

Parashas
miketz

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קהילת שבתי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ

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טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב המערכת

להאיר את הלילות
To light up the nights

One day, a young boy came home excited: he had excelled in his studies and received a gift from his teacher. Overcome with excitement, he called the entire family to see the gift he had received. Then, the boy went and turned off the light. They were puzzled. "If you want to show us your gift, why are you darkening the house?" they asked. "Wait, and you'll understand," the boy replied. To their surprise, the house was illuminated by a beautiful and special light. But the light did not come from the ceiling; instead, it emanated from the boy's hand. He held a powerful flashlight that lit up the entire room. He explained, "To understand the power of the light, I had to darken the house. Now you can truly see and appreciate it."

Chazal established the days of Chanukah as times of praise and gratitude. To commemorate and publicize the miracles that HaKadosh Baruch Hu performed for us, they ordained lighting neiros—specifically after dark. If one lights the candles during the day, they do not fulfill the mitzvah. This is somewhat puzzling. Chazal could have instituted an act to commemorate the miracle in the middle of the day, which might have resulted in even greater pirsumei nisa (publicizing the miracle). But they didn't. Instead, they specifically set the lighting of the candles after dark, indicating there is a deeper reason for this timing.

We often think of the night as a challenging time, a time we might prefer to do without. But if we reflect deeply, we will see that HaKadosh Baruch Hu did us a great kindness in creating the night. Without it, people would sleep at different times, and there would be no order in the world. But because everyone sleeps at the same time, we awaken to the day refreshed and renewed.

Similarly, Chazal ordained the lighting of the Chanukah neiros specifically during a time of darkness to illuminate it. This hints to us that even the challenges and difficulties that seem like complete darkness in our lives are, in truth, for our eternal benefit. Those who strive to bring light into the darkness will discover points of light within it.

All we need to do is to believe that it is precisely within the darkness that we can see the unique light—the hidden light that is reserved for the righteous in the world to come.

Tiv HaMoadim- Chanukah

טיב הפרשה

הצורך לדרוש בצדיק האך לכלכל הרצונות
The need to ask a tzaddik how to manage desires

ועל פיך ישק כל עמי מא:מ

By your command shall all my people be sustained (41:40)

Rashi explains: Yishak – means will be sustained. All the needs of my people shall be handled by you, like וכן משק ביתי 'the steward of my house' (above 15:2).

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It states in the Gemara (Beitzah 16a): "All of a person's sustenance is allocated to him from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur." The holy seforim teach that this allocation is not limited to food but includes all things that benefit a person and that he desires to sustain himself with. Similarly, we know that there is also an allocation of suffering and emotional distress that a person will endure throughout the year, and this too is decreed from Rosh Hashanah.

The holy seforim also teach that a wise person considers his allocations carefully from the start of the year, managing them appropriately. He does not give free rein to all his desires and pleasures, as he fears that perhaps he has not been granted an abundance of good. Thus, he is cautious not to waste his portion on fleeting and material pleasures. In doing so, he gains in two ways:

First, by refraining from fulfilling his desires, he experiences a degree of discomfort or self-restraint, which offsets the decreed suffering. By enduring this self-imposed restraint, he spares himself other kinds of suffering and emotional distress that might have otherwise befallen him. Second, he preserves his allocation of pleasure for spiritual matters. His abstention from material indulgence refines his soul, enabling it to ascend and experience spiritual delights. Consequently, he can channel his pleasure into Torah study and the fulfillment of mitzvos.

However, the fool, who follows the dictates of his heart, quickly exhausts his allocation of pleasure on trivial matters. Once he has squandered what was decreed for his benefit, he inevitably faces suffering and emotional distress, with no means of

substituting or lessening them.

In light of the above, it can be said that this is what Heaven sought to reveal to Pharaoh in his dream. The land of Egypt was known as the “nakedness of the land,” and the Egyptian people were accustomed to following the whims of their hearts. Thus, their king, who was responsible for them and their needs, needed to be warned of the calamity that would ensue if they continued their ways. He was instructed to accustom them to moderate their pleasures so that they would have enough to sustain themselves throughout their days.

