

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 147

**Ki Tisa** | The Golden Calf - Greed and Avarice

# MESILOT

## *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 Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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## Parshat Ki Tisa

### I Was A Lost Sheep...

**Sounds** of joy were heard within the house: 'So much fun! We're going to Grandpa Yaakov!'

**Grandpa** Yaakov was a special grandfather, one who saw the good in every grandchild, and knew how to compliment and honor each one. And when Grandpa Yaakov started to tell stories, the grandchildren sat captivated and enthralled...

**After** a lengthy journey, they finally arrived at Grandpa Yaakov's house, and as expected, he did not disappoint and began a story:<sup>1</sup>

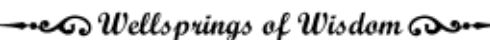
**The** holy Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, of blessed memory, was one of the great leaders of Chassidut and many of his teachings and stories have been passed down to us.

**Our** story occurred in his youth, shortly after his wedding.

**In** the town of Bendin in Poland, there lived a devout and G-d-fearing scholar. One day, the Jewish community leaders approached him and said: "As you know, our town has a very large library, and naturally, the books wear out from use and need to be preserved. Additionally, we occasionally need to purchase new books.

**For** this purpose, we've established a special fund, and anyone who wishes, contributes to it, and with it, we manage and maintain the library.

**We** are currently looking for a responsible person to take on the role of librarian, for pay, of course.



1. 'The Rebbe, Rabbi Bunim of Pshis'cha' (vol. 1, Page 48), by Rabbi Menachem Yehuda Boim.

**Are** you willing?" and the young Torah scholar immediately agreed.

**Time** passed, and one day, a Jew arrived in Bendin and related that he was blessed with a large family and three of his daughters were to marry in that year. Given the considerable expenses, he had no choice but to go out and collect money.

**His** fundraising in the city of Bendin ended, and the Jew sat on a small rock, counting the money he had collected and a feeling of disappointment filled his heart: "Is this all, so little? What shall I do now?"

**In** that same town lived Rabbi Simcha Bunim, who at that time was a young scholar, and used to sit all day in the study hall, diligently studying Torah.

**On** that day, Rabbi Simcha Bunim happened to pass by that rock... and saw the Jew bent-over sitting on the rock, tears streaming from his eyes...

**"Dear** Jew, what happened?"

**And** that Jew told him about the large sum of money he needed to raise...

**Rabbi** Simcha Bunim thought for a while, and then turned to the Jew and said, "Wait for me here, I will return shortly".

**He** at once made his way to the house of that Torah scholar who was newly responsible for the library fund.

**"Listen,** my friend, a needy Jew has come here in need of money, and I want to give him some, but I don't have any money right now... I have an idea, lend me some money from the fund, and I will commit to return it in a week's time."

**The** scholar agreed and lent him the money, and Rabbi Simcha Bunim, with a happy heart, went to the Jew and gave him the money with a smile and a bright countenance...

**Somehow,** the community leaders found out about this and were filled with rage.

"**How** could such a 'disgrace' happen in our community, to take money from our library fund to give to some wandering poor person?!"

**Knocks** were heard on the door of the scholar's house, and at the entrance stood the community's beadle holding a letter: "On behalf of the community leaders, you are summoned to judgment today between the afternoon and evening prayers"...

(Parenthetically: In those days, the community leaders had a very strong hand, and they had the authority to impose heavy punishments, both corporal and financial...)

**The** scholar turned pale with fear, and he went at once to Rabbi Simcha Bunim and told him what had happened...

**Rabbi** Simcha Bunim smiled and said: "I know these community leaders, they are completely ignorant and don't even know how to complete a verse in Psalms. Don't worry, I will come with you, and with G-d's help, everything will be alright."

**The** afternoon prayer ended, and the community leaders sat around a long table, and the 'prosecutor' rose and began to loudly accuse the scholar, who sat at the end of the table, anxious and ashamed, "How dare you do such a thing without permission?"

**Many** murmuring voices were heard: "True, true, he must be taught a lesson"...

**Rabbi** Simcha Bunim calmly stood up and said: "As you know, according to Torah law, before imposing a punishment on someone, he has the right to defend himself. However, since this scholar, my dear friend, is not able to plead for himself, I ask to speak on his behalf and present my arguments to you. But, before I begin my arguments, I want to ask you all a question.

**King** David says in Psalms: 'I am lost like a sheep in straw' (a mispronunciation of "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant..." Psalms 119:176).

**Now**, this verse is difficult to interpret, what does it mean that the sheep is lost among the straw?

**Parshat Ki Tisa - I Was A Lost Sheep...**

(They were all ignorant and did not know the meaning of the words that Rabbi Simcha Bunim had misconstrued...)

**And** they all perplexedly looked at each other to see who among them could answer such a 'difficult' question. But, as expected, none of them knew to explain.

**And** Rabbi Simcha Bunim, in his remarkable wisdom, said: 'Well, good, I will try to explain to you the meaning of this difficult verse, and so that you understand it well - I will explain it to you by the means of a parable:

**In** the African savannah, life went on as usual. All the animals and beasts lived each under their vine and fig tree in happiness...

**But** one bright day something terrible happened. A mysterious disease began to rage in the savannah, and it caused horrible destruction among the animals and beasts...

**The** lion, the king of the beasts, paced back and forth... 'What to do? How do we overcome this disaster?'

**And** after some deep thought, he decided to hold a large meeting with all the animals and beasts to try to find out whose fault it was that this great calamity had befallen them. For surely, G-d had sent them this plague not for no reason, but surely, because of the sins and transgressions they had committed - G-d had sent His wrath upon them...

