

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 170

Devarim | Refinement of the Soul Through Proper Consumption

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 Devarim

The Power of a Kosher Meal

Rabbi Chanoch Teller recounted the following story:¹

At a New York Rabbinical Seminary, a call was received.

The secretary answered the call and heard the following statement:

"Hello, this is Mr. Wolf, head of the Jewish Federation of Southeast Texas."

"Greetings and blessings. This is the first time I've heard of this federation; how may I help you ?

My wife, my daughter, and I are actually about to leave here, and I wanted to make sure there will be a rabbi in my place."

"Do you have kosher meat there ?"

"No."

"Do you have a synagogue there ?"

"No."

"Are there any religious services that take place ?"

"Also no."

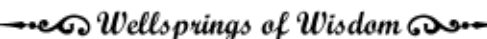
"Forgive me, Mr. Wolf, but are there any Jews in the federation of Southeast Texas ?"

"Apparently, there are many, can they be abandoned just like that ?"

"Okay," the secretary conceded, "I'll look for a suitable candidate."

Just at that moment, a young rabbi, who had recently completed his rabbinical studies, entered the office. His name was Michael Heller.

"You won't believe it, Michael," the secretary said, "I've found you a position. What do you think about being the head of the Jewish Federation of Southeast Texas ?"



1. 'Matok HaOr' (Vayikra I - page 449) by Rabbi Shlomo Levenstein.

Parshat Devarim - The Power of a Kosher Meal

Rabbi Michoel searched for the right words, and finally said: "I apologize, but I don't speak so eloquently, and besides, I have never performed funerals before."

"That's okay," the secretary reassured, "I doubt you will need to perform funerals there at all. Don't worry. Go there, and may G-d grant you much success."

Rabbi Michoel traveled to Southeast Texas, and met the retiring head of the Jewish federation at an honorable ceremony, and was declared his successor.

He got to work straight away and opened the phone book and began to search for Jewish names.

Soon, he found the first name, and without hesitation, he dialed the number listed there.

After many unsuccessful calls, Rabbi Michoel decided to change course and organize a welcome party with kosher food, assuming that many Jews would come.

He posted a festive advertisement for the planned party on the

university's bulletin board, and ordered many kosher items from New York.

Alas, not many people showed up, in fact Rabbi Michoel found himself entirely alone.

He was about to head home when suddenly a man of imposing appearance, with a large head of curls and torn jeans entered.

Rabbi Michoel put on his best smile: "Hello, how are you?"

"I work here at the Mexican restaurant, and I came to taste some of your food."

"What's your name?"

"Bernie."

"Very nice to meet you, I'm Rabbi Michoel Heller. I'd love to talk to you, let's meet, and maybe we'll learn a bit, you know about the Nine Days that are coming, do you want me to explain what that is?"

Bernie didn't seem excited about the offer: "You know what, maybe we'll talk, and I'll see".

He tasted a bit, said goodbye, and left.

Rabbi Michoel Heller realized that Bernie hadn't left behind any name, phone number, or address, other than that of his restaurant.

He decided that he would not give up. He found the number and called.

"Hello, Bernie, do you remember me?"

"Oh yes, I most certainly do."

"So what do you say? Want to meet and sit down for a bit?"

"Yeah, um, the truth is that I dropped out of school in the seventh grade, and I find it hard to study."

"So we'll just talk then."

He agreed.

Rabbi Michoel sat and planned the conversation. He tried to anticipate what Bernie would say and how he would respond to every question, however, reality surpassed all imagination.

Bernie arrived, panting and out of breath.

"Look, Rabbi, I don't really have much time now, because I'm flying

to Los Angeles tomorrow. I worked here a long time to save up money for my trip. By now I've gathered enough, and tomorrow I'm flying."

Rabbi Michoel found it hard to hide his disappointment, but they had a short conversation and he shared a few ideas and words of inspiration with Bernie.

As Bernie headed to the door, he turned back and said: "You know what, Rabbi? Tell me one thing to do for you and I will do it."

Rabbi Michoel thought for a moment, and finally said: "You're flying tomorrow, right? Please do me a favor and order for yourself a kosher meal on the plane."

"Okay," Bernie nodded his curls, "just for you, I promise to do it."

Rabbi Michoel called after him as he walked away with his heavy denim backpack, "and when you get to Los Angeles," "send me a short letter, and let me know that you've settled in alright."

Bernie nodded.

The next day Bernie got on the plane, but when mealtime came,

Parshat Devarim - The Power of a Kosher Meal

the flight attendant, unaware that he ordered the kosher meal, gave it to another bearded man, and served Bernie a regular -non kosher meal.

"Hey, excuse me," Bernie said, "I ordered kosher food."

"I'll check," she said, and returned a few moments later, "I'm sorry. There was a mix-up and someone else got the last kosher meal. But would you like a regular one?"

Bernie felt his stomach churn. He badly wanted to say yes, but the promise he gave to the rabbi was stronger than him. A word is word, he finally decided, and gave up on the enticing offer.

By the time the plane landed in Los Angeles, Bernie was starving, but he found to his surprise that none of the restaurants there happened to be kosher. He had only promised to keep kosher on the flight, but the concerned look of Rabbi Michoel and his request that he keep kosher remained etched in his memory.

There must be kosher restaurants in Los Angeles, he told

himself as he thumbed through the phone book looking for addresses.

He arrived at one such restaurant, but was disappointed, it was closed.

