

מלכותו לעולם ועד

mem

Twenty-First of Kislev

Shlomo *HaMelech* alluded to the hidden-ness of wisdom here:

If you want it as you do silver, and search after it like buried treasures, then you will understand fear of God, [and] Da'as Elokim you will find. (Misblei 2:4)

Wisdom is not only *a* buried treasure, it is *the* buried treasure of life, buried beneath layers of “clothing.” This is so we can first become aware of the light on a lower level, and then *choose* to pursue it on higher levels. God wants us to choose the wisdom of the *Aitz HaChaim* over the knowledge of the *Aitz HaDa'as*.

How else can we rectify the first mistake of the first man, especially in the corresponding “tenth hour” of histo-

ry. According to the *Zohar*, he should have at least eaten from trees at the same time, if not the *Aitz HaChaim* first.¹

This is why *Chanukah* is the holiday of *Chochmah*. It says that someone who wants to become wise should pray angled to the south because that is where the *Menorah* was placed in the Temple.² The *Menorah*, or at least the oil and flame is the symbol of wisdom, as it says:

“*Yōav sent to Tekoa, and took from there a wise woman*” (II *Shmuel* 14:2). Why did he send to Tekoa? Rebi Yochanan said: They are accustomed to use olive oil, therefore wisdom could be found there. (*Menachos* 85b)

This is why *Talmidei Chachamim* are compared to *sbemen zayis*.³ Like the grape, whose juice is only revealed through squeezing, oil is only harvested through pressing, like the soul itself. It is only through *mesiras Nefesh* for God that we “squeeze” our soul out of the depths of our bodies and reveal it, and its *chayn*, to the world.⁴

But, unlike a grape, an olive is not tasty but bitter; even after ripening. And looking at it, there really is no in-

¹ *Zohar, Bereishis* 35b.

² *Bava Basra* 25b.

³ *Sanhedrin* 23a.

⁴ This *hashbemen*—the oil—and *Neshamah*—soul have the same letters, *Heb, Shin, Mem, and Nun*.

dication of any beautiful yellow oil inside that can be used as fuel to ignite a wick and warmly illuminate a room. Sounds once again like wisdom.

This is also why Adam *HaRisbon* did not first eat from the Tree of Life before eating from the “Tree of Death.” The fruit of the *Aitz HaDa’as* was appealing to the eyes and inviting. The fruit of the *Aitz HaChaim* was actually its bark, and who eats bark?⁵

But had Adam looked past the obvious and dug deeper into why one tree promised death while the other promised life, he might have tasted the bark of the *Aitz HaChaim*. Had he tasted the *Aitz HaChaim*, he would have been amazed how good it tasted, and how he could taste every tree in the garden through it.

A *ba'al teshuvah* will often tell you the same thing. While secular, Torah seemed archaic...a waste of time... like tasteless bark of a tree, especially against the fruits that secular knowledge dangled in front of their eyes. It was only after they “tasted” Torah that they realized, in time, that just the opposite was true.

This is why the *Ba'al HaTurim* says that *terumah*, the tithe taken on produce of *Eretz Yisroel*, is the word Torah with the letter *Mem* in it. This is to indicate that only someone who has learned Torah can eat *terumah*, a metaphor for the consumption of holy knowledge, Torah wisdom.

⁵ *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*.

Some letters when spelled as they sound to produce their *millui*, have multiple spellings, as will be discussed next regarding the letter *Vav*. The letter *Mem* has only one expansion, which is two of the same letter: *Mem-Mem*, perhaps alluding to the two types of trees and their different levels of knowledge and how, on the surface they may seem similar.

But they are not similar, and it is up to the person to investigate *how* not and *why* not, and where the true treasure of wisdom can be found. As mentioned earlier:

He made a separation in the illumination of the light, that it should not flow or give off light except for the righteous whose actions draw it down and give off light. The actions of the evil however block it which leaves them in [spiritual] darkness. This itself was the hiding of the light. (*Sefer HaKlallim*, *Klal* 18, *Anaf* 8, Os 4)