

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 176

Ki Tavo | Renewal - Source of Blossoming and Success



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

פרשת כי תבוא | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Ki Tavo

Eliminating the Inclination to Idolatry

During the time of the First Temple, the main struggle of the Jewish people was with the urge for desires, urges that tempted them to sin through idol worship, immorality, and bloodshed.

The struggle was very difficult, and the failures were many.

G-d wanted to assist them and sent His prophets day after day to keep them away from evil and bring them back to the right path.

As it is said, "I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and being sent" (Jeremiah 7:25).

However, the evil inclination burned strongly in their hearts, and they did not make a strong enough effort to help themselves.

As a result, G-d sent the prophet Jeremiah to inform the Israelites that because of their wicked deeds, He would destroy

the Temple and exile them from their land for seventy years.

Indeed following seventy years of exile, the Jews had returned to their land.

Then one day, on the 24th of Tishrei, the eight Levites stood: "Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried with a loud voice to the L-rd their G-d" (Nehemiah 9:4), pleading, "Master of the universe, remove from us the powerful evil inclination for idolatry." G-d indeed accepted their prayer and abolished the evil inclination for idolatry.

From that time on, the evil inclination for idolatry was eliminated, and a spirit of purity began to blow in the hearts of the Jewish nation.

Groups of Jews were seen everywhere gathering in synagogues

and study houses, engaging in Torah study.

The Torah they studied in purity helped them subdue their materiality and subjugate it to their spiritual form and soul, and thus overcome all unholy desires.

The Second Temple stood for 420 years, and during those years,

the study houses were filled with Torah scholars engaged in G-dly wisdom.

For those Jews, everything was perfect. Everything that is, except for one thing: within their hearts, an unnecessary and dangerous emotion was revealed, the emotion of baseless hatred.

Baseless Hatred – Self-Centeredness

The Rebbe Rasha”b, Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch of saintly memory, wrote the following on the subject of baseless hatred:¹

Hatred is an emotion, and like all emotions, has many details and various manifestations.

In general, this emotion is divided into two parts:

1. Hatred born out of a specific reason (e.g., someone caused harm or opposes him in some aspect).

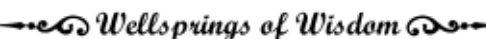
2. Baseless hatred.

Baseless hatred, as its name implies, is hating someone without

any reason. One hates the other person even if he has never had any dealings with them.

The reason for this hatred is that he feels that the very existence of the other person diminishes his own existence, and therefore he cannot tolerate them.

To elaborate further: The real reason for baseless hatred stems from a feeling of self-importance and arrogance - he feels himself to be an important person, with high and lofty qualities. When this feeling is present, he cannot tolerate the other.



1. ‘Ma’amar HeChaltzu’ 5659, (chapter 4).

You might ask, 'What is the connection?'

The explanation is quite simple:

The nature of self-importance is to feel that one encompasses the entire existence. He understands everything and knows everything, and in every subject, he has an opinion.

Therefore, when one feels that another person threatens to exist aside from him, an existence with its own opinion and desire, he feels that the other person diminishes his own existence.

The simple solution to this 'problem' is simply to erase the other person from existence, and he does this through genuine hatred for that person's existence.

Hence, the main reason for baseless hatred is the feeling of inflated self-importance, which makes the other person an opponent just by the fact that they exist.²

This is why the Second Temple was destroyed, because of the manifestation of the emotion of baseless hatred, G-d then decreed that the Temple must be destroyed.³

Wellsprings of Wisdom

2. Every Jew who feels a weakness in this area should cry out and plead to G-d:

“Master of the Universe, you know the strength and intensity of my feeling of self-importance. You know how much I feel pride in my every detail and movement, and you know how important and significant I am in my own eyes.

Please, Father of Mercy, help me purify and refine the intensity of my bloated self-importance.

Please, Creator of the Universe, grant me the ability to recognize the existence of others.

3. In a talk given by my father, Rabbi Yoram, he said (Imrei Noam - Moadim, Bein HaMetzarim - Ma'amar D):

During the time of the Second Temple, the Jewish people were engaged in Torah, mitzvot, and acts of kindness.

During this period, the holy Tannaim lived, through whom the entire Oral Torah was established. Nevertheless, all these merits did not help to protect the Temple from destruction because there was baseless hatred among them.

They were accustomed to belittling and nullifying each other, and when a person

Parshat Ki Tavo - Baseless Hatred – Self-Centeredness

lacks love for their fellow Jews and has no respect for others, all the merits they possess are lost, as the Ba'al HaTanya said (Hayom Yom - the 20th of Iyar): "By nullifying others and elevating oneself, one loses everything, Heaven forbid."

Our custom is to study every day from the book 'Hayom Yom' compiled by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, which is a collection of precious and illuminating Chassidic sayings, one for each day of the year.

On the 8th of Av, the eve of the fast of Tisha B'Av, the Rebbe chose to include the following saying of the Rebbe Maharash of Lubavitch:

"**What** is the value of Chassidut and fear of G-d if it lacks the essential element:

love for one's fellow Jews and to, even worse, cause distress to others, Heaven forbid?"

In another talk, my father, Rabbi Yoram, may his memory be a blessing, said (Imrei Noam, Acharei Mot, Maamer 2):

Every Jew must plead before G-d, blessed be He, every morning in prayer when saying the words: 'May we not labor in vain nor produce for naught,' and ask that G-d help him not to gain honor at the expense of his fellow or to belittle him in his heart, Heaven forbid.

Doing so would cause that one's efforts in studying Torah and observing mitzvot would be in vain, and he would lose from his share in the World to Come.