Indeed, this is how Yosef interpreted the dream: the attractive and healthy cows, as well as the robust and good ears of grain, symbolized the seven years of plenty. During these years, the Egyptians would have the ability to indulge in pleasures far beyond their basic needs. However, they needed to understand that if they overindulged, they would forfeit the resources necessary for their future survival.

This would lead to seven years of famine, represented by the gaunt, ill-looking cows and the thin, withered ears of grain blasted by the east wind. Furthermore, in the dream, the thin cows and withered ears consumed the healthy and robust ones that preceded them. This was a hint that excessive consumption and unrestrained indulgence during times of plenty would directly cause the shortages and hardships in the later years.

Therefore, Yosef’s advice was to teach the people to manage their pleasures wisely and to economize during the years of plenty. They were to gather and store whatever excess they had as a reserve for the years of famine, ensuring that they would have enough to sustain themselves even in times of scarcity.

The Torah recounts this story to impart these lessons to us as well. Although the dream’s symbols served at that time as a warning to the Egyptians, the message is relevant to all people, especially to the for Bnei Yisrael, who are the descendants of the living G-d.

They must understand that they were not brought into this world solely indulgence, and they must be careful not to excessively pursue unnecessary

pleasures.

After Yosef interpreted Pharaoh’s dream, Pharaoh already understood on his own that if he did not want his people to perish in the famine, he would need to conserve and store provisions from the years of plenty for the years of famine. However, Yosef did not rely on Pharaoh’s understanding alone. He deemed it necessary to explicitly outline Pharaoh’s responsibilities from that point onward, emphasizing that this task required appointing a wise and capable individual over Egypt. Pharaoh could not simply rely on the understanding and discipline of the general populace.

We must recognize that this avodah of abstaining from excess and indulgence requires a broad and balanced perspective. Without it, one may fall into extremes that ultimately lead to outcomes opposite of what was intended. As the sharp saying of the holy Kotzker Rebbe goes: sometimes, by breaking one desire, two new desires are created in its place, *Rachmana litzlan*.

For this reason, we see in many holy seforim, especially those authored by the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, that it is not appropriate for a person to overly engage in fasts and ascetic practices. Although such acts may refine the material self, there is a concern that the soul may not be able to bear them. This could lead to physical weakness, which, in turn, might result in spiritual lethargy and a weakening of one’s service to Hashem. In such a case, the intended reward would be outweighed by the resulting loss.

However, as stated, these matters are not intended to absolve a person from the duty of self-restraint. For, as mentioned, indulging the desires of the heart is neither desirable nor beneficial; on the contrary, it can cause great harm to a person, both materially and spiritually. The question thus arises: who can determine the proper path for an individual? Who can guide a person on how to manage and sustain their body according to the appropriate measure? The answer to this is—the tzaddik. A person should approach a tzaddik, who will guide and instruct him on what constitutes excess and what does not. Once the individual has received the

tzaddik’s guidance, they should not deviate from it. Only in this way can he merit to walk on the proper path.

From this, we learn that had Yosef not added the stipulation to appoint a wise and discerning individual over the land of Egypt, his plan would not have succeeded. The Egyptians, who were deeply accustomed to indulgence, would not have been able to endure the discipline of moderation. Without placing such an individual over them to temper their ways, they would have faced a crisis, turning the solution into a source of trouble instead of remedy.

Indeed, Pharaoh recognized the merit in fulfilling Yosef’s complete counsel. Realizing that no one was more suited for this task than Yosef himself, he appointed him as the “second to the king” to guide the people on how to nourish themselves with the appropriate amount of enjoyment—no more, no less.

This is what Rashi explains about Pharaoh’s statement, “By your command shall all my people be sustained”—meaning they will be nourished and provided for. Yosef would instruct them on how to sustain and support themselves appropriately. Rashi further elaborates: “All the needs of my people shall be handled by you.” After Yosef taught them the proper measure for their sustenance, they would merit to have all their needs met in the future. Thus, he was the one who brought them to this realization.

Yosef was truly deserving of this elevated position as a reward for conquering his desires and not succumbing to the temptations of the wicked woman who pursued him. By doing so, he earned the title of being the foundation of self-discipline and attained the level of “tzaddik, the foundation of the world.” As noted, only the tzaddik is capable of recognizing the proper balance for a person’s life, thereby guiding him to live righteously.