"Closed due to the Nine Days," it said on a sign. Bernie struggled to understand the connection, what did it mean, and how was it related to the restaurant food?

Suddenly the restaurant owner approached him: "Can I help? What are you looking for?"

Bernie spilled out a barrage of words, and found himself sharing with the stranger everything that had transpired.

"I have an idea, come to my house, and we'll eat something."

Indeed, Bernie came over and ate, and was invited back for Shabbat, and he came then as well, and tasted a wonderful spiritual flavor.

Slowly he took on a new and improved form, and underwent significant and great changes.

Three years Rabbi Heller received a letter:

Parshat Devarim - The Power of a Kosher Meal

"Hello Rabbi, I promised you that once I got settled on the West Coast I would write to you. Well, it took a bit of time, but I have finally settled down.

Today I am an observant Jew, thank G-d, with set times for Torah study.

I have a wife and two sweet children, and I am very grateful to you for helping me to get my life in order.

Yours truly, Binyamin Feldman (Bernie)".²

Before we address this story and its lessons, let us precede.

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

2. While Bernie had many questions and doubts, he nonetheless withstood the temptation to eat non-kosher.

These questions arose in his quest for the truth, and in his search for answers that would satisfy him.

This explains the difference between a wise and wicked son in the Passover Haggadah:

“**The** wise son, what does he say? ‘What are the testimonies, statutes, and judgments which the L-rd our G-d commanded you?’”

Whereas, “the wicked one asks: ‘What is this service to you?’”

Seemingly, the wise son and the wicked son, seem to both be saying the same thing. What then is the difference between their questions?

This will be understood with a story shared by Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer:

Once, a mussar scholar came to a town during the month of Elul and stayed at an inn.

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, he heard a voice of lamentation coming from the nearby house, ‘Oh, what will be, it is already the month of Elul, and the summer has passed.’

The righteous scholar heard this and began to introspect and make an accounting of his deeds, realizing that indeed the Days of Awe were approaching. Thus, he spent the whole night in introspection.

In the morning, when the scholar arrived at the synagogue, he asked the caretakers who lived next to the inn, and they showed him the person's place.

The scholar was certain that it must be some kind of hidden Tzaddik, a righteous man who engages in unique devotions at night.

Yet, when the rabbi approached him and started discussing Torah matters, he realized that the person knew very little and was quite ignorant.

The rabbi asked: “Are you the one who lives next to the inn?” The man replied: “Yes.”

Repairing the World Under the Kingdom of G-d

One of the most exalted prayers is 'Aleinu Leshabe'ach', which was written by Joshua son of Nun at the time he encircled the city of Jericho completely from all sides.

The Ariza¹ revealed many of the secrets of this prayer and said that by reciting 'Aleinu Leshabe'ach' a tremendous and encompassing spiritual light descends into the world that blinds the eyes of the external evil forces and nullifies them.³

Therefore, our holy sages instituted that we say it at the end of every prayer (morning, afternoon, and evening) to prevent the forces of impurity from drawing and receiving from the light, influence, and vitality that we draw into the world through our prayer.

The Rasha²sh siddur (a prayer book with kabbalistic intentions), for example, lists a multitude of intentions one should intend while saying this awesome prayer.

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

The rabbi continued: "Were you the one who said last night 'what will be, the summer has already passed, and we are already in the middle of Elul?'"

The man replied simply: "Yes."

The rabbi asked: "What did you mean by saying that?"

The man answered: "For a long time now, mosquitoes have been biting me every night, disturbing my sleep. last night I felt that it was just too much, so I complained: 'What will be? The summer has passed, and we are already in the middle of Elul, the time

when mosquitoes are supposed to disappear, yet they are still here!"

Thus, two people can say the same thing: 'We are already in the month of Elul', yet for each one, the meaning is entirely different.

The same is true regarding the questions of the wise son and wicked sons. Both are asking the same question, but the content of their question is entirely different."

(Lachzot B'Noam Hashem', Bamidbar page 426)
by Rabbi Shealtiel Meir Cohen.

3. Shaar HaKavanot (Drushei Ashrei, 1).

In 'Aleinu Leshabe'ach' we pray and hope:

'Therefore we hope to You, L-rd our G-d, to see soon in the glory of Your strength, to remove detestable idols from the earth and to completely cut off all false gods, and to repair the world Under the Kingdom of G-d'.

The teachings of Kabbalah explain that the main way to repair the world is through the divine service of 'refinement'.

Let's expand:

In the Midrash, Rabbi Abbahu is quoted: "[Before creating our worlds,] the Holy One, blessed be He, created and destroyed worlds [until He created the worlds we know today]."4

The teachings of Chassidut explain, that when G-d wanted to create a reality of the impure powers (Sitra Achra) that oppose holiness, He created it through the creation and destruction of worlds, an action known in Kabbalah as 'Breaking of the Vessels' - 'Shevirat Hakeilim'.

For further explanation, we quote from 'Chassidut Mevueret':5

At the end of the portion of Vayishlach, it is written that seven kings reigned over the land of Edom. The Torah lists them one by one, and at the end of each of their names, emphasizes that they died.6

In the writings of the Arizal,7 it is explained at length that these seven kings refer to the seven

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4. Bereshit Rabbah (3:7).

5. 'Chassidut Mevueret - Ma'amarei Admor Hazaken' (page 449).

6. **As** the section begins:

"**These** are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel.

Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhavah...

and then Bela died (Genesis 36:31-33).

7. **The** elevating of the sparks from the impure powers, is mentioned in the Kabbalah of the Arizal alone, not by the Kabbalists before him, nor explicitly in the Zohar.' - 'Igrot Kodesh - Admor Hazaken' (vol. 1 - page 89).

In the 'Igrot Kodesh - of the Rebbe Maharash' (page 96) this is emphasized as

Parshat Devarim - Repairing the World Under the Kingdom of G-d

Sefirot (divine attributes)⁸ that belong to a very high spiritual world called the 'World of Tohu', about which it is said: "And the earth was without form and void" (Genesis 1:2). It is indeed a world even higher than the World of Atzilut which is the first and highest world in the chain of formation.

These seven Sefirot were each formed beneath one another, and as such, each stood alone and had no interaction or partnership at all with the other.

Moreover, each Sefira felt powerfully its own essence and lived for itself in a very prominent way, and therefore when it encountered a reality different from itself, it went to war against it -

Chesed fought against Gevurah, Netzach fought against Hod, and so on with all the Sefirot.

As a result of this, the 'Breaking of the Vessels' occurred and these

opposing entities shattered and were dispersed into many sparks, and were thoroughly mixed and mingled.

Through this 'breaking', holy sparks (from the spiritual 'World of Tohu') fell and were scattered throughout all of reality.

As a consequence, it caused two general matters:

A. Within all physical things in the world there exist holy sparks that enliven their reality.

B. The possibility was created that the divine light would be completely hidden to the utmost degree of concealment. Thus, the impure powers came into existence, and they have no revelation of divine light to the extent that they are against G-d outright saying 'I, and nothing else exists'.

Their existence was only able to be formed by 'Breaking of the

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

well: "The Pardes Namely: 6(a kabbalist before the Arizal) did not know of 'Tohu' and the 'shattering of the vessels' or the matter of the 'refinement of the sparks'."

8. Kindness (Chesed), Severity (Gevurah), Harmony (Tiferet), Endurance (Netzach), Gratitude (Hod), Foundation (Yesod), and Kingdom (Malchut).

Vessels', for in no other way would such a lowly power come into being from the world of holiness, except through falling and 'breaking'.

After this foundation was prepared, G-d created man and charged him with the task to gather these lost divine sparks and to elevate them to holiness.⁹

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9. Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin recounted (Stories of Chassidim - vol. 2, page 229):

The holy Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Kosov, was once in a very joyful mood, and sat and told stories with great fervor until late in the afternoon.

The people standing before him, due to their great passion and devotion, forgot to go home and eat.

When he finished speaking, one of those present stood up and said:

Moses said: 'I neither ate bread nor drank water' (Deuteronomy 9:9) during the forty days he went up to the mountain. But this is not such a great wonder, taking into account the immense spiritual pleasure he had from what his eyes saw and his ears heard, the words of the living G-d. He was satiated, as will be in the world to come, when 'the righteous will sit and enjoy the splendor of the Shechinah.'

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon replied:

"Perhaps we must learn this verse alternatively: Moses did not talk about the loftiness of not eating and drinking, but rather, he lamented the fact that he did not elevate the many sparks of

holiness through eating and drinking during those forty days. Moreover, those foods still may demand from him as to why he did not rectify and elevate them.

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon continued and recounted to all those present a story on this matter:

Once, Rabbi Michel, the Maggid of Zlotchov, fell seriously ill, and all the doctors who came to visit him raised up their hands in despair.

His son, Rabbi Mordechai, traveled to the holy Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz to ask for mercy on his behalf.

He arrived and hadn't yet had a chance to tell the reason for his visit, yet Rabbi Pinchas opened and said:

"Rabbi Mordechai, the reason your father is ill is because of an accusation that arose against him.

Your father took upon himself, for reasons of asceticism, not to eat certain foods, and these foods are now accusing him in Heaven that he had prevented their rectification that would have been done through his eating them with holiness.

Parshat Devarim - The Sparks of the 'Mixed Multitude'

Every spark that is elevated reveals in creation another part of the Divine, thus 'repairing the world under the kingdom of G-d'.¹⁰

We skip the first two thousand years of the world, and 'land' straight into the land of Egypt.

The Sparks of the 'Mixed Multitude'

During the Breaking of the Vessels, from the World of Tohu, 288 holy sparks fell down to our earthly world, and were scattered throughout the world.

Out of them, 202 sparks were scattered in the land of Egypt.

In order to refine these holy sparks, G-d sent the souls of the people of Israel down to Egypt, where, through the harsh bondage of the Israelites and the Torah study

of the tribe of Levi, they refined all the holy sparks that were in Egypt.

Those souls enslaved in Egypt were very exalted souls, so powerful that we are not even capable of comprehending, and therefore they had the strength to refine 202 of the 288 sparks, in over the 200 years spent in Egypt.

In the Exodus from Egypt, it is said that: "A mixed multitude went up with them." (Exodus

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

Therefore, tell your father to accept upon himself to eat these foods, and he will immediately recover."

And so it was.

10. In summary:

Clearly, the creation of the world of 'Tohu' was intentional, for it was the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, to create such a world where the vessels would not contain the great lights and would shatter.

The reason for this being that the ultimate

purpose is our physical world, where the Divine light is completely concealed, and through the Divine service of the Jewish people, this light is revealed.