This behavior of nullifying others weakens a person's standing in the higher worlds.

Our entry into the World to Come depends solely on whether we respect others or not.

However, many people, including rabbis and heads of yeshivot, may ascend to Heaven only to discover and find that their name is not listed among those who belong in Gan Eden.

When they ask why their name is not mentioned here, they will be told that it is because G-d has "wiped out their name forever and ever" (Tehillim 9:6).

Immediately, they will raise their eyebrows in astonishment:

'How is it possible? I am the famous so-and-so who completed all of the Sha"rs with all of its commentaries dozens of times, and I have a yeshiva with hundreds of students.

Have you truly not heard of me?

Do you not know my status?

Surely, this is a World of Truth, and there are no mistakes made here.'

Yet nonetheless, they will be told that they were rejected from Gan Eden and lost their entire share in the World to Come because they were accustomed to always belittle others, nullify them, and gain honor at their expense.

Parshat Ki Tavo - Give Me Yavne and Its Sages

G-d then put into the heart of the Roman Caesar to go and conquer the Land of

Israel, and so he ordered his servants to call his general Vespasian.

Give Me Yavne and Its Sages

Vespasian entered the king's palace and stood before the Roman Caesar with his helmet tucked under his arm.

"Vespasian. Go and destroy Jerusalem."

Vespasian gathered the best soldiers from the scattered army bases.

On his way to the land of Israel, he passed through Alexandria in Egypt, and from there he also gathered many elite commando soldiers.

From there, he went up to the Galilee and, in a swift conquest, captured Tzipori, Yodfat,⁴ and several other cities.

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

4. Rabbi Yitzchak Zvi Bernfeld, of blessed memory, wrote as follows ("Misharim Magid", Sefer Shmuel):

On Thursday of Parshat Korach, Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5707 (1947), I ascended from Akko to Tel Yodfat, where thousands of our Jewish brethren fell and their women were taken captive and sold during the destruction of the Second Temple. Many thousands of mothers were defiled here, and this was a prelude to the destruction of the Temple.

I began to search, and since the earth of the entire area was soaked with blood that was spilled like water, I immediately started the spiritual rectification that I had prepared, even

before finding any signage that indicated an exact location.

After studying the Mishnah, the *maggid* (heavenly messenger) said to me:

“What do you seek in this place that is not mentioned in the Tanach, even if thousands were killed here by force, much of this was caused by senseless hatred, and the rectification then, needs to be partial.

The quarters of the priestly guard who sanctified themselves before ascending to perform their duties in the Second Temple, is at the foot of the mountain, on the plateau to the left, and this guard of Yodfat was among the most important of the priestly families, and this city was surrounded by wall since the days of Joshua bin Nun.

With a victorious and proud spirit, he turned to go up to Jerusalem; the war had broken out with its full force.

At that time, the great sage Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai lived in Jerusalem.

Out of a sense of responsibility for the future of Judaism, he decided to try to save what he still could.

He left Jerusalem and came to Vespasian's encampment.

When he arrived before him, he greeted him and said, "Peace be upon you, king, Peace be upon you, king."

Vespasian replied annoyed, "You deserve the death penalty on two accounts. One for calling me 'king' when I am not in fact the king. Secondly, if I am a king, why did you not come to me until now?"

Rabbi Yochanan answered, "You must truly be a king because

if you were not, Jerusalem would not be delivered into your hands, for it is said, 'Lebanon⁵ will fall by a mighty one' (Isaiah 10:34).

And regarding your question of why I did not come to you until now, it is because of the zealots among us who did not allow me to leave Jerusalem."

Meanwhile, a hurried messenger arrived from Rome and said to Vespasian, "Stand up, for the king has died, and the noblemen of Rome have decided to crown you in his place."

Vespasian said to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, "I am going to Rome and will send another person in my place to lead the fight. But since you have brought me such great news, ask from me anything, and I will grant your requests."

Rabban Yochanan requested three things, one of which was, "Give me Yavne and its sages."

Wellsprings of Wisdom

5. In Eichah Rabbah 4:15, the term "Lebanon" is explained to mean the Beit HaMikdash. The symbolism of the

Temple being like Lebanon is because it "whitens" (cleanses) the sins of Israel, drawing from the root word "lavan" (white).

Parshat Ki Tavo - From Yavne to Usha

He asked Vespasian to spare the city of Yavne; it had a high concentration of Jewish residents and a large group of Torah scholars that he requested be spared. Vespasian agreed to his requests.

On the 17th of Tammuz in the year 3828 to creation, the Fortress of Antonia, the third perimeter wall surrounding Jerusalem, was

destroyed, creating a breach that led eventually to the conquest of Temple Mount.

Three weeks later, on the 9th of Av, the Second Temple was destroyed.

Many Torah scholars who survived this destruction went to Yavne, and Rabban Yochanan reestablished the Sanhedrin there.

From Yavne to Usha

The Sanhedrin stayed in Yavne for only ten years before it had to move yet again.

This is described as follows:⁶

For eight years after the destruction, until the death of Vespasian, the Israelites in the land of Israel lived under a regime of continuous decrees and persecutions.

However, Vespasian's promise to Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai regarding Yavne and its sages was fulfilled.

Following Vespasian's death, his son Titus ruled for two years and also granted full autonomy to Yavne and its sages. However, this period of peace ended with Titus' assassination by his brother Domitian.⁷ Domitian was a brutal ruler who killed many of Rome's dignitaries and hated the Jews with a fervent religious hatred. He ordered the preparation of a decree to annihilate all Jews worldwide within thirty days.