**And** the king lion issued a decree saying: every beast and animal in the camp that has sinned, transgressed, and rebelled should come here to confess, and its judgment would be determined at once for better or worse. And all the animals and beasts came before the king to confess.

**The** first to come was the leopard, and he stood before the king and confessed: 'My lord, the king, high and exalted! What can I say and what can I speak? Some time ago, I was very hungry. I hadn't eaten for several days, I wandered and wandered and looked for prey but couldn't find any. Suddenly, my eyes brightened, a group of tourists

**Parshat Ki Tisa - I Was A Lost Sheep...**

arrived at the savannah. Honestly, I hesitated a lot and didn't know what to do, if to let them pass in peace, or to devour at least one of them to quench my hunger ?

**My** conscience started to bother me a little, and I almost let them go in peace, but my hunger overcame me greatly and I couldn't withstand it. I made a giant leap, and tore and ate one of the tourists and thereby quenched my hunger'...

**'Perhaps** because of this sin' - the leopard finished his confession - 'this whole disaster befell us'.

**The** king and his ministers consulted among themselves, and the king lion answered the leopard: 'Why did such a thought occur to you, to attribute guilt to these actions of yours? Aren't you a leopard? You were created to consume, and surely when you were hungry and tore up a man to quench your hunger, you did well, justly and righteously. And now, my son, return in peace and let not your conscience disturb you, for what you did finds favor in the eyes of G-d and man'.

**And** so, after him, all the animals came to confess their sins, and none of them were found to be at fault.

**The** wolf came and confessed his sin and said: 'Hear me, the ministers and our lord the king lion.

**Once**, I too was very hungry and I went to seek prey. I saw a cow grazing in the field and behind her walked a small and tender calf, and since I was very hungry, I didn't think much, and I devoured them both at once. But after I was relieved of my hunger, I thought to myself, maybe I shouldn't have torn both of them all at once, and maybe this whole calamity befell us because of me !'

**The** ministers consulted among themselves, and the king once again issued his verdict, saying: 'This entire calamity did not come because of you. You did what is expected of a wolf like you. You may tear whatever comes to hand, ox, lamb, and its offspring on the same day, for you have the right as predator. Therefore, return to your place in peace, and may your conscience be at peace with you.'

**Parshat Ki Tisa - I Was A Lost Sheep...**

**When** all the animals had finished confessing and were found as innocent as snow, at last, came the turn of the poor sheep, who had stood the entire time in a neglected corner trembling, and kneeling before them, began her confession:

**'Your** Majesty and the esteemed ministers, may I be your atonement and dust under your feet. I too will not hide from you what happened to me: as you know, I live in a small barn in the courtyard of my owner. The barn where I live is open on all sides, without a roof and without straw on the ground to rest my head on. The food I receive is really just the barest of sustenance. However, I have no choice, I know no other place, and am happy with my lot. And so, I endure difficult days, which I try to accept with love...

**But** - continued the poor sheep and said - once, there was an unbearable winter, thirty degrees below zero, and I was freezing and unbearably hungry. There was nothing to eat in the barn, the cold entered from the roof, and I was aching all over. I started to groan

and cry a lot until my owner woke up and saw my suffering, and in his great mercy, he brought me into his house to warm my bones a bit.

**When** he went back to bed, my hunger overwhelmed me unbearably, and I started looking around the house for something to satisfy my heart. And then my eyes were enlightened, I found my owner's big wooden shoes, and inside them was a little soft straw, intended to warm his feet. And I, being very hungry for a little food, couldn't control myself, and I took a little straw from the shoes and revived my soul'...

**She** had not yet finished speaking, and all the animals of the forest; the lion, the bear, the leopard, the wolf, and the fox, together with their king lion, rose up, and shouted loudly in unison:

**'Ah** ha! Finally, we have discovered the transgressor and troublemaker. It is you who brought this great calamity upon us'!

**In** their great wrath, they immediately pounced upon the



miserable sheep and beat her to a pulp...

**This** is what King David said in psalms - Rabbi Simcha Bunim finished his words - 'I am lost like a sheep in straw'.

**I** am like a lost sheep torn away from my land. But why is the sheep torn away, because of 'straw', because of the little straw that she ate. Not because of severe transgressions and sins, but only because of a little straw, which is indeed nothing at all...

**So** too my dear brethren - Rabbi Simcha Bunim continued and said - each one of you may commit great and terrible sins, yet you do not feel or see your own blemishes at all. But upon this poor, innocent scholar - you all rose up as one, to judge and punish him!

**And** all this, for what? For having saved a poor man in his time of need!

**He** merely borrowed some rubles from the library charity fund and will return them within a week, and for this, you were so angry!

**Ah**, truly a lost sheep...

**Rabbi** Simcha Bunim turned to each of the community leaders by name, and said to them: You, don't you remember this and that day, when you committed this and that sin in such and such a place... And you there, sinned and did so and so, with such and such an excuse.

**Only** upon the scholar, this innocent sheep, and he pointed his finger at the scholar standing on the side - you all erupted with a great noise, and found his sin to be unbearable! You should be ashamed of yourselves!

**Within** minutes the synagogue emptied... All those present dispersed for their lives as quickly as they could out of fear that Rabbi Simcha Bunim would reveal and open up their own can of worms... And peace finally returned to Bendin.