Only through this 'shattering of the vessels' were the holy sparks able to fall and leap, from a world of holiness to our lowly world.

These sparks are then refined through man's toil in Torah and mitzvot, and especially through fulfilling one's physical needs for the sake of Heaven.

12:38) The Ariza"l explained that they managed to redeem the 'mixed multitude', ('erev rav', 'rav' in gematria is) the 202 sparks that were contained in Egypt.

Since that time, we still have 68 sparks to refine, and the moment we finish refining them, the redemption will come.

The Journey of Refinements in the Desert

Moses gathered the people of Israel and said to them: 'Thank G-d, we have finished collecting all the holy sparks in Egypt, and now we are moving on to the next stage.'

'Moses our beloved teacher, what is the next stage?'

'To collect all the holy sparks scattered in the Sinai desert. Don't think it's an easy task,' Moses continued, 'in the Sinai desert dwell immense and terrifying forces of impurity, and in order to refine the sparks hidden there we will need to use all the tools at our disposal.'

As the Or HaChaim haKadosh explains (Numbers 33:1):

According to the kabbalah, the journey of Israel through the desert was to refine the sparks of holiness, that the impure forces of desolation - which resides in the

barren desert, a place of snakes and scorpions - had swallowed.

G-d's flock were led there to extract its prey from its mouth, and this is why Israel camped in one place for a year, and yet in another for just twelve hours, all as was needed for the refinement of the sparks there.

This refinement is performed by:

The **Complete holiness** - The Shechina (Divine Presence), the people of Israel, and the Torah.

The refinement performed by the people of Israel is further divided in two:

The **General completeness** - is done by Moses, as the verse says: "Moses - his people" (Isaiah 63:11) - Moses is the tree from which the six hundred thousand Jewish souls emerged, and were then aided by

Parshat Devarim - The Refinements of the 42 Journeys

the Divine, to extract prey from the mouth of the evil powers and perform the immense refinement.

The **Particular completeness** – is performed by the six

hundred thousand individual Jewish souls.

This brings us to two stages of refinement the Torah mentions, as we shall discuss.

The Refinements of the 42 Journeys

The last portion of the book of Numbers is Parshat Massei, and the portion that follows it is Parshat Devarim, which is the first portion of the book of Deuteronomy.

In these two Torah portions, the three methods of refinement by the people of Israel are elaborated on at length.

At the beginning of Parshat Massei, the forty-two journeys that the people of Israel took in the desert are detailed over 94 verses.

The Magen Avraham writes (Orach Chayim, 428:8):

“The ‘Tzror Hamor’ writes that the 42 journeys in the portion of ‘Massei’ should not be interrupted since it corresponds to the divine name ‘Mab’ (מב) and if they are interrupted, G-d forbid, it blemishes this holy Divine name - therefore the reader who goes up

for the first Aliyah should read all 94 verses continuously (and they should not be divided into two Aliyahs).

To expand further:

The Holy One, blessed be He, has several names and titles, each name and title indicating a specific action that G-d performs in His worlds.

The knowledge and understanding contained in these Divine names and attributes is the reward in store for us in the future. Yet a small part of this knowledge has been revealed to us by our holy sages, one such name is the name ‘Mab’ (numerically the value of 42).

This 42-letter name is divided into seven groups of six letters each, and this name is what elevates the holy sparks that are refined in this world.

Since the purpose of the journeys in the desert was to elevate the sparks of holiness that fell, G-d arranged it so that the people of Israel would journey in the desert 42 journeys that correspond to this 42-letter name, and by the power of this name, elevate the refinements.

Parenthetically:

The Ariza”l writes:¹¹

“After reciting the Shema before retiring to bed, one should say the prayer 'Ana B'koach'

which contains within it the Divine name of ‘Mab’, in order for his soul to ascend along with all the sparks of holiness he refined during the day through the study of Torah, the performance of mitzvot, and the prayers throughout the day.”

This was the first refinement in the desert, brought in last week’s Torah portion.

Now, let us proceed to the two other refinements that appear in our Torah portion.

The Refinement of Seir

This week, we begin - with the help of G-d - the book of 'Deuteronomy', which contains the last words of Moses.

These words were delivered before the people of Israel in the days leading to his passing, starting from the first of Shevat¹² until the day of his death on the seventh of Adar (Kiddushin 38a).

On the day of his death, Moses did not speak any words of Torah or rebuke, as Rashi interprets Moses' words: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today; I can no longer come and go" (Deuteronomy 31:2) - 'to come and go' meaning to discuss deep matters of Torah. On that day the traditions and wellsprings of

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

11. Shaar HaKavanot (Drushei HaLayla - 5).

12. As stated explicitly at the opening of the book of Deuteronomy:

“**On** the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to

the children of Israel” (Deuteronomy 1:3) - meaning the first day of Shevat, which is the eleventh month from Nissan, the head of the months.

Parshat Devarim - Esau is Seir

wisdom were blocked to him, as it is said: "There is no dominion on the day of death" (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

Thus, the book of 'Deuteronomy' was spoken over precisely thirty-six days, as the Ohr HaChaim writes at the opening of the book of Deuteronomy (1:1):

"These are the words that Moses spoke." - 'These' - 'Eleh' is the numerical value of thirty-six.

Our Torah portion opens with Moses focusing on two new

locations that do not appear in the 42 journeys, namely: the Emorite Mountain and Mount Seir.