Domitian's hatred was so intense that he even executed his

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

6. 'Dorot Rishonim' (part 1, vol. 5, chapter 21, p. 142), as quoted by "Galuyot Sanhedrin" (page 33), by Rabbi Menashe Ben Chaim.

7. **The** Talmud (Gittin 56b) relates, "When Titus entered a boat to cross the sea, a wave rose against him and threatened to drown him.

Parshat Ki Tavo - From Usha Back to Yavne

own ministers, accusing them of being inclined toward the Jews.

Many slaves took advantage of this and falsely accused their masters of having Jewish sympathies, leading to their deaths.

As recorded by the Roman author Cassius:

"Through the cruelty of his soul, Domitian regarded every person as his enemy and adversary, to the point where he could not trust even his household servants, nor the chief generals of his personal guard."

(Domitian serves as a great illustration of an inflated feeling of self-importance that was manifest to an extreme degree).

The sages of the Sanhedrin in Yavne were informed that the Romans no longer looked upon Yavne favorably.

Therefore, they adhered to the verse "Hide for a little moment until the anger passes" (Isaiah 26:20) and moved the Sanhedrin from Yavne to Usha where it would arouse less attention and be less conspicuous.

From Usha Back to Yavne

Years passed until, in the year 3855, King Domitian was assassinated by his guards, and Nerva took the throne.

Nerva was the complete opposite of Domitian. Among all

the Roman emperors, none were as corrupt and destructive as Domitian, and none were as righteous and as just as was Nerva.

The Roman historian Cassius wrote concerning Nerva:

Wellsprings of Wisdom

He said: "It appears that their G-d has power only in water."

A voice came forth from Heaven and said: "Wicked man, I have a small creature in My world, called a mosquito. Go up on dry land and wage war with it."

When he reached land, a mosquito entered his nose and picked at his brain for seven years. When he died, they split open his skull and found a creature as big as a sparrow."

The cause of Titus's death is not mentioned here explicitly.

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

"He commanded not to accept any slander from a slave against his master, or even from a freed slave, and generally did not accept slander that someone is inclined towards the Jewish religion or behaves according to Jewish law."

Upon hearing that this upright man had ascended the throne, the

sages of Israel hastened to Rome to plead on behalf of their people.

Thus, in the year 3856, the first year of Nerva's reign, the leadership and the Sanhedrin were allowed to return to Yavne, this time, with Rabban Gamliel, the grandson of Rabban Gamliel the Elder, now at its head.

The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

In Yavne, a very large yeshiva was established, with many Torah scholars studying there.

Two things were unique about this particular yeshiva:

1. The scholars sat in rows like a vineyard, hence it was called 'Kerem B'Yavneh' - 'The Vineyard in Yavne.'

2. All the students could study with peace of mind since the Jewish residents of Yavne took upon themselves to provide for all their physical needs, allowing the scholars to disconnect from the material world and its vanities.

When Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yossi, Rabbi Nechemia, and

Rabbi Eliezer (the son of Rabbi Yossi HaGili) heard that Rabban Gamliel had established a yeshiva in Yavne, they left their homes and traveled to Yavne.

When they arrived and saw how the city's residents generously supported the Torah scholars, their hearts were filled with boundless admiration. They gathered all the city's residents in the study hall and, standing atop the steps of the sanctuary, lauded and praised the self-sacrifice of the city's people.

The Talmud recounts (Berachot 63b):

"Our Rabbis taught: When our Rabbis entered the vineyard in Yavne:

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yossi, Rabbi Nechemia, and Rabbi Eliezer the son of Rabbi Yossi HaGlili, they all began by honoring the hosts and praised and expounded on the virtue of those who support Torah scholars.

Rabbi Nechemia began by honoring the hosts and expounded: What is meant by the verse "And Saul said to the Kenites, 'Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt'" (1 Samuel 15:6)?

This teaches us that although Yitro did not care for Moses for his sake but rather for Yitro's own sake, and yet was rewarded generations later by sparing his Kenites descendants, how much greater is the merit of one who hosts a Torah scholar in his home, feeds him, gives him drink, and benefits him from his possessions.

Rabbi Yossi began by honoring the hosts and taught:

"Do not despise an Edomite, for he is your brother; do not

despise an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land" (Deuteronomy 23:8).

If the Egyptians, who only welcomed the Israelites for their own benefit, as it is said, "And if you know any capable men among them, make them overseers of my livestock" (Genesis 47:6), are to be accepted, then certainly someone who hosts a Torah scholar in their home, providing them with food, drink, and benefiting them with their possessions, deserves much more.

Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yossi HaGlilli, also spoke on the value of hospitality and taught:

"And the L-rd blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belonged to him because of the Ark of G-d" (2 Samuel 6:11-12).

If the Ark, which neither ate nor drank but was merely honored and cleaned, brought many blessings, then certainly someone who hosts a Torah scholar in their home, providing them with food and drink and benefiting them with their

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

possessions, deserves an even greater honor.⁸

Certainly, these three teachings contain great lessons

and enormous secrets, but we will focus specifically on the fourth teaching - of Rabbi Yehuda.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

8. We bring in this connection the following story ('Besod Avdecha, vol. 8, page 103):

The righteous Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, used to personally prepare the list of 'ma'amadot' - the funds for maintaining the holy court, the study hall, and its students.

These funds were collected by emissaries who went around among his Chassidim and supporters in the nearby and distant cities, every year.

The emissaries were from among the greatest and most important students, whose mere appearance in the Jewish townlets and villages, inspired and strengthened Jewish spiritual life and directly contributed to the fortification of religious observance and fear of Heaven.

