

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 149

Pekudei | Free Choice and Power of Thought

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Publisher and Distributor of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l

 500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666

 en@h-l.org.il


 www.hameir-laarets.org.il/en

 HaKatzir 666, Netivot, Israel

 (954) 800-6526

 HameirLaaretsEN

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 054-870-8737

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Parshat Pekudei

A Time of Soul-Searching...

Meir sat in his home, and felt a strange sensation - there was a deafening silence.

On a normal day, his house buzzed with the sounds of his children, but today they had all gone on a trip, leaving him enveloped in waves of silence...

He at once approached the bookcase and pulled out a book. He opened the book (Beyond the Well Known - Life After Death, page 197 by Rabbi Yaakov Maavri) and his eyes followed the text, which read:

“This event occurred in the month of Shevat, 5779:

A couple, married for about a year, were driving near the city of Modi'in. The woman, who was in her eighth month of pregnancy, told her husband that she wanted to eat. The husband replied that he would stop in a few minutes at a gas station, where there is a store that sells food.

The couple stopped at the gas station café, entered, and sat down to make an order.

Suddenly, the wife turned to her husband and said, "Wait, we didn't check the kosher certification here !"

The husband dismissively replied, "What does it matter? What will we eat here anyway?!"

The wife explained that it doesn't matter what they eat - a proper kosher supervision is required.

The husband argued that 'since it's not meat or chicken, just a tiny dairy bite', and since the wife is pregnant - it's a matter of life and death, and so there are several reasons to be lenient !

On the other hand, the wife explained that although she was very hungry, without a proper

kosher certification, she would not eat anything !

Eventually, they agreed that since the wife was very hungry, they would now drive back to their hometown Ashdod, and eat in a restaurant with good and proper supervision.

They returned to the car and began driving quickly, speeding southwest on the newly built highway.

He must have driven at a high speed, and a police highway patrol followed him, turned on its siren, and commanded him to immediately stop by the side of the road.

When they stopped their car, the officer approached the vehicle and said wryly, "Don't you realize you're flying too low for an airplane ?"

The husband's eyes widened in astonishment, and suddenly he said to the officer, "What happened to you?! This is a life-threatening situation, an absolute danger to life !

Aren't you ashamed to stop me? Look at my wife - she's in her ninth month, and about to give birth, and I'm rushing to the Barzilai Hospital.

Is this how you detain me? Stopping me poses a real danger to her life - and if she suddenly gives birth right here, what will we do?!"

The officer glanced at the back seat and saw the wife, who, upon hearing her husband's tale, started to breathe heavily, holding her stomach and moving about in her seat...

The officer looked at the husband who continued to argue, but sensed something was not right, and said to the husband:

"Listen - you're on your way to Barzilai Hospital, right? Fine.

I will drive in front of you with my siren and clear the way including all the red traffic lights all the way to the hospital. I will also coordinate with the hospital that we are arriving at, so that they will receive us immediately at the entrance and save you a lot of precious time.

But listen, my friend - I'm now spending my entire shift with you, if she indeed gives birth - congratulations!

However, if she is not on her way to giving birth... and here the officer rubbed his hands and threatened: then I will pile on you every traffic violation that I can - including tickets, points, lying to a police officer, and wasting a public servant's shift...

The officer began the speedy drive with the siren, and they hurriedly drove after him.

The wife grabbed her head and said, "What are you doing? Why did you tell him that? You're not normal!"

The husband however, retorted: "It's all because of you and your kashrut! Do you have extra money to pay a fine? We have many other expenses like buying a stroller, a pram, and more. Let's just play along, and we'll make it up as we go along."

The wife was not at all pleased, but with the officer's

siren streaming ahead, she had no other choice.

And so they drove on all the way, while she was regretting her cooperation with her husband's story and complicating their situation further, and the husband blaming her for being unwilling to eat at a gas station without proper kosher certification.

Upon reaching the hospital, they received VIP treatment, the entrance gate for vehicles opened for them without needing to print a parking ticket, and they drove straight to the maternity ward, where a team awaited them with a ready bed and two nurses.

The wife panicked even more and was distressed: "Look what you've done! Look what's happening here!"

But the husband, calm and collected, continued to assert: "Keep up with inhaling with deep breaths, it'll all be fine..."

She imitated what a woman about to give birth would look like - barely walking, breathing heavily, and struggling to function.

The team helped her, laid her on a stretcher, and took her for initial examinations to assess her condition.

Among other things, they did an abdominal ultrasound in which they saw that the umbilical cord was tightly wrapped around the baby's neck, seriously endangering its life. Immediately, it was decided to rush her to an emergency cesarean section, and her bed was rapidly rolled towards the operating rooms.

The husband was in total shock.

By the grace of G-d, the surgery went smoothly - the baby was saved and the woman was healthy and sound.

And the officer? He stood by the side, not comprehending the enormity of what he had done, and what had driven him to all of this. Truly, who knows, maybe it was the angel created in the merit of keeping kosher?..."

As Meir read this story in his unusually quiet home, a storm began to swell within Meir, 'they're

both Torah observant, so why? Why did the wife have a problem being lax with kosher standards, while the husband did not?'

As these thoughts raced in his mind, memories surfaced and rose...