**The** grandchildren, who had been listening intently to Grandpa Yaakov, smiled happily: All's well that ends well.

**Only** one grandchild squirmed restlessly in his place...

**Parshat Ki Tisa - The Influence of the Ten Sefirot**

**Grandpa** Yaakov turned to him and asked: "Shmulik, what's wrong? Is something bothering you?"

**"Yes,** Grandpa! I can't understand how people can be so wicked? How can they acquit a murderous leopard who

devoured people, wolves that slaughter, and yet be so cruel to the good and poor little sheep?"

**"A** great question you have asked, my dear Shmulik, and I will try to answer you, please listen carefully...

**The Influence of the Ten Sefirot**

**When** it arose in G-d's will to create the world in order to bestow His goodness upon His creations, He first emanated ten very sublime and spiritual lights, known as the 'Ten Sefirot'.

**The** Ten Sefirot are hidden, concealed, and beyond our comprehension, yet G-d clothes Himself in them and by their means, created and governs all of existence.

**In** other words: The Ten Sefirot are the root of all the particulars of existence in the lower worlds. Every created being has a root in the Ten Sefirot.

**And** from these Sefirot descend all types of influence, generally divided into ten.

**In** the Ethics of the Fathers, our Sages enumerated eight of these influences<sup>2</sup>: beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom, old age, hoariness, and children.

**These** influences are necessary and essential for a person, for only through them can one recognize the Divine.

**In** the words of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick (Brit Avot, page 202):

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

2. This is in the language of the Mishnah: "Rabbi Shimon ben Yehudah, in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, says, 'Beauty, strength, wealth, honor,

wisdom, old age, hoariness, and children are fitting for the righteous and fitting for the world..." (Mishnah, Avot 6:8).

**‘The** whole reason the soul descends and incarnates in a physical and material body is solely to merit and recognize the Creator, blessed be He.

**But** for this, one needs vessels, because without vessels it is impossible to receive the divine light, and these eight types of influence help a person

be a vessel to receive the infinite light of G-d, as our Sages said (Shabbat 92a): The Divine Presence rests only a person who is wise, strong, wealthy, and of commanding presence.

**While** all of these types of influence are necessary, we will focus on one of them...

### Shining Gold and Silver

**In** the Zohar (Hashmatot 267a), there is a discourse called 'Li HaKesef VeLi HaZahav' ('The Silver and the Gold are Mine'), where are explained the deeper meaning and secrets of the verse: "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the L-rd of Hosts" (Haggai 2:8).

**There**, it is explained that wealth cascades into the world from the Sefirah of Gevurah (Might).

**To** further explain:

**In** the Kabbalistic works, we find there is an association between the Sefirot and colors; each Sefirah is related to a color.<sup>3</sup>

**The** color of Chesed (Kindness) is silver, while the color of Gevurah is gold.

**Silver** and gold in their highest source are lofty shades and levels, and in them is

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3. As detailed in "Ne'imot Netzach" (Part 3, Page 487) by Rabbi Chaim Menachem Kramer: "Keter (crown) - white, hidden and unseen. Chochmah (wisdom) - a color that includes all colors. Binah (understanding) - yellow and green. Chesed (kindness)

- white and silver. Gevurah (severity) - red and gold. Tiferet (beauty) - yellow and crimson. Netzach (eternity) - bright pink. Hod (glory) - dark pink. Yesod (foundation) - orange. Malchut (kingship) - blue."

clothed G-d's blessed light, as the verse says: 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the L-rd of Hosts'.

**The** Zohar (there) explains, why is it called 'Zahav' (gold)? Because it includes within it all the Sefirot.

**The** letter 'Zayin' (ז) numerically the value of seven, corresponds to the seven lower Sefirot (Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and the crown of Yesod), the letter 'Hey' (ה) numerically the value of five, corresponds to Malchut (Kingdom), and finally the letter 'Bet' (ב) numerically the value of two, corresponds to Chochmah (Wisdom) and Binah (Understanding).

**Silver** and gold are combinations of upper and lofty lights, and when they descend through the power of the Sefirah

of Gevurah into our physical world as gold and silver minerals.

Parenthetically:

**This** is the deeper reason why people crave silver and gold, and are willing to risk their lives to acquire them. It is since silver and gold come from the spiritual hues, from G-d's lofty and divine light, that they so greatly desire to attain them...

**However**, one can only enjoy and experience these higher and spiritual hues by using the gold and silver for charity to a deserving poor person, it is only then that one merits to connect to the divine life force clothed in silver and gold.

**After** this lengthy introduction - Grandpa Yaakov continued and said - let us open the Book of Genesis...

### **Garden of Eden - True Attachment**

**5,784** years ago, Man was first created, after which it is said: "And the L-rd G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it" (Genesis 2:15).

**This** verse is located at the beginning of the Torah, in the beginning of the Book of Genesis, and since it is in such a central place, it's most likely that

every Jew has read it dozens, if not hundreds, of times.

**Presumably**, each time they read it, their heart would wonder and yearn: What is this Garden of Eden about, what does it look like? Is it possible to feel and experience its bliss in this world?

**Now**, just as the words of the Torah are endlessly deep, so too, in the answer to this question there are endless depths. we will now touch merely on one point:

**The** holy Zohar (Genesis 27a) quotes Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai:<sup>4</sup> "And the L-rd G-d took the man" - it needs to be understood, from where did G-d take the man?

**The** Rashbi (Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) answered and said: The body of man was created from the four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. When these elements are

not sufficiently refined, then the person is distant from the divine.

**The** Torah revealed to us that when G-d created man, He took and removed him from the elements of this world and placed him in the Garden of Eden.'