During these fundraising rounds, these emissaries would deliver Torah lessons and speeches to the holy communities, urging them in all matters of Torah and divine service and to repair all that needed correction.

Among the regular donors to the 'ma'amadot' was Shaul, one of the well-known wealthy men of the Ostroh region.

His name was recorded every year by the righteous Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, in

the list given to the emissaries, and based on it, they would visit his home and receive from him a generous donation for the support of the Torah and its scholars.

One year, after the emissaries set out on their journey, they reviewed the list of donors in their possession, and to their great surprise, they found that Shaul's name was omitted from the list. They were greatly astonished, as they knew that he was not just any donor, but one of the most prominent ones.

They could not understand how Rabbi Pinchas could have omitted his name from the records. They convened and deliberated, and wondered whether they should visit the wealthy man even though they were not instructed to, and attribute the absence of his name to mere forgetfulness - or perhaps, the omission was not accidental, and they should therefore refrain from approaching him.

While they were still debating, and this question remained in the air, they arrived in the city, and shortly thereafter, the mystery was fully resolved.

They learned that Shaul, this generous individual, had passed away and was no longer among the living.

While in shock, astonished, and bewildered by the evident 'divine spirit' that had occurred to the righteous Rabbi

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

Pinchas, one of the emissaries noticed a new name - 'Yitzchak Dovid' - which appeared on the donor list in their possession.

A brief inquiry among their associates in the city revealed that it referred to none other than the son and heir of Shaul, the late wealthy man.

Yitzchak Dovid, newly wealthy, had succeeded his father, and welcomed the emissaries warmly, expressing his joy in continuing his father's legacy and tradition, and generously donated to their cause, as G-d had abundantly blessed him.

From then on, every year, Yitzchak Dovid's name appeared prominently on the list of 'ma'amadot' donors, and the emissaries of the righteous Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz would visit his home first of all the city's residents and receive from him a substantial donation - in a fixed and unchanging manner, and with a shining countenance and a warm heart.

One year, as the emissaries were preparing to visit Yitzchak Dovid's town and honor him with the first visit at his home, as was their custom, they were stunned to see his name was noticeably missing from the list.

Having previously witnessed the evident 'divine spirit' when his father's name was omitted, they were now filled with fear and sorrow for his fate.

Indeed, upon arriving in the city, they learned that while there wasn't a matter of physical death in the family this time, there was an even more severe case of spiritual demise; Yitzchak Dovid and his

family had strayed from the righteous path, and they had all, G-d forbid, abandoned entirely the Jewish way of life.

It became clear that the great wealth he had inherited from his father had been to his detriment.

His spiritual backbone was not strong enough, and the burden of wealth had overwhelmed him.

The extensive commercial network he inherited from his father extended over many estates of noblemen, through the castles of counts, and the palaces of royalty, and he acquired a good reputation and a respected place among the barons.

The business dealings with them were frequent, and his daily presence in their company was commonplace and a required part of the profession.

However, while his late father maintained his integrity, fearing G-d above all, and knew how to navigate in their presence without harming his spirituality even a hair's breadth, the son was not strong enough to avoid the negative influence of the undesirable behavior that hovered around him.

Having become a regular in their homes and spending much time in their company, Yitzchak Dovid was deeply affected by their harmful influence, and this eventually led to his complete spiritual downfall. Moreover, he dragged his entire family down with him.

Soon, his entire household followed his deviant ways, and in no time, they all veered off the path of Judaism, finding

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

themselves imitating the ways and actions of the non-Jews.

This led to them being ostracized by the Jewish community, with no one willing to associate with them.

It was clear that the righteous Pinchas of Koretz, had sensed this from his chambers and foresaw, with his holy vision, the calamity that had befallen this wealthy man.

Hence, he distanced himself and his students from benefiting from funds that originated from such an impure source.

From that moment and on, Yitzchak Dovid's name was no longer mentioned among the fundraisers, and it was as if he had passed away and ceased to exist in the world.

Years passed, and the emissaries continued their customary annual journey year after year.

One year, to their great astonishment, Yitzchak Dovid's name reappeared on the list of donors. By now, his name had become notoriously known throughout the entire region for his abandonment of Judaism and the Jewish community, making his inclusion on the list even more perplexing.

However, the emissaries, accustomed to being surprised by everything associated with these matters, did not question the list that their Rebbe had prepared but eagerly awaited their arrival in the city to witness the mystery's resolution firsthand.

Indeed, upon their arrival in the city, passersby informed them of a remarkable

transformation in Yitzchak Dovid and his family's lifestyle.

They had suddenly and completely repented, returning to their Jewish roots in full display for all their fellow Jews to see.

"Today," they were told, "it is impossible to recognize in them the sinners and transgressors they once were. Their entire demeanor now exudes repentance and fear of Heaven. The reason for their sudden change, however, remains hidden and unknown."

With great curiosity, the emissaries reached Yitzchak Dovid's home.

Their hearts pounded as they waited at the gate, eager to glimpse at the face of the newly penitent man and perhaps hear from him the reason for the drastic change in his life.

Yitzchak Dovid appeared at the door, visibly surprised but then quickly regained his composure.

His eyes sparkled with joy as he greeted them warmly, inviting them inside with great respect.

Once seated around the table in his grand hall, Yitzchak Dovid, with a slightly embarrassed tone, began:

"Allow me, dear guests, to express the pressing question on my mind:

Who directed your steps, deciding when to visit my home and when to refrain?

For several years now, I have not had the honor of seeing your faces."