Being that the purpose of the journeys of Israel was to refine the holy sparks, certainly in each of these locations, there were long and difficult refinements, and they therefore received special attention.

Indeed, we find that the Torah commentators discuss the spiritual refinements made at Mount Seir, and we will focus and discuss these refinements.

Esau is Seir

The Book of Joshua, the first book in the Prophets, recounts in its final chapter, how Joshua (at the end of his days) gathered the people of Israel and made a covenant with them 'to remain faithful to the L-rd'.

Among his words, he said to them:

"Thus says the L-rd, G-d of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river in old times; Terah, the father of Abraham, and

the father of Nahor: and they served other gods.

I took your father Abraham from the other side of the river, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

I gave to Isaac - Jacob and Esau,¹³ and I gave to Esau Mount Seir to possess it; while Jacob and his children went down into Egypt" (Joshua 24:2-4).

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

13. Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa once said:

“Do not think that Esau appeared to be a coarse peasant, he was rather dressed in

Parshat Devarim - Esau is Seir

fine white garments and delivered lofty Torah teachings at the three Shabbat meals" ('Shem MiShmuel,' Toldot, 5674).

In a similar vein, Rabbi Shalom Schwadron shared the following story ('Kol Chotzev' - page 314):

It was late at night, close to midnight. The streets were empty, and the man was looking for a minyan (quorum of ten) near the 'Shtiblach' - the small synagogues of Meah Shearim, in Jerusalem.

In those days it wasn't easy to gather ten people at such a late hour.

'Sir, have you prayed the evening prayers yet? You're the sixth; we need four more people. Wait, soon we'll have a full minyan,' shouted the man who went out to gather people.

After half an hour, he managed to gather a full minyan.

I was also there.

I saw how the man gathered the minyan with great effort - and when the ten were found, we all entered the synagogue, and the man who gathered together the minyan, approached the lectern.

At that moment, a middle-aged man wearing a light suit and a straw hat appeared from a nearby alley.

He entered the synagogue running and panting, and immediately approached the lectern, asking the man with a sympathetic voice:

'Please, today is my father's yahrzeit. I must pray from the lectern and recite the communal prayers.'

Silence fell upon the synagogue, and the congregation waited.

The man raised his head and looked at him with an expression of disdain: 'I have been working for half an hour to gather a minyan, and you come at the last moment and wish to snatch the lectern from me? Go find yourself another place!'

The middle-aged was persistent:

'But I have a yahrzeit, and I came from quite a distance, thinking I might find a minyan to pray with in memory of my father. Do me a favor, please.'

The congregation waited quietly, stunned.

The man raised his voice: 'So you're telling me that you have a yahrzeit but waited until late at night?! On that account alone, you don't deserve the lectern!' and he pushed him away with both hands and began the evening prayers, demonstratively.

Rabbi Shalom concluded the story in a tone full of pain:

In protest, I stood up and loudly announced: 'Esau is leading the evening prayers here,' and left the synagogue.

When one has a lot of wisdom but fails to align their actions with their knowledge, it is merely philosophy, nothing more.

Parshat Devarim - Circling Seir from Three Directions.

It is clear from the verses that the Holy One, blessed be He, granted each of Isaac's sons a portion of land; Jacob was given the Land of Israel, while Esau was given Mount Seir.

As mentioned in our Torah portion:

"And to the people command¹⁴ and say, 'you are to pass by the border of your brothers the children of Esau who dwell in

Seir; and they will fear you, and be very careful.

Do not quarrel with them, for I will not give you their land, not even to set a foot on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as their possession" (Deuteronomy 2:4-5).

Since this was so, Mount Seir became the center of Esau's power, and as such, understandably, it had many sparks that needed to be refined...

Circling Seir from Three Directions.

If we consider the journey of the Jewish people in the wilderness for forty years, we see that Mount Seir appears all along:

When the Jewish people left Egypt, they went eastward toward Mount Seir,¹⁵ (circling Mount Seir from the west) as the verse states: "Eleven days from

[Mount] Horeb in the direction of Mount Seir to Kadesh-Barnea" (Deuteronomy 1:2).

Then they turned southward, as is written: "And we turned and journeyed into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea, as the L-rd spoke to me: and we encompassed Mount Seir many days" (ibid 2:1).¹⁶

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

14. Throughout the Torah, the word 'tzav' (command) appears seven times.

The first time, it says - 'Command to Aaron'. Another five times it says - 'Command the children of Israel', and the final time is in our verse - 'And to the people command and say'.

15. From Mount Horeb in the south, they went northward through the western slopes of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea.

16. As Rashi comments: 'and we encompassed Mount Seir many days' - its entire south until the land of Moab.

Parshat Devarim - Circling Seir from Three Directions.

The Midrash¹⁷ says on this verse that they spent 38 years on the south side of Mount Seir.

Then they turned eastward, and again they encounter Mount Seir, as it is written: "And we passed our brethren the children of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, by way of the plain, past Eilat and Ezion-Gaber; and we turned to pass through the wilderness of Moab" (ibid verse 8) (circling from the east).

Thus, the Jewish people circled Mount Seir from the three sides: west, south, and east.

In order to complete the encirclement, all that remained was to circle Mount Seir from the north side.

G-d however said to Moses, "you have surrounded this mountain [of Seir] long enough, turn northward." (ibid verse 3)

"The time has come; enough dealing with Mount Seir. Proceed at once towards the Land of Israel!"