**For** further explanation:

**The** Moharosh wrote (Diburei Moharosh, Exodus - page 185):

**Adam** merited to feel G-dliness in a very lofty and sublime way, and this feeling of G-dliness is itself the 'Garden of Eden'.

**How** did Adam merit this?<sup>5</sup>

**By** refining the four elements, with G-d's assistance, He separated him from their physicality, and placed him in the delights of the Garden of Eden, and all his senses became entirely spiritual.

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**4. To** quote the Zohar: "And the L-rd G-d took man and placed him in the Garden of Eden..." (Genesis 2:15).

'**And** He took,' from where did He take him?

**Rather**, He took him from the four elements, as is stated regarding them:

'And from there it divides and becomes four heads' (Genesis 2:10).

**He** separated him from them and placed him in the Garden of Eden."

**5. The** difference between this world and the Garden of Eden is that in the Garden of Eden, one feels the divine. This feeling is

**His** eyes saw only the true existence of G-d.

**His** ears heard the incessant song of the creations who stand and sing before the exalted G-d...

**And** in all his senses, he felt the existence of G-d, overseeing him with individual providence...

**With** all of his essence, he tasted the sweet taste and radiance of the divine.

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one of pleasure, as our Sages said (Berachot 17a): "The World to Come has no eating or drinking nor procreation or commerce nor jealousy or hate and rivalry. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads and enjoy the radiance of the Divine Presence, as it is said: "And they saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was a firmament of sapphire." (Exodus 24:10).

**However**, even in this world, we must strive to merit and feel, at least during prayer, that we are standing before the great and awesome King.

**To** bring this closer to understanding, I will share a story:

**Rabbi** Menachem Mendel Groner, related ("HaMazkir," p. 204) the following:

**As** is known, The Lubavitcher Rebbe of saintly memory (in the early years of his leadership) would accept individuals for a private audience three nights a week. This audience was called 'Yechidut' (unity) because the one who entered found himself in unity of soul with the Rebbe.

**Once**, a young man entered Yechidut, and as he stood before the Rebbe, he

suddenly realized that he was face to face, in unity, with the Rebbe's penetrating eyes and was seized by an uncontrollable fear.

**Within** seconds of having entered, the bell rang signaling to the secretaries to enter the chamber.

**My** father, Rabbi Groner, was very surprised since the young man had just seconds before entered.

**Then**, before his amazed eyes, he saw that the young man was lying on the ground in a state of unconsciousness. Apparently, due to excessive excitement, the young man collapsed. The secretaries entered, took him out, and revived him. Following the episode, the Rebbe inquired about his well-being through the secretaries.

**It** is quite possible that the Yechidut that this person experienced was of the highest level, which a person can merit.

**With** all his senses and his awareness, he realized that he was, at that moment, in unity with the Rebbe. He surrendered himself completely to that moment until he lost consciousness. There is no greater unity than this...

## Lasting Damage - Loss of Awareness

**Inside** the pure and holy Garden of Eden, lived the mysterious creature known as 'the serpent'.

**We** don't have many particular details about the serpent, but what is known is that it succeeded in making Adam sin.

**And** as a result of the sin, terrible damage was inflicted.

**Before** the sin, it was impossible to separate the influence from the Giver of influence. Whoever received influence from the Ten Sefirot knew that it was from G-d, and consequently, they would behave according to G-d's will.

**But**, after the sin of Man, a new situation was presented: It was suddenly possible to separate the influence from the Giver of influence, and turn the

influence into an independent reality by itself.

**This** caused people to 'forget' the reality of G-d and to invest all their energy merely in attainment of more influence...

**Furthermore**, people suddenly felt that obtaining the influence depended solely on them, for which they had to work hard all day and night.

**Since** they realized that it was impossible for a person to acquire all the types of influence, they began to deliberate amongst themselves what the primary and most important influence was.

**In** other words: What is the purpose of life? For what should one toil and work all their life?<sup>6</sup>

**As** a result of this primordial sin, people lost their awareness, and all certainty turned into uncertainty...

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**And** it is such a feeling that we must aspire to when we stand in prayer before the great King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

**6. In** a lesson delivered by Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, he explained that as a result of the sin of the Man, three concealments (or veils) were

### Ten Groups...

**The** opinions and arguments grew fiercer, and in the end, mankind divided into ten groups, each group defining its purpose differently.

**To** quote the words of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov:<sup>7</sup>

'**And** the day arrived, and there was a great storm in the world. And this storm confused the whole world and turned water into land, and land into sea. And from wilderness to settlement, and from settlement

to wilderness and turned the whole world upside down...

**And** after the noise and confusion, people settled down to make themselves a king. And they investigated who was worthy to be made king over them, and they researched and said: Since the essence is the purpose, therefore, whoever strives most for the purpose, is worthy to be king.

**And** they began to investigate what the purpose was, and they could not reach a unanimous

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created, distancing humanity from the Creator:

**The** first concealment [the concealment of Keter] - is humanly expressed in the feeling of being unnecessary and lacking purpose. One lives with the sense of having no meaning or purpose, not knowing why they should wake up in the morning, and whom they are benefiting by their very existence.

