaMikdash, there were options of which type of

selichot. The *sod* of this is to coerce the *dinim* and *gevurot*, for the rooster is called *gever* in Aramaic because it's the aspect of *gevurot* in the *Yesod DeNukvah*, which is called *gever*, and it's also slaughtered on the ninth of Tishrei which also corresponds to *yesod* (which is the ninth *sefirah*), and by slaughtering it, the *gevurot* of *yesod* are sweetened.

20. Ben Ish Chai - Year 1 (Vayelech, 2).

sacrifice to bring. Those that were expensive and those that were less expensive. *Chazal* said²¹ that all the types of sacrifices came to teach us that no matter how much someone paid or how many they offered up, all that mattered was if their hearts were directed to Heaven.

So too, with *Kaparot*. It doesn't matter the amount set aside. Whether you gave a lot or a little isn't important in

Hashem's eyes. What matters is from where it derives... From the bottom of your heart or from haughtiness trying to look better than others.

Hashem owns the whole world. Everything is His, and there's nothing that He lacks... By His will, He gives, and by His will, He takes. Hashem examines our hearts and desires only our pure intention...

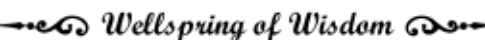
Live by Them, Not Die by Them

The Shulchan Aruch ruled²² that "An ill person that needs to eat; if there is an expert doctor, even a gentile, that says, "If he (the sick person) doesn't eat, the illness may worsen and become dangerous," we trust his (the doctor's) word and feed him."

There's no chassidut in trying to fast when the doctors say that you shouldn't. In fact, it's considered a complete sin!²³

HaRav Ovadia Yosef zt"l once recounted...

Members of a certain family once came to me and asked me to tell their father that he wasn't allowed to fast on Yom Kippur. I asked them, "What does he have?" They told me that their father had a kidney disease, and the doctor ordered him to drink water during the fast, but their father wouldn't listen to the doctor. I told them to bring their father to me. When he arrived, I explained to him that he must listen to the doctor.



21. Mishna (Menachot 13:11).

22. Sulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 618:1).

23. Mishna Berurah (618:5); Piskei Teshuvot (Vol. 6, p. 282).

He asked permission to speak and said, “My name is Yonah because I was born on the afternoon of Yom Kippur when the congregation reads the *Haftara* of Yonah, and every year since my bar mitzvah, I go up to the Torah for the *Haftara* of Yonah. If I drink on Yom Kippur, I won’t be able to go up for the *Haftara*.

I understood the danger of the matter and said to him, “You’re allowed to go up for the *Haftara* even if you drink!” Yonah got up and left. It didn’t seem as if he was going to listen to me. At *Arvit* of *motzei* Yom Kippur, Yonah turned to his friend and said with satisfaction, “Baruch Hashem, I was able to fast all day, and nothing happened to me!” He then left the Beit Knesset, walked to his house, reached the doorway, collapsed, and died... His kidneys completely failed from dehydration...

Someone whom a doctor forbade to fast must eat with joy (of course, according to the boundaries of Halacha). We must remember that even when doing something

different than others, even when it doesn’t feel right, if Hashem is the one that commanded us, then we must be overjoyed for having the privilege to fulfill the will of Hashem !

Rebbe Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the *Baal HaTanya*, was very weak in his old age, and when Yom Kippur came, he had to eat according to the doctor’s instructions, and indeed before the Mussaf prayer of Yom Kippur, he entered his room and ate a little.

At that moment, his son, Rebbe Dovber, entered to see how his father felt and was greatly surprised to see the Baal HaTanya eating cheerfully. His holy face radiated happiness and joy.

His son, Rebbe Dovber, was astonished at the sight of his father eating with joy on Yom Kippur. He thought for sure he would be sad for being compelled to eat on Yom Kippur...

His father, who saw his son’s perplexed expression, said to him, “My son ! When you ate matzah on *Seder* night, were you happy ?”

“Of course!” Rebbe Dovber replied. “And in five days, when we fulfill the mitzvah of eating in the sukkah, will we be happy?”

“Of course!” he answered.

The Baal HaTanya looked at his son and replied... He who commanded us to eat matzah on *Seder* night, and who commanded us to eat in the sukkah, He is the

one that commanded me to eat right now on Yom Kippur. As our holy Torah says, “You shall keep My statutes and My judgments which you shall do, and you shall live by them” (Vayikra 18:5), and *Chazal* explained,²⁴ “Live by them and not die by them...”