The Jewish people thus continued their way straight to the border of the land of Bashan.

Moses turned to the children of Israel, and delivered G-d's instructions:

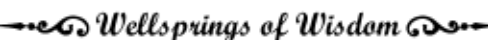
"We do not have permission to pass through the land of Edom and Mount Seir, however, G-d has commanded us to buy food and water from the Edomites."

As the verse states: "You shall purchase food from them with money, and eat; and also buy water from them, and drink" (Deuteronomy 2:6).

We must understand:

A. The Jewish people had abundant food and drink in the wilderness, why did G-d tell them to buy foodstuffs from the nation of Edom?

B. Why did the verse write at length 'and you may eat' 'and you may drink', which seem superfluous and unnecessary instructions?



Refining the Fourth Side of Seir

Rabbi Aharon of Belz once sat surrounded by his disciples and preached:¹⁸

“Many nations who oppressed the Jewish people arose throughout the generations—Egypt, Babylon, Media, and others, and as long as holy sparks were hidden within that particular nation, they maintained their prominence.

The moment the sparks were removed from them, they collapsed and lost their significance.

One such nation however stands out from among all the other nations, and that is the nation of Edom.

Within this nation many holy sparks are deeply hidden, and from them they derive great strength to maintain their stature and prominence until the time of Moshiach.

The Holy One, blessed be He, out of great mercy for the children of Israel, wished to weaken their

power, and therefore commanded the Jewish people to encircle Mount Seir from three sides, and refine many sparks that are hidden and held captive in Esau.

We quote the words of Rabbi Aharon of Belz:

“The reason that they circled for such a long time is because Seir is Edom, and Edom will be the last of all the exiles, and therefore they had the great task of refining all that was there because immediately after the exile of Edom, the coming of Moshiach will occur.

Therefore, they needed to correct everything during their time of exile, and that was why 'you have surrounded this mountain [of Seir] long enough', for such an extended period of time.

This was also said by the ancient scholars that the Jewish nation needed to encircle around there for a long time in order to

Parshat Devarim - You Shall Purchase Food from Them

prepare everything for the future to come, at the end of the exile. Edom will exist at the final leg of the exile after which Moshiach will come. Consequently, they needed to circle there for a long time to inspect the ‘nooks and crevices’ and perfect everything so that Moshiach would come.”

He then explains further that if the Jewish people would have also circled Mount Seir from the north, they would have refined all the holy sparks hidden within Esau, and the ‘work of refinement’ would have been completed, hence, the redemption would have come.

However, G-d did not desire this, and instead He commanded them to forgo surrounding the north side and rather continue onward.

Thus, the divine sparks that remain for us to refine, are those in captivity by the impure powers of the ‘north side of Mount Seir’, and once we finish refining the north side, Moshiach will be immediately revealed.

The task that remains for us is to understand and discover how it is possible for us to refine ‘the north side of Edom’.

You Shall Purchase Food from Them

We find in the holy writings of Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov the greatness and loftiness of the act of eating properly, for the sake of Heaven.

It is when a person eats in holiness and purity, that he causes the refinement of the ‘north side of Mount Seir’.

We quote his words (‘Agra D’Kallah’, Devarim):

“It is known that the service of G-d’s people is to refine from every nation the sparks of holiness within them, and when this refinement is completed, the nations are given to be trampled underfoot and will be nullified without any vitality.

The refinement is performed through food and drink that a person eats and drinks with the intention of fulfilling the will of

Parshat Devarim - You Shall Purchase Food from Them

his Creator, and when he eats with this intention, the divine spark within it is refined.

G-d told the people of Israel:

Know that the time has not yet come to inherit the land of Edom until the end of days when their refinement will be completed, now your task is to refine the sparks within them through eating in holiness.

Thus, "You shall purchase food from them with money, and eat" (Deuteronomy 2:6).

Although the Jewish people had enough of their own food and drink, nonetheless G-d commanded them specifically to purchase and consume from the Edomites to refine their divine sparks.

This is also why the Torah says at length "You shall purchase food from them with money, and eat; and also buy water from them, and drink," indicating that there was a special intention and divine

service in this eating and drinking.

The spiritual refinement is through limiting and minimizing one's physical and material pleasure from food and drink.

Thus "purchase food' - 'Tishberu', which literally means break, 'with money' - 'Bakesef', which alternatively translates as intense longing and desire, meaning that when you will break your desire, through this, you will literally break and release free the divine spark from within them and then you will deservedly 'eat.'

The verse continues: "and also buy water from them, and drink" (ibid) - even water, which does typically involve much desire, still, you shall 'buy' - 'Tichru', similar to the term 'kor' which is a measure, meaning that even water you should drink in measure.

By this, through the divine service performed in eating, drinking, and all worldly affairs for the sake of Heaven, you refine these scattered sparks.

A Righteous Man Eats to Satisfy His Soul

In a talk delivered by my father Rabbi Yoram Abargel, he said the following (Imrei Noam, Shlach, chap. 7):

In the Torah portion of Shlach, the Torah commands us: "And it shall be, when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up a tribute to the L-rd" (Numbers 15:19).

According to the plain meaning of the verse, this commandment instructs us that when we knead dough to bake bread, we should separate a portion of the dough as a tribute to the L-rd, which is the separation of challah.

However, in addition to the plain meaning, there is a wonderful hint here regarding our divine service.