Meir remembered himself as a charming child with long hair accompanied by his mother arriving at the kindergarten for the first time, the teacher opened the door and his mother left... and the child burst into tears...

The first day in first grade, Meir arrived at the secular school in the neighborhood, intrigued by all the noise and commotion...

He then continued down the usual path, elementary school, high school, military... The images appeared and ran one after the other at a dizzying speed...

Meir remembered that during all those long years, a deep sense of deficiency gnawed at him, a longing and yearning for something more meaningful and profound...

Parshat Pekudei - The Process of Choice

Now he knew to identify that it was the cry of his soul, 'give me nourishment and sustain me'...

He had then begun the process of searching and eventually returned to the Jewish faith...

Meir nostalgically remembered those first magical days of discovering his Judaism - the devoted prayers, the meaningful blessings, the exciting Torah lessons which filled his heart with feelings of joy and happiness...

He felt in those days, repulsed by the temptations of the world, it interested him as much as did the measure of snow that fell in Iceland...

He had been sure that within a few years he would be so great spiritually, that he would be counted among the 36 righteous

of the generation...

Meir suddenly stopped... 'Wait ! Since then, not only have I not become righteous, but occasionally a terrible fire of desire burns in my heart, and I have to struggle hard to extinguish it...'

How can this be ? How is it that instead of continuing to ascend spiritually, I sometimes feel such a terrible fire of desire that I didn't even feel when I was non observant ? !...

Meir's forehead furrowed with wrinkles, and he got up from his place and started pacing back and forth between the four walls of his home...

And with a sudden decision, he got up, left his house, and walked to the nearby study hall. 'Maybe I'll meet someone there who can solve this mystery for me'...

The Process of Choice

Around a long table sat a group of Jews, listening to the words of the rabbi. Meir slipped into a seat and listened:

The rabbi was in the midst of the Torah class...

If we examine closely, we will discover: of all the soul's powers endowed to him by G-d, the most important is the power of choice.

This significant power elevates him and increases his

value over all other living creations.

In wild animals and forest beasts, there are great powers, such as wisdom, desire, and ability, but all these are merely natural forces imbued in them to enable their existence.

In no way can these creatures limit, define, or change these characteristics.

A calf born today has all its spiritual forces completed and finished at birth. It walks on earth, eats, drinks, and knows how to find food and sustain itself. And when it grows and ages, only its physical and fleshly body grows, but its spiritual forces remain in the same state as they were on the day of its birth.

Not so with Man, "And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7); Man was imbued not only with a living body, but with a living soul.

Not only does his body grow and develop, but his soul and its spiritual powers also must grow and develop along with his body.

With Man's power of choice, he must develop his intellect to know to choose good and reject evil, and with his own will and force, determine the path he will take and the actions he will perform."

The rabbi paused for a moment, held up his cup of tea, blessed over it the required blessing with intention, sipped from the tea, and continued:

"There are many people who fail to grasp the concept of choice at all and say 'I have no choice, every time a desire arises in me, it enslaves me without the ability to escape, and I fail! So what is this choice you speak of?'"

And so we find that Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler explained and elucidated at great length the matter of free choice, and we rephrase his words:¹

Let us consider, as a parable - Rabbi Dessler began and said - one of our choices, and thoroughly investigate its particulars.

Yossi is a heavy smoker, and at night his conscience gives him no rest, he tosses and turns and the agony in his chest gives him no reprieve...

Before the long night ends, he already decides to himself: 'That's it, I'm quitting smoking!'

Morning comes and he once again passes by the deadly pack of cigarettes, and looks at it and says to himself: 'I'll only smoke one, it surely won't hurt me'...

He lights the cigarette for a temporary feeling of bliss... but after ten minutes the desire to smoke arises again, and he says to himself: 'This is just the last one'...

By the end of the day, he finds that alas! he's finished three cigarette packs!...

And then another night of torment passes over him...

What do you think, did he learn his lesson?... Well, apparently you don't know Yossi...

Rabbi Dessler continues and says:

Here, if we examine this process, we discover that Yossi is struggling between two realities. A reality of truth and a reality of imagination.

In the reality of truth, he knows that cigarettes are poisonous, while in the reality of imagination, he feels that one cigarette won't harm him.

So the power of free choice is essentially between a choice one constantly makes between the two realities, between the real reality and the imaginary one.

A man can choose the reality of truth, and consequently, the desire will be revealed as weak and imaginary, and will at once leave him.

One can also distract their mind from the truth, and accept imaginations instead, distancing themselves from the will for the truth. This ability to choose

either of these two paths - is what is called 'free choice'...

We will elaborate on the matter of free choice...

The Moment of Choice

As I write these lines, Russia is in the midst of a war with Ukraine, with a clear desire to conquer Ukraine and annex it into its territory. Russia stands along their front lines facing eastern Ukraine, eyeing to the west. If it succeeds at battle, it will advance region by region until it completes its entire conquest...

Now, the actual war at a given point in time is only along a specific area, while in areas outside of this zone, there is no war, and it belongs to one of the warring sides.

If one side conquers the specific war zone, that area will come under its control, and the war will move on to a new area. Thus, the war is always only in one given area. And in areas outside of that - there is no war.

