

THE GATE

The Factory Authorized

Owner's manual

For the SOUL And Body

PREFACE

You have reached THE GATE. Things for you will never be the same. As you are about to change your life. You are about to come into unique Divine Providence. You are about to set off on a journey that will take you to a new awareness, a new consciousness. You are about to KNOW GOD.

We have been told by our Blessed Creator to meditate three times a day upon the statement "Know this day and take into your heart that the name of God (YHWH) is God (Elokim) in the heavens above and the earth below and there is none else" (Deut. 4:39). God has asked us not merely to understand that He exists but to "know and take into your heart," this being the purpose of life, as will be discussed. One must go beyond belief to experience the Divine Presence to the extent that one can say, "I know God." Thus, we have been given this *Owner's Manual to the Soul* to help us accomplish this end, which is the greatest delight of

this world and all others.

This is a book designed for a generation that values convenience and desperately wants to have things *now*. This is a book for a generation that needs the truth. So-called *modern thought* clouds people's understanding and this great confusion is compounded by there appearing to be several versions of Judaism. All this is far from the truth, for the Torah is ancient, having been transmitted in unbroken succession since the time of Moses, and one can only do harm by disregarding the commandment "Do not add or subtract from this law" (Deut. 13: 1). We have seen the consequences in this generation: unprecedented assimilation and spiritual annihilation. Contemporary attitudes only rob our brothers and sisters of their spiritual heritage, by letting them believe they are living as they should, fulfilling what their Creator has asked of them-when in reality the glory of the holy Sabbath has passed them by. As the Rambam¹ taught in the Mishnei Torah,² "Moses received all the *mitzvot* (commandments) (Ex. 24: 12). 'And I give to yiu the Tablets of Stone, and the Law"and the Commandmentn' The Law refers to the Written Torah; the Commandment to the Oral Torah, its explanation. Moses taught the whole of it in his couòt to the Seventy Elders, as well as to Joshua. Xinchas received it from Joshua; Eli from Rinchas; Samwel from Eli; David from Samuel; Ahiyah from David; Elijah from Ahiyah; Elésha fvom Elijah;

1. Moses Maimonides

2. The Book of Knowledge

Jehoiada from Elisha; Zachariah from Jehoiada; Hosea from Zachariah; Amos from Hosea; Isaiah from Amos; Micah from Isaiah; Joel from Micah; Nahum from Joel; Hebakkuk from Nahum; Zephaniah from Habakkuk; Jeremiah from Zephaniah; Baruch from Jeremiah; Ezra from Baruch; Shimon HaTzaddik from Ezra; Antigonus from Shimon HaTzaddik; Yoseph ben Yoezer and Yoseph ben Yochanan from Antigonus; Yehoshua and Nittai from Yoseph ben Yoezer and Yoseph ben Yochanan; Yehuda and Shimon from Yehoshua and Nittai; Shemaiah and Avtaliah from Yehuda and Shimon; Hillel and Shammai from Shemaiah and Avtaliah; Rabban Shimon from his father, Hillel. and from Shammai; Rabban Gamaliel the Elder from his father Rabban Shimon; Rabbi Shimon from his father Rabban Gamaliel the Elder; our teacher, Rebbe Yehuda the Prince, from his father Rabbi Shimon; Rabbi Yochanan, Rav, and Shmuel from Rebbe Yehudah the Prince; Rav Huna from Rabbi Yochanan, Rav, and Shmuel; Rabbah from Rav Huna; Rava from Rabbah; and Rav Ashi received the Torah from Rav. All the sages mentioned here were the great men of the successive generations. Besides them, there were thousands and myriads of disciples and fellow students. Ravina and Rav Ashi closed the list of the sages of the Talmud. The Talmud is an exposition of the Mishnah, which was compiled by our teacher, Rebbe Yehuda the Prince. The Talmud elucidates the abstruse points of the Mishnah, explaining what is permitted and forbidden, what is unclean and what is clean, what is unfit and what is fit, all in accordance with the traditions received by the sages from their predecessor in unbroken succession up to the teaching of Moses, "father of all prophets."

The above is the true tradition of the Torah as it was passed down generation to generation till reaching you here. The purpose of this book is to

reveal these teachings once again in a form easily accessible to all. As a guide to the Torah Way of Life, that is a gift from Heaven. This gift is given to us not because of our merit, but because of the merit of our ancestors, from the kindness of our Blessed Creator. Even if it is a gift, one must receive it with sincere effort. Thus, the teachings of this book allude to many higher things. One needs to read and review the words contained herein over and over, so as to merit having revealed the depth of the matter, which is as a flash of Divine Wisdom. As King Solomon says in Song of Songs (8:3). "His left hand is under my head. His right hand does embrace me."

May it be the will of the Holy Blessed One that your eyes will be opened, and you will be the next in the line of succession of the truth that is your inheritance, as it says in the Torah, "This shall be your wisdom in the eyes of the nations." Amen, Selah.

1

JUST WAY Gate One

We learn in the holy writings of Rabbi Meir Leib, known as the Malbim, that both man and the Holy Blessed One ride the same chariot. The Holy King sits in the great Chariot; He is the Soul of the World, guiding and sustaining it. The soul of man sits in the small chariot, guiding it by the same agency of free will that the King employs to guide the great Chariot; man's soul is as free in its actions and how it guides the chariot as the Godly Soul of the world is free to employ Its will upon the pattern of the world. ¹ Concerning this the Malbim further teaches that man was created as a blend of the material and Godly so that he is a charioteer of the whole world, reflecting the physical and Godly aspects of its many realms. ²

1. Malbim parsha Bereshith.

world, reflecting the physical and Godly aspects of its many realms. ²

Once we grasp the concept of our guiding the chariot of the 8 world, we must find direction to guide us. For this, we may look in the Talmud, tractate *Perek Shalom* there, the sages teach that atonement is called "peace." The Messiah's first message will be peace. The covenant of priesthood was made with peace. For one who loves peace, pursues peace, gives the greeting of peace, and responds with peace, the Holy One causes him to inherit this world and the World to Come.³ All desire the life of this world and the World to Come. Why would anyone choose not to run forward in the way described above, guiding the chariot in peace? This difficulty is explained in this manner: A man who cannot see that it is possible that things that are impossible to explain by our perceptions exist is as a worm spending its entire life deep within a radish thinking he has surrounded himself with the sweetness of life. Try to explain to Mr. Worm about going to an apple or a fig for sweetness of life. Many miss the path of peace because they stay in the same place just as the worm stays in the radish.

A scoffer deserves punishment in his body and spirit as the Talmud says "Do not scoff so you wont suffer afflictions and never see the face of the Shechinah" (Avoda Zara 10). As a result his personality (soul) is slated to destruction. The Scoffer's essence has been corrupted, even afflictions don't cause him to return to the way of truth. The deepest essence of falsehood has a admixture of good, if there was no good in it, no one would believe or desire it. Here in lies the confusion. It is by this that most men continue to stride in their delusion reality. To over come the delusion one must realize that in this world we hear about things, most things we can not "see" them for all they "really" are. In the next world, the world of souls we will "see" clearly. Now we only hear about "it". When the Torah was given on mount Sinai it states :

" And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the sound of the shofar, and the mountain smoking; and when **the people saw it**, they were shaken, and stood far away."
(Exodus 20:15)

At the mount Sinai experience heaven came down to earth and we saw the sounds. Most cannot be "seen" now, like angels. In the time to come all will be seen. For a similar reason the Talmud says "come and hear", while the Zohar which reveals wisdom of the upper worlds says "come and see". There is many things in this world "hidden from view" and thus people fail to "understand". One must always consider that there is much they do not know.

The way of life is peace, but he that gives money out to loan on interest or takes interest will not wake in the resurrection of the dead, as stated in *Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer*. Such a one does not have peace and so does not share in the World to Come,⁴ as he does not share here except on interest. Concerning him the Prophet Ezekiel reveals, "He has given money at interest, he has taken interest-shall he live? He shall not live" (Ezek. IS: 13).

We must heed the words of the Torah, "Love thy neighbor as thyself, I am God" (Lev. 19:18). We should follow the

2. Ibid. 167.

3. *Perek Shalom* 59b.

4*Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer*, ch. 33, Alshich on Mishle

instruction of Rabbenu Bachyah, peace unto him, as he teaches us in *Duties of the Heart*: "Brother, it should be our duty to be ready for the appointed time and prepare ourselves for the distant journey to the other world from which there is no escape, and which we cannot avoid. We should think of provisions to take with us where we should meet our great Creator on the Great Day of Reckoning" ⁵ So as we are in the chariot of the world guiding a peaceful way, gaining provisions on the journey to the other world, a man must beware, as Rabbi Abba teaches us, that a man walks in this world thinking it is his perpetual possession and that he will reside here from generation to generation, but even when he walks he is being put in chains and while he sits he is being tied to the conclave with other prisoners. And like the worm in the radish, he believes this to truly be life. But we must take up our provisions, staying free. With this in mind, we cannot unknowingly, as described above, be put in chains.⁶ As simply put by Rabbi Yishmael in tractate *Beitzah* the Torah was given to Israel because they are intense and worth it. If they had not been given the law, no nation could withstand them.⁷ From this we see that one such as Israel must merit the way of peace known as the Torah, but that Israel's merit is essential and required, or else the world cannot stand such an individual. The Holy One says in His Torah concerning Israel, "You must sanctify yourself and be holy" (Lev. 20:7). "You shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation to me" (Ex. 19:6). This is Israel's role in the plan of creation. The world depends on its function, as the body depends on its heart or brain to function properly.

For the world to function properly, Israel must do its part.

5. *Duties of the Heart* 2:233.

6. *Zohar* 3: 145a.

7. *Beitzah* 25b.

To explain this idea further, we can look to the teaching of Rabbi Chayah, of blessed memory, as he explains in the holy *Zohar* that the only aim and object of the Holy One placing man in this world is so that he can know and understand the Name of the Creator, Havaya (YHWH) is Elokim-meaning, the Lord is God.⁸ Thus the cycles of nature, which are regulated by the Name Elokim, do not become destructive because the world cannot withstand such an individual but, instead, one guides the chariot the soul of the world in the way of peace so that the Name Havaya, the Personal Providence of the Blessed One, is united with the emanation known as Elokim (revealed as the forces of nature), directing them in a peaceful way.

With the help of the Holy Ancient One, later we will try to understand the depth of these matters as much as is permitted and can be known. In this matter of raising ourselves and the creation closer to the Personal Providence and supervision of YHWH (the Name Havaya), we learn from Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi in his Chassidic *sefer Tanya* that by concentration on words of Torah and meditation, one can truly express the Holy Speech with his lips and breath. Doing this, we draw down light of the *Ain Sof*, the infinite quality of the Creator. unto the vivifying soul that dwells in the 'blood that is common in all living things and is sustained by the ingestion of mineral, vegetable, and animal matter, all these being elevated as they are absorbed in His Blessed Unity. This is the purpose of the descent of the worlds, and this is the essence of man's intent in his service of the Creator-that is, to draw the infinite light of the *Ain Sof* down below,⁹ ultimately fulfilling the words of the Holy Blessed One. Rabbi Yudan said in the name of Rabbi Meir in the

Midrash of The Song of Songs that the Holy Blessed One said to Israel, "Follow my oath and I will make you as the heavenly hosts." ¹⁰ Concerning reaching this goal of becoming as the host of heaven, Rabbenu Bachyah tells us that it is our duty to use diligence and effort for the improvement of our noble souls, which are immortal, and whose interests we have been charged to manage. Turn from superfluities of this world and busy yourself with what you will need in the end; spiritual possessions remain yours and no one may take them. The *שׂוֹטֵף* (accuser) feeds man worthless things that are "free" (requiring no struggle). The only thing he (*שׂוֹטֵף*, the accuser) has no control over are the commandments one performs at great expense to oneself. Thus anything for free is intrinsically impure rooted in the "sitra achra" (other side), the opposite is true of "Kidusha" (Holiness). ¹¹ Only with this foresight may we raise ourselves from our coarse physical natural awareness to gain a higher divine understanding of reality-ultimately gaining, as Rabbenu Bachyah spoke, spiritual possessions, so that ultimately the Creator's Will can be fulfilled as stated previously, that we become as the hosts of heaven.

A necessary awareness that always helps us to see ways to raise ourselves all the time, all the days of our lives, we learn from Rabbi Kahana in the *Pesikta* as he teaches that those who mourn over the Holy Temple and yearn and wait for God to rebuild it will then rejoice in the Torah. ¹² It is by this sense of loss, the awareness of the greater purpose in this world, that one can continually be motivated to bring back into the world the Divine awareness for all to see and share, this time in much greater force. Once one can see beyond the veil, the limiting physical awareness of the universe, then he can behold the

8. *Zohar* 2:161b 9. *Tanya* 261

10. Midrash Rabba Song of Songs 113.

11. *Duties of the Heart* 2:223, Oar Ha Chyim Mishpatim

12. *12. Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana*, supplement 5

divinity of the Torah, the blueprint of creation, bringing rejoicing in each letter like the host of heaven as they learn in the upper worlds.

With Divine purpose directing our ways in this world one can avoid the most common pitfall, as Rabbi Schneur Zalman

explains, when the innermost part of the heart—that part whose desire to serve the Creator comes from above intellectual motivation—becomes vested in its corresponding opposite, namely the soiled garments of mundane matters and worldly desires that are referred to as *Babylon*. Then this innermost Divine aspect is said to be in a state of exile and captivity, and this is the state of the exile of the Shechinah. ¹³ Its opposite is the revelation of the Shechinah, when one does not forget his purpose but actually spends time in the awareness of spiritual matters, ever yearning for a greater day. In acquiring this awareness, we are not to shun all material things; this is not necessary to separate ourselves from Babylon. Know, The greatest motivating power is pleasure. Greater than the lower physical pleasures of the body is the thrill of new creation. Revelation of something previously hidden.

God describes the proper path in the thoughts of Rabbenu Bachyah, as from him we learn that, concerning material things, one must select those that promote physical pleasure and material well-being, but only to the extent of that which is absolutely needed and sufficient, rejecting excess or those things that will turn his heart away from his Creator. He will see the world and its possessions as only a means of providing for his appointed day, his later end. He will take only that which will accompany him on his journey and to this end will he labor with all his might. For his earthly needs, he will work as one works for others, in moderation, only to the extent absolutely necessary. ¹⁴ It is important to find the proper level of participation and our true needs while in our sojourn here.

To discover our true spiritual needs, that which we must find, Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that one with a soul that is contaminated from the sins of youth will need to make a forceful effort, greatly exerting oneself with much vigil and toil

13. *Tanya* 402.

14. *Duties of the Heart* 1 :295.

and intense concentration, immersing oneself in the greatness of God for a considerable time, to reach awareness of the lower fear (awe, not fear of punishment).¹⁵ It is through this intense concentration, and the fear it arouses, that one can begin to see his true need. Pushing aside that which is superfluous does not help to meet this end.

