

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 172

**Eikeyv** | Fear of Heaven - Basis for Man, the World, and All of Judaism

# 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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## Parshat Ekev

### Advice for Debt Cancellation

Dovid sat in the synagogue, in his usual spot, waiting for Yossi, his study partner for Talmud.

The study time arrived, but Yossi had not yet come. A few minutes passed quickly, and only after half an hour did Yossi arrive and immediately began apologizing:

"Dovid, I'm so sorry, but because of a defaulted debt, my bank account was seized, and I had to deal with the bank, so I was delayed."

Dovid listened sympathetically and said: "If you're already talking about debts, I must tell you that I've been thinking and pondering for a

long time whether there is some magical way to get rid of debts."

Yossi replied: "I remember once hearing a sermon by a rabbi, where he explained that one of the fundamental concepts in Kabbalah is the idea that spiritual energy that descends from Heaven requires a vessel to contain it, for if there is no vessel to contain, the descending abundance is of no benefit.<sup>1</sup>

The rabbi continued, 'Know that even one's livelihood that descends from above requires a vessel in which to rest. The vessel for livelihood is reciting 'Grace after Meals' with intention.

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#### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**1. In** "Chelev Ha'aretz" (Part 3, Page 1), we brought the words of the Baal Shem Tov who said:

"**G-d** does not send afflictions upon a person unless He first sends upon a spirit of melancholy" (Degel Machaneh Ephraim, Parshat Ekev).

The explanation:

**Even** the afflictions sent to a person from Heaven are spiritual, and in order for them to manifest, they need a vessel upon which to rest, and the vessel of sadness and melancholy is precisely the vessel that can receive and contain afflictions.

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When a person blesses the 'Grace after Meals' with great intention and concentration, they create a vessel for receiving spiritual abundance.'

'Sefer HaChinuch' (Mitzvah 430) adds:

I was taught by my teachers that anyone who is meticulous about the 'Grace after Meals' will have their

livelihood provided honorably throughout all their days.'<sup>2</sup>

Yossi concluded: 'This then, is the answer to your question. By reciting the 'Grace after Meals' with intention, one gets rid of their debts.'

Dovid sat deep in thought, his eyes fixed upon a random point deep in space. Yossi looked at

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### *~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*

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**Therefore**, a person who shatters this vessel and instead is always joyful, afflictions cannot come upon him.

**2. Rabbi** Avraham Kesler, author of 'Notrei Amen' on the power of reciting 'Amen', once shared before a conference of returnees to Judaism, a remarkable story, the details of which are precise and were verified, heard firsthand by a school teacher in Bnei Brak:

**We** had a neighbor on Malachi Street in Jerusalem, a simple and regular Jew, who had a special conduct - He was extremely meticulous with reciting Grace after Meals.

**He** would recite each word from the prayer book with immense intention and sweetness, such that the blessing took him nearly half an hour.

**Throughout** the year, we could not notice this, but during the holiday of Sukkot, when all the neighbors sat in their sukkahs in the building's courtyard, they heard him reciting his unique Grace after Meals in a sweet tune, and everyone

was amazed, for no one knew him to be so meticulous in other mitzvot. Why was Grace after Meals different for him?

**One** of the neighbors, unable to contain his curiosity, entered the neighbor's sukkah one day and asked for an explanation for his special conduct.

**The** Jew responded emotionally with his tale:

**I** was born in Poland before the war, and I lived in a small town. One day, when I was nearing Bar Mitzvah age, my teacher informed the class that in a few days we would be tested by the great Rabbi of Lublin, Rabbi Meir Shapiro, and emphasized that we should prepare well.

**The** test took place, and because of our efforts, we managed to impress the rabbi with our broad knowledge.

**Rabbi** Meir, moved by our class's knowledge, said to us: "You deserve a great gift, and I am going to give it to you now."

**Parshat Ekev - Advice for Debt Cancellation**

**The** rabbi then opened "Sefer HaChinuch" and began reading to us from it:

**'Thus** I have received from my teachers, may G-d protect them, that anyone who is meticulous in Grace after Meals will always have honorable livelihood' (Sefer HaChinuch - Mitzvah 430).

**Rabbi** Meir repeated the sentence with emphasis again and again, and then said: 'Here is a wonderful gift for you all.

**I** am giving you a promise for a lifetime of livelihood, and it is worthwhile for you, children, to accept from now on to recite Grace after Meals with intention and you will see the fulfillment of the promise'.

**Many** children accepted upon themselves to be meticulous in saying Grace after Meals from the siddur with intention, as the "Chinuch" says to do.

**I** too - continued the neighbor - accepted this and maintained it daily without compromise for several years.

**When** dark clouds loomed over Europe, and the Germans, may their names be blotted out, invaded Poland, they also reached our town, to gather Jews for the notorious selections and from there to extermination, G-d forbid.

**I** was a young boy when one day they gathered us in the town square. The Germans set up L-shaped boards at a certain height, and each boy had to stand next to it to measure his height. Those who reached the height of the board passed to the right, and those who didn't, were sent to the left - to be shipped off to the gas chambers. I approached the board

and stood on tiptoe with all my might and barely reached the top of the board. Only by the grace of G-d, I was sent to the right.

**Then** a second selection began. We stood in line, and each of us was asked about his craft and professional skills that could serve the German people.

**I** didn't know what a young boy like me, who had not practiced any trade, could offer, but those who had nothing to offer were sent back to the left side.

**As** I deliberated what to say, an older man standing behind me in line turned to me and said: Say that you have been a professional cook for many years and that I worked as your assistant in the kitchen.

**When** my turn came, and the German looked at me, a short boy, he was of course surprised how I passed the first selection, but nonetheless asked me about my trade.

**I** confidently replied that I had been a cook for several years and that my 'assistant' was behind me.

**I** was sent together with that Jew to one of the kitchens of the German army, and we began doing the cooking.

**By** the grace of G-d, I managed to fulfill the task, and while most Jews in the camps starved for bread, I sat beside pots of food.