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

The emissaries, after some hesitation, answered truthfully:

“We do not act on our own authority, but only as emissaries of our holy Rebbe, Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz.

In accordance with his instructions, we travel or stop.

Every year, before we set out, he hands us the list of those to be visited, written in his own holy handwriting, and we collect the ‘ma’amadot’ donations according to this list.

When your name appeared on the list, we visited; and when it was omitted, we refrained. The same happened when your late father passed away. His name was omitted, and yours appeared in his place.”

Yitzchak Dovid listened in awe, and tears began to stream down his face.

He wept silently for a long time while the emissaries sat in embarrassing silence.

“I will tell you, friends, what caused me to repent,” he finally said after a prolonged pause.

“Know that your holy Rebbe, although he resides in Ostroh, has influence that extends not only over this entire region and the whole country but even in the heavenly court above. Listen carefully to my tale.”

Yitzchak Dovid then narrated the following story to the eager ears of the emissaries, who absorbed every word:

It was midday.

Yitzchak Dovid, who had strayed from the righteous path, had just finished a lavish, non-kosher meal at home and laid down for an afternoon nap.

No sooner had his eyes closed than a vivid vision unfolded.

He found himself taken by the hair of his head and transported far away to a city where an international fair was being held.

As he had done in recent years since abandoning his Jewish faith, he stayed at a luxurious hotel in the city, unperturbed by its glaringly non-kosher kitchen.

During lunch, while seated at his table, a distinguished-looking stranger approached him, announcing that he was a messenger from the local rabbinical court and that Yitzchak Dovid was summoned to a Din Torah.

Blushing with embarrassment, Yitzchak Dovid glanced around to ensure no one noticed his shame. He whispered to the man that he was not one for legal disputes and was willing to settle any debt on the spot.

However, the stranger insisted that a court summons could not be ignored and that Yitzchak Dovid must come immediately.

Persuaded by the man’s gentle but firm words, Yitzchak Dovid reluctantly followed him to the rabbinical court. Upon arrival, he was instructed to wait in an outer room before being called inside.

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Merit of Supporting Torah Scholars

After a long wait, growing impatient, and seeing no sign of him being called in the near future, he left the building and returned to his hotel to resume his meal. However, no sooner had he sat down than the same messenger appeared again, this time with a more insistent tone, criticizing him for leaving the court.

Helpless and confused, Yitzchak Dovid followed the man back to the court, where he was again left to wait.

After an even longer wait, he left once more, only to be forcefully dragged back by the now stern-faced messenger, who scolded him for disrespecting the court.

This time, he was immediately brought inside. The room was majestic, filled with awe-inspiring figures whose faces shone with divine radiance.

The judges' penetrating gazes made Yitzchak Dovid feel as if his innards were being skewered by sharpened rods.

Just then, another figure entered, clearly designated as the prosecutor. He began to enumerate Yitzchak Dovid's sins one by one, recounting his transgressions since abandoning Torah and mitzvot, detailing his numerous offenses. Yitzchak Dovid's ears rang, his knees buckled, and he felt faint under the weight of his guilt.

The prosecutor's list seemed endless, but finally, after what felt like an eternity, he finished. The judges began deliberating Yitzchak Dovid's fate, with it becoming clear that a most severe punishment awaited him.

Just as the sentence of death was about to be pronounced, a voice rose from among the judges. One of them, striking the table, took the floor.

"This man," the voice declared thunderously, "has for many years merited to support Torah scholars generously, never turning away the emissaries I sent."

He for the first time raised his eyes, and to his astonishment, Yitzchak Dovid beheld the righteous Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz advocating on his behalf.

Lowering his head once again in humility, he listened on, as the Rabbi continued:

"Because of his acts of charity, which have given him a share in the Torah that was studied, deserves another chance.

I ask that his sentence be postponed, his life spared, and I am confident that he will repent and mend his ways."

Rabbi Pinchas' words were followed by a moment of silence. Then, with great clamor, the court unanimously agreed, affirming the Rabbi's plea.

Yitzchak Dovid felt himself being violently thrown from his bed, landing across the room. When his household rushed in, they found him lying on the floor, bruised from the fall.

"From that moment, I had no doubt about the dream's truth." Yitzchak Dovid concluded, shaking with emotion.

"I immediately ordered all non-kosher utensils and food items in the house to

Forty Years in the Wilderness

The study hall in Yavne was filled to capacity.

All the Torah scholars and hospitable city residents were gathered to hear the teachings of the famed four sages on the merit of supporting Torah.

Rabbi Yehuda stood up and began by honoring the Torah and expounded:

"Be silent and hear, Israel; this day you have become a nation people to the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 27:9).

Was the Torah indeed given to Israel that day? That day was the end of forty years!

Rather, this teaches that the Torah is precious and valuable to those who study it, as if it were given from Mount Sinai that very day.

Thus, Rabbi Yehuda praised the residents of Yavne for their support of Torah, by praising and exalting the study of the Torah.

To explain, let us begin by providing some background:

As is known, the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sanctified and purified themselves entirely from worldly matters until they reached great and lofty spiritual levels and became a chariot for the Divine Presence,

Wellsprings of Wisdom

be thrown out into the depths of the river.

I then gathered my family and recounted before them the entire dream, warning them that anyone unwilling to return to the righteous path of G-d must leave the house at once.

“With G-d’s help, my stern words had their intended effect. Though it was hard for my family, who had grown accustomed to a

life of sin, they overcame their inclinations and returned to the righteous path.

Today, they are all devout Jews, serving G-d with all their heart, soul, and might, just as they did before and even more.”

