

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 82

**Vayetze** | The Path Of Life



# 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 Vayetze

## The Four Meals

**In** those times, before the use of motorized vehicles, mobility from place to place was a complex task that took many days.

**Once**, rabbis were required to travel to a distant city, a journey that spanned five days. They left on Sunday morning and arrived late at night on Thursday.

**Exhausted**, they wandered the streets of the city looking for anyone. Suddenly, a Jew with honorable attire approached them, interested in their well-being, and they told him about the purpose of their arrival.

**The** Jew requested with a warm smile, "Please, come rest in my home." They accompanied him and soon arrived at his luxurious house. The rabbis slept the night there and thanked him the next day.

**The** owner of the house then asked them once more, "Please,

stay here for Shabbat." To his great joy, they agreed. He sat them in the grand living room, and they began to learn.

**The** house started bustling like a beehive... A delivery arrived from the butcher's shop, knocks were heard on the door, and in the doorway stood the delivery man from the fish store with a large crate, and after him, the baker arrived, then groceries came, the guy from the candy store, and finally the last person arrived with bottles of fine wine...

**The** rabbis approached the owner of the house in embarrassment and said, "If all this is for us, for our honor, we're leaving. We don't want you to spend so much money on our behalf."

**The** Jew smiled and said to them, "I'm very happy that I have the privilege of hosting two

**Parashat Vayetze - The Four Meals**

Torah scholars. However, all this isn't for your sake but rather for the sake of Shabbat. This is what I buy every Shabbat..."

**The** rabbis wondered, "Why do you trouble yourself so much to honor the Shabbat?"

**The** Jew answered... My father was a peddler. He would set out every Sunday with a hundred dollars in order to buy goods and sell them in the nearby towns from Sunday to Thursday. When he returned, he would spend everything he earned in honor of Shabbat without exaggeration. That's how he conducted himself his entire life. He never spared a cent when it came to Shabbat, and he never ever missed one of the four Shabbat meals.

**One** week, my father didn't return on Thursday. We began to worry about him greatly and waited for his arrival. Thursday went by with no signs of his whereabouts, and on Friday, we began to really fear, and on Shabbat, we broke down...

**Sunday** arrived, and suddenly, my father came riding on his

donkey, weak and exhausted, and behind him trudged a terrible-looking black dog...

**We** ran to our father and hugged him. We took him inside the house, and to our surprise, he brought the donkey into the living room with him... Father untied the sacks carried by the donkey and opened them. To our absolute astonishment, precious gemstones and gold spilled out of the sacks...

**Father** then told us, "When I finished selling on Thursday as usual, I set out to return home, and on the way, an Arab approached me and screamed, 'Jew, Jew! I own something very special. If you buy it, you won't regret it...' In my innocence, I went with him, not knowing that he was an armed bandit who steals people's money and then turns his prey into lunch for his dog..."

**When** I entered his house, he immediately attacked and robbed me of all my money, tied the donkey, and then took me to his terrifying dog...

**I** saw the shadow of death in front of my eyes. Fear and

trembling overcame me. The terror of death fell upon me, and there was no escape. I asked him for one last request that he lock me in a room until after Shabbat, and then he can do with me as he wishes. He granted my request.

I had nothing but a pitcher of water and a few slices of dry bread. When Shabbat entered, I poured a cup of water, took a piece of bread, and said, "Hashem! I don't have wine for *kiddush*, but may it be Your will that this water be as wine in Your eyes!" I drank the "wine" and ate a few bites of bread. I then asked, "Hashem! It's known before You that this meal corresponds to Itzchak Avinu. May it be Your will, in the merit of Itzchak Avinu, that You save me from the hand of this evil man..."

I did the same during the second meal. I said, "In the merit of Avraham Avinu, save me from the hand of this evil man!" Likewise, at the third meal, I said, "In the merit of Yaakov Avinu!" And thus, during the fourth meal, I said, "In the merit of David HaMelech, and in the merit of Eliyahu HaNavi, save me from this evil man!"

I finished saying *Birkat HaMazon*, and suddenly, a deep sleep fell upon me. I then saw in a dream five old men arguing among themselves. One said, "I'll save him," and the other said, "I'm the one who will save him," and one stood up and argued against them, "You guys didn't save him when it was your time! Now is my time. I'm the one who will save him!"

**They** then agreed and said, "Since he fulfilled all the meals and asked in our merit, we shall all stand in his merit and save him from this evil man!" They all stood and said to me, "We are the forefathers of the world, Avraham, Itzchak, and Yaakov, as well as David HaMelech and Eliyahu HaNavi, which you mentioned and asked in our merit. We've come to save you, don't be afraid!"

**The** door then flew open, and the bandit came in and brought me before his dog to devour me. Oh, how great are your wonders Hashem! Instead of the dog pouncing on me, it pounced on its owner and devoured him! Baruch Hashem! His kindness towards me saved my life!

**Parashat Vayetze - Get Out!**

I approached my donkey to untie it and return home, but the dog pulled me from my clothes to one of the rooms of the house and began to dig with its feet. Suddenly, a large urn of precious gemstones began to sparkle from under the dirt, and then the dog took me to another room and dug up another large urn, but this time filled with gold! I loaded everything on the donkey and covered it with a sackcloth so that the passers-by wouldn't notice. The dog then trailed behind me the entire way, until this moment as I stand before you!

**After** my father finished his story, he looked at us and said,

“Since all this was done for me in the merit of the four Shabbat meals, I ask of you, my precious children, honor the Shabbat more than in accordance with your abilities, and fulfill the four meals with pleasure and honor.”

**We** fulfilled all his words. From then on, we've become accustomed to spending a great deal of money in honor of Shabbat.

**The** two rabbis listened to the story with great interest, and their minds were then put to rest. After Shabbat, they left his home and thanked him for the wonderful, inspiring Shabbat.<sup>1</sup>

**Get Out!**

**During** the *shiva* after the passing of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu zt"l, Effi Eitam, a former Israeli brigadier general, came to comfort the mourners and recounted the following incredible incident...

**Once**, during my time as the commander of the 91<sup>st</sup> Division, a

group of soldiers entered Lebanese territory in order to execute a certain operation. The lieutenant of the platoon suddenly became horrified at the discovery that they were presently standing in a minefield...