**I** did not defile myself with forbidden meat, heaven forbid, and even bread I did not eat - because reciting Grace after Meals would take me twenty minutes, and it was almost impossible to recite a blessing under the circumstances for so

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long. But I had vegetables in abundance and no one was on my tail.

**Thus**, I had the promise fulfilled that my livelihood would be found in honor all my days.

**For** two full years, I worked in the kitchen, and throughout that time, when hunger was the only going currency, I always had a livelihood in abundance.

**One** day, a German officer entered the kitchen and saw the rare sight: a young Jewish man, well-built, unlike his emaciated Jewish brothers whose appearance was usually pale and stricken. He could not bear this sight at all.

**He** grabbed me by my arms, hit me several times, and handed me a small hammer.

**Then** he took me to the yard and pointed to the frozen ground and ordered:

**“Here**, dig a pit for us, two meters deep, and three meters long and wide, all this with the small hammer I gave you.”

**I** tried to dig with the hammer in the frozen snow but did not reach the hard ground beneath it at all. The task was completely unrealistic. I stood there helpless, knowing that in a few hours the cruel German would return and see that I had done nothing, and my fate would be bitter and terrible.

**I** looked around, and discovered a bus full of German soldiers. They were passing through after a hard battle, and when they saw me, they wanted to get off the bus and vent their anger on me.

**They** shouted at the driver to stop, but he refused, so they started throwing potatoes and carrots at me with all their might. The vegetables did not hit me, but in a short moment I was surrounded by piles of carrots and potatoes.

**I** turned to G-d and said:

**Master** of the World. I have your promise that my livelihood will be available to me all my days, but now I have nothing but this large pile of vegetables, and I must manage to dig the pit.

**Before** I had even finished my prayer, a large vehicle passed by, filled with Polish forced laborers returning from a hard day's work.

**They** stopped next to me and asked about my business.

**Immediately**, I offered them a deal: I need to dig a pit in this area, if you work for me, you will receive many potatoes and carrots.

**These** famished individuals, despite having had a grueling day, did not think twice and got off the vehicle.

**They** took out digging tools and all began to work together with great vigor, digging into the ground while I stood by and supervised their work.

**In** less than half an hour, the pit was ready as had been required of me.

**I** gave them the pile of vegetables in return, and they thanked me with tears of joy in their eyes, while I returned to the kitchen.

**Parshat Ekev - The Torah Makes Rounds Among the Nations**

his friend and asked: 'Dovid, what are you thinking about?'

Dovid replied: 'I was just thinking, if every abundance requires a vessel, even one's physical livelihood, then surely

a vessel is needed to receive the lofty light of the Torah.

What is the vessel that is required for the containment of one's Torah study?

**The Torah Makes Rounds Among the Nations**

Dovid suddenly answered his own question: 'Oh yes, now that I pondered this a bit, I remembered.'

'What did you remember?' Yossi asked.

Dovid replied: 'I remembered what our sages say on the matter.'

'Please do share,' Yossi pleaded.

Yossi listened intently as Dovid began to expound from the very beginning:

'It was 2,448 years after creating the world, when G-d decided that the world was ready and capable of receiving the Torah.

G-d began to make rounds among the nations of the world

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

A few hours later the German officer saw me, and ran at me in a frenzy and started screaming: What are you doing here?

I calmly replied: "I finished my task, the pit is ready, you can check my work."

**Of** course, he didn't believe me, how could a young boy dig a large pit with such a small hammer? So he went out dragging me along with him to the yard, ready to vent his anger on me for the perceived mockery and disrespect, but

was instead stunned silent by what he saw.

**He** kicked me hard and exclaimed: "I don't understand what has happened here, but your G-d has given you a pair of unique hands."

**Until** the end of the war, I continued working in the German kitchen, and throughout all those years, when hunger was most prevalent everywhere, I always had food in abundance ('LeHa'ir, Maor Zemirot Shabbat', Page 511).

and inquired, 'Who wants to receive the Torah?'

This grand search is eternally recorded in the Torah: "The L-rd came from Sinai and shined upon them from Seir; He appeared from Mount Paran, and came from amongst the holy myriads, with flaming fire from His right hand" (Deuteronomy 33:2).

The verse hints that first, G-d revealed Himself to the children of Esau, as it is said: 'And He shined upon them from Seir' ('Seir' refers to Esau), and asked them: 'Do you want to receive the Torah?'<sup>3</sup>

The children of Esau looked at each other and asked: 'Master of the universe, what is written in it?'

G-d replied: 'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13).

The children of Esau looked at G-d and asked: 'Is this commandment absolute, or is it flexible a bit?'

You surely know, Master of the universe, that we are ruled by our hearts, and when we desire something, our character has no power to resist the temptation.

The children of Seir continued - 'Our hearts greatly yearn for blood, and find great pleasure in the goriness of murder, and we know that when this lust is awakened and has desires, we will have no power to resist.'

Yossi interrupted Dovid's flow of speech: 'Well, the sages referred to this most poignantly: 'The wicked are under the control of their hearts' (Bereishit Rabbah 34:10).

'You're right,' said Dovid, and continued: 'G-d told the sons of Seir, 'this commandment is absolute'.'

'If so,' said the children of Seir, 'we do not desire the Torah.'

G-d then moved on to the children of Ishmael, as it is said: 'He appeared from Mount Paran' ('Paran' refers to the children of Ishmael) and asked them: 'Do you want to receive the Torah?'

**Parshat Ekev - Refined Traits Precedes Torah Study**

'What is written in it?'

G-d replied: 'You shall not steal' (Exodus 20:13).

'Master of the universe, you know that the wicked are under the control of their hearts, and when the heart yearns for something, the intellect is entirely nullified to it, and it has no right to express an opinion.

We know ourselves and know that our hearts feel alive and rejuvenated every time we steal, and sadly therefore we do not want to receive the Torah.'

From there, G-d sent messengers to all the nations of the world and asked them as well: 'Do you want to receive the Torah, do you accept what it says?'

They asked: 'What is written in it?' They were told in response: 'You shall have no other gods before Me' (Exodus 20:3).