Every meal, even if it includes meat, fish, and other delicacies, is generally called 'bread' as well, as the verse states: "Jacob offered a sacrifice upon the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread." (Genesis 31:54) Rashi explains there: 'Every kind of food is

[generally] called bread', since the base of every meal is bread, which sustains and satisfies a person.

Thus, what our Torah portion says: "And it shall be, when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up a tribute to the L-rd," hints to each one of us that when we come to eat any meal, we should eat it with holiness, so that through this we elevate ('offer up a tribute' - 'tarimu terumah', indicating an elevation) and lift it up to the L-rd.

In this manner, we turn a physical and coarse item into something spiritual and holy.

All foods draw their vitality from the "neutral shells", which are neither holy nor evil, and when a Jew eats them with holiness, he refines and elevates and lifts the good part in them to holiness.

This refinement of food is primarily done by reciting the blessings with great intention on each food and drink, the appropriate blessing as our holy Sages, the Men of the Great Assembly instituted.

Parshat Devarim - A Righteous Man Eats to Satisfy His Soul

However, this is not enough. In addition to blessing with great intention on every food one eats, the act of eating itself should be done with holiness as well, because a Jew should be recognizable not only when he is studying Torah and praying but also when he is engaged in physical and worldly matters, such as eating.

Esau the wicked had said: "Pour in my throat, please, some of that red stuff" (Genesis 25:30), and his ways are of gluttony and stuffing oneself.

However, a Jew eats calmly and peacefully, a reasonable amount, as much as needed to satisfy his hunger, as it is said: "A righteous man eats to satisfy his soul" (Proverbs 13:25). He does not eat excessively or overload his body beyond what it truly needs, and in this way, it is evident to all that it is a Jew who eats.

A person's eating has an impact on the other aspects of his divine service, since every food and drink that a person consumes is turned into lifeblood that flows

through his veins, from which his body receives all its vitality.

As it is said: "For the blood is the life force" (Deuteronomy 12:23), and "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11), meaning that all of a person's physical vitality depends on the blood flowing in his body.

When a person eats with holiness and refines the foods that he eats, consuming only the holy part within them, his body produces refined lifeblood. When the body receives its vitality from this refined blood, his material inclinations, desires, and urges are greatly diminished, and he has a strong inclination toward spiritual matters.

On the other hand, when a person eats without holiness and evil remains embedded in the foods he consumes, his body receives its vitality from impure and contaminated blood, leading him toward material things and base desires, and harsh and bitter urges. It then follows that his passion for spiritual matters -

Parshat Devarim - The Divine Service of Eating

Torah study, prayer, and charity
- steadily diminishes.

When a person eats with holiness, it instills within him renewed strength for divine service.

Conversely, when a person eats without holiness and fills his stomach with great greed, not only does his eating fail to instill within him strength for divine service, but it also brings upon him great fatigue and tremendous heaviness. Therefore, one who finds that his eating brings upon

him a bad spirit, and sleep, which is a sixtieth of death (Berachot 57b), it is a sign that he is not eating with sufficient holiness.

Thus, a significant part of a person's divine service greatly depends on the holiness of his eating.

This is hinted at by the Sages (Pesachim 101a): 'There is no sanctification [over wine] except in the place of a meal', meaning, one's sanctity depends on their level of sanctification during their mealtime.

The Divine Service of Eating

When a Jew wishes to eat or drink, the first thing they must do is check the kashrut (Kosher certification) of the food.

Afterward, they should pause for a moment and think, 'What blessing should be recited over this food or drink?'

Once he determines the required blessing, he should recite it with intention after which, he should eat politely and with good manners, reciting the final blessing afterward.

If he wishes to eat bread, he must not forget to wash his hands before eating.

One who is careful to observe the mitzvah of washing hands will receive not only his true reward awaiting him in the eternal world but also a 'taste of his reward' here in this world.

Washing hands before eating bread is a good omen (segulah) for abundant livelihood.

Parshat Devarim - The Divine Service of Eating

The acronym of the blessing 'al netilat yadayim' (concerning the washing of hands) spells 'ani' (a pauper), indicating that one who neglects washing hands may, G-d forbid, be reduced to poverty.

Conversely, 'mayim' (water) has the initials 'me'osher matnot yadecha' (rich with the gifts of Your hands), indicating that one who washes his hands with plenty of water will be blessed with wealth. As Rabbi Chisda testified about himself that he would meticulously wash his hands with plentiful water, and therefore, from Heaven, he was granted bountiful goodness and wealth (Shabbat 62b).

After washing one's hands, one should break bread and dip it in salt three times.

This too is a segulah for livelihood, as hinted by the fact that 'lechem - 'bread' in Gematria equals 78, three times the numerical value of the Name of G-d (26), and likewise, 'melach' - 'salt' has the same numerical value (78).

The two together equal six times the Name of G-d (156), which is the numerical value of 'Yosef' - which hints that one who is meticulous to have bread and salt on his table throughout the meal and during the Grace after Meals will be blessed with abundant livelihood like Joseph the righteous, who even during a great famine had storehouses full of grain, to such a great extent that he then sold grain to the entire world, as it is said: "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he provided to all the people of the land" (Genesis 42:6).

It is also of great importance to say words of Torah at the table, for by speaking words of Torah, the table becomes like the table of G-d, and all who eat upon it are considered that they ate from the table of G-d.