So it is precisely with the matter of choice. Every person

has a choice, and this choice is the battleground where one's truth faces the imaginary, falsities of the evil side.

Most of one's actions fall in an area beyond the friction of the truth and the lies, and do not meet at all.

For there is much of the truth that a person has been educated and accustomed to, and it would never occur to him at all to do otherwise, and likewise there is much that a person will do evil and falsities without giving notice at all that it is not appropriate to do so.

Thus, free choice happens at the point or area between the good inclination and the evil inclination.

Many constantly fail in the sin or evil speech and slander, because they are accustomed to it, and it would never occur to them at all that it is evil.² Those

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

2. In a discourse delivered by Rabbi Yoram, he said ('Imrei Noam', Tzav - Discourse 7):

"It is known and well-publicized that the seven gates (openings) of a person's head -

Parshat Pekudei - The Moment of Choice

his two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, and mouth - which correspond to the seven branches of the Menorah in the Temple. The right ear, eye, and nostril correspond to the three right branches of the Menorah, and the left ear, eye, and nostril to the three left branches, and the mouth corresponds to the central branch of the Menorah (Tikkunei Zohar - Introduction, page 13b).

From the fact that the mouth corresponds to the central branch - which is actually the most central branch of the Menorah from which all other six branches extend - we learn that the most central aspect upon which a person's holiness depends on is their mouth, and one who does not sanctify his mouth properly will consequently fail to properly sanctify and guard the other gates.

Many people guard their eyes and ears, but are very weak in guarding their mouth and tongue.

It should be known that for the sin of evil speech, there will be great punishment in Heaven, for while with other sins a person has some enjoyment, his punishment will be lighter in Heaven, for G-d "knows our inclination" (Psalms 103:14), and understands our weaknesses.

But for speaking evil, there is no enjoyment, as it is written: "There is no advantage to the master of the tongue" (Ecclesiastes 10:11), and therefore there is no real justification for this evil deed.

Therefore, every person should be very careful to guard the holiness of his mouth with all their might, and be very careful not to utter any disgraceful word about

another Jewish person, and all the more so not to say anything that could cause anyone harm. Similarly, if someone comes to speak disgracefully about others, one should flee as mightily as he can.

A person must always remember that every word he utters goes up to heaven and is examined by G-d, and if, G-d forbid, it does not pass the test of propriety, he will have to give an account for it.

In this context, we bring a story from the book 'Avihem Shel Yisrael' (Part 2 - page 69):

"I was a young student and I came to the house of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu to ask about two people who were 'Kabbalists' - whether they were worthy or not.

About one the Rabbi told me, yes he is as great as he seems! About the other, the Rabbi gestured with his hand not to go to him...

As a young student, I felt it my mission to publicize that the second one was not worthy, and that the Rabbi should exert his influence and prevent that rabbi from receiving people.

I continued and said to Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu: 'They say so and so about that rabbi...' and I didn't even manage to finish the sentence and the Rabbi, who was sitting on a swivel chair, turned himself towards the wall, and he turned his side to me.

At first, I thought that the Rabbi was looking for something to show me to confirm my words. But as the Rabbi continued to gaze at the wall, I realized that the Rabbi was signaling to me that

same people will not have the evil inclination offer them to desecrate the Sabbath, neglect prayer, Tzitzit and Tefillin, etc.

That is because regarding the Sabbath, Tefillin and Tzitzit, they are educated and accustomed to it, that there is no entry there for the evil inclination.

Let's take a moment to imagine the following:

In the Levi family home, there is joy and gladness. Dad arrived with wonderful wrapped baguettes filled with shawarma and other fried foods, and all the family members sat at the table enjoying the afternoon meal...

Suddenly, there were knocks on the door, an uncle came to visit and in his hand dairy ice cream cones. One of the younger children

saw the ice cream, and started to scream: I want an ice cream cone !

Dad tried to explain and reason with the boy: You've just eaten meat, in a while, once six hours have passed, we'll give you the ice cream. This child now stands before a choice: to restrain himself from eating dairy after meat, or not.

This example is one of a low plane of freedom of choice...

However, someone who is fortunate, and has worked on himself, such a situation does not present a 'choice' for him, for it is clear and obvious that he will wait six hours, and for him, the 'point of choice' will be at a much loftier plane...

The lesson ended, and the congregation dispersed. Meir

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

when it comes to evil speech, I could 'talk to the walls' - but he did not want to hear...

Of course, I was very embarrassed and asked for forgiveness. The Rabbi immediately turned his chair back to me and asked calmly if I had any more questions.

After I left the Rabbi and absorbed what had happened - on one hand, the Rabbi

was not willing to hear evil speech in any way, even about a rabbi whom he deemed unworthy, yet on the other hand, he took care to do this in a respectful manner, without offending the person speaking.

I decided that from then on, that Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu would be my teacher and Rabbi in all respects, such a Rabbi I want !...

Parshat Pekudei - Three Equivalent Generations

felt enlightened and was glad he participated, but he still didn't understand how this Torah class answered the questions he had.

'I'll have some patience' - he told himself - 'and I'll stay for another Torah class that is starting momentarily'...

Three Equivalent Generations

In the year 2448 to creation, the Egyptian exile ended and the Children of Israel began their journey to the Land of Israel.