With great joy, gratitude, and relief, Yitzchak Dovid generously donated to the emissaries, expressing his gratitude to G-d for guiding him back to the path of truth of G-d.

and therefore, materiality had no control over them.

However, their descendants were enslaved in Egypt, where their spiritual powers disappeared and withered.

Hundreds of years had passed until they were eventually redeemed from Egypt and arrived at Mount Sinai.

There, they were purified, and all the defilement that had clung to them since the beginning of time was removed, and the Shechinah rested upon them completely.

That generation, which merited receiving the Torah, was very great and exalted and is eternally termed "the generation of knowledge."

As Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel, the "Alter of Slabodka", wrote:⁹

The generation of the wilderness reached the most wondrous levels. It was the generation that witnessed all the signs and wonders that G-d

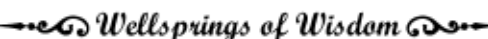
performed in Egypt and at the splitting of the Red Sea.

It was the generation that saw the revelation of G-d at Mount Sinai, heard His holy words, and received the Torah from His hand. They stood in the presence of the heavenly angels and proclaimed, "We will do and we will hear" (Exodus 24:7), to which G-d marveled and said, 'Who revealed this secret to My children, that the ministering angels use?'

Moreover, the prophets had also crowned the generation of the wilderness as "a generation of knowledge" as the verse states, "And Dar'da" (1 Kings 5:11), which our Sages interpreted as 'Dor Deah' - "the generation of knowledge" (Yalkut Shimoni, Kings I, 178), meaning that the essence of their being was knowledge.

The generation of the wilderness was entirely detached from the material world.

They lived as if in the heavens, between the pillar of



9. 'Or HaTzafon' (vol. 2, Page 132).

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Jews' Dedication to the Torah

cloud and the pillar of fire, far from all physical conditions, and even lacked food supplies, being completely sustained by the heavenly manna, "the bread of the mighty" (Psalms 78:25).

The generation of the wilderness was detached from all materiality for forty years, and merited to

dwell in the wilderness under the wings of the Shechinah, in the shadow of Moses our teacher, and to engage in Torah study.

Until the last day came, and on the seventh of Adar (in the year 2488 to creation), when Moses reached the age of 120 years, his last day in this world had arrived.

The Jews' Dedication to the Torah

On his last mortal day, Moses taught the Israelites three Torah portions from the Book of Deuteronomy: Nitzavim, Vayelech, and Haazinu.

He then blessed all the Israelites with boundless love, all as the blessings recorded in Parshat Vezot HaBerachah.

Additionally, he wrote a Torah scroll, and when he finished writing it, he gave it to the members of his tribe, the Levites.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the camp of Israel: "Moses gave the Torah scroll he wrote to the tribe of Levi", and this news caused a tremendous upheaval among the Israelites.

Rashi, at the end of Parshat Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 29:3), explains:

"I heard that on that day when Moses gave the Torah scroll to the sons of Levi, as written in Parshat Vayelech: 'And he gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi' (Deuteronomy 31:9), all of the people of Israel came before Moses and said, 'Moses our teacher, we also stood at Sinai and received the Torah, and it was given to us as well. Why then, do you give your tribe control over it? They will tell us someday tomorrow that it was not given to us but to them.'

Moses rejoiced over this complaint and said to them, 'This day you have become the people

Parshat Ki Tavo - The Jews' Dedication to the Torah

of the L-rd your G-d' (Deuteronomy 27:9) – today I understand that you are attached and desire closeness of the Omnipresent G-d."

Thus, atop the steps of the sanctuary in Yavne, Rabbi Yehuda expounded before the many congregants: "Be silent and hear, Israel; this day you have become the people of the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy 27:9) – Was the Torah given to Israel that day? That day was the final day of Moses after forty years in the wilderness.

The Israelites had been studying Torah with Moses for forty years – pure and elevated Torah, studied for its own sake.

For forty years, Moses had been observing their study, yet despite all the study, toil, and effort, Moses was still not convinced that they were worthy of being called "sons of Torah" until this last day, when they protested against Moses giving the Torah scroll to the Levites.

Only then did Moses' inner tension dissolve.

Now there would be no more reason to worry; they truly deserved to be called "sons of Torah."

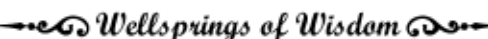
But we need to understand why Moses was doubtful of the Jewish people's resolve and dedication to the Torah in the first place.

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, of blessed memory explained it this way:¹⁰

It was only after forty years which contained so many trials and tribulations, that the Jewish people had proven their tenacity and dedication to the Torah.

After all this time, nevertheless, the Torah had proven to be dear to those who learn it every day as if it were given that day from Sinai. 'This is also what the verse says 'This day you have become a nation of the L-rd your G-d'.

What gives you meaning and a true existence in the world is that the Torah is dear to you every day as if it were given, and it doesn't appear



10. 'Kovetz Teshuvot' (vol. 1, chap. 70).

to be getting old and irrelevant to have to add or change to it.

But before continuing to explain his words, let us introduce an additional idea.

Experiences – The Nourishment of The Soul

Rabbi Yochanan David Solomon, once said the following in a talk:¹¹

The technician who came to fix my washing machine is a great talker. He enthusiastically talks about his next planned trip. He has already been to Europe twice, to Western Europe and also Eastern Europe.

He has a lot of pictures from his travels, which he proudly mentions. His big dream now is to visit South Africa, but it costs a lot of money, so he won't be able to fulfill his dream this summer, but perhaps next.

This is his ultimate goal, the one he dreams about.