As our Sages say (Avot 3:3): Three who ate at a table and spoke words of Torah at it, it is as if they ate from G-d's table as it is said: "This is the table that is before the L-rd" (Ezekiel 41:22).

Eating with Holiness

We will conclude with the words of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov:¹⁹ "Know that through the eating of the Jewish people, a unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah is achieved, as it is said: "And Boaz said to her at mealtime, Come here" (Ruth 2:14). 'At mealtime' specifically, meaning through eating 'Come here' - this is the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Shechinah."

Rabbi Nachman reveals that through eating with holiness, one can merit the resting of the Shechinah in the most literal sense.

Like any spiritual matter, intention and desire themselves hold great power. When a Jew yearns and longs to eat with holiness, even if he does not always succeed, this very desire attracts holiness upon himself.

We can now understand the story of Bernie (with which we opened our conversation).

The mere commitment he made to eat kosher once, gave him the strength to withstand the temptation of hunger and from there, the path upward to an illuminated life of Judaism was paved.

Shabbat Shalom !



Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. One of the missions that every Jew is tasked with is the work of refinements - to refine the sparks of holiness scattered within our physical world. Ultimately, when the Jewish people finish refining all the holy sparks, the redemption will come.
2. When a Jew wishes to eat or drink, he must know that within the food and drink sparks of holiness are hidden, and he must therefore eat with sanctity. By doing so, we elevate the food and turn something material and coarse into something spiritual and holy.
3. When a person eats with holiness, they refine and separate the evil part within the food he eats and is nourished only from the good part within them. As a result, purified blood is formed in his body, and when the body receives its vitality from this purified blood, his material inclinations, desires, and urges become constricted and his inclination toward spiritual matters and the service of the Creator becomes strengthened.
4. Conversely, when a person eats without holiness, and the evil part remains embedded in the foods he eats, his body receives its vitality from 'contaminated' blood, and causes him to lean toward material things and base desires.
5. The refinement and separation of the evil part in foods is primarily done by reciting the proper blessing instituted by the Men of the Great Assembly on each food and drink with great intention.
6. Before a Jew wishes to eat or drink, he must first check and ensure the kosher certification of the food.
 Afterward, he must pause for a moment and think, what blessing should be recited over this food or drink?
 He then must recite the blessing slowly and conscientiously, and eat politely and with good

manners, and recite the final blessing afterward.

7. In addition to reciting the blessing with proper intention over every food one eats, the very act of eating should be done with holiness, since a Jew must recognize and live his Judaism not only when he is studying the Torah and praying, but also when he is engaged in physical and worldly matters, such as eating.

8. Furthermore, one must be careful to eat calmly and peacefully, without gluttony or haste, and eat only a reasonable amount as necessary, without pressure or hurry.

9. By properly adhering to the laws of kashrut of the food, reciting the blessings with intention, and eating in a gentle and polite way, one merits to be a dwelling for the Divine Presence.



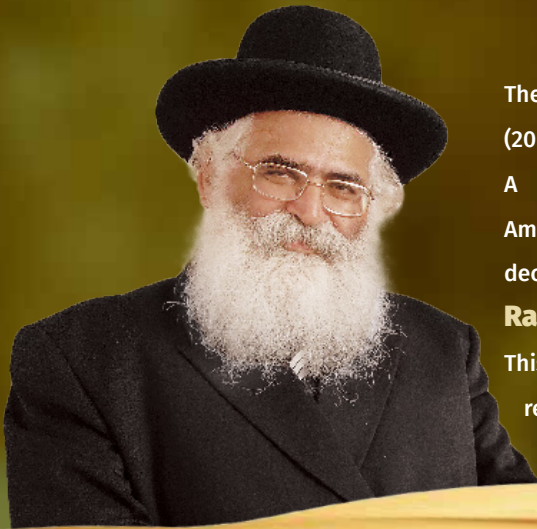
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as the author of the Tanya says that:

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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**Shabbat Times
Devarim**

6th of Av, 5784



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Miami	7:43 pm	8:36 pm	9:12 pm
Los Angeles	7:28 pm	8:25 pm	8:57 pm
Montreal	7:52 pm	8:58 pm	9:21 pm
Toronto	8:11 pm	9:15 pm	9:40 pm
London	8:15 pm	9:30 pm	9:44 pm
Jerusalem	7:13 pm	8:02 pm	8:54 pm
Tel Aviv	7:10 pm	7:59 pm	8:50 pm
Haifa	7:11 pm	8:00 pm	8:51 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:09 pm	7:58 pm	8:48 pm

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HaRav Yoran Abargel zt"l

The wife must be cared for and greatly appreciated.

She left her parents' home and dedicates her life to maintaining the home, bearing children, and rearing them. She stays up nights to care for the children and invests great effort to upkeep the home, and in many cases this is in addition to working away from home.

Woe to one who causes anguish and distress to their wife, even slightly, for G-d will surely not forgive them.

A husband must utilize every opportunity to appease her and reimburse her for her valiant efforts; for the most precious gifts that she brings home, the children, and for them alone, she deserves the greatest treasures in the world.



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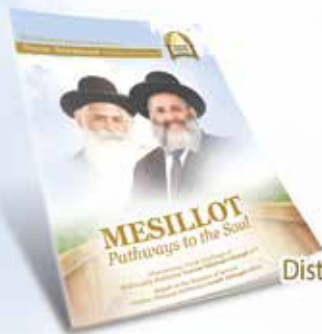
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