They then said: 'We are sorry, our hearts do not agree with these difficult laws, and we cannot adhere to them.'

**Refined Traits Precedes Torah Study**

There remained only one possibility. G-d turned to the people of Israel and asked them: 'Do you want to receive the Torah?'

The Jewish people replied sincerely and simply, without questions or unnecessary investigations:

'Everything that the L-rd has spoken we will do and we will hear' (Exodus 24:7).

At once, the preparations for the Sinai revelation began.

To quote my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel (Imrei Noam, Yitro - Discourse 4):

As a preparation for the revelation at Sinai, G-d commanded Moses to sanctify the people of Israel, as it is said: 'Sanctify them today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their garments' (Exodus 19:10).

The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch explains that this verse hints that to merit the

Torah, each person is obligated to launder and purify the three garments of the soul: thought, speech, and action. (Hayom Yom - 5<sup>th</sup> of Sivan)

This means: a person should strive to remove any evil thoughts and think only holy thoughts, they should cease forbidden speech such as gossip, slander, lies, flattery, and vulgar speech, and should speak only holy words, and they should avoid improper actions and instead only do deeds that will bring satisfaction to G-d, and thereby be a worthy vessel to receive the Torah.

This verse 'Sanctify them today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their garments' additionally hints that anyone who wishes to merit the Torah must cleanse their heart and remove from it evil, cruelty, and narrow-mindedness to others, and instead, fill it with good traits, compassion, and a good eye toward others.

These teachings fit very well with the great principle taught by

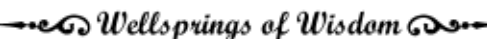
the Vilna Gaon,<sup>4</sup> regarding the Torah being compared to water:

Water has the power to grow and sprout the seeds and crops in the ground but not to change them into something else.

If a person plants apple seeds, the water will come and grow and sprout the seeds into a large apple tree. But if a person plants thorns and thistles, the water will come and sprout and grow those thorns, turning a small thorn into a large thorn, but not changing them into sweet fruits.

Likewise, the characteristic of the Torah: the Torah has the power to grow and sprout but not to change one into something else.

If a person who has planted within themselves good traits, such as love, compassion, and a good eye, studies the Torah, the good traits within them will grow and sprout, multiplying both in quantity and quality, as our sages have said (Avot 6:1): “and it [the



4. Vilna Gaon's commentary to Proverbs 27:19:

Torah study] elevates and exalts them above all deeds.”

But if a person who has planted within themselves bad traits (such as hatred, cruelty, and narrow-mindedness) studies the Torah without first correcting their traits, the Torah will not be able to change their nature but only grow and sprout what is already planted within them, and if they were a 'small wicked' person before they studied, they will become a 'great wicked' person.

There is no better proof of this concept than Doeg the Adomi, who was one of the greatest sages of his generation in Torah learning (Chagigah 15b), and yet, from the creation of the world, there was never a 'chief of murderers' like him, as recounted in the Prophets (Samuel I, 22), that he personally killed eighty-five priests in Nob, the city of priests, in one day, together with the other inhabitants of the city, "from man to woman, child to infant" (1 Samuel 22:19).

This was because deep within Doeg's heart were implanted evil

and cruel traits from the beginning, even before he began studying Torah (see Chagigah 15b and Rashi there), and he did not bother to correct them.

Since the Torah has the power to grow but not to change the person's traits, he not only failed to improve but rather grew in his wickedness, turning from a 'small wicked' person into a 'great wicked' person.

Therefore, our sages prohibited teaching Torah to a student who is not virtuous in their deeds and traits, saying that anyone who teaches an unworthy student will eventually descend to Gehinnom, and that it is like throwing a stone to the idol of Mercury (Chullin 133a).

The Rambam ruled this explicitly ('Talmud Torah' 4:1):

"We do not teach Torah except to a student who is fitting and proper in his deeds or to a simple one.

But if the student is going down a bad path, we return him to the right path, leading him in the proper way, and examining him, and only

afterward, do we admit him into the house of study and teach him.'

This is an essential preparation required from each of us to be worthy of learning the Torah.

Each person must remove from their heart any traces of evil, cruelty, and narrow-minded traits towards others and instead develop pure feelings of love, compassion, and a good eye towards others, and only afterward can one truly merit the 'crown of Torah.'

The people of Israel who stood before Mount Sinai, even before meriting to receive the Torah, had their impurity cease (Shabbat 146a).

This is why we say in the Passover Haggadah: 'Even if He had brought us near to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would have been enough,' because this removal of impurity which we merited to just by standing before Mount Sinai already gives us an infinite joy, even if we had not received the Torah.

That impurity which ceased from us at Mount Sinai is the wickedness of an evil heart and

evil thoughts toward others. One who still has this impurity within them, we must be concerned about their lineage.

Our sages have said (Yevamot 79a): 'There are three signs of this [Jewish] nation - they are merciful, modest, and perform acts of kindness. Anyone who has these three signs is worthy to join this nation.'

Additionally, our sages (Beitza 32b) tell the story of Shabtai bar Marinus who arrived in Babylon and asked the people there to help him find a source of livelihood or at least provide him with some charity to sustain himself. When they refused to help him in any way, he angrily declared: 'These people came from the mixed multitude and not from the seed of Israel, because those who have mercy on the creatures are known to be of the seed of Abraham our forefather, while anyone who does not have mercy on others is known to be not of the seed of Abraham our forefather.'

This is said about someone who does not show mercy and

**Parshat Ekev - Fear and Awe at Mount Sinai**

compassion, all the more severe is someone who acts cruelly.

We must act with love, compassion, and kindness towards every person, but all the more so must a person act this way towards their wife, and strive to

support her physically and emotionally, and make her happy in every possible way.

The more a person does so, the more G-d bestows him with heavenly assistance in all his matters, both material and spiritual.

**Fear and Awe at Mount Sinai**

The days of preparation ended, and the people of Israel stood at the foot of Mount Sinai.

G-d then revealed Himself to them, and this revelation caused them great feelings of fear and awe.