It took them many long years of journey until they were privileged to enter the land of Israel.

Those Jews were all members of the generation called the 'Generation of the Desert'.

The Zohar states that there was no generation as elevated as the 'Generation of the Desert' who saw divine glory openly and clearly. As it is said: "Face to face the L-rd spoke with you at the mountain" (Deuteronomy 5:4)...

Nearly 1500 years passed since the 'Generation of the Desert', and again there came a generation that was equivalent to the 'Generation of the Desert', the generation of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The Zohar concludes that there will not be in the future such a generation until the revelation of our righteous Messiah...

And so we have three generations that are equivalent in level: the 'Generation of the Desert', the generation of Rashbi, and the generation of the Messiah...

Let us now discuss the people of the 'Generation of the Desert'...

Wise-Hearted People Needed !

On the 15th of Nisan in the year 2448 to creation, the Children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt.

Six months later, on the 11th of Tishrei, they were commanded to build the Tabernacle.

Parshat Pekudei - Wise-Hearted People Needed!

They quickly began collecting the items needed for the construction of the Tabernacle, and within two days, everything had been gathered and the construction of the Tabernacle and its vessels began...

G-d turned to Moses and told him: The Children of Israel have donated all the raw materials needed for the construction of the Tabernacle, and now we need artisans and craftsmen who know how to turn these materials into a Tabernacle and its vessels...

For this purpose, I have chosen "Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all kinds of craftsmanship... And I have appointed along with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, so that they succeed to make all that I have commanded you" (Exodus 31:2-6).

G-d then specifies 18 items that they were required to produce, namely:

The Tent of Meeting, the Ark, the Ark's cover and all the other vessels of the Tent.

The Table and its utensils, the Menorah and its utensils, and the Altar of Incense.

The Altar of Burnt Offering with all its utensils, the Washing Basin and its stand.

The embroidered garments and the sacred garments for Aaron the Priest and his sons.

And finally, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense.

The people of the 'Desert Generation' were of a very high stature, people of their lofty level were rarely to be found in all of the generations.

Yet from among them, G-d specifically selected a group of people called the 'wise-hearted', and imposed upon them the sacred task of constructing the Tabernacle and its vessels.

And here we must understand, what was unique and extraordinary about the construction of the

Parshat Pekudei - Three Sets of Priestly Garments

Tabernacle that required specifically 'wise-hearted' people of immense and awesome stature that were hand-picked by G-d?...

There is much to expand on this, but we shall focus on one aspect of the Tabernacle, the priestly garments...

Three Sets of Priestly Garments

There are three Torah portions that deal with the priestly garments.

The first is the portion of Tetzaveh where the Children of Israel were commanded to make the priestly garments.

The second is our portion, Pekudei, where the Children of Israel actually made the garments as they were commanded.

And the third portion is Tzav where the high priest Aaron and his sons donned the priestly garments for the first time.

In the Torah portion of Tetzaveh, we were commanded to prepare three sets of priestly garments. Two for the High Priest and one for the ordinary Kohen:

The garments set of the ordinary Kohen contained four items of clothing: trousers, a tunic, a sash, and a turban.

The first set of garments of the High Priest contained these four garments as well as four more: an ephod, a robe, the breastplate, and the headplate.

The second set of garments the High Priest wore on the Day of Atonement, and were called the 'four white garments'.

Here once again we encounter the same question:

What was unique and extraordinary about the making of these garments that specifically required the wisest of men - the wise-hearted amongst the great 'Desert Generation'?

Priestly Garments of Atonement

Before we answer the above question, we quote Rabbi

Yoram (Imrei Noam, Tzav - Article 7):

The first half of the Torah portion of 'Tzav' deals with the different sacrifices in the Torah: burnt offering, sin offering, guilt offering, and peace offerings. The Torah concludes by saying: "These are the laws of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering, and of the peace offering; which the L-rd commanded Moses..." (Leviticus 7, 37-38).

In the second half of the portion, the Torah proceeds to deal with the priestly garments and the order of them being worn by Aaron and his sons, the priests.

One of the well-known principles in the expounding of the Torah is that whenever two different matters are juxtaposed, it is not by chance, G-d forbid, but has significant meaning.

As our sages taught (Berachot 10a) the verse "They stand fast forever and ever, performed in truth and uprightness" (Psalms 111, 8) to mean that the juxtaposition of matters in the Torah ("stand fast") is "truth and uprightness".

The Torah is like a marvelous building, constructed layer upon layer, where every detail is precise. Accordingly, the juxtaposition of matters in the Torah also has a deep meaning, and we are required to strive to understand what the Torah wants to hint to us with this juxtaposition.

Thus, our sages (Zevachim 88b) endeavored to understand the reason for juxtaposing the matter of sacrifices to the priestly garments.

In the words of our sages: 'Rabbi Inini bar Sason said, why were the passages of the sacrifices juxtaposed to the passages of the priestly garments? To teach you - just as sacrifices atone, so too do the priestly garments atone'.

Meaning: Just as the sacrifices that the people of Israel offered had a great and powerful force to atone for their sins, so too the priestly garments that the priests wore had a great and powerful force to atone for the sins of Israel.