**The** sophisticated method of the Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon

to harm the Israeli soldiers was to surround an area with several powerful improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and paint them to look like rocks. They would place the explosives between other rocks and wait for the Israeli soldiers to enter the surrounded area. The IEDs were linked through a laser that created a hidden connection that surrounded the entire area. Once the laser was activated, it was enough for someone to cross the imaginary line for all the explosives to instantly detonate.

**Terrorists** would hide and observe the area from nearby hills, and as soon as they saw the soldiers entering, one of them would activate the laser, trapping the soldiers from all sides with nowhere to escape. These very dangerous explosives had the ability to cause many casualties when in close proximity to the soldiers.

**The** lieutenant suddenly saw the laser surrounding the arena and realized that they were standing inside an IED zone. From the knowledge he received in training, he knew that there

was no possibility of leaving the zone alive... He also assessed that the terrorists were watching and could open fire on his soldiers from one of the hills in the vicinity at any moment.

**About** fifteen soldiers were standing in the heart of the danger...

**With** a trembling voice, the lieutenant reported to his commanders, and within one minute, the division commander, Effi Eitam, came into the picture.

**Three** o'clock in the morning. The phone at Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu's house rang. Effi Eitam was on the other line.

**He** explained to the Rabbi the complicated situation and begged, "Please, we need the power of your prayer!"

**"Wait** on the line for a couple of minutes," the Rabbi said and put down the phone.

**After** a few minutes, during which he strengthened himself in prayer, the Rabbi returned to the phone and calmly said, "I'm holding it... Take them out now..."

**Parashat Vayetze - The Dream**

**The** commander, knowing the destructive power of such a deadly explosive zone, understood what the command to get out might mean. On the other hand, he had simple *emunat chachamim*, and he knew that the Rabbi wouldn't take any chances... The Ranni knows the power of his prayer...

**“Go!** Get out now! Immediately! Start running!” Effi Eitam's voice was heard screaming at the lieutenant.

**One** of the intelligence officers who was listening to the terrorist's communication network turned up the loudspeaker from which voices were heard arguing and shouting at the terrorists located on the nearby hills. Their commander repeatedly ordered the terrorist in the field, “Activate the explosives!” The terrorist then replied in frustration, “I'm activating it, but it's not working!” The commander started

scolding him, “You're a traitor!” They began cursing him in Arabic...

**On** the phone, the Rabbi's calm and peaceful voice was heard saying, “I'm holding...”

**When** the last soldier escaped the area, Effi Eitam immediately reported to the Rabbi, “Their safe.” At that moment, the entire minefield exploded. The rocks in the area turned to powder, and only sawdust remained from the trees. But the Jewish soldiers made their way back to their base safe and sound...<sup>2</sup>

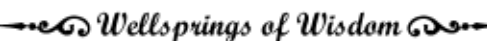
**In** our parasha, we'll learn that the soul of a Jew was sent to this world to fight against the evil inclination and to perfect the world through the Kingship of Hashem, and in order to succeed in its mission, it was given several methods of guidance...

**A** few of them appear in our parasha...

**The Dream**

**Our** parasha begins with the verses, “Yaakov left Beer Sheva

and went toward Charan. He reached the place and he slept there,





for the sun had set. He took of the stones of that place, and set them around his head, and lay down [to sleep] in that place. He dreamed, and behold a ladder was set on the earth, and the top of it reached the heavens, and behold angels of Elokim were ascending and descending on it” (Bereshit 28:10-12).

**Chazal** revealed to us that within these verses, the greatness of Yaakov Avinu’s devotion to Torah study is expressed. In order to understand this, we’ll have to go back to the previous parasha, parashat Toldot.

**Yaakov** Avinu was born in the year 2108 from the creation of the world. Yaakov, since his youth, was drawn with all his heart to the study of the holy Torah...

**Therefore**, he began to study with unprecedented persistence and concentration... Thus, 63 years passed by...

**Then**, when his father, Itzchak, was 123 years old, he called his other son, Esav, and asked him to prepare a meal for him, and after he ate, he would bless him.

**The** rest of the story is known... Yaakov managed to receive this blessing instead of his brother Esav, and Esav decided to kill him...

**Itzchak** then called for Yaakov and commanded him, “Go to Charan and take a wife from there.”

**Yaakov** left the city of Beer Sheva, the city where his father lived, and instead of going to Charan, he went to the Beit Midrash of Shem and Ever and learned Torah with remarkable diligence, forgetting everything around him...

**Fourteen** years later, when Yaakov was 77 years old, he got up, left the Beit Midrash, and journeyed toward Charan.

**On** his way, Yaakov Avinu arrived in Beit El. There, he stood in prayer, with complete nullification before Hashem. At that moment, he instituted the evening prayer, the third prayer of the day.

**When** he finished praying, Yaakov Avinu requested to continue on his way, but Hashem prevented him from doing so because He wanted to reveal Himself to him. However, since at

## Parashat Vayetze - The Four Weapons

that time, Yaakov Avinu still wasn't married, there was no possibility of being revealed to him in the daytime, for the Shechina doesn't appear in the daytime to someone who isn't married. Therefore, Hashem set the sun 2 hours before actual sunset, and a thick darkness filled the earth...

**Yaakov** Avinu retired for the night... In his dream, he merited having prophetic revelations, "Behold, Hashem stood over him..." (Bereshit 28:13).

**Yaakov** Avinu merited lofty, divine levels and awoke "a new person" (we're talking here about exalted levels that we can't

perceive even in our imaginations) and continued on his way to Charan.

**After** a long, arduous journey, he was privileged to marry four righteous women, Rachel, Leah, Bilha, and Zilpa.

**From** these four women, 12 holy sons were born, and from them, Am Israel quickly grew to 600,000 Jewish souls.

**That's** our parasha in a nutshell...

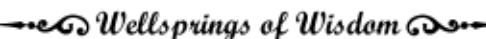
**Now**, we'll dive into the explanation of Rabbi Chaim ben Attar zt"l, the *Ohr HaChaim*, who explains these verses by way of *remez* (allusion). But before that, a little introduction...