As it is stated:

"On the third day, when it was morning, there was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the shofar; and all the people who were in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16).

"All the people saw the thunder and the flames, the sound of the shofar, and the mountain smoking; the people all

saw it, and they trembled and stood from afar" (Exodus 20:15).

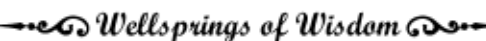
We need to understand why the divine revelation awakened in them specifically the feeling of fear and awe and not love and connection.

The Mittlerer Rebbe of Lubavitch explained:<sup>5</sup>

The world of emotions is a complex world that is generally divided in two central emotions: love and fear.

These two emotions are polar opposite.

The emotion of love is most strongly aroused when a person feels that they are far away from their beloved. When the beloved



5. 'Imrei Binah' (Shaar Kriyat Shema - 74).

**Parshat Ekev - G-d Blessed His People with Peace**

is close by, this feeling of love is not as noticeable and palpable.

We see this clearly with the love of a father for his son, the more the son is far away from him in time and place, the more his soul longs for him with great love and increased yearning.

However, when he sees him constantly, this love is nearly not at all discernable.

In complete contrast, the emotion of fear and awe is exactly the opposite.

The emotion of fear and awe is aroused precisely when a person feels close to the thing they fear, but when the feared thing is far

from them, they nearly do not feel this emotion of fear at all.

We see this clearly with anyone who stands near a king. Their knees knock against each other, and they tremble greatly, because the sight itself causes fear.

Someone who is far from the king does not feel the fear nearly so much.

At the revelation at Mount Sinai, G-d revealed Himself to the people of Israel with a tremendous revelation and spiritual illumination, and therefore it was specifically a terrible awe and fear that fell upon them. Because great closeness awakens specifically this emotion most strongly.

**G-d Blessed His People with Peace**

At the revelation at Mount Sinai, the people of Israel achieved perfection. Their hearts were pure from all bad traits, and in addition, they felt an intense feeling of fear that spread throughout their 248 limbs and 365 sinews.

When we talk about emotions, some people think that an emotion is a small muscle that

beats in the heart or thoughts that swirl in the brain.

This however is not accurate; emotions flow throughout the body and course through the veins of the blood.

At the revelation at Mount Sinai, the feeling of fear enveloped their entire existence until their souls departed, and

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G-d miraculously revived them anew.

The hearts of the people of Israel were now pure and clean, and so G-d created within them a vessel and placed in it the infinite light of the Torah.

The vessel was peace, and the light was the spiritual light of the Torah.

Thus, our sages said (end of tractate Uktzin): 'Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta said: G-d found no vessel that holds a blessing for Israel except peace, as it is said: "The L-rd will give strength to His people; the L-rd will bless His people with peace (Psalms 29:11)".'

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe explained:<sup>6</sup>

It is explained elsewhere<sup>7</sup> that the tablets served like a mirror that showed and repaired the heart of the people of Israel.

G-d Himself first gave the tablets, preparing the hearts of

the people of Israel and only then placing the Torah within them.

This is the interpretation of the verse:

'The L-rd will give strength to His people' - 'strength' meaning Torah,

'The L-rd will bless His people with peace'.

Thus, he gave them both a renewed heart and the Torah, together and simultaneously, being that both the Torah and its vessel - that is, a corrected heart, descended together from above.

'This is the end of the sermon I wanted to share with you,' Dovid said with a smile.

'The vessel for receiving the Torah is peace. The larger and purer the vessel, the greater the abundance of Torah wisdom that will enter it.'

Yossi looked up at the clock, noticing the late hour.

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6. 'AleI Shur' (Part 2 - Page 488).

7. **Sfat** Emet, Parashat Ki Tisa (5631): "In truth, the tablets were like a mirror that

revealed the heart of each person, reflecting and thereby rectifying the inner intentions and spiritual state of the people of Israel."

**Parshat Ekev - What's the True Vessel for Torah?**

'I would love to continue again tomorrow, with G-d's this fascinating conversation help, ok?'

**What's the True Vessel for Torah?**

The next day the two got together again.

Yossi turned to Dovid and said: "You know, the sermon last night has occupied my thoughts all night - the vessel for the light of the Torah being peace.

However, this morning, I studied the daily portion of the Chumash and came across the verse in this week's Parsha: 'And now, Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you but to fear the L-rd your G-d' (Deuteronomy 10:12).

I glanced at Rashi's interpretation quoting the Talmud which explains that the vessel for the Torah is fear of Heaven.

In the words of the Talmud (Berachot 33b):

'Rabbi Chanina said: Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven, as it is said:

"And now, Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d ask of you but to fear the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 10:12).

The Talmud then asks "Is fear of Heaven a small matter?"

It then immediately answers "Yes, for him (Moses our teacher) it was a small matter, as Rabbi Chanina said: this is comparable to a person who is asked for a large vessel that he has; it then seems to him like merely a small vessel. But if asked for a small vessel that he does not have, it seems to him like a large vessel.' (meaning that since Moses had fear of G-d; he considered it small, but to us who are lacking it, is considered large)

From the words of the Talmud here, I have gleaned that the vessel for the Torah is fear of Heaven.

To explain this, let us delve deeper.

## Fear - A Vessel

In a lecture given by Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, he posed the following question:<sup>8</sup>

We see that the Talmud learned that everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven which G-d therefore asks of man.

But seemingly, in the closing verses of the book of Micah, similar words are said: "He has told you, man, what is good, and what the L-rd requires of you, which is to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your G-d" (Micah 6:8), yet the Talmud does not learn the same extrapolation that 'everything is in the hands of Heaven except for doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly'?

He answered thus:

In the verse in Micah, the word 'require' (דורש) is used, and דורש doesn't exclude the matter

being dependent on Heaven.

But in the verse we are dealing with, 'ask' (שואל) is used, and שואל implies that the matter is truly dependent on man, and not from Heaven.

'Ask' is like borrowing a vessel from his friend, as it says: "And if a man borrows from his neighbor, and it breaks or dies" (Exodus 22:13). It is as if G-d begs that the person fear Him, like someone who asks for a vessel from his friend.