It is also told regarding Rebbe Zusha of Anapoli, that he did nothing for *hishtadlus*, rather, he would only say a few words, “Zusha is hungry!” Thus, the amount of *hishtadlus* is different for each person based on his *bitachon*.

טיב ההשגרה

‘צומת דרכים’ – ‘At a crossroads’

Great sorrow filled our family when my brother was sent to prison for a financial crime he had committed.

It was one thing for my brother to pay for his misdeeds, but the greatest pain was for the children he left behind, especially his son, who was to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah in a month without his father’s presence. Our inquiries revealed that there was no chance of securing a prisoner’s release for a Bar Mitzvah just a month after entering prison. Amid all this sorrow, our elderly aunt passed away from a broken heart, and her family requested that everyone make a special effort to attend her funeral in Bnei Brak.

I work as a bus driver in Beitar Illit, with a tight schedule due to a shortage of drivers. Nevertheless, I asked the dispatcher for permission to take a few hours off to pay my respects to my aunt on her final journey. The dispatcher was reluctant to release me, but after considerable effort, he agreed, with the condition that I return to work immediately after the funeral.

Of course, I committed to returning promptly and even arranged a ride back from the funeral straight to work.

Plans, however, often differ from reality. After the funeral, they asked me to stay for Mincha, especially since I was needed as the tenth man for the minyan. The person giving me a ride back also stayed for Tefillah, leaving me with no other choice.

After Tefillah, we set off together toward Beitar. Near Beit Shemesh, my ride suddenly decided to change his route. He informed me that he had to alter his plans and, to my dismay, dropped me off on Route 38 near Beit Shemesh. I felt like I was about to explode from stress, especially since the dispatcher, who had been so accommodating, was now receiving ingratitude in return.

As I stood there, a bus driver from my company recognized me and picked me up on his route. He told me he was running the Beitar Illit–Kiryat Gat line and needed to finish his shift urgently but required a replacement. I told him that if he got the dispatcher’s approval, I’d be happy to replace him.

He called the dispatcher, got the green light, and I took over his shift. After completing the return route to Kiryat Gat, I had some time and entered a local shul to daven Maariv. Across from me, I noticed a man wearing a shirt with the logo of the Israel Prison Service (Shabas-Sheirut Batei Sohar). I kept glancing at him, debating whether to approach him, until I finally decided to try. We waited until after Maariv, and outside shul I asked if he could assist with securing my brother’s release for the night of his son’s Bar Mitzvah. He asked for my brother’s details, gave me his personal phone number, and told me to stay in touch. He said that if it were possible, he would help arrange it. I was stunned by his response, which filled me with hope. But I wondered to myself—does he really have the authority to help? Mustering my courage, I asked, “Sorry for asking, but what’s your position in Shabas?” “I’m the one who signs off on all releases and furloughs,” he replied. I nearly collapsed from excitement. I was overwhelmed with gratitude and regret for having questioned God’s plan. He had arranged for my friend to drop me off on Route 38, and instead of recognizing His providence, I had been filled with complaints. Now I saw clearly that God knows exactly what He’s doing, and it’s always for the best!

What we had hoped for was just an hour of release. The reality? My brother was granted leave from prison for several hours—from the beginning of the event until the end of the Bar Mitzvah—bringing immense joy to the entire family!

ש.ק.

טיב המעשיות

They Illuminated the Eyes and Hearts of Yisrael

And the earth was unformed and void, and “darkness” (Bereishis 1:2)—this refers to the Greek exile, which darkened the eyes (and some versions add .(the hearts) of Yisrael with their decrees...” (Bereishis Rabbah 2:4

In a single word, the Midrash defines the Greek exile and the essence of the decrees of the wicked Greek kingdom as “darkness.” They intended to darken the eyes and hearts of Yisrael, chas veshalom. Similarly, Rashi comments at the beginning of Parashas Vayechi (Bereishis 47:28): “When Yaakov our forefather passed away, the eyes and hearts of Yisrael were closed due to the distress of the

What does it mean to “darken the eyes and the heart”? How does one darken the eyes and the heart?