Another force that must accompany this fear of God. if one is to reach elevated consciousness, is faith. belief in the way of the law of the holy Torah, for without this one cannot approach the holiness of Divine service, as we learn from the words of Rabbi Shimon in tractate *Menachot*, where he teaches that a person who does not believe in the (priestly) service has no portion in priesthood.¹⁶

Not only does one need to believe in the way of observance of the Torah, but also one must trust in the Holy Blessed One in all other things as well. Rabbenu Bachyah explains that if one puts his trust in anyone or anything other than God, God removes his providential care from that individual and leaves him in the power of the one he trusted. In describing this trust, Rabbenu Bachyah states that trust is the tranquility of the soul in the one he trusts. If Yisrael fails to carry out the commandments and repent, heaven forbid. Hashem then withdraws his face and Yisraels fate is then subject to the laws of nature as He withdraws his special providence.¹⁷ Since God has everything under his control. all who truly trust in Him are taken under the protection of the wings of the Shechinah, which

provides all their needs, as all is His to distribute at will. With this lack of lacking, there can be nothing but tranquility of soul before the Divine Presence.

One must *try* to always place himself before the Divine Presence, fulfilling this with trust and faith in God to such an extent that, as the sages say, one should always *try* to give more and more to God. This way, we are always

15. *Tanya* 219.

16. *Menachot* 18b.

17. *Duties of the Heart* 1:281.

coming closer to the Holy Blessed One, though, in essence. there is no closer or farther. for God fills and transcends all existence. and through it all is unchanging.

Sometimes this giving to God may. in a way. be against our nature. but if we do this without retaliating, God does the same for us.

18

Rabbi Miller explains to us how Jacob discovered the gate of Heaven on earth among simple natural objects around him. Moses attained his lofty prophetic stature from seclusion in the desert. God revealed himself to all Israel on the mountain. The people of Israel wandered forty years in the wilderness to compensate for their urban dwelling in Egypt. While dwelling in the Promised Land, they lived a simple. natural life, dwelling in tents for centuries. It was not until the time of King Solomon that they turned to luxuries and this is the very thing that contributed largely to their downfall.

Repeatedly, the people of Israel have been despoiled of their possessions and compelled to live simple lives. The physical possessions of Israel throughout history seem to be separated from them as a lamb in season is sheared of its coat. Being denied places to live they were forced to seek. refuge in the bosom of nature (the Name Elokim).¹⁹ Yaakov in the Torah is

called a simple man because he accepted whatever the Torah said with out any question, he did not complicate his life.

We see that in the past. the path used by Israel to ascend to God has been living a life excluding what people today call luxuries, living a simple life. The ultimate expression of this elimination of physicality is found in the circumstance of Moses being alone with God on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. Yet all Israel spent much time in the desert, away from the habitations of men. Such living allows the

18. Ibid. 295.

19. *The Secret of Happiness* 9.

mind to be free from the burdens of material concerns and allows one to spend a great amount of time contemplating the greatness of the Creator. from Whom all life comes.

Rabbi Miller further shows us, concerning our way of life, that all one's spirit. body, wealth, ability. and power are given to promote and preserve the world in righteousness and love. The earth is not ours, but we belong to the earth to respect it as Divine soil, and every one of its creatures is a fellow being to respect and love. As such. we endeavor to bring it closer to its goal according to the will of Elokim. These words indicate the sublime mission and lofty privilege of man. ²⁰ With these thoughts in mind, we will not develop a lust for wealth and money and begin to think of them as the goal in life. as explained in the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.²¹ But we shall proceed with wisdom in the words of the Malbim:

"All precious things together cannot compare with the survival of the soul. which is the end purpose of man and of his hopes. to bring the soul into the purity of holiness."²²

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto teaches that one must approach watchfulness. meaning to

become aware of the states of our actions whether they are beneficial or not. We must also perform all our positive actions with great zeal, and remove bad traits. One also should separate from permissible pleasures for the sake of Heaven. One looks into the Torah for ways to serve God: separates from idle conversation; and lives in a state of (relative) seclusion, with purity of mind and heart. The removal of haughtiness may bring one to the next level of improvement, the level called "holiness," which is a gift from God.²³ As holiness is a gift from God, so is

20. Ibid. 33.

21. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 283.

22. *Path of the Just*.

23. *Malbim parsha Lech lacha*.

its method of attainment, which we are beginning to describe. This may be understood from a common parable of the sages, showing how a man goes to a doctor to receive direction in curing his illness-but instead of taking the prescription given by the doctor, he goes to his own laboratory in the garage, and makes his own medicine or follows no remedy, and dies. This is analogous to one who disregards the Torah, which is our Healer's Remedy for the diseases of the soul from the evil inclination. The Blessed One created the disease and also its cure.²⁴

Concerning the nature of this disease, brought forth by the evil inclination, Rabbenu Bachyah teaches bodily pleasures come to man's soul first in early youth and the attachment to them from the onset is very great, strong, and urgent, overcoming his other faculties, even the intellect for which sake man was created. Man must overcome his animal instinct for lust of animal enjoyments and revitalize his noblest endowment, his intellect. As the sensual animal lust in man is the product of natural forces and a combination of his physical

elements, those such as food and physical pleasures add to its vigor. The intellectual soul, the purpose of man's creation, is a stranger to this world. So, for its nourishment, to strengthen it, God has given us the Torah. It is the Torah that is the food to strengthen the Holy Soul within us and cure diseases brought forth by the evil inclination. Moses never felt at home in this life, In this world he felt as a stranger in a strange land. Avraham referred to himself as a stranger. As he looked forward to permanent status in another world.²⁵

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, gives us an explanation of a common disorder brought on by the evil inclination, where one says, "Let us be like every one else. Its symptoms include development of gross corporeal tendencies, wherein all one's desires, the essence of

24. *Path of the Just.*

25. *Duties of the Heart* 1: 195, Aor HaChym, Yitro, Alshich Mishley

one's being, becomes reduced to coveting personal wealth, excessive eating and drinking, clothes, and all manner of physical pleasure. Indulging oneself in all desires of the hour without discretion eventually removes all restraints on human decency. This gives way to complete abandonment of modesty and a total loss of all sense of shame.²⁶

The Malbim shows us how the Torah redirects greed and lust when stating that the body's imaginative faculties of striving, as well as its passions, tend to be destructive. These are the being of the vitalizing animal soul, yet they can be controlled for the benefit and happiness of the man when properly utilized. The drive that sends man searching for material riches can be the force directing acts of kindness, and the drive of one's passions can be directed at cultivating the garden to supply everyone's needs.²⁷ From this, we see the importance of proper direction

for the protection and preservation of our soul.

Rabbi Miller clarifies this understanding by stating that the Torah does not stress mere faith, and neither does it deny the enjoyment of life on earth, but aims at bringing Heaven down to earth to make the world a better place to live, to make man better suited to live happily by taming such bestial instincts as greed, animosity, and deceit. The Torah's rules and regulations, if carried out, would make the world an ideal community, a happy commonwealth, for love is the essence of the Jewish faith.²⁸ It is from this love that we can reach out to our brothers and sisters so that all our needs may be satisfied, creating, as Rabbi Miller teaches, a happy commonwealth with no lacking. And it is truly a commonwealth, for our sages teach that each class within society wins

credit for itself and joins meritoriously with the others. By this one is joined to the Tree of Life. The righteous collect charity to distribute. Likewise, we must extend our love to our Blessed Creator, the Holy Blessed One. Just as we get to know our friends and our love deepens for them, so Rabbenu Bachyah explains, one who does not know his Master will not serve him devotedly. One with no knowledge of God, who yet performs religious acts, does so with the intent of pleasing some human being and not the God Who created him. The idolater is preferable to one such as this, and he is called in our sacred language hypocrite, arrogant, seducer, and misleader. ²⁹

But concerning one who becomes aware of his Creator, Rabbenu Bachyah teaches us that he will act with a faithful heart and pure soul, and his understanding will be illuminated. He will

²⁶ *Chabad Chassidus*.

²⁷ *Malbim parsha Lech lacha*.

²⁸ *The Secret of Happiness 225*

see the road to all high excellencies and the evil inclination will have no way to reach and seduce him. He will have the status of one

treasured by God. There will be formed within him a new and unusual supernatural force, allowing him to partake of a permanent joy in this world and the next. *Every* hidden subject will become clear in his mind, and he will behold the true form of things with open eyes. The gate of high degrees will be open to him; the curtain between this person and the Creator's wisdom will be rolled away, yielding divine vision. The exalted Creator will bestow Divine power on such a person.³⁰ All this is the Glory of the Holy Exalted One. This is the good He bestows on His creatures, those who choose to come close to His Throne of Glory. But it seems here we need to bring to mind the words of Rabbi Shimson Raphael Hirsch, who teaches that when a man endeavors to carry out not the will of God but solely his

29. *Duties of the Heart* 2:17.

30. *Ibid.* 2:279.

own he no longer has an eye for the Law of the All-One Whom all creatures serve.³¹ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches that when one sets out to serve God, One does not feel any accomplishments; one feels their worship is dry and life-less

31. Nineteen Letters of Ben Uzziel 45.
32. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 37.

JUST WAY Gate Two

One should review his activities daily, seeing where he falls short of *his* potential and areas in which innovations may aid his divine service, as in the example given in the writing of our teacher Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, telling of one bringing the first fruits to the Temple. Of course, he chooses only the best fruits, he has an ox pulling a wagon bringing the fruit, the ox is adorned with gold on its horns and an olive wreath upon its head. The fruits themselves sit in a fine gold box. In a like manner we should learn to perfect each commandment

that we perform.¹

Rebbe Nachman teaches us to make sure our days are very long. With each new day make sure the time is longer,

1Path of the Just.

fuller, richer with added holiness. Expand the days, filling them with more holiness and purity.² In this way we will be perfectly united with our Creator in a revealed way, as it is explained in the *Tanya* of Rebbe Shneur Zalman, that the commandments are the inwardness of His Blessed Will without any concealment of the countenance whatsoever. The vitality that is in them is in no way a separate and independent thing but is united and absorbed in His Blessed Will, and they are truly one in a perfect union.³ When Hashem wills a action and we carry it out. We become one with his will. We make his will our will. Each commandment must be done with vitality. It must be an act lighted by inner devotion. This gives it wings. We must seek atonement for the wicked, as the Holy One does not yet want to destroy them. By doing so harsh

decrees are nullified and gates of blessings are opened.

The Malbim teaches that to the extent a man possesses *kedushah* (holiness) he surpasses nature; with the help of Divine Providence he achieves the goal.⁴ The sages describe the true descendants of Abraham as bashful, merciful, and benevolent. These traits are our true nature, and those we need to cultivate-but to bring the Divine Providence into being in this world, as spoken of above, we must surpass our natural endowment of these traits and others. Concerning surpassing our natures, Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai in the Midrash explains that love upsets the natural order, as Abraham got up early to offer Yitzhak, going against his natural

2. Advice

3. *Tanya* 159

4. *Malbim parsha Lech lacha*

5. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 488

great damage, as Rebbenu Bachyah teaches in *Duties of the Heart*- that the evil inclination beguiled us to neglect the cultivation of this world, depart from the way of our forefathers, and instead see life as an opportunity for hoarding and a time to increase in the wealth of inclination to sleep, so his providence is above the natural order.⁵ With a great love we can surpass all bounds, revealing holiness in even the lowest places. But please beware: Just as love can break all bounds, selfishness and lack of understanding can cause equally this world till they sank deep into the sea. Everyone did what he saw his neighbor do. One who took from this world only what was sufficient for him was called an idler. It was said of one who delayed to increase what he had that his action fell short. One who was content with what was needed for him was regarded as a

weaking. People went astray in the depth of folly and turned to the coarseness of idleness instead of being eager to serve God. Rebbenu Bachyah concludes that even among the religious people of today the evil inclination has gone as far as described here.⁶

We need to set boundaries upon our desires so that we desire only permissible things. The rest is out of the picture and as inconceivable as a king wanting his son to marry a thieving harlot. Rebbenu Bachyah teaches that one may train himself through abstinence to see things that are forbidden to us but desirable to most, such as eating forbidden foods and improper sexual relations-things people are usually fond of doing-can become no longer a temptation but actually abhorrent to them, as repulsive as eating mice⁷ resulting in the total abandonment of desire for and instead disgust of transgression. The hatred of evil is the revelation of the will of God. Ultimately, we must reach the level of soul of man called *yechida*. To reveal *yechida* one must depart from the corporeal matters that one is immersed in, the most obvious and those hidden from the surface, meditate much upon the Torah, and do acts of *tzedakah* (charity), thus creating the

6. *Duties of the Heart* 2:295.

7. *Ibid.* 2:315.

Godly feeling of one being drawn to God. But before one can have the reward of this feeling, he must first depart from the corporeal matters that he is immersed in, which are not beneficial. In identifying these the Malbim teaches that the difference between a pleasure and a tempting desire exists in the fact that the temptation exists even when the object of desire is not present.⁸ It is by the same power that the animal soul is led astray that one may be driven to the opposite perspective toward holiness. As the animal soul uses the intellect to rationalize temptations of

pleasure, so can one be made to see there are pleasures of divine contemplation, as taught by Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn. Just as there is deviation into foolishness so is there also into holiness, and this is reached by recognizing the levels of pleasures. The animal soul recognizes pleasures in deviant behavior and so too will it also recognize pleasures in higher things. For example a deeper and more lasting pleasure may be found in music than in eating, and a greater pleasure from intellect than from emotional satisfaction alone. Only by recognizing the higher levels of pleasures is one truly a man and not an animal. It is taught by the Malbim that the essence of life is the life of the intellect and serving the Creator. and this is called human life, rather than the life of sense and instinct, which is a life of animals. ⁹

It is a matter of the lower animal desires being subdued by divine inspiration, as it is explained by Rabbenu Bachyah, that ultimate submission to God arises from an inward urge in the mind that is innate in the nature of the human being, whose body and soul are joined together. Such a one is induced to follow the Torah by reason, and reaches the

8. *Malbim parsha Bereshith.*

9. *Malbim parsha Chayah Sarah.*

degrees of the prophets and the elect of the supernal and the pious. His recompense here on earth is joy in the sweetness of the service of God, and in the world to come the highest illumination, which we are unable to picture or describe. The urge of the Torah is a revelation from God. ¹⁰ Concerning this inward urge, revelation from God, Rabbenu Bachyah further explains that to reach the stage where one is drawn to the service of God by the intellectual urge, one must realize the Creator has implanted in the mind to esteem truth; detest falsehood; chase righteousness; avoid injustice; requite

benefactors with good deeds, expressing gratitude; punish and condemn the wicked; and keep peace with all human beings, acting beneficially towards them and forgiving transgressors when they repent. ¹¹

Comprehending the idea of spirituality creates a love for the Holy One by revealing the righteous intellectual urge spoken of above, but we must be careful in our search for truth as misconceptions can, Heaven forbid, separate us from Divine inspiration as our thoughts lead us astray. It is explained that Adam made a mistake of this nature. He believed that by eating the fruit of knowledge he would be endowed with the evil inclination, making it more difficult to serve God, and thus believed this service, since it was a greater trial, would be more pleasing to his Creator. What he did not realize was the complete impact this act would have upon his overall perception. Of course intellectualization alone is not enough to ascend to holiness, especially in these later days. In the past the keys for ascending into holiness were known, but in these later generations few know those ways so the locks must be broken with the inner devotion of a broken heart.

10. *Duties of the Heart* 199-207.

11. *Ibid.* 233.