The imagery in the Talmud accurately describes Moses as someone who is asked for a large vessel and has it, because this is indeed true with fear of Heaven.

This idea is incredible:

Indeed, everything is in the hands of Heaven; All blessings and influences G-d can give a person - but the person must prepare the vessel in which he will receive the blessing and influence, and this vessel is fear.

**Parshat Ekev - Fear - A Vessel**

G-d merely 'asks' us to prepare Him this vessel, which He will then return to us filled with all good.

He does not ask for the same kind of vessel from everyone.

A great person who is ready to receive great abundance - is asked for fear in the form of a large vessel.

Therefore, Moses, may he rest in peace, was demanded

a very large vessel of fear,<sup>9</sup> while a smaller person in stature, is asked for fear in a lesser measure, as much as necessary to contain the blessing from Heaven.

Yossi completed his idea, and then added: "See, now I'm totally confused, which is the vessel for the Torah, Love and acceptance of others, or fear of Heaven?"

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

**9. We** bring you a story that illustrates this point:

**It** was a wintery Friday afternoon in Shpola.

**Dark** clouds hung over the sky, drops of rain fell continuously, and in the market square - transactions were being made quickly, as the bundled figures of the customers hurried to escape the biting cold outside and take shelter under the roof of their home.

**In** the home of the Tzadik, Rabbi Aryeh Leib, the 'Saba' of Shpola, the preparations were large and many, as on every Friday.

**Many** guests - among them several distinguished ones - would regularly visit and stay in the court of the rabbi, and it was imperative to prepare enough for the following day, so that nothing would be lacking, Heaven forbid, in honor of Shabbat.

**In** his room, the Tzadik sat, sanctifying himself for Shabbat that was fast approaching. He was completely immersed in the sweetness of the

Divine light, and from time to time he would detach himself from his sublime thoughts to check the pace of the Shabbat preparations in his house.

**The** Rebbetzin, the Rabbi's wife, had passed away not long ago, and a team of loyal attendants and caretakers managed the household, appreciating the privilege to arrange the ways of the Tzadik's house properly so that he could continue his holy work with peace of mind as before. However, the Tzadik's soul was not entirely at ease with this, and his eye was still open and watching every step to ensure that everything was done correctly.

**Today** was no different. From noon onwards, the Tzadik was already urging the household members with his pleasant words to hurry and finish their work before the upcoming Shabbat.

**As** the hours passed, the urging and encouragement grew stronger, being that the day was short, and there was much work.

**Parshat Ekev - Fear - A Vessel**

**Meanwhile**, guests who had come to spend Shabbat with the 'Saba' of Shpola arrived and extended their hands with trembling and awe to receive 'Shalom' from the Tzadik. This time, the number of guests was large, and among them were prominent rabbis, renowned Torah geniuses, and known Tzadikim, who had traveled to benefit from the light of his Torah, righteousness, and holiness, whose reputation had spread across the land.

**That** day, a dreary twilight and misty weather hung over the town and had prevailed since dawn. Even the midday hours did not manage to dispel the dark cover that the clouds had cast over the face of the earth.

**'Shabbat**, Shabbat is fast approaching.' - the 'Saba' urged his attendants countless times - 'soon it will be the time to light the candles.'

**'There** is still plenty of time, Rabbi.' - the attendants tried to alleviate some of the tension - 'It is just past noon, and it is only the clouds that are concealing the daylight.'

**However**, the Tzadik's soul did not find rest. The sanctity of Shabbat burned within him, and it seemed to him as if the day was about to end and the night was nearing. Yet, nonetheless, the attendants would remark to him, in between one task and another, that there was still time for candle lighting, and that they would inform him when the time arrived.

**When** the time for candle lighting finally came, and the attendants came to inform him, the 'Saba' jumped from his place with joy and trembling, and recited the blessing with fear and awe: 'To light the Shabbat candles', and

with hands trembling from holy excitements, he kindled the light in the wicks until golden flames rose and shone by themselves.

**Everything** had supposedly gone smoothly, but the Tzadik cast his eyes on the dark and gloomy sky outside and felt a dreadful pang in his heart.

**'Oh** no,' - the 'Saba' cried out in deep anguish, shaking the house and its inhabitants - 'Oh my, woe to me, who knows if I didn't delay, Heaven forbid, the time for lighting the Shabbat candles.'

**Hearing** the cry of distress, everyone rushed to the Tzadik's room to see what this commotion was all about. When they heard from his mouth what the matter was, they all answered in one voice:

**'Heaven** forbid, no such sin was committed by the Tzadik. You didn't delay the time at all. Only the strange weather of the day caused the light to be concealed earlier, and there's no reason for the Rabbi to torment his soul unnecessarily.'

**For** just a moment, it seemed that the people's words entered the 'Saba's' ears and settled in his heart to calm his mind, but a few moments later, the Tzadik again recalled the view of the dark sky outside when he had lit the candles, and his inner torment was reignited as before.

**'Who** knows?' - the 'Saba' murmured to himself, half softly and half loudly - 'Who knows if the attendants didn't make a mistake after all? Perhaps their eyes deceived them? Who can guarantee me that I didn't delay, Heaven forbid, the time for lighting the candles?'

## Parshat Ekev - Fear - A Vessel

**These** words were repeated again and again, both before and after the prayers, and all the household members were exhausted from trying to calm the Tzadik's soul and relieve his mind from worry.

**The** time for the meal arrived, and a large and long table was set in the house of study, around which were seated dozens of guests, rabbis, chassidim, and righteous people who had gathered from all over the country to see and hear the revered Tzadik.

**At** the head of the table, the tall figure of the 'Saba' shone, his face glowing with the light of the Shechina resting upon him, and all the attendees felt the sanctity prevailing in the place, emanating from the depths of the Tzadik's soul, resembling an angel of the L-rd of Hosts.

**Silence** fell in the house of study, and a deep stillness spread over it, as the Tzaddik rose from his seat and took in his hand the prepared cup of wine to recite the Kiddush of the day.