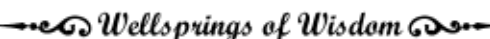
Before leaving, he didn't forget to give me his card with his phone number. He says, "You don't have to order repairs

through the company and wait two days. Call me directly, and I'll come the same day. It's hard to travel the world on a company's salary, you understand?" he adds with a wink.

As he leaves, I reflect on how, not many years ago, the goal of such a person might have been to save enough money to improve his living conditions or to start his own business. It was for this purpose, that he would work extra hours, save, and accumulate his funds.

Today however, he spends his money on experiences, on traveling to foreign lands, seeing unique landscapes, and visiting far-off locales.

The continuous flow of travel programs abroad, advertised in the newspapers and on the radio, and even colorful catalogs sent to



homes by travel agencies, shows that our technician is not alone in this pursuit of experiences.

Every summer, hundreds of thousands of people from our small country set out to tour the globe, returning home loaded with experiences and rolls of film.

Our tiny country is not unique in this phenomenon. It is a global trend that involves hundreds of millions of people.

Anyone whose basic material needs are met begins to seek experiences.

The source of experiences is not limited to tourism.

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of assorted drugs, psychedelics, and other unlawful toxic substances, which has spread like wildfire throughout the Western world, is also part of this massive pursuit of experiences.

After one's basic life needs are met, the next ultimate goal is to acquire and consume experiences of all kinds, even frightening and dangerous ones.

The variety of experiences the world offers is endless, and the greater the life-threatening danger involved, the more thrilling the experience, and the stronger the attraction.

For those who don't have money, courage, or physical ability, literature, cinema, theater, and various media offer imaginary experience journeys, filled with tension and fears, in heights and depths, on battlefields, and among wild animals.

One can say without much exaggeration that we live in an age of experiences. The whole world has become consumers of experiences. Everyone runs after them, everyone seeks them in all corners of the earth, and pays for them the full price, and also with their health, and sometimes even with life.

Experiences are indeed necessary psychological nourishment. Experiences and external stimuli are the nourishment of the soul, and without them, the soul dies, just as the body dies from lack of food.

Parshat Ki Tavo - Experiences - Enable The Power of Choice

However, there is a significant difference between soul nourishment and body nourishment. The body cannot produce oxygen for breathing, its food to eat, or the clothing and furniture it needs.

These must come from outside, and there is no alternative source for these.

However, with regard to experiences that serve as nourishment for the soul, things are entirely different.

Experiences - Enable The Power of Choice

As mentioned, experiences and stimuli are the nourishment of the soul, and when they are lacking, a person feels hunger – hunger for experiences.

It is here, at this point of feeling a ‘hunger’, that the possibility of choice is born.

The soul stands before two possibilities: to satisfy its hunger with the material matters of this world, such as reading the news, following sports and other similar trivialities, or to satiate the soul with pure and delightful divine light of the Torah and its wisdom.

In truth, this is not a fair choice at all, since for there to be choice, the two things standing opposite each other need to be of approximately equal weight.

However here, the distance between them is immeasurable; What is physical pleasure compared to divine pleasure? Absolutely nothing.

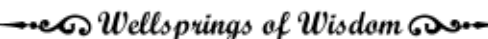
The power of the evil inclination is to blind people's eyes and make them think that there is something really special and worthwhile in physical pleasures.

Vitality Through Internal Renewal

To elaborate a bit more:¹²

Human nature is to feel and receive vitality from anything new.

This is why people always seek to hear the news, acquire new items, buy new clothes, and



Parshat Ki Tavo - Vitality Through Internal Renewal

change their lifestyles in various ways. However, everything new that one acquires becomes old after a short time, and then they seek to buy something new or experience a new event to feel alive.

But true vitality is found in those who find renewal within their souls.

In the material world, it is not possible to renew oneself in a way that provides lasting vitality, since every physical thing ages over time.

Only in the higher realms and in the upper worlds are things constantly renewed, and there are continuous and new wonders.

The world operates every day according to a special arrangement of the Sefirot (Divine emanations) for that particular day, unlike any other time or day.

Every mitzvah (commandment) performed in the physical and inanimate world creates new delight and an elevation of the worlds in a completely renewed manner.

Therefore, one who wants to derive vitality from serving G-d

must strengthen their faith, remembering that beyond the physicality seen with one's eyes, many spiritual matters are renewed moment by moment through the good deeds one performs.

And to the degree that one remembers and recalls this faith in everything one does, to that degree they cause that the spiritual renewal truly affects them with every additional mitzvah performed.

Every Jew must constantly renew their service to G-d, not performing mitzvot by rote as a mere habit.

When a person loses their vitality in mitzvot, it is because they live with the sense that the world operates by nature, as if today is a continuation of yesterday, and the same mitzvah done now was done yesterday. Thus, the matter becomes old, and they have no vitality when the same thing repeats itself.

But if they attach their thoughts and remember that the world of the deed is truly spiritual and endless, they will

Parshat Ki Tavo - Staleness – The Root of Downfalls

receive new vitality each time as if it is the first time. Even though in the physical world the action of one mitzvah looks the same as all the previous times – the prayer book appears the same, the tefillin are the same tefillin, and the Shabbat table is the same table with the same foods – in truth, everything is entirely new.

One who lives this way, lives true life, experiencing novelty in every moment of their life because they live a constantly renewed life.

Even if they fall and slip in their

service to G-d, they can always renew themselves, forget everything that happened, and start anew, even many times in one day.

This is because they believe and know that every moment G-d renews the creation, bringing new influence to the world that did not exist before, so there is no connection between a previous moment and the current one.