The Kedushas Levi (Vayigash, d’h Vehinei Eineichem), quoting his teacher, the great Maggid of Mezeritch, explains: “My teacher, the righteous Rav Dov Ber, said that just as there is ‘light and darkness’ in the world, so too there is ‘light and darkness’ in the human mind.” These holy words teach us that “darkness” does not merely refer to the absence of physical light but also to the state of obscurity within a person’s intellect and mind.

When one’s mind is clouded, he cannot find a spark of clarity to illuminate his way. Such a person is like a blind individual groping in the darkness. Even if the sunlight brightens the streets, all remains shrouded in darkness within the heart and mind. As the verse in the tochachah section of Devarim (28:29) attests: You shall grope at noonday as a blind person gropes in the darkness. (See Mesilas Yesharim chapter 3 for further insight.)

To counteract this darkened state, the Chashmona’im arose, purified the Beis HaMikdash, and “lit candles in Your holy courtyards” to illuminate the eyes and hearts of Yisrael.

For this reason, the primary establishment of Chanukah was not centered on the victories, battles, or deliverances but rather on the lighting of the pure olive oil in the Menorah by the holy kohanim in the Beis HaMikdash. This is explicitly stated in the Gemara’s discussion of “What is Chanukah?” (Shabbos 21b). The essence of the chag is reflected in its central mitzvah: “to light the Chanukah candles” and bring light to the eyes and hearts of Yisrael.

A Doting Father to a Beloved Son

A prosperous family of the upper echelons of society lived in one of the wealthiest cities overseas. Among the wealthiest elites, they built a luxurious villa in an exclusive high-class suburb. The large house was an exquisite architectural masterpiece, surrounded by decorative gardens and lush lawns. It was meticulously furnished with the finest and most elegant décor, exuding grandeur and luxury.

However, the legendary wealth that adorned every corner of their lavish estate brought no joy to its owners. The mansion’s vast, empty halls were filled with sorrow and grief. The one thing they desired most was missing—a child. The elderly couple who owned the home had not been blessed with children, and their hearts yearned deeply to embrace a small child who would bring light and happiness to their melancholy and darkened home. They did everything humanly possible, spending enormous sums on treatments and remedies, and constantly prayed and beseeched Hashem, the sole keeper of the keys to childbirth (Taanis 2a), to grant them the gift of parenthood.

At long last, after many years, Hashem heard their prayers, and their cries ascended before Him. They were blessed with a beautiful and healthy son, a radiant child who brought a luminous light into their home.

Their joy knew no bounds. Their only son grew and flourished into a fine and admirable young boy. His devoted parents poured endless love and warmth upon him, as was fitting and proper for their beloved only child, the prince of their home.

One day, the beloved son fell gravely ill, unfortunately contracting a severe and dangerous disease that posed a threat to his life. His loving father cared for him with boundless devotion. Driven by his great love for his son, he spared no effort to heal and restore him. He spent a significant fortune bringing the finest doctors to his bedside. Renowned specialists and experts came from near and far to find a cure for the critically ill child. The father, constantly worried and anxious for his son's wellbeing, barely left his bedside. With Hashem's help, the merciful and faithful Healer, the child eventually recovered and regained his strength.

After his recovery, the son expressed heartfelt gratitude to his devoted father for his loving care and compassion. He said, "Father, I have always known how much you love me, but during my grave illness, I truly realized the depth of your love. I saw your extraordinary concern, your unwavering dedication to all my needs, and how you never left me for even a single day during my sickness."

Out of the great love that had now deepened between them, the son grew closer to his devoted father, and they began to spend a fixed time together every day in the luxurious parlor of the palace. The father dedicated this hour of tranquil joy to bond with his beloved son, listening to him, discussing everything in his life, and addressing his needs. The time was especially precious and pleasant for both of them, as the son made it a daily practice to bring a distinguished steaming cup of tea, served on a golden tray, and present it to his esteemed father.

One day, however, when the son entered to meet his father as usual, he did not bring the tea. When the father inquired why today was different and why he had come empty-handed, the son apologized, explaining that he felt weak and didn't have the strength to prepare the tea.