**Great** Jewish leaders, upon whom thousands of Jews rely, stood there with bowed heads, their ears open like funnels, so as not to miss a single word uttered in holiness from the mouth of the 'Saba'.

**Not** only did they seek his words, but also his every movement, nod of his head or hand. For in the whole world, there was nothing truly equal to the power of the righteous, who stand on the ground and their heads reach the heavens.

**Shabbat** had only just begun, and before them was the Friday night mitzvah dance that the 'Saba' would perform every Friday night in honor of the Shabbat Queen.

**This** dance he had received from Elijah the Prophet, of blessed memory, one night in a pit when he stayed behind in a dark and damp prison cell to save one Jewish soul.

**Suddenly**, an anguished sigh broke from the 'Saba's' lips.

**Deep** groans followed, and all those seated at the table, not knowing the reason, were left bewildered and confused by the Tzadik's inner pain.

**"Dear** Jews." - the Tzadik suddenly called out - "Why do you remain silent? Why this silence at such a difficult hour? Open your mouths and enlighten me with your words.

**Give** counsel and proper advice on what a man who may have delayed the candle lighting time must do?"

**"And** you, what do you say, my dear?" - the 'Saba' turned his pleading question to the disciple sitting to his right - "Say a word. Speak a word to soothe my aching soul."

**"Heaven** forbid." - the bewildered respondent answered - "G-d forbid. G-d does not bring upon the hands of Tzadikim, a stumbling block. Surely the Rabbi lit the Shabbat candles on time."

**The** Tzadik waved his hand dismissively at these comforting words and turned to the one sitting to his left.

**"And** what do you say?" - he asked.

**"Surely** the attendants' words are trustworthy," the respondent answered with trembling, "that the Rabbi lit the candles on time and that there was still

Parshat Ekev - The Vessel for the Second Tablets

The Vessel for the Second Tablets

Dovid looked at him with a surprised expression: "Did you

forget what we learned at the beginning of the discussion?"

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

ample time. It is only the cloudy day that caused the early concealment of daylight."

**This** answer did not appease the 'Saba' either, and he continued in rounds around the entire table, asking each person in turn what they had to say.

**He** then reached the person sitting at the end of the table, the renowned Tzadik, Rabbi Raphael of Bershad, the man of truth and great humility.

"**Well**, Rabbi Raphael." - the 'Saba' fixed his eyes on him, seeking a redeeming word from his lips - "What do you say to my distress? What words of comfort are on your tongue regarding this delay that might have occurred in my lighting of the candles?"

**Rabbi** Raphael was gripped and horrified by the difficult question posed to him by the Tzadik.

**However**, the 'Saba', knowing Rabbi Raphael's nature and the nature of his silence, did not let him go without his awaited answer.

**Sensing** his silence and hesitation, the 'Saba' felt that within this man's heart lay the answer he was anticipating, and therefore did not let go of Rabbi Raphael, insisting that he answer aloud.

"**What** can I say and what can I speak?" - Rabbi Raphael's voice

trembled - "The doubt of desecrating the Sabbath is not a small matter. It is a severe and terrible thing. If indeed the Rabbi doubts whether he delayed the candle lighting time, he must increase his repentance for this. Only complete repentance can help here."

"**Ah.**" - the 'Saba' jumped from his place full of joy and excitement - "You revived me, my dear Rabbi Raphael. You revived me with your words. Indeed, I need to perform complete repentance, that is what I truly need."

"**And** you," he continued, rebuking the other guests around the table, "Did you come here to flatter me?"

"**See** the difference between my dear Raphael'ik and you," the Tzadik continued to reproach them, "For without him, you would have driven me out of this world without repentance, Heaven forbid."

"**Blessed** are you, Rabbi Raphael, for standing me on the matter of truth. You can rest assured that you have soothed my soul."

**At** that moment, all those gathered at the 'Saba's' table knew how great and powerful the degree of 'Saba's' fear of sin had reached and how genuine was the fear of Heaven of Rabbi Raphael of Bershad ('Besod Avdecha', Part 1 - Page 177).

**Parshat Ekev - Fear of Heaven - The Foundation of Judaism**

At the beginning of the discussion, we learned that every light that descends from Heaven has its own unique vessel.

Indeed, from the Talmud we understand that fear of G-d is a vessel, but who says that it is a vessel for the Torah?"

"Ah," Yossi smiled, "I forgot to tell you the continuation of Rabbi Wolbe's words:

The preceding verses deal with the second tablets, and from this proximity, it is clear that the vessel of fear of Heaven is related specifically to the receiving of the second tablets.

Fear is the vessel for the light of the second tablets, while love and acceptance of others is the vessel for the light of the first tablets."

At first, the hearts of the people of Israel were pure and corrected,

and they merited that the Torah and its vessel - that is, a refined and loving heart - descended upon them together from above.

However, after they corrupted their hearts with the golden calf, G-d commanded Moses to hew the stone tablets. This signified that the time had come for the people of Israel themselves to prepare their hearts to receive the Torah.

And the preparation and vessel for this second receiving of the Torah is fear of G-d.

Yossi and Dovid looked at each other and said: "These are some incredible insights that we discovered, thank G-d, but now we need to make order of all these ideas."

Just before doing that, we interject with a few words about the mitzvah of fear of G-d.

**Fear of Heaven - The Foundation of Judaism**

We quote from 'Chelev Ha'aretz' (Part 2 - page 127):

Fear of Heaven is the basis of the entire Torah and the foundation of all of Judaism.

Fear of Heaven is also the beginning of a person's divine service in this world, and what provides him with a good and broad vessel to contain all the abundance

that comes from G-d, blessed be He.

Moreover:

The Mishnah states (Avot 1:2):

'The world stands on three things: Torah, the service of G-d, and on acts of kindness.'

These three have no real significance if not imbued with fear of Heaven, as we shall demonstrate below.