When attaching their thoughts to this faith, they can transform all their life's habits in an instant and start serving G-d with complete renewal.

Staleness – The Root of Downfalls

Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick once said in a talk (Shichot Moharash, vol. 9, p. 73):

The main success in serving G-d is dependent on the attribute of renewal.

A person must always make a new start, and even if they are already diligent in Torah study, they should not think they have already become established. Rather, they should start afresh

every time, as our sages said (Pesikta Zutarta, Va'etchanan): 'Every day the words of Torah should be new in your eyes as if they were given today at Sinai, and as if today you entered into the covenant with G-d.'

Therefore, even if someone has studied a great deal of Torah, they still need to renew themselves and study with a new 'start', like a person who is very thirsty for water. No matter how much water

Parshat Ki Tavo - Finally, a People of Torah

they are given to quench their thirst, it is never enough; they always want to drink more.

Similarly, a person should renew themselves every day in the study of the Torah, and in this way, they will succeed in their diligent study.

The same applies to prayer. Each prayer should come with a new sense of renewal as if one has never prayed before.

Even if they have prayed with great devotion for many years, each time they approach prayer, it should be with a sense of newness, recognizing that this is a new Shacharit (morning prayer), a new Mincha (afternoon prayer), one they have never prayed before.

Even if they have prayed with deep devotion for years, the key to success in serving G-d is to approach each prayer anew.

This way, they will always succeed, unlike people who we often see fall and become distant from G-d due to staleness.

They think, "Haven't I already prayed Shacharit? Haven't I already prayed Mincha?"

This leads to laxity, their devotion cools because they are used to it, and this is the main cause of their decline and fall.

They fall into despair and give up on themselves, G-d forbid, all because they do not renew themselves.

Finally, a People of Torah

For forty years, the Jews studied Torah from Moses, but during all those years, Moses did not see a hunger for spirituality in their souls. Throughout those forty years, they complained about the lack of meat, bread, and water, about the lack of comfort, and so on, but they

never complained about a lack of spirituality.

This worried Moses greatly. If they do not complain about it, it means it is not missing for them; it means spirituality has become 'old' to them. When spirituality seems old to a person, the results can be disastrous.

Parshat Ki Tavo - Finally, a People of Torah

In the lightest case, a person falls into despair, and in a more severe case, they may decide they need to make reforms in the Torah.

Moses was concerned, and rightly so. If the Torah is old to them, who knows if they will keep the Torah properly and in its purity?

But on the last day, when they protested that Moses did not bring them the Torah scroll, Moses saw their love for the Torah, and he saw their sense of renewal.

Then he rejoiced and said, "This day you have become the people of the L-rd your G-d" (Deuteronomy

27:9) – now I am sure you will preserve the Torah in its purity, without changes or reforms.

Rabbi Yehuda concluded his teaching before the congregation of Yavneh, saying:

This is the greatness and uniqueness of the Torah that you all so generously uphold, that it is preserved in its purity, without changes and without additions, yet constantly new and relevant, always timely and full of vitality.

Dear residents of Yavne, you all have merited this greatness, because the attribute of true spiritual renewal is revealed within you.

Shabbat Shalom !



Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. Success in serving G-d is through the attribute of renewal.

A person should always start anew, even if they have already been very diligent in Torah study. They should never think they have already established themselves and are acquainted, but should start studying with fresh vitality anew each time.

2. Renewal should be such that every day the words of Torah are new in their eyes, feeling as if it was given today at Sinai.

Even if someone has studied a great deal, they should approach Torah study with a sense of newness every time, feeling like a person very thirsty for water, who, no matter how much they drink, always wants more, and in this way, they will succeed in their diligent study.

3. The same also applies to prayer. Each prayer should be approached with a new sense of renewal as if one has never prayed before.

Even if they have prayed with deep devotion their entire life, each prayer should be approached with a sense of novelty.

4. It is human nature to seek vitality from anything new. We see this in the desire to hear news, buying new items and clothes, or in the pursuit of various new and interesting activities.

However, all new things eventually become old, but true vitality is found in those who find renewal within their souls.

Only in the higher realms is there continuous renewal.

5. To receive vitality from serving G-d, one must strengthen their faith, remembering that beyond the physicality they see with their eyes, many spiritual matters are renewed moment by moment through a person's good deeds.

The more one remembers this faith in everything they do, the more they will truly experience renewal themselves with every mitzvah they perform.



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Shabbat Times Ki Tavo

18th of Elul, 5784



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	6:37 pm	7:34 pm	8:06 pm
Miami	7:01 pm	7:52 pm	8:30 pm
Los Angeles	6:34 pm	7:32 pm	8:03 pm
Montreal	6:37 pm	7:37 pm	8:05 pm
Toronto	6:59 pm	7:58 pm	8:28 pm
London	6:44 pm	7:50 pm	8:12 pm
Jerusalem	6:22 pm	7:11 pm	7:55 pm
Tel Aviv	6:19 pm	7:08 pm	7:51 pm
Haifa	6:19 pm	7:07 pm	7:50 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:19 pm	7:08 pm	7:51 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

Before a child reaches the age of six, he does not enter school for Torah study, and regardless of how bright he might be, he must still be allowed to play and be a child.

After the age of six, however, a child must be encouraged to study the Torah, whether with prizes and rewards or with bribes of money.

A child at first may learn to receive the monetary reward and needs to be offered a reward every time, but it is essential to win over the heart of the child. The results won't be long in coming, you will soon see the child learn with great dedication and enthusiasm.

This all is possible only after the child spent his earliest and most formative years at home, pampered and showered with warmth and having had all his needs met.



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