But do not be mistaken: One should not be depressed or sad, as this keeps one from divinity. Rebbe Shneur Zalman explains that a person should consider himself shameful and loathsome from a contrite heart and humbled spirit, while at the very same time he should be joyful; the shame is an aspect of the animal soul while the joy is from his divine soul. ¹²

How can one not feel shame and loathe past behavior when he realizes, as taught by Rabbi Chaim Volozhin in *Nefesh HaChaim*, that each transgression causes damage in the upper worlds. The level of one's understanding determines the

extent of damage that results.¹³ Obviously an unlearned unintentional sinner¹⁴ does less damage than the sin of a holy man who has revealed the essence of his soul, because at that level, Heaven forbid, from his transgression the damage begins, affecting many worlds, while the unintentional sinner was only acting with his animal soul so the damage is less widespread.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that in order to avoid temptation one must direct his mind away from the object of his desire completely; he must not confront the desire at all. Nor should he speak, think, or wonder about it; he should totally avoid letting his thoughts confuse him.¹⁵ This applies to the unlearned man, but the scholar all the more so, so that he does not defile his intellect with impure thought; he should turn to the Torah and meditate upon it, putting sin out of mind.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel, it says: "The Chayot ran and returned" (Ezek. 1: 14). The sages say that this running is entering into holiness, contemplation of the divine, and returning is descending back to the more physical level. We too,

12. *Tanya* 155.

13. *Nefesh HaChaim*..

14. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 21.

15. *Duties of the Heart* 295.

when faced with temptation, can run, approaching God and freeing ourselves from the temptation, and when we return we're in a different place. King Solomon is talking about this running in the Song of Songs when he says, "Draw me and I will run after thee; the king has brought me into his inner chambers" (Songs 1: 4). Elijah the Prophet explains this as meaning that the Holy One has an innermost sanctum in the innermost chambers of the Torah that he has composed, so the disciples of the wise, each and every one of them, have an innermost sanctum in the innermost chambers of the Torah. If you see

afflictions creeping up nearer and nearer to you, run to words deep within the Torah, and afflictions will at once flee from you as Isaiah teaches, "Come my people, enter into thy chambers ... until the indignation is past" (Is. 26:20).

This idea of running and returning also applies in the physical sense, as it is known that wandering causes humility and a lowly spirit fitting for *teshuvah*. The breaking of arrogance of spirit by wandering is like the decomposition of a seed before it begins to grow; likewise in spiritual growth the ego must be broken so that divinity may permeate. The breaking of the seed coat from sprouting of Godly revelation can be difficult to handle at times but one must always remember, as the Malbim teaches, that all precious things together cannot compare with the survival of the soul, which is the end purpose of man and of his hopes. ¹⁶ It is taught, in tractate *Magilla*, that snow is good for mountains, heavy rain good for trees, gentle rain for fruits of the field, and drizzling rain to seeds under a hard clod. A young scholar is like a seed under a hard clod; once he has sprouted he soon shoots forth. A scholar is inflamed by the Torah, and should be as hard as iron that can break a rock into many pieces. When the young

16. Malbim parsha Chayah Sarah

scholar's seed coat is breaking and he finds it difficult, let him become inflamed by the Torah and his difficulties will be as nothing, as he is then as hard as the iron that breaks rock. From becoming inflamed by the Torah one can see, as Rebbe Nachman teaches, that there is always rejoicing in the Holy One's presence-so even if one falls one must remain happy. Whenever a person falls it is for the sake of ultimately elevating them further; when a person remains happy he will eventually reach the higher level. ¹⁷ And one should never despair no matter how bad the situation may look, for as Rabbi Avraham

teaches in his book *Meditation of the Sad Soul* when God is angry with those that fear Him He punishes them in a natural way, but when He delivers them He employs wonders and supernatural means. ¹⁸

17. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 355.

18. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 91.

3

ELIXIR OF LIFE

Rabbi Banah teaches that whoever occupies themselves

with the Torah for its own sake, his learning becomes an elixir of life as it states in the holy proverbs of King Solomon: "It is a Tree of Life for those who hold fast to her"¹ (Proverbs 3: 18). Not only is the Torah life for one who meditates upon it, but it gives life to the whole world, as the sages teach us in the Midrash: "If you recite Torah, you do a good deed for the world, for if it were not for the Torah the world long ago would have been reduced to a state of primeval waste and desolation."² This notion is further clarified in the teaching of Elijah the Prophet, as he makes known that from the Holy One's

¹ *Taanit* 7a.

² Midrash Rabba *Devarim* 8: 15.

Presence *every* day angels of destruction come down intending to destroy the whole world and everyone in it. If it were not for the synagogues and houses of study in which Jews sit and occupy themselves with the Torah, these angels would have at once destroyed the world and its people. Every sin creates demons of destruction that harass one in this life and Gehenom (Hell). Every commandment observed creates a Holy angel. The light of Torah and mitzvot will be the "crowns in our heads" in Olam Haba. The performance of mitzvot is equivalent to making

crowns. One merits revelation of their soul in proportion to their mitzvot performed.³

It is the light brought forth from the Torah that repels the severe judgments of heaven. Each little thing toward this end that we do has lasting effect, as our sages teach us a good deed never ceases to reappear in one's house.⁴

More insight into the impact of Torah is found in the teachings of Rabbi Elazar in the Holy *Zohar*, as we learn there that Torah gives life and freedom in this world and adeptness in the World to Come, earning its devotees fullness of days.⁵ Also in the *Zohar*, Rabbi Chayah teaches that whoever labors in the Torah upholds the world and enables each part to perform its function, and the whole world is as one organic body.⁶ This is especially true in our time in this dark exile from Divinity, as Elijah taught Rabbi Chayah: "As long as the sages cling to the Torah, even if Jerusalem is fallen, the evil has no dominion over them." But aside from the benefits Torah provides this world, for the immortal soul, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai teaches, he who has not laid up provisions for the journey from this world will have nothing to eat in the other world.⁸ In both worlds the spiritual and the physical Torah is the elixir of life, as Rabbi Yitzchak teaches; the Torah was given in fire and darkness so that those who study and occupy themselves in it are spared from the fire

3. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu* 432., *Sni luchot Vayachi*, Oar Ha Chyim Mishpatim

4. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 4:2.

5. *Zohar* 1:131b.

6. Ibid. 1: 134b.

7. Ibid. 1:151b.

8. Ibid. 1: 196b.

Of Gehenom and the darkness of exile.⁹ And specifically Rabbi Shimon teaches that if a man wakes at night to study the Torah, the Torah makes known to him his sin not through

chastisement, but as a mother who gently chides her son. ¹⁰ By the study of the Torah the world is brought into proper order, as Rabbi Chayah teaches; when the Torah is observed and studied in the world, the foundations of the world are consolidated.¹¹ The judgments that come to the world become mitigated by the mercy of the Holy One. Rabbi Chayah further teaches that whoever concentrates deeply in the Torah sustains the world. As it was from the Torah that God created the world, so man by looking into the Torah sustains it. Hence the Torah is the cause of the world's creation and also the power that maintains its existence. Blessed is he who is devoted to the Torah, as he is a preserver of the world. ¹²

Rabbi Yose teaches concerning the twelve properties of the Torah that inequity can be purged even without sacrifices of flesh but with words of Torah. Even if punishment is already decreed against one, it can be annulled. Words of Torah can purify those who are unclean. He who studies Torah is first purified and then sanctified. ¹³ Ultimately, one who is near to the king is ever in joy, free from sorrow and depression.¹⁴ This is because the Shechinah (the Divine Presence) finds a home in the land only through Torah and finds a home above only through Torah. ¹⁵ By making a home for the Shechinah, one brings oneself under the protection of

Divine Providence. It is also taught by Rabbi

9. Ibid. 2:83b.

10. Ibid. 3:23b.

11. Ibid. 2: 155b.

12. Ibid. 2: 161a.

13. Ibid. 3:80b.

14. Ibid. 3:221a.

15. Ibid. 3:268a

Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, in tractate *Bava Kamma*, that whoever is involved with Torah study and acts of righ-

teousness is worthy of the inheritance of two tribes, represented by the ox, this being our forebear, Joseph the Tzaddik; and the donkey, this being the tribe of Issachar. ¹⁶ This shows us that if one decides to direct his path in Torah study and righteousness, he can merit these at their highest level. It is known that Joseph perfected the trait known as righteousness, or in Hebrew *tzedek*, so he is known as Yoseph HaTzaddik, while the tribe of Issachar were known to dedicate all their time to Torah study as the tribe of Zevulun worked, raising money to support them in this venture. So the heights of Torah study and righteousness are an inheritance waiting for those who seek it. Sni luchot ha brit on parsha Vayachi teaches that the tribe Yisachar is compared to a donkey as it willingly carries the burden and does not object to the burden. Concerning reaching the goal of this inheritance, Rabbi Yirmiyahu teaches, in tractate *Bava Metziah*, that he who humbles oneself for the Torah in this world is magnified in the next; one who makes himself a servant to Torah learning in this world is free in the next. ¹⁷ From here we see that it is humility that will allow us to bow before the will of God, fulfilling the Holy One's desire in every moment like Yoseph, and the study of the Torah is like that of Issachar, a full-time occupation. So one must be a servant to his learning; this is how the inheritance is earned. Being a servant to the Torah means, as Rabbi Nachman ben Yitzchak teaches in tractate *Bava Batra*, that students who banish sleep from their eyes in this world the Holy One invites to a feast with repleteness of the Shechinah in the World to Come. ¹⁸ We also learn concerning the treasure of this repleteness and its value over the things of this world, in tractate

16. *Bava Kamma* 17a.

17. *Bava Metziah* 88b.

18. *Bava Batra* 10a

Bava Batra, from the words of King Menaboz: "My fathers gathered for this world, I gathered for the next; my fathers gathered treasures of money, I gathered treasures of souls,"¹⁹ but one must not believe that the benefits the Master bestows on His servants are only in the next world, which does abound with treasure, if one fulfills Divine Will. Yet Rabbi Avdimi of Heafi teaches that since the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise. The gift of prophesy is only given to people of understanding intellectual capacity, people who are whole in body and soul. Yet to be a prophet on a regular basis one must also possess wealth, humility and physical prowess. One does not experience prophet visions except in a state of joy.²⁰ In *Devarim* it states: "You who cleave to God are alive this day."

In tractate *Sanhedrin* it is explained that just as you are alive today so shall you be in the World to Come.²¹ This cleaving to the Holy One is life, as it states in the Song of Songs: "love as strong as death"; just as you are alive today so shall you be in the World to Come. This idea of assuming our position in this world as in the World to Come is as Rabbi Sheshbesh's teaching that whoever teaches Torah in this world will do so in the next-and again this teaching does not only prepare us for the World to Come but. as Rabbi Elazar teaches, every teacher that leads his community with mildness in this world shall lead them in the next.²² The sages teach that each good deed we do will testify for us in the World to Come.²³ At that time the Holy One, blessed is He, shall take the sun from its sheath and from this the righteous will be healed, but this shall be punishment to the wicked. as we learn from Rabbi Shimon Ben Lakish in tractate *Avodah Zarah*.²⁴

It cannot be expressed enough how transient our stay in

19. Ibid. 11a.

20. Ibid. 12a., Aor HaChyim smot, Sni Luchot Vayishlach

21. *Sanhedrin* 90b.

22. Ibid. 92a.

23. Ibid. 2a.

24. *Avodah Zarah* 3b

this world is, but we can view a bit of this knowledge from the teaching of our sages in tractate Horayot-that a scholar takes precedence over a king of Israel. If a scholar dies, there is no one to replace him, but any in Israel can be king.²⁵ We can see that the highest position in this physical world, that of being king, is of no value. The only thing that should be of concern is a concern of the soul. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yochanan both teach that the Torah was given in forty days and the soul is formed in forty days, so that whoever keeps the Torah, his soul is kept; whoever does not, his soul is not kept, as is taught in tractate *Menachot*.²⁶

This physical-spiritual interdependence is further clarified in the teaching of Elijah the Prophet, from whom we learn that if a man reads the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, the Writings, Halachah (Law), Midrash, and attends to the business of the *yeshivah* (house of study), showing less concern for the business of the marketplace, the Holy One will say this world and the World to Come will be Mine and yours together, the Temple will be Mine and yours together.²⁷ These things the Holy One wishes to share with us, as Rabbi Yitzchak teaches in tractate *Menachot* that men lure each other from the way of life to the way of death, but the Holy Blessed One lures one from death to life, out of the narrow mouth of Gehenom, its mouth being so narrow to keep the smoke in though it is deep and large.²⁸ The deliverance from Gehenom is not the only reward of the Torah, as it says: "Tables of Fatness." When a man has right conduct and study of the Five Books to his credit, he is given one angel. If he has the Five Books, Prophets, and Writings to his credit, he is given two angels to guard him. When one has all these and also

- 25. *Horayot* 13a.
- 26. *Menachot* 99b.
- 27. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 14.
- 28. *Menachot* 99b.

Mishnah, Midrash, Halachah, and Aggadah, and puts himself under the guidance of the sages, the Holy One Himself keeps watch over him, as is taught by Elijah the Prophet.²⁹ All these supernal gifts and much more than can be described are the good for the righteous, but even on the physical level, Rabbi Shimon ben Akashiya tells us in tractate *Kinnim* the intellect of uninstructed people becomes distracted as they age, while this is not so with scholars of Torah: the older they get, the more their minds become composed. With aged men there is wisdom and understanding in length of days.³⁰

In the Book of Lamentations, the Prophet states, "Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the watches; God will see Thee" (Lam. 2: 19-20). Concerning this, Rabbi Chayah teaches us in tractate *Tamid* that for one who learns Torah at night, the Shechinah faces him. The disciples of the wise increase peace in the world,³¹ and this increase of peace is not only from His inward peace, which is a treasure in and of itself, but, as Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel explains in tractate *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, whoever makes peace in his house, the Torah ascribes to him as though he has made peace for every individual in Israel. Each person is a king in his own home.³² Concerning the Crown of Torah, Rabbi Abba ben Surangeya teaches that from much Torah study, God will remove your evil passions and you will hear good tidings, you will become a prince.³³

Rabbi Levi teaches that students of Torah impose their will on the upper and lower beings when they are living in

- 29. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*. ch. 18.
- 30. *Kinnim* 25a.
- 31. *Tamid* 32b.
- 32. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* 28a.

33. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 14:4.

purity³⁴ taking part in the creation, as Rabbi Yehoshua of Saknin teaches that the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, sat and took counsel with the righteous before creating the world.³⁵ Even in the beginning the righteous were taking an active part in the forming of the creation.

Rabbi Yudan said in the name of Rabbi Meir that the Holy One says to Israel, "Follow My oath and I shall make you like the Heavenly Hosts" ³⁶ This all helps us to understand how Rabbi Yehuda states in the *Zohar* that the *B'nei Elokim* (Sons of God; see Genesis 6:2) are the Great *Beth Din* (Supernal Court).³⁷

Not only in this world does one find a place in the unfolding of Heaven from the Torah; all the more so in the World to Come. We learn from Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish that in the World to Come a porter will not dwell with a Torah scholar. Only like craftsmen dwell together and there are infinite levels of each type of craftsman. ³⁸ As the sages teach in tractate *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, if two men dye a fabric in the same vat, the one who is greater in righteousness gets a deeper color. He even enjoys his food more. ³⁹ This is because, as our sages explain, the Holy Blessed One does not deprive any creature of its reward. Whoever labors with self-sacrifice will get his reward.⁴⁰ The more one gives to God, sacrificing himself beyond his own nature, the more God will have nature itself favor him-even above the laws of nature, if needed. All is in His control to do as He sees fit.