The four priestly garments, the tunic, trousers, turban, and sash atone for four transgressions:

Parshat Pekudei - Spirituality is the Main Thing

Tunic - atones for bloodshed.

Trousers - atone for adultery.

Turban - atones for haughtiness.

Sash - atones for thoughts of the heart.

Added to this, the four additional garments of the High Priest atoned as well for four transgressions:³

Breastplate - atones for judicial errors.

Ephod - atones for idolatry.

Headplate - atones for brazenness.

Robe - atones for slander.

After this introduction, we will explain the uniqueness of the priestly garments...

Spirituality is the Main Thing

The saintly Rabbi Yoseph Chaim wrote (Ben Ish Chai - Sermons, beginning with "And these are the garments"):

G-d, in His immense love for His people, gave them the priestly garments as a gift.

The priestly garments had tremendous power to atone for the four most severe transgressions in the Torah, which are: idolatry, bloodshed, adultery, and slander.

They also atoned for four very common transgressions, namely: thoughts of the heart, haughtiness, brazenness, and judicial errors...

Now, certainly, the material garments alone do not atone, but rather it was the sublime reality that was en clothed in them, for the priestly garments were indeed a chariot for the divine power that dwelled within them...

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

3. Rabbi Avraham Yisrael Moshe Solomon, deliberates in his book 'Netivot Hakodesh' (Zevachim 88:):

Does the saying that 'priestly garments atone' refer only to the garments of the High

Priest, or do the garments of an ordinary priest also have the power to atone ?

And he concludes that even the garments of an ordinary priest have the power to atone...

And to take raw material and elevate it to such an extent that it becomes fit for the dwelling of the Divine Presence within it, immense wisdom is required - wisdom of the heart!

And even in that great 'Generation of the Desert', very few knew how to do this.

In the words of the 'Ben Ish Chai':

"The priestly garments, which had great power to atone, each for a different transgression, the atonement was not done merely by the physical aspect of the garments but by its spiritual aspect. Each of the eight physical garments had a spiritual garment alongside it,

Service of thought - for G-d alone

The Talmud states (Sukkah 49b): Rabbi Elazar said, what is the meaning of the verse: "He has shown you, man, what is good; and what does the L-rd require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your G-d?" (Micah 6:8).

'To do justice' - this is Fairness.

resembling and mirroring it, a spiritual image hovering over it similar to the spiritual image that hovers over a person and their soul.

As such, the craftsmen who made the eight garments had to also make spiritual images for them, and these images are called 'holy garments', while the physical garments were simply called 'garments', and these images were made through the sanctity of their intention and thought'...

We now understand why special men were chosen for the task of the preparation of the Tabernacle, the wise-hearted men had greatness and sanctity of intention and thought...

'To love kindness' - this is the performance of acts of kindness.

And 'To walk humbly with your G-d' - refers to attending funerals and escorting a bride to the chuppah.

Now, if regarding these matters, which are typically done publicly, the Torah says 'walk

humbly', all the more is this true for matters that should be done with humility and modesty.

Rabbi Meir Chadash explained, saying: People usually think that the modesty required of a person is only in matters that are meant to be private, but in matters that are done publicly and openly, there is no obligation of modesty.

This is what the Talmud comes to teach us - that the modesty required from a person is also in matters that are done publicly and loudly, such as attending funerals and escorting a bride to the chuppah.

To further illustrate this point, Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein writes ("Aleinu Leshabeach", Deuteronomy vol. 1, page 477):

The command to 'walk humbly' is much more than just concealing one's actions, but is as its name implies, to walk continuously with G-d through the attachment of one's thought to Him, as the prophet says: 'And walk humbly with your G-d.' This is called 'walking humbly', because it is a

service that is done in the secrecy and privacy of one's thoughts.

To accustom oneself to always walk with G-d, in every place and corner, and to crown Him over us in our thoughts is indeed one of the foundational principles that G-d demands from us, and one of the greatest achievements that a person can attain on earth.

It is the mission through which a person can grow and perfect himself in this world, and the greatest success that a person can achieve in their life.

And this is the great perfection that the great people of the world were praised with.

As we find with Noah - "Noah walked with G-d" (Genesis 6:9), as well as with Enoch - "And Enoch walked with G-d" (Genesis 5:22), and this is what Abraham was commanded - "Walk before me, and be perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

And this is what the Talmud teaches us - that even when a person is outwardly busy with public actions, in his inner world, he should dwell with G-d, and all

Parshat Pekudei - Acting Below Yet Hinting Above

his thoughts, longings, and desires be for the Creator of all worlds.

For example: A man who returns home after a whole day away from home.

To 'walk humbly' is that before he knocks on the door, he stands to think how to bestow kindness upon his wife, how and in what way to help her, and how to behave at home in general.

Nobody knows and sees what he is thinking. It's all done internally, in complete modesty. This is the essence of 'walking humbly'. This service is extraordinary and is a wondrous aspect of serving G-d.

Another example: When one prepares to enter the study hall, the kollel, or a 'daf yomi' lesson, he should bear in mind how to make the most efficient use of his time, think about what he can do to benefit the community, and then perform

them discreetly without the community knowing what he did.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller related that in the Lakewood Yeshiva for thirty consecutive years someone bought soap for the benefit of the public, placed it next to the sink in the yeshiva, and no one knew who it was.