You must fulfill Hashem’s will with joy!

Take the First Step

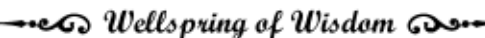
The following is an excerpt from our book *Imrei Noam* by HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt”l...²⁵

The holy day of Yom Kippur is a magnificent time of heavenly desire to merit forgiveness and atonement for all sins.

Yet, the Rambam writes,²⁶ “Yom Kippur itself only atones for those who do teshuva.” That is, the *segula* for atonement on Yom Kippur is specifically for those who do teshuva but not for those who don’t do teshuva.

The Rambam also writes,²⁷ “Yom Kippur is a time of teshuva for everyone, for the individual and for the public, and it is the last time for forgiveness and pardon for Am Israel. Therefore, all must do teshuva and confess on Yom Kippur.”

This is similar to a laundromat where dirty clothes are brought for washing. If someone brings their clothes to the laundromat but doesn’t put them into the washing machine, obviously they’ll remain dirty. In order for the clothes to be cleaned, it’s necessary to put them



24. Yoma 85b.

25. *Imrei Noam* (Yom HaKippurim, Maamar 3).

26. Mishneh Torah (Halachot Teshuvah 1:3).

27. Mishneh Torah (Halachot Teshuvah 1:3).

Parashat Vayelech - Yom Kippur - Take the First Step

in the washing machine. The same is true of Yom Kippur. The purpose of this day is to clean the souls of Am Israel from the stains that they acquired throughout the year, and to do so, we must enter the essence of Yom Kippur, teshuva.

When someone merits doing teshuva on Yom Kippur, they attain the level of “*adam*” (man)! We’ll explain...

The Ten Days of Repentance correspond to the Ten Utterances in which the world was created, and Yom Kippur corresponds to the Utterance, “Elokim said... Let us make *adam* (man) in our image, according to our likeness” (Bereshit 1:26).

This verse comes to hint to us that even someone who, during the year, committed the most severe sins, and fell spiritually to the lowest levels, can return and rise to the lofty spiritual level called “*adam*” if they properly utilize Yom Kippur and strive to return in complete teshuva.

Furthermore, what is said, “Let us make *adam*” in the plural (and not “I will make man” in the singular), hints that if we really want to rise to the level of “*adam*,” we shouldn’t rely on Hashem to do the work for us. Instead, we must invest a lot of effort to attain it by striving to straighten our ways and correct our deeds, and only then will Hashem help us complete the final *tikkun* for our soul.

“Let us make *adam*” - Hashem is telling us that only together with our own efforts will He help us acquire the level of *adam*.

We must first put in our own efforts from below, and only then will Hashem put in His and help us from above. As cited in the Midrash,²⁸ “Hashem said to Am Israel... My children, open for me one opening of teshuva the size of a needlepoint, and I will open for you openings large enough for chariots to enter.”

For this reason, it’s written, “Moshe went up to Elokim, and Hashem called to him from the

mountain” (Shemot 19:3). The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* explains that this verse comes to teach us that Hashem won’t call for someone who doesn’t first ascend on their own. Someone who waits for Hashem to raise them up without attempting first on their own will never succeed !

We must take the first step... But after we do, Hashem will raise us to new heights beyond measure.

Thus, Rabbi Akiva said,²⁹ “How fortunate are you, Israel. Before Whom are you purified, and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven...”

At first, it’s up to us to purify ourselves before Hashem, and after we give it everything we have, from here on, Hashem will complete the work and purify us entirely.

May we all merit a *Gemar Chatimah Tova* !

Shabbat Shalom !



The Pathway...

1. Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah. One of *reshaim gemurim* (completely wicked), one of *tzaddikim gemurim*, and one of *benonim*, whose good and bad deeds are equally balanced. The *tzaddikim gemurim* are immediately written and sealed for life. The *reshaim gemurim* are immediately written and sealed for death. Only *benonim* are left with their judgment suspended from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit (by means of mitzvot fulfilled during this period), they are written for life, and if they don't merit, they are written for death. Therefore, our strengthening in *avodat Hashem* during these ten holy days is most significant and necessary.

2. We must remember that not only for big and serious sins should we do teshuva, but even for small ones. **Someone who's immersed in the materiality and vanity of this world will not feel the distress of their soul even when committing the most serious of sins...** More important

than all, in order for our request for forgiveness to be accepted, it must be a result of remorse over the past and resolving to truly do better in the future... But, with true teshuva, there's no way that the gates of repentance won't open!