### The Four Weapons

**The** 4<sup>th</sup> chapter in Tehillim deals with Jews who feel they need strengthening in *avodat Hashem*. One of the verses in the chapter says, "Tremble, and do not sin. Say in your hearts upon your beds and be still, forever" (Tehillim 4:5).

**The** Gemara explains the verse as follows...<sup>3</sup>

**One** should always incite their *yetzer hatov* [to go to war] against their *yetzer hara* [so that they won't sin], as it says, "Tremble, and do not sin."



Parashat Vayetze - The Journey of The Soul

**If** one succeeds [in subduing their *yetzer hara*], excellent, but if not, they should endeavor in Torah study [and this should defeat the *yetzer hara*], as it says, “Say in your hearts,” [that is, say words of Torah and ponder them in your hearts.]

**If** one succeeds [in subduing their *yetzer hara* through Torah study], excellent, but if not, they should recite *Keriyat Shema*, [which contains the acceptance of the yoke of heaven and the concept of reward and punishment], as it says, “upon your beds,” [which alludes to the

words “when you lie down,” in *Keriyat Shema*.]

**If** one succeeds [in subduing their *yetzer hara* through reciting *Keriyat Shema*], excellent, but if not, they should contemplate the day of their death [and this should defeat the *yetzer hara*], as it says, “and be still, forever,” [that is, the day that is completely silent, the day of death.]

**More** than a millennium passed after these words were written in the holy Gemara, and as the *Ohr HaChaim* was studying these words, he found a source for them in the first verses of our parasha...

### The Journey of The Soul

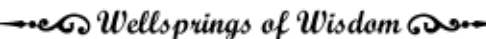
**By** way of *remez*, these verses allude to the phases of man, from the time of his soul’s descent from the higher worlds down to our world, until the time of its return...

**This** is how the *Ohr HaChaim* interprets the verses...

**“Yaakov left”** – the Zohar says<sup>4</sup> that the soul of the Jew is

called “Yaakov” (יַעֲקֹב) because the *yetzer hara* constantly accompanies us, wrapped around our heels (עֲקָב), so to speak, and when its time comes, it descends from the higher world.

**“Beer Sheva”** – (מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע) the place from which the souls descend is called “the well of living waters” (בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים) and



4. Zohar HaKadosh (Vayetzei 147a).

”שָׁבַע” alludes to the oath (שְׁבוּעָה) that Hashem makes every soul swear before it descends that it won’t transgress the words of the Torah.

“**and** went toward Charan” – it goes down to this world and begins the course of its life, and then, “Charan” (חֶרֶן), the *yetzer hara* enters man from the moment he leaves his mother’s womb (מִרְחֵם) and begins his efforts to lead him astray.

“**He reached the place**” – the word “reached” means prayer.<sup>5</sup> In order to save oneself from the *yetzer hara*, one needs to invoke Hashem’s help through prayer, Hashem being the “place” of the world,<sup>6</sup> that He not leave us in the *yetzer’s* hands.

“**and he slept there, for the sun had set**” – one must conduct themselves properly all their life until they die, i.e. “until their sun sets.” This is what *chazal* say,<sup>7</sup> “Don’t be certain of yourself until the day of your death.”

“**He took of the stones of that place**” – the stones of that place are the words of Torah, which are the building blocks of the world, and with them, we can stone the *yetzer hara* and its forces, as *chazal* testify,<sup>8</sup> “The Torah saves you from the *yetzer hara* not only when you are engaged in its study but even when you’re temporarily not engaged in its study.”

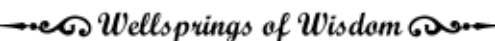
**There** are two more pieces of advice to save yourself from the *yetzer hara* besides prayer and Torah...

**1. “and set them around his head”** – recite *Keriyat Shema* upon one’s bed.

**2. “and lay down [to sleep] in that place”** – contemplate the day of one’s death, the day when you will “lay down in that place...”

**After** employing all these means, it’s guaranteed that you will defeat the *yetzer hara* !!!

“**He dreamed, and behold a ladder was set on the earth, and**



5. Brachot 26b.

6. Bereshit Rabbah 68:9.

7. Pirkei Avot 2:4.

8. Sotah 21a.

**the top of it reached the heavens, and behold angels of Elokim were ascending and descending on it”** – after one has merited defeating their *yetzer hara* and purifying their body from lusts and

negative *middot* (traits), they’ll have become worthy of receiving prophecy, of Hashem revealing Himself to them in a dream.

**Let’s** expand on his holy words...

### **The Longing of The Soul**

**At** the time of creation, all the souls of Am Israel received a personal mission.

**Since** that moment, the souls stand and wait for their time to descend to this world, for they know that coming down here is essential, important, and critical.

**They** know that their eternal destiny depends entirely on their performance here in this world.

We’ll explain...

**There** was once a man whom Hashem blessed with precious children, each one unique in their own way. He took much pleasure in them all the years of their youth.

**Then**, the stage of marriage arrived. For some reason, none of them were able to get married.

**There** are no words to describe the grief of their parents.

Although we have a rule that “time is the best medicine,” in this case, “time” was the cause of sorrow.

**Every** day that passed while the “chicks” were still in the “nest,” the feeling of sorrow intensified. This was especially true regarding the daughters who were unable to find their match, the feeling of sorrow was doubled...

**Another** day passed, another month, another year... The pain was great. She longed to get married. Her parents prayed to Hashem that He would send her a match, waiting for her to leave the house already. Not because they want her to leave but because they want her to build her own family.

**One** day, the long-awaited time arrived. Hashem sent a very special, virtuous young man. He even quickly managed to integrate

## Parashat Vayetze - The Trail

into the family, as if he was always a part of it, truly a gift from heaven.

**The** *shevah brachot* had yet to come to an end, and the parents had already approached their daughter and asked, “Come to us for Shabbat...”

**The** same thing happens with the soul. Before its descent into this world, it’s like a mature daughter living in her parents’ house. She lives at home at the expense of her father and mother, it’s her house, but at the same time, it’s not her house... It’s her house in the sense of using it to eat, drink, sleep, etc., but she can’t sell it because she doesn’t own it... But when she gets married, she enters her own home.