We know, as is taught in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, that the

34. Ibid. Song of Songs 1 :2.

35. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 8:7.

36. Ibid. Song of Songs 2:7.

37. *Zohar Pinchat*.

38. *Bechorot* 31 b.

39. *Avot D'Rabbi Nathan* 32a.

40. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 12:9.

Torah that is acquired through forty-eight distinctions crowns its owner with health to the flesh and bones, peace to the heart, life with honor, protection, and the World to Come,⁴¹ but the actual benefits with which the Creator rewards His creatures are too diversified to number because of His infinite nature.

In the Midrash, Rabbi Meir teaches us that God gave the Torah to the Elders of Israel, just as the Sanhedrin sits before Him on high. The sages teach also in the Midrash that all who direct their courses forthrightly in His Presence shall be among the men in His council.⁴² The Torah is the Law of God by which He rules over Heaven and earth. Like the *Beth Din* below, the one above is ruled from God's Torah. The holders of the Torah, the ones who hold the Tree of Life, are, as Rabbi Meir says, the Sanhedrin above.⁴³ The spiritual forces become subjugated by such a man, as the sages state:

When a man performs one precept the Holy One, blessed is He, gives him an angel to his charge: if he performs many precepts, He gives him half his camp.⁴⁴

Rabbi Chaninah ben Avohu teaches, concerning man's angels, that God provides each man one thousand angels to his left and ten thousand to his right. He must sustain them, but they do not request that he feed them.⁴⁵ If one brings divinity into the Earth through Torah and *mitzvot*, then the angels are nourished, and then, the sages say, the Torah guards those who possess it.⁴⁶ God gives each of us potential, but it is left for each of us to develop, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches: man can be saved by the Holy

41. *Kallah Rabbati* 54b.

42. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 30: 18.

43. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 11: 1.

44. Ibid. *Shemot* 32:6.

45. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 12:3.

46. Ibid. *Shemot* 33:6.

One as a beast; or as Rabbi Eliezer ben Menachem teaches: the righteous have an Eden for themselves.⁴⁷ As a reward for one's religious duties and righteous deeds, God renews His countenance.⁴⁸ Concerning renewal, Rabbi Nachman teaches that just as the moon is constantly renewed, so are we by the month and year constantly. When one perfects the concept of renewal, this is the root of *memory*.⁴⁹ Rabbi Chananya ben Gamliel teaches that if one performs a mitzvah his soul is granted him,⁵⁰ and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that as long as man refrains from sin he is an object of awe and fear.⁵¹ With the renewal of the righteous, his soul is granted to him. That which was concealed is revealed, thus raising him in the creation toward becoming the awesome image of which he was created, taking his proper place in the scheme of creation. As the sages teach, the Torah was given in the wilderness, which is neither sown nor tilled, so if one accepts the yoke of Torah, he is relieved of the yoke of earning a living. Just as one is not charged taxes for growing crops in the wilderness, so scholars are free men in this world.

⁵²

It is even taught that if one carefully observes the commandments, even the ones that seem less important, a curse cannot arise upon him. for he is like the Shechinah, their names being merged.⁵³ Concerning the effect of this unity, Rabbi Yashi teaches in the *Zohar*, the righteous are as kings united to their thrones that He sets forever and remain established to rule over the world.⁵⁴ These things may be

47. Ibid. *Vayikra* 27: 1.

48. Ibid. 28: 1.

49. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 365.

50. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 5:4.

51. Ibid. 11 :3.

52. Ibid. 19:26.

53. Ibid. 20:21.

54. *Zohar* 1: 164a.

hidden from the eyes of some now, but Rashi explains that there will come a time when the Holy One will reveal His love. People will learn Torah from His mouth; their position will be higher than that of the Ministering Angels. ⁵⁵ They will enjoy the Light of the blessed *Ain Sof*, as explained by Rabbi Schneur Zalman in the *Tanya*, that by the fulfillment of the commandments a *makif* (surrounding) light, being an efflux from the Essence of the Light of the blessed *Ain Sof*, radiates as a garment for the ten *sefirot* of the worlds of Atzilus, Briah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah. Eventually this radiance unites itself with the *Ohr P'nimi* (Internal Light). This is called the unification of HaKodesh Baruch Hu and his Shechinah. From this *makiff* garment is made in the upper and lower Gan Eden for the Nefesh, Ruach, and Nashamah of man, enabling him to attain pleasure, appreciation, and illumination of the light of the blessed *Ain Sof*⁵⁶ Further, concerning this illumination, Rabbenu Bachyah teaches in *Duties of the Heart* that when you act with a faithful heart and pure soul, your understanding will be illuminated. You will see the road to all high excellencies. The evil inclination will have no way to reach and seduce you. You will have the status of those treasured by God. There will be formed within you a new and unusual supernal force. You will partake of permanent joy in your world here and the next. Every hidden secret will become clear in your eyes. The gate of high degrees will be open to you. The curtain between you and the Creator's Wisdom will be rolled away, yielding Divine Vision. The exalted Creator will give you Divine Power. ⁵⁷ Or, in the words of the Malbim, may his soul aid us, the Creator has appeared to man and has given him the living Torah. One who medi-

55. Rashi Bamidbar.

56. *Tanya* 397.

57. *Duties of the Heart* 2:279

tates upon it eats of the Tree of Life and lives forever in fear and love of the Blessed Holy One. He is aware of Direct Providence and knows the truth about heavenly matters. ⁵⁸ But the things we have spoken of here do not come easily, as the Malbim further explains that a man must rid himself of all impurity and defilement before he can be worthy of holiness. If one applies himself to an intellectual grasp of the Holy One, knowledge of Him, he will be influenced by Divine Abundance and be given inspiration or the level of prophecy that leads to knowledge of the truth, the truth that cannot be attained unaided, the infinite reaches of creation. ⁵⁹

Elijah the Prophet explains that when a man learns Torah, he has wondrous power in the world for he can act for mercy and shake the firmament and bring rain to the world.⁶⁰ Elijah also teaches that they who sit in synagogues and houses of study, whenever they are reciting Chumash and Mishnah for the sake of Heaven, because of the reverence they have in their hearts, precepts of the Torah are decreed through them and put into effect.⁶¹ These things are not apparent because, as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches in the *Zohar*, the ornaments that Israel received from God on Sinai were taken away when they sinned, but whenever Israel returns to the Father in Heaven, these ornaments are restored to them and they are invested with them, and in the time to come all will be returned.⁶² But we must not think that the benefits are limited to us alone and limited to the good we bring to the world, as Elijah teaches that when a man has done a good deed, well-being is bestowed on him and on

58. *Malbim parsha Bereshith*.

59. *Malbim parsha Lech lacha*.

60. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 18.

61. Ibid.
62. Zohar 3: 193a.

his descendants through four generations,⁶³ and the Malbim teaches that whenever someone dies before his time, the uncompleted years are given to a student of the Torah who rules over his own nature. ⁶⁴ Thus he brings salvation into the lives of other souls also.

With this understanding, we can consider the words of Rabbi Nachman that at the end of each day a person should be highly motivated thinking how one's understanding with his emotions and wisdom take leave and sing to one another. One must prepare to meet the holiness of the coming day.⁶⁵

63. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 7.

64. *Malbim parsha Chayah Sarah*.

4

SHABBAT

The Eye of Holiness

There is no difference in sanctity between Yom Kippur and *Shabbat*. as is taught by Rabbi Adah bar Ahavah. ¹ Rabbi Abba teaches us that *Shabbat* is the holiest of days. the most restful. the most joyous. The *Shabbat* is equal in significance to the whole Torah. so one who keeps the *Shabbat* is as if he keeps the whole Torah. *Shabbat* is a delight to the soul. a delight to the body, a delight to those above. a delight to those below. Call it, invite it. as one invites an honored guest and prepares everything generously for him and concentrates all his attention on him.² Rabbi Shimon teaches. concerning the *Shabbat*. that on this day the Torah crowns herself with all

beauty, with all those commandments, and with all the decrees and punishments for transgressions in seventy branches of light that radiate on every hand. To behold it is to behold gates that open at all sides and through which burst forth splendor and beauty, streaming inexhaustible light.³

Rabbi Yehuda teaches us that the joy and observance of the *Shabbat* is superior to that of all others, as this day is crowned with the Father and the Mother (Wisdom and Understanding) and is invested with an additional holiness. It is a day of joy for the higher and the lower worlds, **full of** blessings in all worlds.⁴

Rabbi Shimon teaches that the Holy Ancient One reveals Himself on the *Shabbat* more than any other day. All the upper and lower celestial beings are in perfect joy, and judgment has no dominion.⁵ Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that each one of the celestial beings becomes the habitation of an additional soul. Under the influence of the additional soul, sadness, gloom, and irritation are forgotten, there being only joy and gladness diffused through the upper and lower worlds. The additional soul bathes itself in the sweet perfumes of Gan Eden after it descends to rest on the Holy People. Happy are they when the spirit is stirred within them. We learn from Rabbi Yose that the community of Israel is called *Shabbat* for she is God's spouse; that is why *Shabbat* is called "bride." God gave us a "Nashama Yatera" (additional soul) so that we could have a glimpse of the reward of Torah observance. It helps us to appreciate that Shabbat is a most precious gift. ⁶

Rabbi Nachman teaches that *Shabbat* observance is the foundation of genuine faith.

1. *Makkot* 23b.

2. *Zohar* 2:47.

All acts of charity and other good deeds that we do are invested with radiance and perfection only in virtue of the *Shabbat*. Because *Shabbat* is the

very

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. 3:94a.
5. Ibid. 2:89b.
6. Ibid. 2:204. Sni Luchot Pekudy

embodiment of faith, it is the fountain of blessings. Blessings are manifested into actuality because of the *Shabbat*.⁷

The Malbim teaches us that *Shabbat* provides access to abundance and generosity of blessing for the world from an inexhaustible source, the pattern of governance that transcends nature. This is the meaning of He made it holy." It is a pattern of doing higher than the natural order as it involves God's providence and His power to disregard the natural. It is on this day that the providential ordering of creation dominates. The six days of the week each bring forth their energy as designated in the days of creation, yet these are dominated by the providential order of the seventh day the *Shabbat*.⁸ We also learn from the Malbim that man's actions control the mechanisms of creation, determining whether it is slowed down or sped up or what degree of abundance is bestowed.

The value that controls what degree of Divine abundance is available for the running of the world is the *Shabbat*. This valve can entirely arrest the system if the rules of reward and punishment so dictate. The natural order was finished on the sixth day by Elokim (God, the Name of Strict Justice). But with the *Shabbat*, havaya hLord, the Name of Mercy) inserted the possibility of arresting the natural order or varying its rate to the order of providence and its rules of reward and punishment, modifying its motions and processes. The possibility of interfering with the automatic operations of nature is called "rest"⁹ During the six days of the week the world was created, but only during

Shabbat is the level of revelation given a firm basis and established. ¹⁰ Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that whoever observes

7. *Advice* 168.
8. *Zohar* 2:63b.
9. *Beginning and Upheaval* 175.
10. *Ibid.* 172.

Shabbat according to halachah (Jewish law) is forgiven all of his sins. The Aor haCyim teaches that one who meticulously observes the Shabot, his sins will be forgiven. Even if they include idolatry. Therefore, it is incumbent on *every* individual to master the major laws of *Shabbat* and not engage in idle chatter, as this is of a mundane nature. By avoiding such speech, one mirrors God ceasing the Ten Utterances by which the physical heaven and earth were created, for one is parallel to the other. ¹¹

From Rabbi Yitzchak we learn more concerning this nature of *Shabbat*, as he teaches that the Ancient Holy One appears and rests not on the ordinary; for this reason it is permitted on *Shabbat* to think about ordinary things, because thinking produces no effect. But if a word issues from his mouth, it becomes a voice if it rises aloft and breaks through ethers and firmaments and arouses some force from above. If a man utters a holy word of Torah, it rises aloft and arouses the holy servants of the King, who set a crown on the word, so there is rejoicing above and below. ¹² This is reflected in the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "If you restrain your feet because of the *Shabbat* from attending to your affairs and speaking profane things, then you shall delight in God, and I will make you ride on the high places of the earth, and I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob your father; thus the mouth of God has spoken" (Is. 58: 13-14). Spiritual heights are only obtainable when Yisrael frees itself of human concerns as anguish, and anger. It is the serenity given called "minuchah" that's called the "Oneg" (Delight) of Shabbot. It was when ever Yaakov felt this that he was called

Yisrael.

We learn in Rabbi Nachman's teaching that the *Shabbat* protects those who guard it; this is why the *Shabbat* is mentioned before the sin of the golden calf, for it was the *Shabbat* that protected them. Similarly, Adam HaRishon sang the *Song of the Shabbath Day* (Ps. 92) after the sin, and it was the *Shabbat* that prevented him from immediately being ejected from the Garden. In Gan Aden (Garden of Eden) we can see the results of how their positive actions contributed to the Garden. Once Adam was expelled from the Garden he was denied the ability to see the results of his actions until "Olam Haba". (the World to Come) If Adam had not sinned obscenity would not have existed. The sexual act would have been no different from any other mitzvah, no different from putting on Tefillin. 13 Rabbi Avraham teaches us

11. *Tanya* 633.

12. *Zohar Emor*.

13. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 269., Aor Hachym Vayalch, Aor HaChyim Barashit, Noach Sni Luchot ha Brit

that one who is devoted all his days to the worship of God, observing His commandments and walking in His path, rejecting the lusts of this world-his entire life leads him out of the prison of this world, and on *Shabbat* he finds his pleasure in meditation on Torah and comprehending Divine manifestations. That man calls his afflictions of this world "richness." This delight is the reason why Yom Kippur is called "*Shabbat*." 14 Just as from the fasting and *teshuvah* of Yom Kippur one merits a purer vision of God, so too with the *Shabbat*.

We learn from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman that *Shabbat* gives us the power to hold on to the original forces of creation and integrate them into our lives. It is also the central point from which, instead of looking outward,

we may look inward to integrate holiness to ourselves from our new vantage point of vision, the *Shabbat*.¹⁵

Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that for all who lead a holy life during the week, all six days become as one with those six days (the Holy *Sefirot*) that are within and concentrated into that central point where they are kept and guarded. That point again is hidden during the six days of the week, but on the entrance of the *Shabbat*, it rises on high, where it is decorated and becomes unified with the whole cycle of days, all of which are absorbed by it. When that point ascends, everything else is hidden away, it alone holding sway, and it assumes the name *Shabbat*.¹⁶ The *Zohar* teaches us that *Shabbat* is called "holiness." The *Shabbat* has the right of entry by inheritance.¹⁷ One's *Shabbat* experience is established by his life during the week, yet the week is established through the *Shabbat*, as taught by

14. *Meditation of the Sad Soul*!

15. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 32.

16. *Zohar* 2:204a.