3. *Chazal* likened the beginning of the *avodah* of teshuva to the point of a needle to imply that just as the point of a needle, despite being tiny, is strong and steady, so must the beginning of our coming close to Hashem be, through small, good choices. However, these choices must be extremely strong and steady, in such a way that nothing in the world can move us from those good choices. So too, must we remember that this process can take time, and we must remain patient. But after all is said and done, just as the point of a needle can sew and repair various tears made in a garment and return it to how it was before, so too our *avodah* of teshuva is capable of mending all the tears made in our souls by our sins and restore it to its initial perfection.

The Pathway...

4. Although *Cheshbon Nefesh* and true teshuva are vital steps in this process. Nevertheless, we must beware of our great enemy, *Yeush* (despair)... Many times, we think to ourselves, “There’s no way I’m capable of fixing everything, so I’ll just stay the same...” Rabbi Yochanan taught us a lesson that we all need to remember... Sometimes we feel sad and discouraged about our shattered ambitions and failed expectations. When this happens, we must remember one thing, “One who does more is the same as one who does less, as long as his heart is directed to Heaven.” With perseverance, you will achieve everything you wanted. **It’s impossible to change everything at once! Forget about that! Instead, focus on what most urgently needs improvement, even the smallest thing, and fix it! Then move on to the next...**

5. It is customary to perform *Pidyon Kaparot* on the eve of Yom Kippur. In the past, most of Am Israel would perform *Kaparot* with chickens, but today, many people perform the *Kaparot*

with money. The Ben Ish Chai writes that when circling the *Kaparot* (whether a chicken or money) around your head, you should say, “זו הליפתִי, זו תְּמוּרָתִי, זו כְּפָרְתִי” which has the acronym of the holy name יהוה. **It is also very important to do teshuva at that moment...**

6. The *Kaparot* should then be given to the poor or to institutions of Torah. During the time of the Beit HaMikdash, if someone sinned, they would bring a sacrifice and confess, and then their sin would be atoned for. This is what we do on the eve of Yom Kippur. The *Kaparot* is our sacrifice, and during the *Kaparot*, we do teshuva, which is our confession. It doesn’t matter the amount set aside. Whether you gave a lot or a little is not important in Hashem’s eyes. What matters is from where it derives... From the bottom of your heart or from haughtiness trying to look better than others.

7. The Rambam writes, “**Yom Kippur only atones for those who do teshuva,**” but not for those who don’t do teshuva. On the path to teshuva, we must first put in our

The Pathway...

own efforts from below, and only then will Hashem put in his and help us from above. We must invest a lot of effort to attain it by striving to straighten our ways and correct our deeds, and only then will Hashem help us complete the final *tikkun* for our soul. Someone

who waits for Hashem to raise them up without attempting first on their own will never succeed! We must take the first step... But after we do, Hashem will raise us to new heights beyond measure.

May we all merit a Gemar Chatimah Tova!





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Shabbat Times

Vayelech Yom Kippur

6th of Tishrei, 5783



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:21 pm	7:19 pm	7:50 pm
Miami	6:50 pm	7:42 pm	8:20 pm
Los Angeles	6:20 pm	7:14 pm	7:49 pm
Montreal	6:18 pm	7:19 pm	7:47 pm
Toronto	6:42 pm	7:41 pm	8:11 pm
London	6:25 pm	7:28 pm	7:51 pm
Jerusalem	6:10 pm	6:59 pm	7:41 pm
Tel Aviv	6:07 pm	6:56 pm	7:37 pm
Haifa	6:06 pm	6:55 pm	7:36 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:07 pm	6:56 pm	7:37 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

A child who grew up in a home with wonderful parenting never heard their father say an unnecessary word, and certainly not their mother. They never saw their father walk around the house in a tank top and shorts. They always see their father as respected and their mother as respected and dignified. When such children grow up, they say, "I grew up in a warmhearted home, and so too, will I raise my children warmheartedly."



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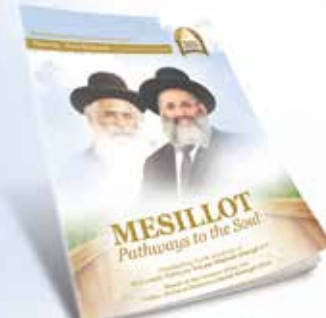
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