**The** soul, when still above, is similar to that mature daughter. Everyone’s waiting for her to leave already. But when she leaves this world, it’s like a married daughter coming for Shabbat.

**This** world’s virtue is that one can achieve things that can only be achieved down here, only that there are many delusions and misconceptions that prevent a person from hitting the target.

**The** Lubavitcher Rebbe writes that someone who believes in *Hashgacha Pratit* (Divine Providence) knows that “Man’s steps are established by Hashem” (Tehillim 37:23). That every soul has its own individual mission, and it’s incumbent upon it to refine and bring about the *tikkun* of something specific in a particular place. Only this particular soul can fulfill its specific mission. Sometimes that which needs refinement or *tikkun* waits for centuries or even since the world’s creation for this soul to come and refine it or bring about its *tikkun*. The soul, too, ever since it came into being, has been waiting for its time to descend so that it can fulfill the mission assigned to it of refining and bringing about the *tikkun*...

## The Trail

**Hashem** sends the soul of a Jew down to this world

to carry out the mission He assigned to it. According to its

mission, thus the conditions it receives.<sup>9</sup>

**Hashem** paves the way for each soul according to its needs, and the path He paves is very accurate... There are souls that in order to carry out their missions, need to live for many years, and there are souls that require fewer years. These are very deep matters that we don't get into. But surely, everyone has a fixed time.

**Everything** a Jew goes through in this world is for the purpose of fulfilling their mission. Sometimes someone misses out on the opportunities given to them, and they must close those gaps through suffering. Sometimes they'll receive bodily suffering, sometimes emotional suffering, sometimes they'll close those gaps through financial problems, and sometimes through hardships

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**9. For** example, one soul is assigned a mission to drive children to Talmud Torah, and for the purpose of its mission, it receives a bus...

**Once**, a director of a Talmud Torah and a bus driver came before Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l for a *Din Torah*. They agreed on a fixed number of students, and over time, the Talmud Torah grew, Baruch Hashem, and the director requested to add more children to the bus. There was room on the bus, but the bus driver demanded an increase in his salary. The director of the Talmud Torah claimed that his salary was determined by the number of stops and not by passengers! What does it matter if a few more children get on at the same stations...

**Rabbi** Ben Tzion heard the two sides of the argument, turned to the bus driver, and asked, "Do you bid for the opening

of the Ark or the taking out the Sefer Torah from the Ark during *Kol Nidrei* on Yom Kippur night?"

**"Of** course! No question," he answered.

**"How** much do you bid?" Rabbi Ben Tzion asked.

**"Depends..."** he replied.

**"Know,"** Rabbi Ben Tzion said, "every time you open the door for a child, it's like opening the ark on Yom Kippur night, and picking up another child and transporting him is like taking out the Sefer Torah during *Kol Nidrei*! In the Ark, there are Torah Scrolls, and in the bus, there are righteous, pure children traveling to study Torah! Thus, who needs to pay for that, you or the director?!"

- Rabbeinu HaOhr LeTzion (Vol. 3, p. 180).

## Parashat Vayetze - Fight Until The End

from their family. The entire purpose of suffering is to atone for sins committed in the past or to complete mitzvot that weren't fulfilled or which lacked intention.

**Sometimes** in this incarnation a person was fine, but in their previous one, they sinned and must fix their mistakes.

**In** someone's previous incarnation, he was a manager of a certain factory, and instead of being a good person, he constantly insulted his employees, belittling them, not paying them on time...

**No** one wanted to work for him, but what could they do? They have ten children at home... With no choice, they remained put, silently eating the insults and their hearts...

**He** then passed away...

**His** soul went up and stood before the Throne of Glory. Dark angels surrounded him, trying to obliterate him...

**The** manager of the factory returned again to this world, but this time as a miserable, poor man. He was hired as a factory worker... The poor man begins to pay off the debt from his previous incarnation. Every day he returns home from the factory broken and mentally crushed...

**We** understand nothing of these deep matters. Hashem's ways are hidden...

**That's** why many questions that people have stem from a lack of knowledge and a lack of understanding. But, in *shamayim*, everything is clear. There are no mistakes, no questions!

**A** person goes on a hike in the mountains. There's an easy trail, an intermediate trail, and a difficult trail, but whichever they go down, they all come to an end. The important part is to finish the trail successfully – and that's only possible by conquering the *yetzer hara*!

## Fight Until The End

**We** must know that conquering the *yetzer hara* encompasses a

person's entire life, from the time they're born, until after their death.



**The** Gemara states<sup>10</sup> that the *yetzer hara* enters a person from the moment they emerge from they're born and not before because if he had entered while they were still in the womb, he would cause the baby to kick his mother's womb and exit...

**The** *yetzer hara* provokes a person at all ages, and at every age, he has his own ways and his own language. Thus, one should always beware of him. Even after death, so long the person isn't buried yet, the *yetzer hara* tries to break them.

**As** a person is laid on the ground, before the eulogies begin, the *yetzer* comes to them and says, "Soon, people will eulogize you. What praises they'll say about you! Now everyone will know how truly great you were!"

**If** they fall to pride, they lose everything in one moment!

**The** eulogies begin, and the *yetzer* tells them, "Listen to what they're saying about you! Listen,

listen..." The person is already dead, but the *yetzer* is still in full force. They place the person in the grave, but the *yetzer hara* fights to the finish. They cover the person with earth, and he still tries to overcome them...

**He** continues to fight to the last shovel. Only then is the war over.

**We** must know that the *yetzer hara* never attacks us with big things. He always starts with small things. With sins or lusts that don't appear to us as threatening. Even in the midst of the test, he gives us the feeling that we're stronger, that we're managing to "defeat" him. Then, we become complacent, and in the process, the *yetzer* turns around and finishes us...

**The** *yetzer hara* has now celebrated his 5,783<sup>rd</sup> birthday. He's very old, but he's never aged... He's stayed young, dynamic, and energetic, and he's very wise. He's called "An old and foolish king." On the one hand, he's old and has a lot of wisdom. He has many

## Parashat Vayetze - Fight Until The End

methods to bring people down.<sup>11</sup>  
On the other hand, he's a fool.

Deny him several times, even with  
the same excuse, and he'll buy it...