17. *Ibid.* 3:94a

Rabbi Yehuda that the six days receive blessing from the seventh.¹⁸ Rabbi Abba further explains that the activities of the days of the week are dependent on the *Shabbat*. Holiness descends from above to rest upon it. It is written "לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת" (make the Sabbath) meaning add from the weekdays to *Shabbat*, start early.¹⁹ Those are of the mystery of the union of the Holy Blessed One with his [hechina] on the *Shabbat*. This is the time most appropriate for marital union.²⁰

We learn in the Kabbalah that by serving God with great zeal, *mayim nukvin*-the feminine waters-are elevated. This causes a revelation of the *mayim duchrin*-the upper masculine waters.

By devoting oneself to the upper world one can feel the illumination of the upper world during the week for a moment, but on *Shabbat*-

since then one can accomplish the elevations and unifications strictly for their own sake-one feels Divinity even more. By the cleansing of the week in Elokim, which is a garment for Havaya, this allows through the *Shabbat* the absolute delight of Havaya to shine through clearly. it being a revelation in the mode of "nothingness from existence"-the upper unity. This is the revelation of *Shabbat Oneg*-ecstatic delight. *Shabbat is* a revelation of the cleansing of the week.

Rabbi Yitzchak teaches us that whoever attains the level of faith needs to prepare a table and a meal on the *Shabbat*, so that his table may be blessed through the six days of the week.²¹ Rabbi Nachman teaches that preparing special delicacies for *Shabbat* is very precious and has a unique holiness.²² Rabbi Yehuda teaches that one must regale on this day

18. Ibid. *Beshallah*.

19. Ibid. 1:5b.

20. Ibid. 2:63b.

21. Ibid. *Yitro*.

22. *Advice* 171.

with three festive meals so that this day may be one of satisfaction and refreshment.²³

Rabbi Shimon teaches that one should find joy and refreshment in all three meals and in each one distinctively, because this is a manifestation of perfected faith. Therefore, the *Shabbat* is more precious than all other times and seasons and festivals, because it contains and unites all in itself, whereas no festival or holy day does so.²⁴

How important is each of the *Shabbat* meals? Rabbi Abba teaches us that one who lessens the number of meals brings imperfection

and blemish into the regions above.²⁵ Rabbi Abba also said that when the *Shabbat* meal was removed. Rabbi Shimon used to arrange his table and meditate on the *Merkavah*.²⁶

Guard the holy ways of the *Shabbat* from the ways of our past sages and the holy men of today. There is so much we can learn from them. There are so many holy customs concerning the *Shabbat*. From the teachings of Rabbi Nachman we learn that one must do things all week to remember the *Shabbat*.²⁷ Rabbi Chiya teaches that all things are found in the *Shabbat*.²⁸

Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that people who serve God from the fear and love that is latent in their heart, not arousing an intellectual fear and love for their Creator, blessed is He, serve God in the category of *spirit* of the righteous, but do not rise to Gan Eden in *spiritual seeing* except on *Shabbat* and Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) by means of the pillar that rises from the lower to the higher Gan Eden

23. *Zohar Yitro*.

24. *Ibid*.

25. *Ibid*.

26. *Ibid. Emor*.

27. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 308.

28. *Zohar 2:88*.

in the world of Briah (Creation).²⁹ Related to this, the *Zohar* instructs us in what it calls a mystery entrusted to the wise. We learn there that on *Shabbat*, in the middle of the night, the Holy One is pleased to enter the Garden that is above. On weekdays at this time, He enters the garden that is below to joyously commune with the righteous. On *Shabbat* evening, the hosts of holy angels bring these souls up into the firmament that is close to this Garden, where chariots await to escort these souls to the Paradise above and

bring them before the Throne of Glory.³⁰
Understand these things set forth here and you
will do well.

*Blessed Is the Lot of One Who
Is Worthy of the Glory of the
Shabbat*

*in this World and the Shabbat
in the World to Come.³¹*

5 Visitations

Rabbi Bachyah teaches us in *Kad HaKemach* that visitations come upon the world only for the sake of Yisrael;

The world is maintained or destroyed according to their deeds. These visitations should not be attributed to chance, without a specific design or intent, because if one does the Creator responds to this action proportionately, removing this person's Divine supervision to a degree and increasing such chance occurrences, allowing them to run their course, completely uncontrolled. This only happens if one removes himself from God's personal providence. Man brings upon himself whatever befalls him. Harm does not originate from God who is the source of all good.¹ But when one contemplates in the profundity of understanding his coming into existence every moment, being created newly from *eyin*

29. *Tanya* 181.

30. *Zohar* 2: 136a.

31. *Zohar* 2:64a

1. *Kad HaKemach* 395, chapter "Rain."

(nothingness), His blessed wisdom, which is the source of life, welfare, and delight, it is the Eden that transcends the World to Come-then he will understand that one may imagine to have sufferings. Yet this is only possible because this *ayin* is not apprehensible, and in fact no evil descends from above. Everything is good though it is not apprehended as such because of its immense and abundant goodness. Deliverance from danger in a unexpected way suddenly, brings forth laughter. Going from total despair to deliverance suddenly brings forth laughter. Every thing God does is for the good. The joy of the redemption is in the fact that both the ordeal and its resolution are both the redemption, the "problem" is the solution. This world will be turned upsidedown at the time of redemption. In modern secular society those who live their life with the purpose of "knowing God" live opposite of their secular society. At the time of Mashiach those who live Godless lives will find themselves to be completely disoriented.

Therefore a man should be happy and joyous at all times, and truly live by his faith in God. One who cannot see that all that happens is God's will, and that all these things are good, is like one of the *erev rav* (mixed multitude), the defiled souls of Egypt that went out with the Children of Israel in the Exodus. The Aor haChym teaches that *erev rav* absorbed sparks of Holiness from dwelling with Yisrael but they were mixed with sparks of "Tuma". The *erev rav* felt discriminated against, as the commandment of sanctifying the first born did not apply to |heo> The ark did not travel before them, so they made the golden calf. The "erev rav" initially left Egypt under the instruction of Pharaoh, then decided to place their lot with the Israelites. The trials of the righteous are explained in Midrash,² where we are taught that God only tries the righteous because the more one beats flax the more it is improved and glistens as fine linen. He can not do so with a defective vessel as it will break. It is as the sages teach:³ that God tries the righteous, testing them before He confers greatness upon them.

When considering judgments, one must consider also his relation to the immortal soul. It is taught by Rabbi Eliezer⁴ that in a place where there is judgment below there will be none above, but where there is no judging there will be judging on high. If justice is carried out on Earth there will be none above. When judgments do fall on one below, Heaven forbid, it is then an obligation to believe that things will work out for the best. ⁵ The Oar Hachym teaches afflictions unite parts of our souls that have been separated from their Holy root. With this the estrangement from one's creator with this part of the soul is ended.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches in the Holy *Zohar* that one should never say "I wish this river were not here," as all is appointed by providence, even fleas and pests, and in some

unforetold way they may even come to one's aid. Because we know that all judgments are in our best interest,⁶ We engage in this world so to achieve the reality of the next. From our suffering and difficulties in this world will be one's happiness in the next. They are exactly what one needs, even though they can not see this now. This can be a deep source of strength. When one faces a "test", the force that "helps" the to pass the test is God, it is revelation of the Divine presence. Light from darkness, problems, make us stronger strengthening the soul. The Creator commands us to make a blessing invoking His Blessed Name when faced with these hardships. It can not be stressed enough that one must remain happy throughout these judgments, as all curses come only on account of a lack of happiness in Divine service. During the times when the Temple stands and the Divine service is done by the *kohanim*, when there is open revelation of Divinity, the Creator has set certain corrections for transgression as stated in the Torah stoning, burning, sword, and strangulation-but when we no longer have the Temple, one must not think that these punishments no longer occur, because they are carried out by Heaven, as the sages teach in the Talmud (tractate *Sotah*): for an offense liable to stoning, one falls off a roof or is trampled by beasts; for burning, one is a victim of fire or a serpent bite; for decapitation, one is given to the government or robbers; for an offense liable to strangulation, one drowns or suffers disease. The 4 types of atonement for transgressions of Stoning, burning, sword and asphyxiation are listed in descending order of severity. Know, you need to tell yourself that your intelligence is not profound enough to understand

2. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 34:2. , Sni Luchot Vayashev

3. Ibid. *Shemot* 1 :21.

4. Ibid. *Devarim* 5:5.

5. *Zohar* Emor.

the workings of God.

When we see these sufferings approach, we must remember the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov that whenever feeling pain or any discomfort, recognize that it is God in concealment in the pain. By removing this garment of concealment, God can be seen and thus the decree is nullified. It is essential that one recognize that it is God that is in control of one's hardship, it is His will and His will is for one's best. We see what happened to Pharaoh when he refused to acknowledge God in the plagues: In the first plague Pharaoh "hardened his heart" because of his wickedness, but as the severity of the plagues came to him he was ready to give into "the pressure"-but not because he was consciously succumbing to the will of God. As his "heart was hard-

6.Zohar 3: 101a

ened" by God, so he could receive the further plagues to reach atonement.

We must not be still but cry out to God as taught by Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Shila and Rabbi Helbo in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that the Matriarchs were barren because God yearns for the prayers of the righteous. There is so much time for one to pray to God before judgment will befall him, 7 as the sages teach that one is given three chances to return to God. If he takes advantage of none only then is he punished for missing the first chance. This may explain why we see many wicked men who seem to prosper in this world, for God is slow in trying them, as Rabbi Chizkia teaches: God hastens the happiness of the wicked, but delays that of the righteous. God is long-suffering and does not desire the destruction of the wicked, but wants them to return to Him. Hashem is quick to give the wicked their reward in this world. Since they have no other life.⁸

We have three chances to return from

transgression before it is too late, as Rabbi Chayah teaches that when a man commits a sin three times and does not repent his sins are exposed and published both above and below. Concerning the result of sin, we learn in Torah Moshe from Rabbi Moshe Alshich that one's failure to listen and absorb Torah lessons results in inability to absorb Torah. Failure to perform a commandment, when able, brings a disabling illness preventing ability; by despising the *chukim* (mystical statutes), God smites the enlightenment of one's eyes. Hating social laws results in hating other things and despondency. Rejecting social laws as futile activity results in one's activities being futile, working for one's enemies' benefit, and their consuming one's goods. Transgressing prohibitions, actively thinking God cannot or will not act, causes invading

7. *Zohar* I: 14Gb.

8. *Zohar* I: 17Ia, Sni luchot ha brit Vayachi

enemies to victimize a person. Willful defiance results in running from it and its attack; since one has defied the invisible, God defies that person. All these difficulties come to inspire repentance and are not penalties for sin. If this suffering does not arouse repentance, then a penalty is imposed.⁹

We see penalties for sin in the Midrash where Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman teaches that a woman's life is in danger during childbirth because of her disregarding her time of menstrual separation, separation of *challah*, and kindling *Shabbat* lights. Rabbi Levi teaches that a man allows an accuser to bring accusations if he dwells in a dilapidated house, travels alone on the road, or sails alone on the ocean. One should not put oneself in a place of danger, as sin can overcome him. One is not liable to suffer harm when performing a mitzah (commandment) but this ruling applies only when danger is not likely to

be encountered.¹⁰ Rabbi Yitzchak further teaches us that when man comes to grief through sin and is liable to death by the hand of Heaven, atonement is made by his ox dying, his poultry being lost, his flask breaking, or by his falling and injuring his little finger. A drop of blood flows from it, and this part of his life is considered as the whole of it. These damages are not chance occurrences but the mercy of the Holy Blessed One.¹¹

The sages tell us that when one realizes the truth and associates Heaven with his sufferings by prayer and by saying the blessing *Baruch Dayan Emeth* ("Blessed be the True Judge") he will have his sustenance fly to him. The sages also tell us that not only do judgments come upon us for our sin, but even when one comes under suspicion of some evil it is only because he has at one time done this thing or part of it, had it in mind, or saw others doing it and enjoyed it. One

9. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 22.

10. *Zohar* 3:8b, Sni Luchot Vayashev

11. *Ibid.* 3:46b

must be careful of suspecting others of transgression and should never call Divine Judgment on one's fellow man, as the sages teach in Talmud (tractate *Rosh Hashanah*). Rabbi Yitzchak tells us there are three things that bring iniquity to mind: a shaky wall, expecting instant results, and testing God with one's prayer. Rabbi Abin adds that if one calls Divine Judgment on his fellow man, he is punished for his sins first. Even if the other is at fault, his iniquity is served upon him inflicting his body. ¹²

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai shows us that there is also great benefit in our hardships, as God delights in the soul but not in the body. He afflicts the body so that the soul may gain freedom. So we see physical suffering is only to remove a covering from the soul so that it may be more openly revealed.¹³ It could be that a body's animal desires are too strong, causing much damage, so God weakens it, letting the Divine Soul become more revealed. But if one were to neglect the spiritual the *otherside* is strengthened, as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that when Israel neglects to support the Torah, the serpent who was sentenced to crawl on its belly is thereby provided with supports and legs on which to stand firm and upright.¹⁴

Rabbi Yehuda tells us how to raise our head, and not that of the serpent, as he teaches that while we are exiled from our land and offerings have ceased it is learning of the Torah and performance of good deeds that enable the community of Israel to raise its head high in exile. The true offerings of the righteous are their deeds. ¹⁵

Even if one is involved in the Torah as it appears to him, he still needs to be sure that he is really true to his convictions, as Eliyahu Ha Navi teaches about a generation whose

12. Ibid. 3:218a.

13. *Bava Kamma* 50a.

14. *Sanhedrin* 7a.

15. *Avodah Zarah* 18a., Alshich on Mishley

Disciples of the wise are at strife with each other. They are a seeing people whose hearts contrive covert schemes. If the business of these people is Torah, they do not keep the Torah and their punishment is Gehenom. For there to be true Torah there must be peace among disciples, as Rabbi YOSSI that when people live in peace and do not harbor quarrelsome people in their midst, God has compassion on them and rigorous judgment is not invoked against them.¹⁶ Serpent like behavior causes one to study Torah so to be able to harass and argue with others.

There is another situation we must work to avoid, as Rabbi Shmuel explains:

¹⁷ Famine comes to the world for the sins of the rich, yet the poor suffer most. This is because nothing is as dear to God as a broken and contrite heart. During a famine, the poor weep and cry before the King and He draws them nearer than ever-then woe to the sinners who brought on the famine, as God hears the voice of the poor. Sometimes one may undergo a hardship when the trial for the most part, is not on him as much as on the one who is given the opportunity to come to his aid.¹⁸ In a similar circumstance, the righteous are given the opportunity to prevent the transgression of the wicked, as stated in the *Zohar* that a righteous man is seized for the sins of the wicked if he does not try to stop them when it is within his power. ¹⁹

One must do all he can to prevent transgression. as all Israel depends on this. If not, Heaven forbid, all Israel is weakened, as

Rabbi Abba teaches in the *Zohar* that the righteous are smitten to atone for the wicked of

must the righteous themselves beware of transgression, as Rabbi Ebbe Acha teaches in the Talmud (tractate *Bava Kamma*) that the Holy Blessed One is particular with those round about Him even in matters as light as a single hair. Rabbi Chaninah further states that one who says Hashem is lax in judgment, his life is outlawed.

the generation, and it is through the righteous

In this world we see there is deep judgment over one's transgressions.²¹ Rabbi Hamnuna teaches in the Talmud (tractate *Sanhedrin*) that the first judgment in the hereafter is concerning study of Torah. The more one learns, the greater is his responsibility. as Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches in the Talmud (tractate *Avodah Zarah*). that sins one treads under his heels will encompass him about in the Judgment Day.