Let's specify one by one:

The Talmud (Shabbat 31b) states that fear of Heaven is the basis for Torah:

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: What is the meaning of that which is written, 'And the faith of your times shall be a strength of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the L-rd is His treasure' (Isaiah 33:6)?

The Talmud comes and interprets each part of the verse to refer to a different order of the Mishnah, but even so, with all this, the vessel that enables them all is fear of Heaven, as the verse

concludes: 'The fear of the L-rd is His treasure.'

That is to say, even if a person has learned all six orders of the Mishnah, the most important thing in the eyes of G-d is that the person has fear of the L-rd, for only then will the Torah that he learned be preserved in him and he will remember it. However, if he lacks the fear of G-d, he will eventually forget all his learning.

Fear of Heaven is also the basis for the service of prayer with pure intention, as the Talmud says (Berachot 30b):

"One should not stand to pray except in a serious frame of mind. The early pious ones would wait an hour and then pray, so they could direct their hearts to their Father in heaven."

'A serious frame of mind,' is explained by the sages to mean 'with fear of Heaven.

The book 'Tanya Rabati' states (Siman 5):

'One who prays must stand in awe, with fear, trembling, and

**Parshat Ekev - Three Levels of Fear**

quaking, and direct their heart towards Heaven in prayer, as it is written: "You prepare their heart, and incline Your ear" (Psalms 10:17).'

Besides fear of Heaven being requisite for the service of prayer, it is also the basis for observing all the mitzvot. As The Vilna Gaon wrote in his commentary to 'Ethics of the Fathers' (Chapter 3, Mishnah 9):

"Beloved is fear of Heaven before the Almighty, for it

outweighs all the commandments of the Torah.

One who engages in Torah and the commandments for the sake of Heaven will merit eternal life, as it is written: 'The fear of the L-rd is the source of life' (Proverbs 14:27), and it is also written: 'This is the end of the matter, all having been heard: Fear G-d, and keep His commandments; for this is the entirety of man' (Ecclesiastes 12:13), meaning the purpose of man is to observe and perform the commandments with the fear of Heaven."

**Three Levels of Fear**

Yossi and Dovid continued reading from 'Chelev Ha'aretz' (Part 2 - page 134):

There are two types of fear of G-d:

The first is the fear of punishment, which is a lower fear ('yirah tata'ah'), and the second is the fear of G-d's exaltedness, which is a higher fear (yirah ila'ah).

Fear of punishment, as its name implies, is when a person is scared to transgress the will of G-d because of the punishments

that may come upon them, whether in this world or the next. Such fear is certainly inferior, but it is still called fear of G-d.

The higher fear is the fear of G-d's exaltedness, which means that a person refrains from doing anything against the will of the Al-mighty out of reverence for His great honor. This kind of fear is not easy to achieve and requires much effort and toil.

In the Zohar (Introduction 11b), the mitzvah of fear is divided into three levels:

Parshat Ekev - Fear - The Basis for Peace

1. The lowest level is when a person fears G-d to avoid the punishments of this world, whether to their body or their wealth.

2. A higher level is when a person fears G-d to avoid the punishments of the afterlife, such as Gehinnom or other punishments of the soul. This level is better than the previous one, but still far from perfect fear.

3. The highest and most praiseworthy level is when

a person fears G-d out of reverence for His greatness and exaltedness, recognizing that all before Him is as nothing.<sup>10</sup>

This fear is born from an understanding that all the worlds and their existence depend on His word, and that He alone can return all of existence to nothingness instantly (as elaborated upon in the Tanya (Chapter 43), where the author, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, explains this ultimate level of fear).

**Fear - The Basis for Peace**

Yossi and Dovid now sat to organize all that they had learned today. Yossi volunteered to put all the ideas together in a cohesive unit and said:

“When the people of Israel stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, they had purified hearts of all wickedness

and desire, and their hearts were under their full control—their intellect completely ruled over their hearts, and they were worthy of receiving the tremendous and powerful vessel of peace.

After the sin of the golden calf, however, the people of Israel

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**10. Although** the fear of the exaltedness of G-d, which is called the 'higher fear', is the ideal fear that should fill the heart of every Jew, nevertheless, it is clear that the beginning of all levels is the 'lower fear', called 'fear of punishment'.

**Initially**, a person must attain this fear, and even a person who has acquired a great love for G-d, must precede this lower fear of punishment, because it is a foundation of faith.

**Without** this fear of punishment, it is impossible to begin service of G-d.

## Parshat Ekev - Fear - The Basis for Peace

descended a level, and their hearts were no longer under their control. Therefore, there was a danger in having only the vessel of peace, and G-d commanded that from now on, the primary vessel for the Divine influences would be fear.

To illustrate this danger:

During the Second Temple period, the land of Israel was filled with righteous Jews, who truly served G-d with all their hearts and souls.

These Jews were perfect in the three pillars upon which the world stands: Torah, prayer, and acts of kindness. As the Talmud testified (Yoma 9b), "The Second Temple period was filled with Torah scholars, observance of mitzvot, and acts of kindness."

The Talmud continues and asks: "If so, why was the Second Temple destroyed?" And it answers: "Because of baseless hatred."

They simply hated each other with their entire reality—until G-d despised everything that they were doing, He despised their Torah study, their prayers, and

their acts of kindness, and drove them away from the holy land.

The simple question begs itself:

How can acts of kindness and baseless hatred coexist at the same time and period?

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe explained ('AleI Shur', Part 2, page 473):

Following the sin of the golden calf, we descended from our level and lost the purity of the heart.

The hearts became more materialized and 'fell' into desires and bad traits, which then entered deep into the heart.

Since then, even a person who lives a life of Torah and holiness and conducts their entire life according to the Shulchan Aruch cannot be certain that their deeds will not be influenced by the bad traits within them.

This is precisely what happened to the people of the Second Temple.

They engaged in acts of kindness, which stems from the love of others - but despite this,

**Parshat Ekev - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

this feeling did not reach the depths of their hearts and uproot their hatred.