### ~*Wellsprings of Wisdom*~

**11. The** following true story was told by  
a man who wishes to remain anonymous...

I was born into a respectable family in Yerushalayim. My father was a great Talmid Chacham who sat and studied all his life, always running away from honor. We lived an impoverished life, but the joy and spirit of the Torah always manifested in the house. My father sent my brothers and me to "Etz Chaim," the same Talmud Torah and yeshiva where he studied in his youth.

I was very diligent and successful in my studies, and Baruch Hashem, my teachers, and my parents were very satisfied with me. When I was 19 years old, I was offered a *shidduch* with the daughter of a prominent rabbi in New York. My aunt, who lived in the United States, was the matchmaker, and she urged my parents to send me to America because it was a "perfect match."

**At** that time, right after the establishment of the state of Israel, it was very difficult to attain an "exit permit" from the army. Only after several months of effort did I receive the long-awaited permit, and a week after Simchat Torah, 5710 (1949), I set out by boat to meet the important *shidduch*.

**After** the long, arduous journey and after many other incidents, the engagement took place on Chanukah at the bride's house, and the wedding was set for the end of the summer. The bride's parents wanted us to live in Yerushalayim. It was decided

that we, the young couple, would make the decision until the time of the wedding.

I guess it wasn't a match from heaven because, before Pesach, the wedding was canceled. I was devastated, and of course, my parents were broken as well after all the hassles, preparations, etc... My parents wrote to me that I should immediately return to Israel, but I, whether because of the shame or because of the pain I went through, decided not to return to Israel.

**A** friend of mine that I met in New York, also from Yerushalayim, told me that he had a job offer in Cleveland, and I decided to join him.

**At** first, I continued in my normal way of life, not even changing my way of dress, but slowly I began to deteriorate spiritually. My long coat was switched out for a short jacket. My shaved head became a well-kept hairstyle, and my little beard that only recently started to grow was shaved off...

**In** the first few months, despite the change of clothing and the spiritual decline, I continued to observe a religious life, but little by little, I began to deteriorate under the influence of bad friends until, over time, I completely abandoned my entire religious way of life. I didn't put on *tefillin*, didn't keep Shabbat, didn't eat kosher, nothing...

**Of** course, I didn't write to my parents about all the changes. From the letters I continued

**Parashat Vayetze - Fight Until The End**

to send, they only knew that I lived in Cleveland and was studying and working.

**After** over a year, I returned to New York to visit my aunt and uncle, and when I entered the house, they were shocked at the sight. They thought I was still religious because I made sure to put on a kippah in their house, but they asked me what my parents would say in view of the drastic change in appearance. I assured them that my parents didn't know about it, and I told them that I would slowly find a way to inform my parents about my American appearance. I even asked them to help me convince my parents, when the time comes, that here in America, it's not a bad thing for an Orthodox Jew to dress like this...

**My** aunt and uncle tried telling me that if I didn't want to return to Israel and I wanted to stay here in America, I should at least find a *shidduch*. I explained to them that because of the anguish that I went through by canceling my wedding, I wasn't even able to think about getting married, and especially that here in America, unlike in Yerushalayim, a 21-year-old boy isn't considered too old at all...

**Purim** occurred during the week that I visited my aunt and uncle in Crown Heights. After the bountiful Purim feast, I decided to go for a walk to get some fresh air. While walking down the street, I suddenly saw two Chassidic Jews, a father and son, running like crazy. I called out to them, "What happened?! Where are you running to?!" The boy screamed back at me, "We're running to the Lubavitcher

Rebbe's farbrengen. "Where is it?" I asked him, and he pointed out the place.

**I** don't know why I asked him, and I don't know why I decided to go there, maybe out of curiosity or maybe because I had nothing else to do. Anyway, long story short, I arrived at the place, and when I entered, I saw hundreds of people sitting and standing, crowded, and listening in complete silence to whom I understood to be the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

**A** few minutes after entering, I wanted to leave already. I realized that I had no business there at all. But as soon as I started toward the exit, the lecture stopped, and they started singing and saying *l'chaim*, and I found myself staying put.

**Suddenly**, everyone went silent, and the Rebbe began to speak again. He spoke about how when the Mashiach comes, all the holidays will be annulled except for Purim. For some reason, I was interested in hearing his beautiful explanation on this matter. I don't remember everything, but he talked about how Purim is a day of *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice), and on it, every Jew's soul is revealed even more than on Yom Kippur, and therefore, Purim can never be annulled.

**Suddenly** I felt that I was turning pale. It seemed to me that the Rebbe was talking about me! He spoke about how the *yetzer hara* was a master in his craft. At first, he comes to a young man and takes him out of the yeshiva for a supposedly holy reason. Then he succeeds in seducing him to go out into the big world to look for a job because "Torah study

## Parashat Vayetze - Fight Until The End

is good together with an occupation” (Pirkei Avot 2:2). Then, he seduces him that America is different from all countries and that, “One who goes to a certain country should behave according to their customs” (Shemot Rabbah 47:5) – he must change his clothing and appearance to the customs of America...

**Then** he tells him, “Time is money,” and instead of praying the entire tefillah, you can be content with only putting on tefillin at home. The Rebbe went on and on and described how he entices him to desecrate Shabbat and eat non-kosher food until even Yom Kippur fails to awaken him from his sleep and bring him back to true good...

**But** then comes Purim, a day of *mesirut nefesh*, and the Jewish soul awakens within him until he firmly decides that I will “neither kneel nor bow” (Megillat Ester 3:2), and escapes the darkness and returns to good because Purim has a special power that isn’t found in all other holidays.

**As** the Rebbe continued to speak, I felt as if the whole audience was looking at me until I said to myself, “I’m just imagining. First of all, no one in the audience knows who the Rebbe is referring to. Secondly, the Rebbe himself probably isn’t referring to me. It’s true that all the details suit me perfectly, but the Rebbe surely isn’t referring to me. After all, he can’t see me and doesn’t even know me. I’m crowded here among hundreds of people, and there are quite a few here whose external appearances are similar to mine. It’s only a coincidence that the examples the Rebbe gave fit me exactly. I relaxed a little...