The study of the Torah is of great importance. but no commandment should be taken lightly. This is reflected in the words of King David when he says in Psalms: "Why should I fear the day of evil when the iniquity of my heel will surround me?" (Ps. 49:6). Whoever has reserved a place for Torah study and prayer will overcome his enemies.

The righteous look forward to the day when they are prepared for the Judgment Day and the World to Come, but alas for the wicked who never consider more than this world. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai teaches in the Talmud (tractate *Horayot*): "Happy is the generation whose ruler brings a sin offering for an unwilling transgression. as if the ruler will bring an offering so will the common man. Happy are the righteous men who suffered in this world according to the deeds of the wicked. but woe to the wicked in the world to come that prospered in this world as the righteous." The wicked may enjoy and prosper in this world but this is not their end.

that Israel is strengthened and stern judgment is suppressed.²⁰ All the more so

16. *Horayot* 10b.

17. *Chullin* 7b.

18. *Taanit* 7a.

19. Midrash Rabba Song of Songs 6:2.

20. Ibid. Lamentations 1 :6.

The righteous may suffer in this world, but this is only for their good and benefit. as Rabbi Chaninah teaches in the Talmud (tractate *Chullin*), that no man bruises his finger here on earth unless it is decreed against him in heaven. Blood of a bruise atones like the blood of a burnt offering. This is reflected in the words of King David when he says:

"The steps of the strong man are directed by God. and in his path he delights" (Ps. 37:23). The man who is strong in his attachment to his Creator, the Holy One, personally looks over and directs his path so that he can receive correction in this world-while the wicked seem to prosper and not receive Divine judgment. This is only because they do not draw the Holy One near them. so He allows them to continue in their way without correcting them till the day of judgment when they will finally realize where they really stand. But the righteous are closely watched by God, as Rabbi Yochanan teaches in the Talmud (tractate *Taanit*) that he who lives a more righteous life is judged stricter above, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches that he who bears chastisement joyfully brings salvation to the world. It is a great sanctification of the Holy One when one realizes that the hardships and discomfort he faces are the work of the Holy One, and realizes it is only for his own improvement. ²³ This reflects a great faith in God.

The sufferings of atonement, if received properly. are of great merit but much suffering is unnecessary and can be avoided by not inviting it into your home, as Rabbi Levi teaches that the door that is not open to good deeds will open to

21. Ibid. *Kohelet* 3:9.

22. Ibid. 10:11, Sni Luchot haBrit Bishalach

the doctor.²⁴ One needs to be eager to find deeds of kindness to do, as Rabbi Shimon ben Abba and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teach in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua that the tender-

23. Ibid. *Smot* 13:3.

24. Ibid. 3: 14.

hearted are as lambs, but because of the hard-hearted God turns his head away when people transgress against us in exile. Concerning these hard-hearted ones, Rabbi Pinchas teaches in the name of Rabbi Reuven that it is when one is quarrelsome, a slander monger, an evildoer engaging in strife and violence, that places one in Gehenom. How can we expect kindness from God if our own people do not care for one another-but the mercies of the Holy One are infinite ²⁵ When Judgment, Heaven forbid, lands upon a person in whatever form, do not even begin to consider it as a chance occurrence in as much as God could not be responsible as He is all-merciful. Rabbi Abba and Rabbi Kahana teach that never does a serpent bite, a lion maul, or government interfere with men unless it has been cited from above. Sometimes the mercy of God is hidden, as is taught by Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish that God warns a man three times and if he refuses to repent then God hardens his heart so that he is unable to do so, so that correction through judgment can occur.²⁶

One should not be quick to rebuke someone for transgressions, if he sees he is suffering and knows its cause,²⁷ as Rabbi Levi teaches that he who suspects his friend of something for which he is not guilty will be smitten in his body. There is a middle road where one may comfort his brothers that are suffering and yet at the same time seek to strengthen their faith and bring them to God,²⁸ but rebuke is a difficult matter often unfortunately misused, and its specifics Will be discussed later with the help of God.

It is a bit easier to rebuke oneself, and this introspective nature is most necessary, as the

sages teach that Israel

25. Ibid. Ruth 2.
26. *Zohar Emor*.
27. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 55:7.
28. *Kad HaKemach*. chapter "Atonement."

during the period of Judges was neglectful of repentance so God cast them into a deep sleep. So in this generation we must strive to become closer to God, toiling vigorously in the Torah from introspection to wipe away the sleep from our eyes. It is clear that this is no time for sleep in view of the stern judgments we have seen come upon us. The sages teach that, as in the plagues of Egypt, when punishment is decreed not only are the messengers of punishment active but others are drawn into activity by the action, and if one has judgments suspended against him they may be called upon him by one of the punishing angels.²⁹ During times of judgment such as these, and other matters yielding uncertainty, Rabbi Huna tells us under the authority of Rabbi Eliezer that the Holy One places the righteous in suspense and in doubt only to subsequently reveal the real meaning of the matter to them. These real meanings can be difficult to decipher, as we are not Rebbi. The Talmud (tractate *Bava Metzia*) teaches about Rebbi (Yehuda the Prince), who knew that his thirteen year attack of kidney stones was caused by failing to show compassion to a baby calf. The word "sufec" (doubt) does not exist in the Torah, as doubts involving Divine things have no foundation and don't really exist. They are only caused by faults of our perception.

The Malbim helps us to understand the nature of judgments by teaching us that punishment for transgression against true faith or ethical principles is meted out in a natural order, but transgression against natural law like murder calls the providential order of judgment into play. Elijah the Prophet teaches that God chastises Israel only to bring him to truth,

which is the Seal of God. One way to reach truth is through poverty, as Eliyahu teaches it is through poverty that we come to fear God.³⁰ They who act out of love come to it only through poverty, but in the long term poverty is a curse and we are responsible to see that

29. *Malbim parsha Bereshith.*

30. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 18.

none of our brothers or sisters are left destitute, or as Elijah the Prophet teaches us: "Blessed is the man who shares the distress of the community; he is given ample reward from Heaven."³¹ Concerning dealing with all judgment in general, Elijah gives some good advice, teaching that when a man has words of Torah within him his heart learns to live with them.³²

31. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 5.

32. *Ibid.* ch. 15.

6

JUST WAY Gate Three

When the letters of the first word of the Torah, *Bereshith*, are rearranged, they can spell *ashrei bait*- "happy house." This signifies how great is the bringing of happiness to the world. To achieve this goal we can begin with the advice of Elijah the Prophet that a man should always get himself a comrade to eat with him, drink with him, recite Mishnah with him, recite *Chumash* with him, and reveal to him secrets of the Torah and worldly things.¹ Just as it is so important to have good companionship, so must one avoid the company of evil men, as it is taught that one should not even look at the face of an angry man or an evil man. Energy radiates from the faces of such people and this negative energy is far from the Torah. But when one's thought, speech,

1. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 16.

and actions are directed in Torah and *mitzvot*, he reaches the highest root of influence on man: the forces of creation connecting the world to its original source.

Approaching a complete life of Torah can be seen in this parable: A macrobiotic health food fanatic will not eat certain food, and others he must have, and what he refrains from seems a burden to him until he reaches complete understanding of the nature of the destructive elements from which he abstains. This comes parallel with the knowledge of the benefit of those foods that he chooses to eat. Then all this becomes his only option. This appears to be a gradual enlightenment, leading to freedom, yet the power of prophecy is given when needed, and at the proper time, not necessarily just by merit of the individual, as Yehu killed all worshipers of the *Baal* in a minute.

One can bring oneself closer to perfection by developing listening skills, the ability of expression, the ability to arrive at new ideas not given previously by others. These skills help one to advance toward a perfect state. The Malbim teaches us that the soul was originally a lofty essence, an active intellect involved in absolute truths that it grasped instantaneously, as it was not joined to matter. But now the highest point of the revelation of prophecy is mediated by the imaginative faculty, thus resulting in lofty visions through masks and wrappings, these

being the "unclear mirror". Chidushim (new ideas) in the Torah one reveals in this world are insights their soul received at Sinai. Even the prophecies of the prophets were revealed at Sinai.²

Now we can develop our intellectual and imaginative faculties, thus bringing greater revelation of the soul within, by the developmental skills cited above. Also quite important and overlooked, we must realize the limits of our perception, grieve over our inadequacies and yearn to widen our spiritual

2. *Malbim parsha Bereshith.*, Alshich on Proverbs

horizons. Then God will grant us further insights. Just as the methods and traits above help one to acquire revelation of the soul, one must also be aware of unethical conduct and poor character traits, laziness, and unwillingness to overcome handicaps and evil tendencies. A lack of sensitivity concerning these warps mentality and prevents harmony.

In the school of Elijah the Prophet it is taught that a man should always be resourceful in exercising his fear of God, striving to be on the best terms with his father and mother, master, fellow, and all men. Thus he will be loved on high and regarded well below. His company will be welcomed by his fellows, and his days will be filled with good.³ The proper relationship of a man to his fellows is obviously a deep matter. We get some primary direction in proper behavior in our relationship to others from Rabbi Ashi in tractate *Sanhedrin*, where he states that if two boats going in opposing directions meet on a river, both will sink if they try to pass simultaneously so it is proper to let the one with a greater distance to travel proceed first.⁴ From here we learn a general rule: to establish peace in all our relationships. That is, whoever needs the most help and has the greatest distance to return to God, to this individual we should cater instead of being obsessed with only our own spiritual needs. Whether a person needs help in learning

Torah or taking care of his children, let one put his journey aside for a while to come to the other's aid. These words of Rabbi Ashi contain many secrets and lessons, as all the words of our sages, so they should be looked at closely.

It is important that we take time to turn aside from our business and help our brothers that are unlearned in the ways of the Torah, for Elijah teaches us that the hatred that

3. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 1.

4. *Sanhedrin* 32b.

the immoral, unlearned Jewish man holds against disciples of the wise is greater than the hatred the nations of the world harbor for us.⁵ If we can share even a small portion of the Torah with these men, we can dislodge a bit of this evil hatred from their hearts. Know that the Sni luchot haBrit teaches on parsha Vyigash that the redemption will not come when there is strife and baseless hatred in Israel.

We are told in tractate *Sanhedrin* that Rabbi Zeira showed friendship to lawless men in his neighborhood in order to lead them back to the way of God. All Jewery are one entity. Unlearned Jews are as the physical body. "Religious" are as the spirit. There for pious men do not separate from the unlearned but form a bond with them so as to watch over them with a compassionate eye and return them to the good path. All Jews are as limbs of one body as long as one is not "cut off", there is still a possibility of a cure. Each one of man's limbs is a branch of the *Atz Chym* (Tree of Life)⁶ One should love God to the extent that they call others to love Him. We can learn from his example. This is not to say that one should be immersed in the company of the wicked or ignorant, for this is clearly wrong as King David says at the beginning of Psalms: "Happy is the man that walks not in the counsel of the wicked; in the way of sinners he does not stand, and he does not sit with scorners" (Ps. 1: 1- 2). But one may go to those brothers who will accept our

company and share with them what counsel he may give them, and they will learn a great deal if only by observing the conduct of the righteous man. Soon, these lawless men will be discussing the great questions instead of scorning at what they did not understand.

Men unlearned in the Torah are dormant souls. They are as the wick of a lamp, and a son of the Torah can be as a flame to this wick. The dormant soul, when fed the pure oil that is Torah and then ignited from the holy spark of another Jew, begins to function effectively as a whole lamp, body and soul. This applies not only to the sinner who is being elevated, but to the one who is elevating him; both receive great good from this experience, as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches in the *Zohar* that he who seeks a sinner and takes him from his evil way is elevated as no other.⁷ It 'would be good for one to set aside time each day, week, or month, depending on one's

5. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 16.
6. *Sanhedrin* 37a. Toldot Yaakov Yosef Kiddoshim, Otzer HaChyim, Sni Luchot haBrit
7. *Zohar* 2: 128b.

spiritual level, to go out and help others see the truth of the Torah, bringing them closer to God. Elijah makes a strong statement concerning one's time when he teaches that a mortal should look at himself and realize that after a short time, death comes. Let him lift his eyes to heaven and ask, "Who created these, the heaven, earth, sun, moon, stars, planets; early and late, they do the will of their Creator." In a like manner, early and late every day without fail, one is to be at the words of the Torah in order to do the will of his Creator.⁸ Finally, everything else will seem foolish, as when one is deeply enjoying physical pleasures he always finds the time goes just too quickly. Spiritual pleasure is of the same order: The time is just too short to interrupt for food and drink. Our level of revelation is always changing. Sometimes we find it more difficult to fulfill the

commandments of the Torah than we do at other times. We do not always have the same inner motivation to do what is right. This is because, as Rabbi Miller teaches, life is as a ship traveling on the waters; there are low and high tides, and one cannot depend on the high tide alone- but by use of sails and his ability to control them, he can carry his ship in the desired direction even with ordinary winds, and even if it is contrary to the direction in which the wind propels him.⁹ In any case, one must make the most of each moment that his soul occupies a body in this world.

It is explained that one hour of *teshuvah-return* to God-is worth more than all the World to Come (Olam HaBa), for only in this world can our personal entrance fee to Olam HaBa be attained. Spent constructively, an hour may have three times its value. Time is so precious that we count the seven-year cycles. All time spent on spiritual desires have a permanence in relation to their product.

8. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 15.

9. *The Secret of Happiness*.

By all means, we must try to ride out the wave that each moment has to offer. Through this, we will not only remove the blocks we have put up between ourselves and the Creator, but beyond this atonement we will gain a new closeness to the Blessed Holy One. The way to reach this has been laid out by our sages. The men of the Great Assembly made a fence around the Torah because without the open revelation of Divinity, such as living Prophets, innovations were needed to insure the continuance of the way of a Torah lifestyle. These innovations were needed for our protection. They are the fence on the sides of God's Torah Path keeping us on the way toward that ultimate goal. In traveling that path of acquisitions toward holiness, one must have wisdom that is humility, bravery that is self-control. and wealth that is a state of peace. This

peace is a guiding principle, as taught by Rabbi Kahana in the Midrash *Pesikta*, that the King of the universe has the power to make peace by making His creations surrender to one another and to Him. ¹⁰ This is why we make peace between fellow men, the decisive factor when figuring out how to apply a rule of law. When there is peace between fellow men, then God can dwell in their midst as God's Name is "Shalom" - Peace-as explained in the Talmud.

Just as we can use peace between fellow men as a principle in showing us how to apply the laws of the Torah to avoid its opposite, so too it is appropriate for us to look at other primary holy traits and their opposites to better understand the dictates of the Torah.

The flagrant violation of ritual law is countered by its opposite, piety. Antisocial behavior is countered by social responsibility. Immoral or immodest behavior of a sexual

10. Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana, pesikta 1.

7

PURIFICATION OF THE PERMITTED

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches us that the Exalted Creator's purpose for the creation of man was to discipline the soul and to test it in this world so that it might be purified and attain the character of the holy angels, as the Prophet Zechariah states: "I will give you free access to those who stand." Divine Wisdom deemed it necessary to test souls by union with

physical bodies that have the capacity for growth and increase through food given to them, bodies that could procreate other individuals to take their place.