**The** second concealment [the concealment of Tiferet] - causes one the feeling that G-d is distant from them.

**They** live with the sense that they are unimportant in the eyes of G-d, and as

though G-d does not love them or care for them, as it is said: "For I know the thoughts that I think about you, says the L-rd, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a desired end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

**The** third concealment [the concealment of Malchut] - is the

**feeling** that this world is chaotic and lawless. One lives with the belief that there is no justice, and everyone does as they please, thinking, "Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

7. Sipurei Maasiyot (story 12).



**Parshat Ki Tisa - 'The Magnates' - The Impurity of Egypt**

decision, and ultimately, were divided into ten sects, each defining for themselves a different purpose.

**And** these were the ten purposes mankind discovered:<sup>8</sup>

**Honor**, murder, abundance of food, beauty, speech, joy, wisdom, physical growth, as well as the final two - which are the subject of our conversation - money,

and lastly the sect that believed that the service of G-d is the purpose...<sup>9</sup>

**And** after they finally decided what the essential purpose was, each group searched and settled in a place suitable for it.<sup>10</sup>

**And** the sect that believed that wealth was the essential purpose went down to settle Egypt...

**'The Magnates' - The Impurity of Egypt**

**The** prophet Isaiah prophesied and said: "But Egypt is man and not G-d, and their horses are flesh and not spirit, and the L-rd shall stretch out His hand, and the helper shall

stumble, and he that was helped shall fall, and they all shall perish together" (Isaiah 31:3).

**Rabbi** Nachman of Breslov, revealed wonders in this verse, and said:

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**8.** See there (above) where the opinions of the ten groups are detailed at length.

**9.** In the words of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (ibid): "And there was yet another group who said that all of this is not the ultimate purpose.

**The** true essence and ultimate purpose is only to engage in prayer to G-d and to be humble and lowly, and they asked for themselves a prayer leader and made him their king." (Whoever examines this carefully will understand that all the previous

groups erred greatly, and only this last group had the correct intention; blessed are they).

**10.** We have explained several times that in every place, there is a special quality, similar to what is said in Midrash Rabbeinu Tanchuma (Shlach, section 9): "There is a land that produces giants, and there is a land that produces weaklings. There is a land that produces populations, and there is a land whose number of inhabitants dwindle..." as we will expand on this at another opportunity.

## Parshat Ki Tisa - The Virtue of Holy Wealth

**In** Egypt, the people engrossed in the desire for wealth were concentrated. In Egypt, people judged others based on the money they had.

**And** in general, mankind in Egypt were divided into three:

**People** who had great wealth were referred to as "gods". Isaiah prophesied about them and said: 'But Egypt is man and not G-d' - 'descend already from your high 'horses', you are merely decaying flesh!'

**People** in the middle class were referred to as human beings.

**And** the poor and destitute were considered animals!

**And** the Egyptians didn't stop there, but continued to sink into the depths until they became insane!

**And** as we observe, all the great magnates, almost all of them, are truly insane, and the wealthier a person is, the greater his madness.

**And** the one to blame for this is wealth! Because wealth is what turns a person insane' (Likutei Moharan 2 - Torah 64).

**And** here we must pause for a moment and elaborate...

### The Virtue of Holy Wealth

**The desire** for wealth is the problem, not the wealth itself.

**On** the contrary, it is almost impossible to serve G-d without money, for without money, one cannot buy tzitzit, tefillin, mezuzah, the four species, one cannot pay for the education of his children, or cover the expenses of Shabbat and holidays...

**Therefore**, it is truly fitting for every Jew to have wealth.

**On** the other hand, every Jew needs to make every effort and endeavor to escape from the **desire** for wealth because the impurity of 'the desire for wealth' is akin to the impurity of idolatry!

**To** illustrate the difference between wealth and the **desire** for it:

**A** person with a desire for wealth separates between money

Parshat Ki Tisa - The Virtue of Holy Wealth

and the Creator - the Giver of money.

**He** thinks that money comes to him because of his efforts and hard work, and forgets that the Al-mighty is the one who has given him his wealth, as we say every day: "Wealth and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might, and in Your hand, it is to make great and to strengthen all" (1 Chronicles 29:12)...

**His** ego is inflated like a balloon, thinking that he is wiser and more talented than everyone

else, and he goes on sinking into the abyss day by day, until all his thoughts are only about how to acquire more and more money...

**He** becomes so deranged and arrogant that he sees no problem in harming others to gain wealth. And, in fact, the richer a person is, the closer he is to committing murder, theft, and robbery...

**All** of this is called 'the **desire** for wealth.'<sup>11</sup>

**On** the other hand, one who - thank G-d - is free from this, knows that the Al-mighty is the one who provides him with their

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**11. Rabbi** Yoram Abergel wrote ('Imrei Noam', Vayakhel Ma'amar 8):

**'Many** people became wealthy in the middle of their lives with great riches, but from that time on, their family life began to collapse.

**This** occurred because severe disputes arose in the home between the husband, wife, and children over the substantial sums of money 'lying' in the bank account.

**Similarly**, many people left behind large sums of money and assets after their death, leading to fierce disputes among the inheriting children over these

funds and properties, tearing the family apart... This is usually what happens.

**Therefore**, one who is blessed by Heaven to have great wealth has no choice but to take the money he has beyond what he needs to live comfortably, and to allocate it for commandments of the Torah and for charitable giving, which increase goodness and blessing in the world.

**By** doing so, his wealth will be good and blessed wealth that does not bring in its wake sorrow and pain, as it said: 'The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without added heartache' (Proverbs 10:22).'

## Parshat Ki Tisa - Wake Up From The Dream !

wealth. Therefore, he invests reasonable effort and takes care of his livelihood for a few hours, and dedicates all his remaining hours to the service of G-d, in Torah, prayer, in

investment in his wife and children, and in doing charity and kindness with others...