**But** suddenly, I heard the continuation of the Rebbe’s words, “Particularly when the young man comes from the Holy Land, from the holy city of Yerushalayim where Purim there contains the matter of “close and visible,” “close and not visible,” “visible and not close.” It’s possible that he’s “close,” that he’s to be found here, even if it seems to him that he’s not “visible,” that he’s not seen...”

**The** only thing that calmed me down was that at least no one understood except for me. The crowd truly didn’t understand. The Rebbe’s words sounded very natural, as part of his talk, no one imagined what was going on inside one young man from Yerushalayim that stood among them.

**I** was shocked, filled with emotion and astonishment, and then the Rebbe stopped, and a lively singing that grew louder and louder recommenced.

**People** started saying “L’chaim!” to the Rebbe. I suddenly felt someone forcefully push me by the shoulder. I looked up and saw that everyone was looking at me. Only then did I see that the Rebbe was also looking at me with a smile and motioned for me to say, “L’chaim!” Someone gave me some vodka in a cup, and the Rebbe motioned to him to pour me a larger cup. He filled the cup, but I explained to him that I couldn’t drink that much. He then shouted at me, “The Rebbe’s waiting. Say “L’chaim.” I said “L’chaim” and drank a sip, but the Rebbe motioned that I finish the entire cup. After I finished, the Rebbe suddenly signed to me, “Another one!” They filled the cup

## It Won't Happen to Me

**The** *Ohr HaChaim* explained the verse, "...and he slept there, for the sun had set," by saying that a Jew must guard themselves from the *yetzer hara* their entire life until the time of "sleeping" arrives – until the day of their death.

**The** way to save yourself from the *yetzer* is through constant vigilance and knowing that the *yetzer* consistently attempts to make us fall, especially when we're mentally or physically weak.

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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again, and I said "L'chaim!" and finished it until the last drop.

I don't remember what happened next, only that the next morning at some not-so-early hour, I woke up extremely thirsty and with a terrible headache and found myself on some bench, surrounded by several other Chassidic men sleeping on benches, and my fancy suit was soaked in vomit and dirt...

**When** I returned to my aunt and uncle's house, I told them that I had visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe and that the chassidim there gave me a few drinks. But of course, I didn't tell them the actual story. Not to them nor to anyone else. It remains a secret between the Rebbe and me...

**When** I prayed shacharit that day, wearing *tefillin*, I cried as I had never cried before and as I hadn't cried in the 42 years that have passed since then...

A few weeks later, on *Seder* night, I was sitting at the table in Yerushalayim with my parents and siblings. Even if they were somewhat sorrowful over the change of

clothing, they were probably comforted by seeing the *yirat shamayim* and all the traditions that hadn't changed. And actually, within a short time, even my clothing and appearance returned to how it was before...

**Today**, Baruch Hashem, I've been blessed with children and dozens of grandchildren, all of them wholesome and *yirei shamayim*. I went to America several times since then, and on every occasion, I really wanted to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe, go to one of his farbrengens, or pray with him. But each time, instinctively, I feared getting close to someone who could look through me with x-ray vision... Maybe I was subconsciously afraid that he would start talking about me in public again...

**It** was only in the year 1994, in the month of Elul, when I had the opportunity to be in New York for a joyous family gathering, that I "dared" to go visit the Rebbe at the Ohel (the Rebbe's resting place) and whisper to him, for the first time, "Thank you."

- VeRabim Heshiv MeAvon (Vol. 1, p. 140).

**Don't** say, "It won't happen to me." Many people said that and ended up falling into the darkest places. Many beautiful families broke apart because of those words...

**Life** a second after sinning is nothing like the second before the sin! After falling, people are ready and willing to put their bodies on the altar for Hashem to take them, only to achieve atonement for their sins and to go back to how things used to be. But why come to that? Why get to the stage of crying and endlessly regretting your actions if you can be spared of all that by not sinning?

**Never** put yourself in a situation where you provoke the *yetzer hara*.

**You** know you're driving up a winding mountain very close to the edge of the cliff, don't say, "I'm a professional driver. I won't fall." You may be a professional driver, but the government doesn't trust your professionalism and puts up a guard rail and signs.

**We're** obliged to set up a fence for ourselves. A person recognizes that they have a certain weakness, between them and themselves, between them and Hashem – put up a fence so that you don't make that mistake.

**Praiseworthy** is the person who takes these words seriously...

**After** we understand the purpose of the descent of the soul and we recognize its greatest enemy, we'll now learn a few tactics of war...

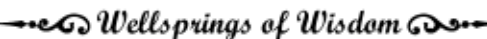
## War Tactics

**HaRav** Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes...<sup>12</sup>

**The Ohr HaChaim** continues and teaches us that the main, best

advice to be saved from the enemy, the *yetzer hara*, is prayer!

**The yetzer hara** is very, very clever, much more than man. In



addition to that, let's not forget that the *yetzer hara* is an angel made of fire, whereas man is made of flesh and blood. Therefore, there's no chance in the world that man will succeed in defeating his *yetzer hara* unless Hashem helps him and bestows upon him supernatural powers to overcome the *yetzer*.

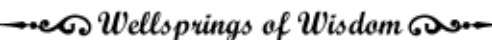
**As** Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says...<sup>13</sup> A person's *yetzer hara* strengthens against him each day and seeks to kill him, as it says, "The wicked one watches the righteous one and seeks to kill him" (Tehillim 37:32), and if not for Hashem helping him, he wouldn't be able to overcome the *yetzer*, as it says, "Hashem shall not leave him [to fall] into his hand, nor let him be condemned in judgment" (Tehillim 37:33).

**In** order to merit this help, we must increase in prayers and supplications every day to Hashem to have mercy on us and give us the strength to succeed in overcoming all the tests and

obstacles that our *yetzer hara* sets for us at every step of our lives. In the merit of these prayers, Hashem will help us and not leave us in the hands of the *yetzer hara*.

**Every** person is obligated to pray these prayers until their last day on earth, even when their old, and it seems to them that the *yetzer hara* has left them to their own devices, as *chazal* say,<sup>14</sup> "Don't believe in yourself until the day of your death." One should also include in these prayers even the day of their burial and ask of Hashem that even then, after their passing, the *yetzer hara* will not cause them to fall to heresy, *chas v'shalom*, or even to pride from hearing the praises that the people say about them before the burial.