The person managed to escape the public eye and place the soap for the benefit of the Torah scholars, and some even tried hard to discover his identity, but all with no success. Imagine that, thirty years without being identified!

This is called 'walking humbly', and being attached to G-d in one's thoughts...

A Jew who thus sanctifies their thoughts has immense power to effect in the upper worlds.

Before we continue, we will share a story on this theme...

Acting Below Yet Hinting Above

After the death of the saintly Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, his followers turned for leadership

to his grandnephew and disciple, Rabbi Mordechai of Nadvorna.

The conduct of Rabbi Mordechai of Nadvorna, faithfully and precisely reflected that of Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, not only in his ways and conduct but also in his spiritual levels and attainments, and in the wonders he performed.

The extraordinary divine service of Rabbi Mordechai of Nadvorna, the fire of holiness that blazed around him, and the prophetic visions that occurred to him constantly, highlighted the wonder of his persona for all future generations.

His every act, movement, and step was intentional and aligned with the movements in Heaven.

Lofty intentions and thoughts accompanied his every move and stir, even while engaged in daily tasks.

He would often say:

'It's a pity for those who contaminate their lungs with smoke, and their noses with snuff tobacco, if they do not

intend thereby the intentions that the High Priest had during the incense offering !'

The 'Divrei Chaim' of Sanz once testified:

'Rabbi Mordechai does not move from one tile to another with his walk, without intending a special intention for the sake of Heaven !'

Following this introduction, we will share a story regarding this great personality:⁴

Rabbi Mordechai once visited Budapest, and sent to announce among the city's craftsmen that he was seeking a craftsman who could make a new prayer stand for him.

Among the craftsmen who came to offer their candidacy, Rabbi Mordechai chose an elderly carpenter and proceeded to give him precise measurements for the length, width, and height of the stand, together with various details regarding its appearance and the manner of its construction.

Parshat Pekudei - The Challenging Creation of the Ephod

On every matter, the man nodded his head and replied:
'Indeed, I know!'

In the end, Rabbi Mordechai specified a certain number of nails and asked the craftsman if he could assemble the entire stand with so many nails, no less and no more.

'**Yes**, I can!' - the man replied.

'**And** please have the nails made of wood, not metal!' - Rabbi Mordechai added.

When the new stand was brought before Rabbi Mordechai, he did not cease to praise and laud it, to everyone's astonishment, and did not cease from praying on it throughout his stay in the city.

After a few days, Rabbi Mordechai asked his close disciples:

'**Who** among you was fortunate enough to see the carpenter of the prayer stand?'

Know that he was a hidden righteous man, one of the thirty-six in the generation, and today he passed away to the afterlife!...

Thus, with every instruction regarding the prayer stand, as with every step and move throughout his life, Rabbi Mordechai was high above, and his mind perceived the heavens and the hidden and concealed worlds...

Let us return to the priestly garments...

The Challenging Creation of the Ephod

The wise-hearted craftsmen were commanded to make the eight garments of the high priest, as the Torah specifies.

The Torah testifies that they indeed created these exquisite garments as the L-rd commanded them, without any special difficulties.

But when they reached the garment of the 'Ephod', they were perplexed:

In each garment, the Torah specifies the raw materials from which the garment was made. And for the 'Ephod', it specifies threads of five raw materials: blue, crimson, scarlet, fine linen, and gold.

Parshat Pekudei - Choice in the 'void'

From each of these four materials, they took six very fine threads and one thread of gold and twisted it into one thicker thread (in total the thread was made of seven threads).

And after creating four thick threads from each of these materials, they twisted them into one very thick rope-like thread, from which the fabric of the entire Ephod was then woven.

What perplexed the wise-hearted craftsmen: How is it possible to turn gold metal into sewing threads ?

But after deliberation and considerable thought, they succeeded in their task, as recorded in the Torah: "And they hammered out sheets of gold and cut it into wires of threads to be worked into the blue, crimson,

scarlet, and fine linen, the work of a craftsman" (Exodus 39:3).

And the Ramban there explains: 'In all the work of the sanctuary, it is not explained the craftsmanship of how it was done, except for here...⁵ for it was a wonder in their eyes how gold was to be spun and twisted as wool and flax, for it had not been done before.'

That is, when they heard from Moses that they needed to turn gold into sewing threads, it seemed quite odd to them, 'How can such a thing be done ? !'

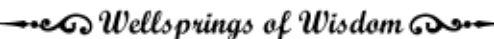
And the verse teaches us that they nonetheless managed to come up with the solution...

However, the difficulty involving the ephod was deeper than the mere physical creation of the garment...

Choice in the 'void'

We explained that in the consciousness of a person, there

are two states of beliefs and actions:



5. Meaning that in all the Torah portions that deal with the construction of the Tabernacle, the manner of the

work is not mentioned at all, and only here (in the making of the ephod) does the Torah detail the manner of the work.

Parshat Pekudei - Choice in the 'void'

The first part includes those that are so clear to him that he cannot think of acting otherwise.

The second part are those which he is unsure of. In other words, there is a certain void in the human consciousness where even one's imagination can seem like reality.

And it is in this void, that the power of choice is expressed.