In this world the Creator gave enjoyment as a reward for exercising these functions. If a person lets his inclination toward these pleasures dominate his understanding, his soul will be drawn to them yielding to excesses that injure its existence and destroy the body-hence the need for the

As taught by Rabbi Yitzchak, one should first do the precepts in fear, and through that fear he will come to do them in joy. It is forbidden for a man to rejoice excessively in the mundane, physical world, but in the precepts of the Torah it is quite right for him to rejoice.

First, one should aim at unifying the Name of his Master in fear, with which the ascent heavenward commences. The ascent begins⁶ through purification of the permitted, limiting permitted physical pleasures. This and the sufferings one endures for the sake of heaven are a very personal matter, varying with each individual based on the nature of his soul.

In tractate *Bava Kamma*, this matter is dealt with where the sages tell us that Rabbi Chisda would raise his pant legs when he walked between thorns because the body, if injured by

nature, will heal, but if his garment were to be torn by nature there is no cure. But Rabbi Eliezer HaKippor ben Rebbe teaches that a Nazarite who does not drink wine brings a sin offering for his abstention: all the more so one who deprives himself in all matters. Not everyone can act as Rabbi Chisda,⁷ and for the wrong soul such behavior would be not much more than a transgression. Yet we do find admonitions from the sages, such as in tractate *Sanhedrin* where Rabbi Yehuda ben Shimon teaches that whoever emaciates his face for the sake of the study of the Torah in this world, the Holy Blessed One will make his face shine in the next. One who starves himself for the Torah in this world, God satisfies them in the next. We see from these statements that the deprivations must be done for the sake of the Torah,⁸ for the sake of study of the Torah. If one were to go without food and sleep and yet spend his time involved in secular affairs and

6. Ibid. 5:56a.

7. *Bava Kamma* 91b.

8. *Sanhedrin* 100a.

not find his delight in the learning of the Torah, how do these actions reflect fulfilling the Torah for its own sake?

As explained earlier, deprivations are only a means to free the soul from the bondage of the body, bringing it closer to God, but the deprivations themselves do not fulfill this end if a person's mind is elsewhere. But he who rises early and stays late in the house of study, blackening his face from deprivation and hunger as a raven, will pile up mounds of explanations on every letter of the Torah. Ben Azzai adds further that if a man debases himself for the sake of the Torah-eating dry dates, wearing shabby clothes, sitting on the ground, keeping guard over the wise- even though every passerby thinks he is a fool, in the end you will find the whole

Torah is within him. The Chutz Chym teaches that those who strive day and night in the Torah and their face becomes black from poverty. To cleave to Torah and Mitzvot is their only hope and desire. While many hinder and mock them. They brace themselves to stand firmly at their Holy post. These attain the peak of spiritual elevation in these times.

The sages in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*⁹ give us more insight, teaching that the way of study of the Torah is eating a morsel of bread and salt, water by measure, sleeping on the ground, and laboring in the Torah.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches us another aspect of this Divine service in the Midrash,¹⁰ that God has given wanderings to those that fear him. Rabbi Alexandri adds to our understanding¹¹ by teaching us that there is no man without suffering; happy is he whose sufferings come through the Torah. All experience hardships of some sort,¹² while in this world we can make ours for the sake of Heaven through our Divine service. From Rabbi Levi, we learn that God's afflictions of love do not hinder one from learning the Torah.¹³ Blessed is the man whose sufferings only strengthen his soul, yielding him greater revelation and determination in his

9. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* 22b.

10. *Kallah Rabbati* 54a.

11. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 40:2.

12. Ibid. 92: 1.

13. Ibid.

study of the Torah. The sages teach that this determination yields a great reward, as one who withstands the test instead of rebelling against God in poverty receives a double portion in the World to Come.

Another asset of purification of the permitted is explained by Rabbenu Bachyah.¹⁴ He teaches that the majority of transgressions require at least two people, such as fornication, fraud, and lying. Solitude and seclusion can save one from many sins and is the utmost means of securing good qualities, it being the chief support for purity of the heart. Good is the love of solitude, but one must not be misled against association with wise men.

Rabbenu Bachyah further explains¹⁵ that the kind of abstinence most in line with the way of the Torah is when one separates from the world in his heart, but is involved in some physical occupation for the material benefit of mankind. The soul should abhor this world and its wealth, yearn for the World to Come, and take from this world only what is needed in order to have spiritual provisions in Olam HaBa. Seclusion is a most precious aid in coming closer to God, but as in all areas of abstinence, there is need for moderation in seclusion as well.¹⁶

For a general principle we can turn to a teaching of Rabbenu Bachyah, that one should diminish desires in this world to such an extent as desiring only what one would want if he were going to leave this world by the evening of this day. This is not easy by any means, for just as it is impossible for a drunkard to be cured of his lust for wine till he is completely separated from it,¹⁷ so must we free our hearts of the desires of this world before our bodies can become disengaged from

14. Ibid. *Shemot* 31:3.

15. Ibid. *Bereshith* I: 15.

16. *Duties of the Heart* 2:305.

17. Ibid. 325.

its concerns. This is one place where seclusion and solitude can be used to help one overcome this battle,¹⁸

Seclusion that is an affliction of the soul is just as necessary as the affliction of the body, as Rabbi Avraham teaches in *Meditation of the Sad Soul* that one can afflict his soul by eschewing all vain and idle words, speaking only words of wisdom, words of Torah not having the heart to contemplate evil or the affairs of this world but desiring to contemplate holiness and the wonders of the upper worlds. If he starves his body but does not afflict his soul, the sages say he will be punished for the hunger of his soul. Rabbi Avraham further teaches, concerning one who separates from the mundane things of this world with his body and his SOUL,¹⁹ that the man who keeps aloof from the affairs of this world, despising its evil desires, refraining from any action not connected to a commandment rejecting worldly possessions and despising all wealth and riches, can be confident that he will receive his reward in the World to Come.

To obtain any of the lofty objectives of the Torah,²⁰ one must beware of sleep, as Rabbi Nathan notes that sleep is an aspect of slavery. Sleep can steal time, and we have already discussed how precious each moment's potential is.²¹

A final word on this subject from our holy teacher Elijah the Prophet: It must be made clear to mortals that whenever a man endures affliction because of his study of the Torah and because of his carrying out the commandments, a reward for his exemplary behavior is given to him-but the principal reward is kept for him in the World to Come. Shamaï said serving God for material reward is permitted, while Hillel held that serving God for material reward or reward of the world to come are equally forbidden.²²

18. Ibid. 381.

19. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 73.

20. Ibid. 134.

21. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 242.

22. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu* 410.

8

JUST WAY Gate

Four

The Holy One always creates a solution before He creates a problem. One may have a problem when trying to come closer to the Creator through His Torah, especially at first, if failing to see the Creator's Will within the commandments. But the Creator gave the solution to this problem before He gave the Torah to Israel. The Malbim explains that it says in the Torah (Ex. 24:7) "We shall do" before "We shall hear." In order to recover the distorted nature of man one must do first, and subsequently the intellect will come to comprehend the truth.¹ Here we have judgment with mercy. The judgment is our separation from Torah understanding and the difficulty the separation creates. The mercy is the solution of initial

1. *Malbim parsha Bereshith.*

doing as explained above. When the obstacles in Divine service seem insurmountable, just proceed and it will be easier the next time.

However, one must also beware when things seem to be going very well. God caused the Egyptians to bring in their horses during the plagues, but this was only so as to set them aside for their final destiny drowning at the Red Sea. One should know that though things seem to be favorable, God, at times, encourages and even leads people in the paths they choose. So, in making choices, one must be most careful, especially if he is a student of the Torah, as it is taught by Elijah the Prophet that a disciple of the wise who learns Chumash and Mishnah, but in business does not deal with integrity, brings destruction to the world.²

Often, people err in believing that since they have had success in their business practices, they are in line with the Will of the Creator in life and that He is honoring them with reward. Many times it is true, but this is their *only* reward, just as Pharaoh's horses were only being prepared for a later, unpleasant end. The sages teach us that jealousy, greed, and the search for glory hastens one's departure from this world. These traits are the root of motivation leading to many a man's falling into callous and unjust business practices. Rabbi Miller, in his book *The Secret of Happiness*, teaches that we can learn from God's giving one ration of manna to each person equally. The lesson is that happiness does not consist in accumulation through competing, racing, grabbing, and subduing others. This was shown further by the fact that even if one accumulated an excess of manna, he found it was not more than the other fellow's when he took it home. This shows us there is no good in letting greed prevail. Manna only came in small pieces, showing that the ingredi-

2. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 16.

ents to happiness are small things one can reach.³ When man acts in self-centered ways, he absorbs impurity till he starts defiling the land. The land will not adapt to the people, but will expel them since they defile it, as with the Great Flood and the destruction of the people of Canaan.

Rabbi Shimon teaches that the place against which a sin has been committed itself reveals the sin.⁴ One need not despair, as atonement is given by the mercy of God and purification is effected through one's own efforts. Specifically, one must go beyond his normal level of comfort to effect purification, as signified in the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Through our service on this day, we correct the damages we have brought into this world, preventing the curses in the Torah, such as (Deut. 11: 17): "The Earth will not yield its produce." We must at all costs avoid defiling the Earth, as we depend upon her. Dependence of one upon another exists throughout the entire creation. The *kohanim* and the Levites are supported by others, showing that God prefers dependence on others to wealthy independence. Just as the *kohen* and Levi are dependent on the rest of Israel, so we are dependent on the earth if we want to see length of days. The sages teach in the Talmud (tractate *Berachot*) that three things, if they are lengthened, lengthen a man's days: prayer, meals, and the time in the lavatory. One should pray many prayers, but not expect his requests to be automatically granted. At one time, the sacrificial altar atoned for Israel. Now one's table, through the spiritual elevation of his food, accomplishes it. This will be explained in depth later.

In the teachings of Elijah the Prophet we find, as Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov teaches, that the Holy One bestows wealth upon a man through a man's love for Him, reverence,

humil-

3. *The Secret of Happiness* 46.
4. *Zohar* 2:85b.

ity, meekness, compassion. peace, diligent study, attachment to scholars, discussion with disciples, through his yes being yes and his no being no- in short. Through labor in the Torah and labor at right conduct, the Holy One comes to treasure such a man.⁵ If one sees that he is falling short of these examples of proper behavior, he can begin anew. To start a new day, one must truly see himself as ignorant and crude before God. One must remove from his mind all that has passed as if he is a new baby; then he can live a good, sweet, and pleasant life and enter the portals of heaven. Rabbi Yossi tells us in the *Zohar* that as soon as the influence of the *sitra achra*-the other side-dies, God brings to life the side of holiness. All this the Holy One, Blessed is He does at one and the same time.⁶ The pushing away of negative traits and replacing them with holiness is taught by Elijah to Rabbi Barokah and Rabbi Eleazer of Hozea in tractate *Taanit*. There we learn that two men who act as jesters cheering up depressed men, as well as those who strive to make peace between quarreling people have a share in the Eternal World to Come.?

Man must rid himself of depression and strife so that he can bring atonement to the world. This atonement comes from eating and drinking and being joyous, as taught by Rabbi Albo, for by these Israel blesses, praises, and extols the Holy One, Blessed is He.⁸ In one of the highlights of rejoicing at a wedding, Rabbi Chelbo teaches in the name of Rabbi Huna, by gladdening the bridegroom one becomes privileged to acquire knowledge of the Torah that was given in five

5. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu*.

6. *Zohar* 3:205a.

7. *Taanit* 22a.

8. *Midrash Rabba Esther* 3: 13.

voices. This rejoicing is a thanksgiving offering,

it is as if one is restoring the ruins of Israel.⁹

When one follows the examples of exemplary behavior, as has been discussed above, he will not have to fear from evil. Elijah teaches that evil does not come to him who does good, nor good to him who does evil, but good comes to good and evil to evil.¹⁰ One can then follow the teaching of Rabbi Aklva without fear of beasts of the field, as it is taught that Rabbi Akiva liked the Medes who hold council in a field.¹¹ The beasts of the field have no power over the righteous man, as God watches over him to protect him, as it states in the Torah (Num. 6:24), "God will bless you and guard you," but one should never expect God to perform miracles for him or put himself into a place of danger.

One way to avoid danger is to beware of guests one invites into one's home. Rabbi Yossi ben Chaninah teaches us that a woman recognizes a person's character better than a man,¹² so one, if possible, should rely upon his wife in this matter of judgment. Rabbi Eliezer, in the name of Rabbi Yose ben Zimra, teaches that a woman is endowed with more understanding than a man.¹³ It is also taught by Rabbi Yehuda that righteous women are not included in the decree pronounced on Eve.¹⁴ Just as Rabbi Aklva taught us to meet in a field, we know the Prophetess Deborah went outside and sat under a palm tree, where she instructed the masses in Torah.¹⁵ It is known that Hulda the Prophetess sat in the House of Torah Study at the gate of the Temple Court, which in the Talmud

9. *Berachot* 6b.

10. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*. ch. 3.

11. *Be'rachot* 8b.

12. *Ibid.* 1ab.

13. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* IS:1.
14. Ibid, *Smot* 1 :20.
15. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*. p. 50.

is called the Gate of Hulda. She taught the Oral Law to the elders of the generation. She had a chamber next to the chamber of stone where the Sanhedrin convened.¹⁶ Eliyahu said that a woman helps man by making his eyes light up. The sages tell us that there is a secret tradition concerning how to identify the Moshiach that was passed from Jacob to Joseph to Asher and then to Serah his daughter, who lived to the time of King David. It is also known that the Torah was given to the women of Israel before the men because they act promptly to fulfill it. Without the **א** and **ה** of **איש** and **אשה** there is only **אש** (fire) of male and female aspects. Women are apt to display a higher degree of faith in God than men. It is due to the righteous Jewish women that we were redeemed from Egypt.¹⁷ With all these facts in mind, it is obvious the great value a man's wife is to him, and women in general to Israel. It is no wonder that we find many statements throughout the Torah teaching that a man is not complete without a wife. Most sons have the character of their mother's brother. It should also be noted in the teaching brought down in the name of Rabbi Levi that women have tendencies toward being greedy, inquisitive, envious, indolent, quarrelsome, and gossiping. Of these traits they must beware.¹⁸ But both men and women must watch their speech, as speech is a garment of the soul.