**And** after understanding this distinction, let us go back to the people of Egypt...

### Wake Up From The Dream !

**Joseph** the Righteous spent thirteen years in Egypt, thirteen difficult years full of trials and tribulations. And then, one night, everything ended...

And then Joseph came and interpreted the dream.

**He** explained it as follows:

**Do** know, you all are so deeply engrossed in the desire for wealth that you have no hope of escaping it !

**Pharaoh**, the king of Egypt, had a dream, and in his dream, he saw seven fat cows standing by the river, and they were well-fed and healthy. Suddenly, out of nowhere, seven skinny and emaciated cows appeared, and they swallowed the fat cows...

**But** the Al-mighty had compassion on you and wanted to help you get out of this disgusting desire. That is why He sent you this dream so that you would understand how vulnerable and miserable you are...

**Pharaoh** expected that their stomachs would swell or maybe even burst, but nothing, they remained thin and lean just as before.

**And** thus, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov explained that in this dream, the Al-mighty revealed to Pharaoh the punishment of a person who falls into the 'desire for wealth'.

**Pharaoh** was filled with deep fear, his heart raced with anxiety, cold sweat covered his body, and his thoughts tormented him...

**The** attempts of the magicians to interpret the dream failed.

**The** punishment he receives is that his inner feeling becomes

corrupted ! Instead of feeling joy, he feels sadness, bitterness, depression, sorrow, and poverty !

**The** desire for wealth generates a sense of lack and need. The more a person accumulates and amasses wealth, the more he feels he lacks, always desiring more, and this is accompanied by worry and dissatisfaction.

**Rabbi** Natan expressed it as follows:<sup>12</sup>

**'Pharaoh's** dream about the seven fattened cows and the seven lean cows, which correspond to seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, allude to the desire for wealth that is always hungry for more.

**"The** seven handsome and plump cows" (Genesis 41:2) – this is the aspect of wealth and all the goodness that the L-rd blessed the wealthy with.

**"The** seven thin and ugly cows" – they represent the aspect of seven years of famine, which is the aspect of the desire

for wealth that is always hungry to devour more.

**This** desire swallows all the wealth the L-rd has granted him, because the more wealth he has, the more he lacks, as stated (Ethics Of The Fathers 2:7) 'increasing possessions increases worries'. He thus has worries and suffers as if he were truly poor...

**"And** the seven thin cows swallowed up the seven cows that were plump... and were lean as before" – meaning that through the evil part of the desire for wealth, which is the aspect of the seven bad cows, all the abundance and wealth given to him by the L-rd are swallowed, and nothing of the goodness and wealth remains with him, as it is all swallowed and forgotten by the desire for wealth that desires more and more each time.'

**However,** Joseph's interpretation and accompanying message did not help, and Egypt remained 'enslaved' to the cruel inclination – the desire for wealth...

## Why Flatter the Wealthy ?

**Nothing** had helped, and despite Joseph's explanations the Egyptians continued to worship the silver and gold. Joseph was greatly dismayed with the trend in Egypt. Why do they covet wealth to such a great extent and flatter the wealthy ?

**And** he waited for the right opportunity, which soon presented itself...

**Since** the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, seven years of plenty had passed, after which seven years of famine began.

**In** the first year of famine, the Egyptians still managed to survive somehow, but when the second year began, they had nothing left. And so they organized a delegation that came before Joseph, saying, 'We will not hide from my lord that the money and livestock have been exhausted... There is nothing left...

### Refinement of Greed Through Charity and Kindness

**The** Holy One, blessed be He, wanted the people of Israel

except our bodies and our lands' (Genesis 47:18-19).

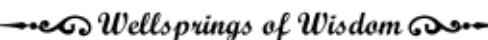
**Joseph** said to them, 'If you want me to sustain you all, and help you survive, go and circumcise yourselves.' So the Egyptians went and circumcised themselves...<sup>13</sup>

**In** addition to the circumcision, he relocated all the Egyptians from one region to another, 'And he removed the people to cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other' (Genesis 47:21)...

**With** this relocation, he managed to deflate the 'bubble of wealth' a little, and the rich, who had previously been somewhat defiant, began to show signs of humility...

**And** in that second year of famine, the children of Israel descended to Egypt...

to stay in exile in Egypt for several reasons, one of which



**13.** The Egyptians circumcised themselves in the second year of the famine (Bahye

- Genesis 41:45).

was for them to purify their desire for wealth.

**Indeed**, while they were in the land of Egypt, they successfully purified their desire for money through acts of charity and kindness that they performed with each other!

**The** following was recounted by Elijah the prophet:<sup>14</sup>

**On** one of the journeys I undertook, I met an elderly man of noble countenance.

**That** old man said to me, 'Rabbi, the people in this generation are more successful than the generation of the Exodus from Egypt. For the people of the generation of the Exodus from Egypt had only the Five Books of Moses, whereas in our generation, we have vastness of Torah; the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, the Writings, and great novelties in Torah study. Since we have much more Torah than they had, we are clearly more successful...'

**Elijah** the prophet nodded in disagreement and replied to the old man:

**'No**, the generation of the Exodus from Egypt was more successful than our generation. For in the time of the prophet Jeremiah, when the people of Israel greatly transgressed, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent the prophet Jeremiah to them, saying, "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying: Thus said the L-rd: I remember for you the loving-kindness of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown" (Jeremiah 2:2).