**If** someone sees that after all the wars they waged against the *yetzer hara*, they still didn't succeed in defeating him, they should engage in Torah study with all their might because the letters of the Torah are



13. Sukkah 52b.

14. Pirkei Avot 2:4.

Parashat Vayetze - War Tactics

called “stones,”<sup>15</sup> in the aspect of, “the stones of that place,” that is, the stones of Hashem, Who is the “place” of the world, and the more a person increases in studying the letters of the Torah, the more they stone their *yetzer hara*.

**When** a yeshiva *bachur*, an *avrech*, or any other Jew sits and engages in Torah study *leshem shamayim* (for the sake of heaven), with *kedusha* (holiness) and *tahara* (purity), without interruption or idle talk, his face shines like the sun, and he receives enormous power to destroy his *yetzer hara*, as *chazal* say...<sup>16</sup> Hashem said to Am Israel, “My children, I created the *yetzer hara*, and I created Torah as his antidote. If you engage in Torah study, you won’t be given over into his hand.”

**If** the Torah that they learned isn’t strong and virtuous enough

to overcome their *yetzer*, *chazal* give another piece of advice, recite *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* (Bedtime Shema). The depth that lies in this advice is that the success of a person’s Torah study throughout the day depends greatly on the sanctity of their sleep at night. Therefore, *chazal* tell us that if someone sees that his Torah study during the day isn’t strong enough to overcome his *yetzer*, it’s a sign that he should strengthen his reciting of *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* at night.

**When** someone goes to sleep in *kedusha*, after reciting *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* with intention, the ministering angels receive their soul and raise it to the highest places, lead it to many upper halls, and allow it to enjoy all kinds of holy sights...<sup>17</sup>

—*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*—

15. Sefer Yetzirah 4:12.

16. Kiddushin 30b.



17. **On** a side note: Reciting *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* with great intention is extremely beneficial for bringing about *Tikkun Pegam HaBrit*, as the Alter Rebbe

writes in Tanya (Ch. 7): However, the life force in the drops of seed that one emitted wastefully, even though it has descended and merged into the three impure *kelipot*, can nevertheless ascend from there by means of proper *teshuvah* and great intention during the recitation



**And** after such a holy “trip,” the soul returns to the person in the morning full of renewed strength, in the aspect of what is said in the tefillah, “He renews in His goodness, each day, continuously, the works of creation,” and inevitably, throughout the day, he has enormous strength to study Torah. After a full, busy day of studying Torah, he again goes to sleep in *kedusha*, and once again, his soul is filled with renewed strength, and this repeats itself every day and every night, adding daily to the previous day and all this begins in the merit of *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita*.

**David** HaMelech teaches us, “When I remember You upon my bed, I contemplate You in the morning” (Tehillim 63:7), that is, when a person remembers Hashem when they go to bed at night, reading *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* with great intention, placing their soul in His hands, sleeping on their left side in holiness, and covering themselves with great modesty, this assists them greatly and gives them immense strength to leap from bed early in the morning with great joy and without any difficulty to run to serve Hashem, as Rabbi Yosef Karo rules,<sup>18</sup> “One should strengthen himself like a lion to

— *Wellsprings of Wisdom*  —

of *Kriyat Shema Al HaMita*, as is known from the teachings of the Arizal (Pri Etz Chaim – Shaar Keriyat Shema SheAl HaMita, ch. 5). This is alluded to in the Gemara (Brachot 5a), “Anyone who recites *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita*, it is as if he holds a double-edged sword...” [One edge] to kill the bodies of the *kelipot* that have become garments for the life force in the drops of seed, [and the other edge] to elevate the life force from them (from the *kelipot*).

**HaRav** Yoram zt”l told us the following: I once had the opportunity to speak with

the Baba Sali zt”l about this matter, and he told me that although reciting *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* with much intention has great power to bring about the *tikkun* for everything, this is on the condition that it’s recited while standing, and also that it’s recited from a *siddur* or the like, and not by heart. Whoever is meticulous in reciting *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* while standing and from a *siddur*, with Hashem’s help, will be able to achieve complete *tikkun* for everything...

**18.** Shulchan Aruch – Orach Chaim (1:1).

## Parashat Vayetze - Shabbat Shalom!

get up in the morning to serve his Creator, so that it is he who awakens the dawn.”

**We've** received a promise from our Rabbis that anyone who is particular and consistent in getting up early in the morning to serve Hashem will never have problems raising their children. HaRav Yoram said, “I've seen with my own eyes *avrechim* who were excellent in their studies, but in the matter of waking up early, they were very weak, and later on in life, they went through many hardships in raising their children. What ensures that your children will merit being true *Bnei Torah* all their lives is the waking up

early of their father for the service of Hashem.”

**After** all this, the Torah says about Yaakov Avinu, “Behold, Hashem stood over him” (Bereshit 28:13), implying that anyone who merits conducting themselves according to the above, engaging in Torah study, and guarding their actions, words, and thoughts according to Hashem's will during the day, and when the night arrives goes to sleep in *kedusha* after reciting *Keriyat Shema Al HaMita* with great intention as his soul is satisfied with spiritual abundance – the day will come when Hashem will rest His Holy Shechina upon them in all its strength and glory!

**Shabbat Shalom!**



## *The Pathway...*

1. At the time of creation, all the souls of Am Israel received a personal mission. Since that moment, the souls stand and wait for their time to descend to this world, for they know that coming down here is essential, important, and critical. They know that their eternal destiny depends entirely on their performance here in this world. This world's virtue is that one can achieve things that can only be achieved down here, only that there are many delusions and misconceptions that prevent a person from hitting the target.

2. The Lubavitcher Rebbe writes that someone who believes in Divine Providence knows that "Man's steps are established by Hashem" (Tehillim 37:23). That every soul has its own individual mission, and it's incumbent upon it to refine and bring about the *tikkun* of something specific in a particular place. Only this particular soul can fulfill its specific mission. Sometimes that which needs refinement or *tikkun* waits for centuries or even since the world's creation for this soul to come and refine it or bring about its *tikkun*. The soul, too, ever since it came into being, has been waiting for its time to descend so that it can fulfill the mission assigned to it of refining and bringing about the *tikkun*...