And this is the difference between one person and another - the degree of void they experience.

Now, the degree of the void in a person, is formed and based on the two stages of education and struggle.

As Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler wrote ('Michtav M'Eliyahu' - Part 1, Page 113):

'There are those who are educated to goodness until they are secure from the evil inclination in these areas, and their point of free choice is in more elevated matters.

For example, someone who was educated in proper Torah education among the righteous

and men of action, this education will benefit him so much that his point of choice will not be whether to commit an actual sin or avoid a positive commandment, but in the subtleties of service of the heart and intention.

However, there are those who were educated among the wicked, the lowly, and the morally corrupt.

With them, there may be no choice at all whether to steal or to refrain... Their point of choice will be when they happen to get caught stealing, and a battle of inclinations will rage whether to commit murder by the advice of his evil inclination, or he will ignore this evil urge at the advice of his good inclination at his particular level...

Thus, education does not change the very matter of free choice, but only at which point and regarding which matter will one experience this struggle and this 'void' of free choice.

Thus, fortunate is he who was reared and educated among the righteous and the G-d-fearing.

Parshat Pekudei - The root of idolatry - not recognizing the truth

In addition to education, a second stage of 'coping' determines regarding what one will feel a 'void' and experience free choice:

Every struggle that one overcomes brings results !

If one is fortunate and chooses to do the good and proper, his inner world is purified and a new, higher void is revealed.

However, if he fails, then his inner world descends downwards, and within it a new, lower void is revealed.

Every choice that a person makes, leaves an impression for

all his life, whether a little or a lot, whether for good or for the better.

Not only regarding himself, but this also affects the education of his children, and everything that develops onward from him until the end of all generations...

Meir thought to himself: 'So this is the reason why the husband didn't feel it to be an issue to eat in an establishment without a proper kosher certification...'

And the Torah class continued...

The root of idolatry - not recognizing the truth

At the beginning of the days of the Second Temple, the sages gathered and decided to eliminate the inclination of idolatry.

Since then, thank G-d, this desire has disappeared from the Jewish people.

Before they had eliminated this inclination, this desire burned with a flaming fire, and its sparks blinded all the feelings and powers...

The struggle that took place then, was within the 'void' of the consciousness.

To additionally explain:

King Solomon revealed to us that: "G-d has created this opposite this" (Ecclesiastes 7:14). Which means, G-d created man and desired that he choose good, and therefore He created two parallel systems.

Parshat Pekudei - The Ephod Atonement for Idolatry

One system of the ten holy powers from which all holy reality emanates, and a second system of ten impure powers from which all impure reality emanates.

And to both systems G-d gave immense powers - corresponding to every level that exists in holiness, there is a corresponding level in the impure side.

For the sake of our conversation, just as in the commandment of faith in G-d there are infinite depths, and even if a person were to study it a thousand

years he will not master all the wisdoms of this commandment of faith,⁶ So too, in idolatry, there are infinite levels of knowledge...

And in those ancient times, the people of Israel struggled with the inclination of idolatry, and every time they succumbed to one level in which they weakened their faith, a new 'void' opened in their consciousness that revealed a new level in idolatry, and the struggle began anew...

And let us now return to the craftsmen of the ephod...

The Ephod Atonement for Idolatry

The wise-hearted were commanded to make an ephod that would draw forth such a spiritual 'image' that would have the power to atone for the sin of idolatry.

The craftsmen found this difficult. The flaw of the sin of

idolatry is more severe than other sins, such as bloodshed and slander, which are an action (or a fleeting thought).

Idolatry however, involves a struggle that occurs within the consciousness and belief system

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

6. When a person comes, after long days and years, to the heavenly court, they ask him several questions, and one of them is: **'Did** you deal faithfully in faith?'

Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick explained this question as follows (Asher B'Nachal,

Part 39 - Page 312):

In Heaven they ask a person whether during his life he tried to perfect the commandment of faith. Did he study in depth the guidelines of the commandment of faith? Did he continuously try to achieve a clearer and more refined faith?

Parshat Pekudei - The Struggle is According to the Level

of a person,⁷ and this struggle seems endless, for when a person chooses good beliefs and rises up a level, he stands there before

a new and higher reality of impurity.

And so, how can one atone for such a sin?...

The Struggle is According to the Level

Suddenly Meir's eyes lit up and he thought to himself:

“The side of holiness and impurity struggle with each other over the same area, and therefore when the level of holiness is low, the level of impurity that struggles against it is also lower.

Conversely, when the level of holiness is high, the level of impurity that struggles against it is also high. This must be so because if a person who has become sanctified has only the original measure of evil inclination that he had originally, his power of choice is then nullified.

For the struggle is only in the place of the 'void,' and for the person who has become sanctified,

the original struggles are no longer relevant and is no longer a 'void' that he must vie to control.

And in order for the freedom of choice to remain, his evil inclination is increased according to the measure of his holiness.

‘I now realize’ - Meir continued thinking - ‘that this is why specifically now, after I started to dedicate myself to the service of G-d, a terrible fire of desire occasionally ignites in my heart, and I have to fight hard to extinguish it...’

For the trials are according to the level of the person...

‘I’m so glad I went to the study hall to listen to these great Torah classes, I finally understand

...*Wellsprings of Wisdom*...