**This** means that the Holy One, blessed be He, promised the people of Jerusalem that even though they would be punished and go into exile because of their sins, He would not abandon them. He would watch over them and ultimately redeem them due to the self-sacrifice of the people

**Parshat Ki Tisa - Please Take the Gold and Silver!**

of the generation of the Exodus from Egypt who followed Him in the wilderness in a barren land.'

**Elijah** the prophet continued and said: 'From here, it is evident that the merit of the generation of the Exodus from Egypt is greater than that of our generation, and indeed the divine promise to the Jewish nation was not in merit of the abundance of Torah in our generation.

**The** great merit that they had was the one commandment that they fulfilled meticulously. In

**Please Take the Gold and Silver!**

**Through** their many acts of charity and kindness, the people of Israel became so refined from the desire for gold

the words of Elijah the prophet:

**"The** one commandment that was in their hands was more pleasing to the L-rd than several of our commandments. What was that one commandment? They were gathered together in union as one and made a covenant to perform acts of loving-kindness with each other. And they preserved the covenant of circumcision, the covenant of Abraham, Isaac, and Yaakov.<sup>15</sup> And did not forsake the language of Yaakov our father, and did not learn the language of Egypt...

and silver, that they loathed money completely, and when they saw money, they cast it away...<sup>16</sup>

...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

**15. The** holiness of a person is dependent to a great degree on one purifying themselves from the desire for money.

**As** Rabbi Yoram once told me:

"**My** son, remember and know that one who does not rectify their desire for money can dream to correct the attribute of 'foundation', but it is not possible for one who is immersed in the

desire for money to be saved from the evil inclination related to immodesty."

**May** G-d save us from the lust for money!

**16. In** a sermon by Rabbi Sholom Shwadron, he said ("Hagadat Rabbi Shalom" p. 316):

**'When** we contemplate, we can see that even though there may be greater



**Parshat Ki Tisa - Please Take the Gold and Silver!**

**The** Talmud (Berachot 9a) interprets the verse, "And the L-rd gave the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and they loaned them..." (Exodus 12:36):

"**And** they loaned them" - Rabbi Ami said, this teaches that the loaning to the people of Israel was under compulsion, since the people of Israel did not want to take the silver and gold from the Egyptians due to its heavy weight.

**The** people of Israel said to Moses, 'Don't you realize that it's a burden for us to carry these many pieces of metal?! It's too heavy for us!'

**And** G-d revealed Himself to Moses and said to him: 'Go to the people of Israel and tell them that I desire that they take the silver and gold from the Egyptians, because I promised their forefather Abraham, "And also, the nation whom they shall serve, I will judge; and afterward, they shall come out with great wealth" (Genesis 15:14).

**And** the people of Israel, having no other choice, took the silver and gold and began their journey in the wilderness...

**The** Egyptians soon pursued them,<sup>17</sup> but ended their lives at the depths of the Red Sea...

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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desires than the desire for money, it is only regarding the desire for money that it is said: "For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous" (Exodus 23:8).

**It** is only in the desire for money that we find this strange quality of irrational and foolish actions.

**Blindness** of the senses and loss of reason result only from the desire for money.

**In** the desire for money, there is a special poison that reaches the brain and

immediately makes a person intoxicated, making them not know what they are doing and saying!

**When** it comes to money, a person justifies their actions with various and different excuses and falsehoods, and doesn't realize how deceptively they behave.

**17.** "**And** it was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people, and they said, 'What have we have done, to let Israel free from our servitude?'" (Exodus 14:5)

## The Impurity of the Sin of the Golden Calf

**Many** days passed following the exodus from Egypt, and on the fiftieth day, the people of Israel merited to receive the Torah.

**The** following day, Moses ascended Mount Sinai for forty days to receive the Tablets of the Covenant. Before ascending, Moses informed the people of Israel that he would descend from the mountain only after an additional forty days, at noon on the fortieth day...

**The** people of Israel counted forty days and waited patiently for Moses. However, they made a mistake in their calculation during the counting: Moses intended

forty days following the day he ascended the mountain, however the people of Israel miscalculated and counted the day of his ascent as the first of the forty days.

**When** they saw that by noon of the fortieth day - according to their calculation - Moses had not descended from the mountain, they were certain that something had befallen him.

**As** a result of this, they decided to make the Golden Calf to serve as their G-d to go before them in place of Moses...

**In** haste, they gathered large quantities of gold, threw them into the fire, and 'the Golden Calf' appeared...

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**Rashi** explains: 'And the heart of Pharaoh turned' - it turned from what he had said to them, "Arise, go forth from among my people" (Exodus 12:31).

**And** the hearts of his servants turned as well, for they had previously said, "How long will this be a snare to us, send the people?" (Exodus 10:7), but now they turned to chase after them.

**And** this is a wonder, for the Egyptians had witnessed the mighty hand and power of G-d, so why did they set out to pursue the Israelites again?

**And** the answer is: Money!

**It** was all for the money they had lent to the Israelites, that they wanted back.

Parshat Ki Tisa - The Impurity of the Sin of the Golden Calf

**The** damage caused by this grave and terrible sin was immense and detrimental, and to this day, this sin has not been fully atoned for...<sup>18</sup>

**And** one of the terrible consequences of this sin was the corruption of their emotions. In the hearts of the people of Israel, the desire for wealth was introduced!

**This** was eloquently expressed by Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (Oznayim LaTorah - Exodus 34:1):

**'Before** the people of Israel bowed to the Golden Calf, wealth was not significant in their eyes. As our Sages explained, "And they loaned from the Egyptians vessels of silver and gold" (Exodus 12:35) - "They only borrowed them because of the Heavenly command.'