3. Hashem sends the soul of a Jew down to this world to carry out the

mission He assigned to it. According to its mission, thus the conditions it receives.

4. Hashem paves the way for each soul according to its needs, and the path He paves is very accurate. There are souls that in order to carry out their missions, need to live for many years, and there are souls that require fewer years. These are very deep matters that we don't get into.

But surely, everyone has a fixed time.

5. Everything a Jew goes through in this world is for the purpose of fulfilling their mission. Sometimes someone misses out on the opportunities given to them, and they must close those gaps through suffering. Sometimes they'll receive bodily suffering, sometimes emotional suffering, sometimes they'll close those gaps through financial problems, and sometimes through hardships from their family. The entire purpose of suffering is to atone for sins committed in the past or to complete mitzvot that weren't fulfilled or which lacked intention.

6. We must know that conquering the *yetzer hara* encompasses a person's entire life, from the time they're born, until after their death. The Gemara states that the *yetzer hara* enters a person from the moment they emerge from they're born. The *yetzer hara* provokes a person at all ages, and at every age, he has his

*The Pathway...*

own ways and his own language. Thus, one should always beware of him. Even after death, so long the person isn't buried yet, the *yetzer hara* tries to break them. He continues to fight to the last shovel. Only then is the war over.

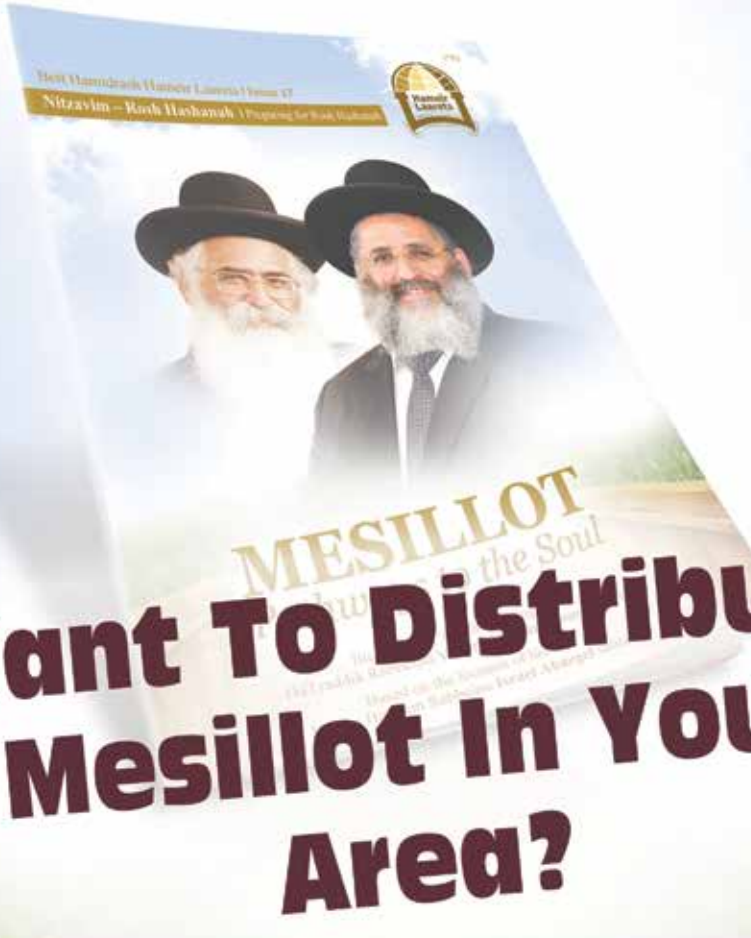
7. We must know that the *yetzer hara* never attacks us with big things. He always starts with small things. With sins or lusts that don't appear to us as threatening. Even in the midst of the test, he gives us the feeling that we're stronger, that we're managing to "defeat" him. Then, we become complacent, and in the process, the *yetzer* turns around and finishes us...

8. The *yetzer hara* is called "An old and foolish king." On the one hand, he's old and has a lot of wisdom. He has many methods to bring people

down. On the other hand, he's a fool. Deny him several times, even with the same excuse, and he'll buy it. The *Ohr HaChaim* teaches us that the main, and best advice to be saved from the enemy, the *yetzer hara*, is prayer!

9. We must increase in prayers and supplications every day to Hashem to have mercy on us and give us the strength to succeed in overcoming all the tests and obstacles that our *yetzer hara* sets for us at every step of our lives. In the merit of these prayers, Hashem will help us and not leave us in the hands of the *yetzer hara*. Every person is obligated to pray these prayers until their last day on earth, even when their old, and it seems to them that the *yetzer hara* has left them to their own devices, as *chazal* say, "Don't believe in yourself until the day of your death."





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New York	4:12 pm	5:15 pm	5:42 pm
Miami	5:14 pm	6:08 pm	6:44 pm
Los Angeles	4:26 pm	5:25 pm	5:56 pm
Montreal	3:55 pm	5:02 pm	5:25 pm
Toronto	4:25 pm	5:30 pm	5:54 pm
London	3:38 pm	4:53 pm	5:08 pm
Jerusalem	4:20 pm	5:10 pm	5:42 pm
Tel Aviv	4:16 pm	5:06 pm	5:37 pm
Haifa	4:13 pm	5:03 pm	5:34 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:17 pm	5:07 pm	5:39 pm

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**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*If you wish to succeed in Torah study, in parenting, in business, etc., always behave with the trait of Ahavat Israel, and be careful not to hurt, offend, or embarrass anyone, even in the slightest.*

*Even if you encounter a person that may seem very weird to you, don't disdain them in your heart, for Hashem is the One who created them that way.*



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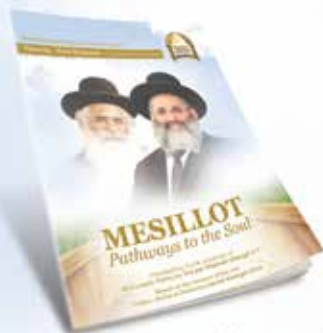
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