7. Therefore, idolatry is the only sin where thought is considered like action!

As the Talmud declares (Kiddushin 40a):

“The thought of idolatry is considered like action, as it says: "To seize the house of Israel by their hearts which have strayed from Me in their idolatry, all of them" (Ezekiel 14:5).

Parshat Pekudei - Summary and Practical Application

what I'm going through this all is', I thought to myself,
internally, and how meaningful and got up to leave.

Shabbat Shalom!

Summary and Practical Application

1. Of all the soul's powers that a person receives from G-d, the most important of them all is the power of free choice.

With this power of choice, one must develop their intellect and recognize to choose good and reject evil, and mark the path to walk and the action they will take.

When one is fortunate and chooses good, they elevate themselves high above, and raise their value above all other living beings.

2. The power of choice in a person takes place at the point of deliberation where one's inner truth meets the alternative, the imagined truth - the falsehood.

Beyond this point, there is no real deliberation and choice between the truth and falsehood.

3. This is because in the consciousness of a person, there are two divided matters: The first consists of all things clear to him as the sun, things regarding which it doesn't even occur to him to act differently.

The second part consists of the things regarding which there can be doubt between truth and falsehood. And it is only there, in the void of doubt, does the power of choice come into expression.

4. A person who is fortunate and chooses good, purifies their inner world, and within it, a new, higher inner world is revealed. However, if one fails and transgresses, his inner world descends, and within it, a new, lower inner world is revealed.

5. The principle that G-d demands of all of us - To accustom oneself to always walk with G-d, in every place and corner, and to crown Him over us in our thoughts - is among the greatest achievements that a person can attain on earth.

It is through this mission that a person can grow and perfect himself in this world, and achieve the greatest success.

6. This is especially true when approaching the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the commandments.

Parshat Pekudei - Summary and Practical Application

One needs to prepare his thoughts beforehand, and be aware in his heart and mind what it is that he's approaching, and what he is coming to fulfill.

In doing so, he brings a 'soul' to the 'body' of the commandment.

The commandment itself is like a body and the preparation before the commandment is akin to a soul, since the proper preparation before the commandment awakens the correct intention and thoughts that corresponds to that particular commandment.

7. Therefore, even though every Jew who fulfills the commandments without intention is loved and cherished above, nonetheless, it is not proper for a Jew to perform the commandments without pure intention.

As previously explained, the act of the commandment resembles a body and the intention of the commandment resembles the soul, as the adage: 'A prayer without intention is like a body without a soul'.

Hence, a wise and understanding person will consider carefully before fulfilling each commandment to prepare himself properly and correctly.

8. The foremost intention that a person should have when performing the commandments of G-d, is to arouse within himself the inner desire to fulfill that commandment

with joy and good-heartedness, and should imagine that they are now receiving all the precious wealth of this world and the next.

Additionally, before fulfilling each commandment, one should think about how the commandment is to be fulfilled in detail and with its reasons, for example:

The commandment of Tefillin, how to fulfill it? Where is it placed? When is the time of its placement? And until when is its time? These and other details of the commandment should be reviewed when relevant, so that no part of fulfilling the commandment is lost, and thus, the commandment will be complete.

Another way to prepare one's thoughts for the fulfillment of each commandment, is to intend to fulfill the obligation related to that commandment. This is all the more so with regard to commandments of speech, such as: reciting the Shema, reciting of prayer, counting the Omer, and the like.

It is therefore proper and correct for all whose hearts are stirred to the service of G-d, to have the intention, when fulfilling each commandment, to do it for the sake of fulfilling that commandment itself.

And this, according to the opinion of many of our sages and halachic decisors, is an obligatory Torah law.

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Pekudei**

6th of Adar II, 5784



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Miami	7:12 pm	8:04 pm	8:42 pm
Los Angeles	6:44 pm	7:40 pm	8:15 pm
Montreal	6:43 pm	7:46 pm	8:14 pm
Toronto	7:06 pm	8:08 pm	8:38 pm
London	5:48 pm	6:57 pm	7:19 pm
Jerusalem	5:32 pm	6:22 pm	7:05 pm
Tel Aviv	5:29 pm	6:19 pm	7:01 pm
Haifa	5:28 pm	6:18 pm	7:00 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:29 pm	6:19 pm	7:01 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

I have noticed youth who at a certain age, turn off from the path of G-d. I have found that a cause for this is that when these kids go to sleep they remove their kippah, thus sleeping like a gentile. It is therefore worthwhile to be careful regarding this with the children so that we don't suffer from them later on.

Sometimes I tell parents that it is worthwhile to be careful and cautious with this just so that their children don't give them heartache. Heartache from children can sometimes bring more suffering than death, G-d forbid.

Therefore we must do our best to see to it that our children act truly G-d fearing and G-d will remove from us this future suffering and heartache.



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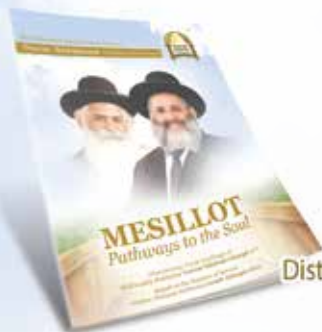
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