The people of the Second Temple had the vessel of peace, which enabled them to receive the Torah and engage in acts of kindness, but despite this, they did not completely refine the black spots hidden deep within the recesses of their hearts, and therefore, ultimately, they failed with baseless hatred.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to arouse true fear of Heaven in our hearts, for only through it

can we be saved, with G-d's help, from making mistakes.

Do you understand," Yossi concluded, "The primary vessel is fear, and only then can peace and love and acceptance of others truly take hold and be established.

Only after being imbued with a deep fear of Heaven, can a person strip themselves of their own 'self,' step outside of themselves, and view objectively their actions, and understand how these actions are truly perceived in Heaven."

**Summary and Practical Conclusions**

**1.** Fear of Heaven is the foundation and pillar of the entire Torah and the basis of all of Judaism.

It is the vessel for attaining all matters of the world in general and divine matters in particular.

Therefore, the first step in a person's divine service in this world is to acquire fear of Heaven, thus providing a good and strong vessel that can contain all of the abundance from G-d.

**2.** The world stands on three things: Torah, service of G-d, and acts of kindness. Although these three things are the primary work of a person in this world, they only have significance if imbued with fear of Heaven.

**3.** A person who has fear of Heaven, merits that the Torah is preserved within them. However, if one lacks fear of Heaven, one will eventually forget all their learning.

**4.** Besides being the greatest and most central foundation for acquiring Torah in a person's soul, fear of Heaven is also the basis for serving in prayer with pure intention.

**5.** Additionally, fear of Heaven is also the basis for observing all the mitzvot.

Fear of Heaven is beloved before G-d and outweighs all the commandments of the Torah and one who engages in Torah and mitzvot for the sake of Heaven is brought to eternal life.

As our sages say: "Anyone whose fear of sin precedes his wisdom, his wisdom endures, and one whose wisdom precedes his fear of sin, his wisdom does not endure."

**6.** There are three levels of fear:

-The lowest level is when one fears G-d to avoid the punishments of this world to their body or their wealth. This means fearing G-d so that one's children live, or to avoid severe illnesses, or to ensure that one's livelihood is not harmed, or to prevent damage to their

property. With this fear, one serves G-d, prays, and puts on tefillin.

-A higher level is fearing G-d to avoid the punishments of the afterlife, such as Gehinnom or 'Kaf HaKela'.

This level is higher than the previous one, but the path to complete fear of G-d is still far removed from them.

-The highest and most praiseworthy level is fear of G-d, is out of reverence for His greatness and exaltedness, recognizing that all before Him is nothing and absolutely naught.

This level of fear acknowledges that the creation of all upper and lower worlds from nothing and absolute void into existence and reality is entirely dependent on His word, and in an instant, He can return them to nothingness as they were initially, as elaborated upon in Tanya (Likutei Amarim - Chapter 43).

**7.** The work on one's traits is a difficult and constant endeavor.

The only way to know if we are on the right path and succeeding

**Parshat Ekev - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

in correcting our traits is by arousing true fear of Heaven in our hearts. It is only through this that can we be saved from mistakes with G-d's help.

**8.** One of the main ways for a person to examine their actions is

by detaching from themselves, stepping outside of themselves, and viewing all their actions objectively as if they were observing someone else's actions. This makes it easier to understand how one's actions are perceived in Heaven.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



” A person must rejoice when the time for  
**prayer**

as the author of the Tanya says that:

every Jew, wherever he is, receives from G-d at the time of prayer a gift called **"Mochin D'Gadlut,"** meaning that the understanding of everything is expansive before him, as is written  
**"Open wide your mouth and I will fill it" ”**



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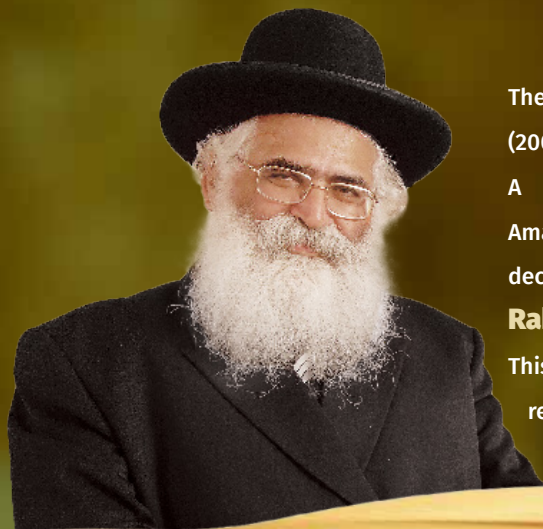
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**Shabbat Times  
Eikev**

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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:23 pm	8:22 pm	8:52 pm
Miami	7:30 pm	8:23 pm	8:59 pm
Los Angeles	7:12 pm	8:07 pm	8:41 pm
Montreal	7:29 pm	8:32 pm	8:57 pm
Toronto	7:49 pm	8:51 pm	9:18 pm
London	7:47 pm	8:57 pm	9:15 pm
Jerusalem	6:58 pm	7:47 pm	8:36 pm
Tel Aviv	6:55 pm	7:44 pm	8:32 pm
Haifa	6:55 pm	8:44 pm	8:33 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:54 pm	7:43 pm	8:31 pm

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*From the Words of*

**HaRav Yoran Abargel zt"l**

*The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains the Mishnah "He went up the ramp and turned to the surrounding of the altar" (Zevachim 53a) -*

*While it is lofty and praiseworthy when one rises up and reaches great heights, they must nonetheless check upon their surroundings upon every rung of the ladder that they ascend.*

*They must check that their wife and children rise up together with them and are not left behind.*

*It is improper for you to rise early for the prayers, leaving the children to sleep until late, since it is difficult for the children to pray alone, a child loves his father, and prefers to pray together with him.*



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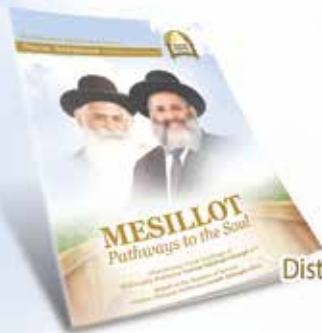
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