The father immediately became alarmed and, with great concern, asked, "What happened? Could it be, chas veshalom, that the old illness has returned? Or perhaps some dangerous infection has taken hold?" The son quickly reassured his father, explaining that there was no illness at all, not even the slightest hint of

one. "It's just a bit of weakness that made me feel slightly lazy about preparing the tea... but it's nothing serious."

As expected, the devoted father was neither calm nor convinced. "One does not play around with health!" he declared firmly. He immediately summoned the city's most renowned professor to thoroughly examine his cherished and pampered only son, who had suddenly become a little weak, wasn't feeling great, and even coughed once or twice.

Soon enough, the expert physician arrived at the palace gates—not without first collecting a hefty fee. He conducted a comprehensive and detailed examination and concluded that the son was completely healthy. The esteemed doctor issued a clear diagnosis: "The patient is perfectly fine and requires no medication! It is simply temporary fatigue. Let the boy rest at home for a day to regain his strength."

Following the doctor's advice, the son remained in his luxurious room that day to rest, recover, and regain his energy.

To the son's astonishment, throughout the entire day, his loving father constantly inquired about his well-being and hovered around his bedside. The father repeatedly entered his room to ensure his son's comfort, personally served him a delicious, hearty meal and a soothing cup of tea, going to great lengths to make his son's rest as pleasant as possible.

The son, puzzled by his father's intense concern, finally asked, "I don't understand. When I was seriously ill, I understood your worry and your tireless efforts to ensure my recovery from that dreadful illness. But now, as the doctor clearly stated, I'm not sick at all. I'm just resting a little to regain my strength. Why are you so anxious about me today?"

The father responded with deep emotion, "I doubt you can fully comprehend my heart... Listen to what I have to say. My love for you is immense, far greater than you can imagine. You were born to us after many years of pain and lengthy anticipation, and my heart is bound to you with an unbreakable and profound love. Therefore, even though I knew perfectly well that there is no illness, only minor fatigue that you'll recover from easily, my closeness to you and the burning love within me would not allow me to refrain from caring for your every need today, so that you may quickly return to full strength."

From that day onward, the son's affection for his father grew immensely, multiplying many times over, as it is written (Mishlei

27:19), As water reflects a face, so does one person's heart to another. After witnessing, on a day when he barely required his father's care and could have managed all his needs independently, how his father nevertheless continued to ensure that everything was perfectly arranged for him so he would not have to exert himself in his weakened state, the son came to realize the boundless love his father had for him. If he had previously estimated the depth of his father's love during his serious illness, he now saw that it was far greater than he had ever imagined. Thus, on that very day, his affection for his father grew tenfold.

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The Essence of Chanukah

Even today, the influence of the Greek spiritual impurity continues to "darken the eyes and hearts of Yisrael." If you feel darkness in your heart and mind, if sadness overwhelms you, if everything seems closed off both inside and out, chas veshalom—if you cannot perceive the light of truth and genuine understanding, which is the firm belief that "there is none other than Him" and that only Divine vitality sustains all creation—then naturally, your troubles will pursue you. Anxiety and pressure will gnaw at you, and above all, the evil inclination will relentlessly chase after you.

Stand with strength and courage during these exalted days, and on this uplifting Shabbos of Chanukah, grasp with both hands the gift that Chazal gave you—the gift of Chanukah! As the Sfas Emes writes in the name of his grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim (1871, at the end of the fifth night of Chanukah): Nachon libo batuach baShem, samuch libo; His heart is steadfast, trusting in Hashem; his heart is secure (Tehillim 112:7–8)—the final letters of these words spell Chanukah.

And when you kindle the light of the mitzvah, do not remain indifferent and confined to the external act alone of a beautifully lit menorah. Internalize the essence of the mitzvah! Ignite the soul of man [that] is the lamp of Hashem (Mishlei 20:27). Illuminate the depths of your heart and mind! Drive out the darkness of confusion and frustration! Lift yourself and free your soul and the souls of your household from the darkness instead of engaging in dark thoughts and sinking into sadness... discover the spark of light in the root of Yisrael's holiness; uncover the beauty and splendor that the Almighty has planted within you and your home! To illuminate the eyes and hearts of Yisrael!