**'But** after the people of Israel created and worshiped the Golden Calf, which represents their desire for gold, they began

to respect wealth, and moreover, they greatly despised poverty...

**'And** even though Moses later ground the Golden Calf to a fine dust, some particles of the 'gold dust' remained in the minds and hearts of the people of Israel.

**'And** from that day forward wealth and gold is worshiped and idealized and the wisdom of righteousness is scorned and deemed 'destitute'.

**Know** however, that not all of the people of Israel were defiled to the same degree. Some received impurity to a larger measure, while others received smaller portions...

**And** each person, according to their level of impurity, has a corresponding level of respect and veneration for wealth and riches...

**"Now** you understand," Grandpa Yaakov turned to Shmulik, "that the natural inclination to admire and honor the wealthy and to

...*Wellsprings of Wisdom*...

**18.** In the words of the Talmud (Sanhedrin 104a): Rabbi Yitzchak said, "There is no punishment that comes into the world that does not contain one

part in twenty-four of the punishment of the Golden Calf, as it is said: 'And on the determined day, I will remember for them their sin' (Exodus 32:34)..."

## Parshat Ki Tisa - Summary and Practical Applications

disdain the poor was caused by the impurity of the sin of the Golden Calf..."

"**But** Grandpa," Shmulik asked, "if that's the case, how is one able to purify and cleanse oneself from the impurity of the sin of the Golden Calf?"

**Shmulik's** Mother entered the room and said, "Kids, we need to head back home..."

**Grandpa** Yaakov smiled at Shmulik and said, "We will have to answer your question next time, with G-d's help..."

## Summary and Practical Applications

**1.** One of the terrible damages that resulted from the sin of the Golden Calf was that a desire for money was born in the heart of the people of Israel! Not all of Israel were defiled with the same level of impurity, there were those who received a larger part of impurity and those who received a smaller part. Each, according to the magnitude of their impurity, is their degree of admiration and worship of wealth.

**2.** As foul and abhorrent the **desire** for money is, the **money** itself is not so. On the contrary, serving G-d without money is nearly impossible, as without money one cannot buy tzitzit, tefillin, mezuzahs, and the Four Species, nor can one pay for the education

of one's children in Torah as well as the expenses of Shabbat and holidays. And so, in truth, every Jew should have wealth.

**3.** However, on the other hand, every Jew must make every effort and endeavor to flee from the 'desire for money', because the impurity of the 'desire for money' is akin to the impurity of idolatry!

**One** who desires and covets money, separates the money from the Creator of the World - the giver of money. They think and are sure that all the money comes to them by virtue of their own labor and effort alone, and they forget that it is G-d who gave them the wealth. And as a result of this, they think that they are smarter and more talented than

**Parshat Ki Tisa - Summary and Practical Applications**

everyone else. And thus, they sink deeper and deeper into the halls of impurity every day, until all their thoughts involve how to acquire more and more money to the extent that they do not hesitate to use any means or effort to get more, even at the cost of harming another. All this is called the desire for money.

**4.** In contrast, one who is, thank G-d, free from this unholy desire, knows that it is G-d who gives them money, and therefore invest only a reasonable amount of effort and tend to their livelihood for a few hours daily, and dedicate all their remaining hours to the service of G-d, to Torah, prayer, investing in his wife and children, and doing charity and kindness with others.

**5.** The punishment of one who desires wealth greatly, is that they think and look at themselves as though they do not really possess assets and money, but on the contrary, feel that they are a poor man who greatly lacks money. Thus, their pursuit of more and more is endless.

**6.** Therefore, the person who truly desires to live his life in joy and tranquility without any worries,

sorrow, and disappointment, needs to keep himself from being inclined after the desires of this world and its materialism, but rather accustom oneself to minimize as much as possible in all material matters of this world, but the barest necessities, and beyond that to lead a very simple lifestyle. On the other hand, at every free moment to flee to G-d and to the study of the holy Torah, which is the purpose of all creation.

**Indeed**, when a person chooses to wholeheartedly be content with the bare minimum in worldly matters, even if this involves living a life of hardship, then when they are fortunate to engage in Torah persistently, they will experience true vitality and great joy even in this world.

**7.** The way to purify the **desire** for money is by increasing charity and kindness. And it is this that quiets the fire of desire and purifies one's being to the extent that all the money in the world is considered by him as nothingness, out of joy in his portion that G-d has privileged him with abundant wealth with which he can fulfill the will of G-d.



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New York	5:30 pm	6:29 pm	7:01 pm
Miami	6:05 pm	6:58 pm	7:35 pm
Los Angeles	5:32 pm	6:28 pm	7:03 pm
Montreal	5:24 pm	6:27 pm	6:55 pm
Toronto	5:49 pm	6:51 pm	7:20 pm
London	5:23 pm	6:33 pm	6:55 pm
Jerusalem	5:22 pm	6:12 pm	6:53 pm
Tel Aviv	5:18 pm	5:09 pm	6:48 pm
Haifa	5:17 pm	6:08 pm	6:47 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:19 pm	6:10 pm	6:49 pm

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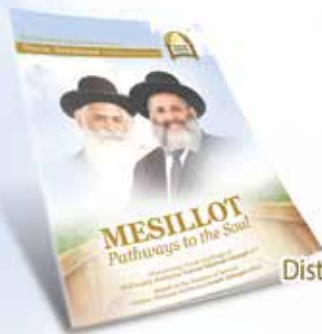
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