It is taught in the name of Rabbi Mari, the grandson of Rabbi Huna, son of Rabbi Yirmiyahu ben Abba, that before leaving a friend one should not finish the conversation with idle talk, joking, or frivolity but a matter of Torah Law.¹⁹ Thus in all ways a man keeps God in the forefront of his thoughts, and the purpose within his actions. It is taught by

Rabbi Chaninah ben Akiva that if a man gets up early in the morning to gather straw and stalks still moist from the morning dew, we apply to him the verse "If water be put on the seed," but if he did this so as to not be disturbed from his usual work, these words don't apply.²⁰ Everything rests

16. 2 Kings 4: 11.
17. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 28:2, Sni Luchot haBrit Bishalach, Alshich Mishley
18. Ibid. *Devarim* 6: 11. , Alshich Mishley
19. *Berachot* 31a.
20. *Ervin* 87b.

within one's intent from his getting up early. Throughout his daily conversation, one must know God in all his ways for this reason, as Rabbi Chiyah bar Abba in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha teaches that one should always try to be first in the performance of a good deed,²¹ and concerning it Rabbi Yossi ben Abin and Rabbi Yossi ben Zeblah teach that even the dispensable parts of a commandment prevent calamities, as is taught in tractate *Sukkah*.²² So we must endeavor to perform the commandments meticulously. Concerning optional parts of commandments, they may not be required yet they glorify a precept. Not only do they prevent calamities but their importance is reflected in the teaching in tractate *Rosh Hashanah* that one who adopts only the more lenient rules of Shammai and Hillel is a bad man.²³ The good man, the righteous man, always has the Torah before him in all his ways and only desires the opportunity to fulfill the Holy One's will. He will not be looking in the Torah to find the easiest way out of a precept, but the most efficient way to fulfill it, bringing the greatest revelation of light into this world. Man must ever be changing his conduct, perfecting himself in the fulfillment of the commandments, for this is known to cancel out a judgment of doom upon a man, as taught by Rabbi Yitzchak that there are four things that

cancel doom upon a man-charity, supplication, change of name, and change of conduct.²⁴

Concerning drawing down the mercy of God, Rabbi Avraham, in his book *Meditation of the Sad Soul*, teaches that it is better for one to feed the hungry than to starve his own body unnecessarily. God does not want you to starve your body and have no pity for unnecessary affliction of the

21. *Bava Kamma* 38b.
22. *Sukkah* 38a.
23. *Rosh Hashanah* 14b.
24. *Ibid.* 16b.

flesh, but according to His attribute of mercy by which He has mercy on the hungry and thirsty and orders them to be fed, so should we act accordingly.²⁵ If we do not abuse our feelings of mercy and pity, we can expect God to respond to us with these forces when we need them. The school of Hillel teaches that He Who abounds in kindness inclines the scales of judgment toward kindness.²⁶ In tractate *Sanhedrin*, Rabbi Meir speaks of this teaching, saying that the measure by which one measures will be equally measured out to him. God gives to each righteous man his full hand.²⁷

Elijah the Prophet teaches that we are to cause the Name of Heaven to be loved by mankind, so we are to be loving in the give-and-take of everyday life in our dealings with men, for when a man is loving in the give-and-take of ordinary life, and besides recites Chumash and Mishnah, through such a man the Name of Heaven is sanctified.²⁸

In tractate *Rosh Hashanah*, we are taught that by extending love in measured actions involving others, God passes over a person's transgressions.²⁹ A man must be a man of kindness. Rabbi Huna teaches in tractate *Avodah Zarah* that one who studies the Torah but does not do acts of benevolence is as if he had no true

God.³⁰ Kindness is of such central importance that the Torah begins and ends with an act of kindness, as taught by Rabbi Similia in tractate *Sotah*.³¹ Elijah teaches that God, even in wrath, remembers and rewards, with the radiance of His countenance, the man who

- 25. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 74.
- 26. *Rosh Hashanah* 17a.
- 27. *Sanhedrin*.
- 28. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, p. 140.
- 29. *Rosh Hashanah* 17b.
- 30. *Avodah Zarah* 17b.
- 31. *Sotah* 14a.

has shown compassion to others in his lifetime.³² One who does not show compassion to his fellow man is evil, as Rabbi Abba explains the teaching of Rabbi Idi in tractate *Kiddushin* that one who is evil to Heaven and evil to man is a wicked man who is evil, but one who is evil to Heaven but not evil to man is a wicked man who is not evil.³³

Concerning doing kindness with God, Rabbi Bachyah teaches that Jerusalem was destroyed because the strict letter of the law was kept and never more. They did their duty, but no more. Sometimes, one who does not more than discharge his obligation has not done his duty.³⁴ Concerning the kindness one is obligated to have for his fellow man, we learn that a man cannot consider himself an island, but is to feel concerned with the condition of those around him. Elijah teaches that one who shares the troubles of his community will live to see the community's deliverance. He cannot look at a populace in deep distress and go home to eat and drink and be untroubled.³⁵ A frequently occurring opportunity to show kindness to one's fellow man is when walking together we may share a discourse on the Holy Torah.

Rabbi Aliyah ben Chiyah teaches in tractate

Megillah that two scholars who travel and do not discuss Torah deserve to be devoured by fire.³⁶ How important is it that one always has Torah in mind so he can be ready to discuss it at will? Few realize how important is the conduct between friends, whether there is peace amongst them or not: the world depends upon them. Each person is a small world.

With this in mind we should consider the teaching of

Rabbi Shimon ben Eliezer in tractate *Taanit* that one should be gentle as a reed but unyielding as a cedar.³⁷ These are *very* deep words containing many lessons requiring contemplation. One must be unyielding as a cedar involving the performance of the commandments in the proper time and place. Yet one must behave as a reed, which is flexible, thus bringing Torah to each situation, making the Torah appear as a thing of beauty to all eyes just as a reed is used in making beautiful music. With this understanding, it is possible to make *every* social contact with others a spiritual experience, strengthening ourselves and growing in application of Torah to daily life, as Torah is a way of life, not just a set of laws one takes on.

This is reflected in understanding Torah's opposite: idolatry, which in Hebrew is *avodah zarah*, literally meaning "strange worship." Throughout life, in *every* hour of the day and night a person is in some way either serving God or doing something "strange," alien to the Torah. Indeed, the Torah given to Moses is a teaching of a holy lifestyle. This is why the sages teach, in tractate *Nedarim*, that idolatry is so grave a sin that in the rejection of it is the fulfillment of the whole Torah.³⁸ One must not mistakenly think

32. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 1.

33. *Kiddushin* 40a.

34. *Duties of the Heart* 2:37.

35. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu*.

36. *Megillah* 10b.

that all one's days are involved only in Divine Service. This must be understood in context of the teaching of the *Zohar* that righteousness must be hidden and not brought out into the open lest the world be brought to offense.³⁹ You must consider the spiritual level of others around you and direct your action accordingly. Beware, for we learn that all who spend life in a deep slumber, not turning darkness into light or

37. *Taanit* 20b.

38. *Nedarim* 25a.

39. *Zohar* I :2b.

bitterness into sweet, will have no portion with Rabbi Shimon, author of the *Zohar*, in the World to Come.⁴⁰

To relate to Rabbi Shimon on any level, one must acquire wisdom of the Torah. It is known that fear is the final object of wisdom, but the highest order of wisdom can only be reached through the gate of fear. It is taught in the *Zohar* that fear is the gateway to faith,⁴¹ faith being the power that surrounds wisdom, as taught by the Rabbi Dov Ber of Lubavitch and to be discussed later. Rabbi Shimon teaches us concerning faith, in tractate *Menachot*, that a *kohen* who does not believe in the service has no portion in the priesthood.⁴²

40. Ibid. I :4a.
41. Ibid. I:11b.
42. *Menachot* 18b.

9

JUST WAY Gate

Five

yearning for Him.

The fear of God is not like fearing punishment by a fellow man, but fear of God comes from an awareness of Him, closeness to His Torah, raising within oneself the memory of being at Mount Sinai that awesome day of revelation, and hearing the spirit of Elokim Chaim (the Living God) speaking through the prophets. Rav Moshe Alsich teaches that man without the Spirit of Elokim in him is like mold that rots into nothingness.

Rabbi Eliezer teaches that whoever sets out to purify himself is helped from on high. A man should place his trust in God and nowhere else, purge his heart of all strange thoughts so as to make it as a path that leads straight to the desired destination, making God the only object of devotion in the world.¹ In achieving this goal of making God the only object of devotion one must acquire fear. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches us that to fear God because we are afraid of punishment or to receive a reward is not an adequate approach to the fear of God, but our awe is to be inspired by His Exalted Glory and Almighty Power. This awe does not depart from a person as long as he lives. This serves as an introduction to pure love and

1. *Zohar* 1:142a.

Once one realizes that he can get closer to

God, the Creator of the whole universe, anything else seems futile and small, incomparable to joining with God to shape the creation instead of passing one's day like cattle, passive participants.

For a deeper understanding of this raising of perception, Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that one must learn separation (from the permitted) before he can approach the love of God, for it is impossible for the love of the Creator to be firmly fixed in our hearts if the love of this world is there. But when the believer's heart is emptied of the love of this world and freed from its lusts as a result of perceiving and understanding, then the love of God may be established in the heart and fixed in the soul in accordance with his yearning

for and realization of God.²

The ultimate manifestation of pure love is shown when the soul apprehends what will bring more light and vigor to it. The soul will attach herself to it in her thoughts and dwell upon it in her imagination; she will desire and yearn for it.³ She will see it if one follows the instruction in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* that a man's house should be a place where the wise agree to meet. ⁴ Thus, one will always have righteousness before him. Concerning the meeting of companions, Rabbi

2. *Duties of the Heart* 2:341.

3. *Ibid.* 343.

4. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*.

Yossi tells us that it behooves men to abound in love for one another, removing enmity from their midst so as not to weaken the right side.⁵ Through this love one has access to life otherwise unaccessible, as taught by Rabbi Shneur Zalman. Love causes wisdom's vitality to flow downward, otherwise his wisdom descends without the flow of life from it, Heaven forbid.⁶

Rabbi Shimon tells us that a man who endeavors to serve the Holy One with joy in heart, soul, and will can be quite sure that the Shechinah (Divine Presence) dwells in him.⁷

In *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu*, we are taught that if one does not serve God with love, he will come to serving Him in the midst of hostility. If one doesn't serve God with joy in the midst of abundance of everything, he will come to serve Him in hunger, thirst, nakedness, and want of all things.⁸

Every morning before prayer the Ar"i would tell his students "Be sure to consciously fulfill the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself." And it is essential to fulfill this to the extent that the "chavarim" (friends) each become like a limb of one united body. We learn of the importance of

love from the generation of Rabbi Shimon. All the companions loved one another with heart and soul. Therefore, in his generation, secrets were revealed. Companions who do not love one another pass away before their time. Students who do not love one another cause a departure from the right path and a blemish in the very Torah itself, as Torah is the essence of love, brotherhood, and truth.⁹ We learn from Rabbi Shimon that one who worships out of love attaches himself to the Holiness of the World to Be, by reason of love, ascending by the right side to its attachment and adornment. Worship stemming from fear does not join this highest supernal sphere that is reserved for the worship of love. One worshipping in the spirit of love is destined for Olam HaBa.¹⁰

5. *Zohar* 1:201a.

6. *Tanya* 417.

7. *Zohar* 2:128b.

8. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 16.

9. *Zohar* 2:190b.

We learn from Rabbenu Bachyah, concerning the nature of this love, that the love of God is expressed because of benefits and kindness to us. This is because the Holy One, Blessed is He, forgives our transgression and inequity. One loves his Master for He is great and exalted and of awesome stature.

This love is manifested in one's personal service. foregoing one's own dignity if necessary. and with one's money. cherishing the Torah of God inwardly and exhibiting it openly. This love penetrates into all one's endeavors. One's love for another person should branch out of his love for God. 11

Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that the highest of all abodes in Olam HaBa is for those attached to the love of their Master, for their abode is linked to the palace that surpasses all, the Holy Blessed One being crowned in this one. This is

the palace of love established for the sake of love. So it is with the Holy Name. The forms of the letters link together so the whole is called love. He who loves his Master is linked to that love. ¹² All need to work constantly toward this end, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that all of us are in need of the mercy of Heaven, which is elicited by an arousal from below. So, at all times and every moment we should show compassion to those in need. He who hardens his heart and suppresses his compassion causes the same to happen above, Heaven forbid. ¹³ We should not be satisfied with a lower level of love, one that only negates judgment, but we should strive for, as Rabbi Yitzchak describes, *the palace of love*, to be one who is attached to the love of his Master. Rabbenu Bachyah explains to us, concerning these higher levels, that one who sets his mind on immediately attaining the love of God will fail to

10. Ibid. 2:216a.

11. *Duties of the Heart* 2:348.

12. *Zohar* 3:267b.

13. *Tanya* 479.

achieve this purpose; only when many preliminaries have been made will the love of God emerge. Then he will always be rejoicing with God, being glad to be with his Creator, exulting in His favor, longing for His visitation.¹⁴ Ultimately, one who constantly strives to keep the commandments in accordance with this, the Creator will strengthen and aid him to attain the true love that consists of aggrandizing and extolling Him beyond the normal power of humanity.¹⁵ Even though it is taught that to achieve this great love one must constantly strive to be more benevolent, yet it must be in its proper place, as Rabbenu Bachyah warns that the hatred of those who love God and the love of those who hate God is detrimental to manifesting love of

God. 16

All one's service to God must be motivated by love, as Rabbi Bachyah teaches that worship of God is only possible by loving Him, and fear includes love but love does not include fear. 17 It is possible for one to err in the service of the worship of love by showing love in the wrong place, as taught above. But from the left side, the side of fear and severity, error is also possible.

Rabbi Yehuda ben Korcha teaches in *Sanhedrin* that where there is strict justice there is no peace and where there is no peace there is no strict justice; peace and charity abide where there is arbitration, for the letter of the law will not let both parties abide in peace. 18

The sages teach in tractate *Kallah Rabbati* that great is peace, for the world is based on it. In the book of Ben Sirah we learn that we should love peace, for on it the world is based. Love all people and be on guard against pride as it kindles

14. *Duties job the Heart 2:353.*

15. *Ibid.* 359.

16. *Ibid.* 361.

17. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Love."

18. *Sanhedrin* 6b.

anger, breaks friendships, and builds sadness instead of the . song of symbols. 19 Unlike false pride that can be a barrier to peace, peace, Rabbi Shimon ben Halaftah tells us, is greater than any other vessel, for no vessel can contain blessing as effectively as peace; it is the seal of all prayer. Rabbi Eliezer Hakapar teaches that peace weighs everything. Elijah the Prophet teaches us that the way of the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed is He, is to make peace among all the inhabitants of the world and among all the handiwork He created in the world.²⁰

A man earns the favor of his Creator by seeking to make peace in emulation of the Holy One, Blessed is He, Who makes peace daily among the 496,000 myriads of ministering angels who

stand before Him, and Who tries to continually make peace among the nations of the world's inhabitants. So should one always make peace between Israel and God's Great Name. A man who seeks to make peace must be a humble man.²¹ Even though one should always strive to make peace and at most times this is accomplished through kindness, yet sometimes peace must be brought about through severity of judgment, as Rabbi Abba explains, telling us to observe that the severity of judgment in which the Holy One delights is fully defined, it being the judgment that evokes mercy and gladness.²² Thus, one needs a willingness to show forbearance, compassion, and forgiveness in making judgments. At most times, one should be merciful with others so as to draw them nearer to God.

The way you approach the Torah is the way it approaches you, as Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that if a man comes to attach himself to the Torah it will open to receive him, but if a man

19. *Kallah Rabbati* 52b.

20. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 17.

21. *Ibid.* p. 158.

22. *Zohar* 2:223b.

closes his eyes to it and walks the other way it turns its closed side to him. This is why the first letter in the Torah is the letter *beth*, which has one open and one closed side.²³

The sages teach that God created the world only so that He could bestow kindness on His creations. Rabbi Eliezer teaches that a man should do kindness so kindness may be shown to him.²⁴

A good object for acts of kindness is one's own parents, as Rabbi Yose teaches that one should honor his father with food and drink. ²⁵ This is an aspect of the service of honoring one's parents, which is a great commandment and part of the *Asereth HaDibroth*, the Ten Commandments.

We should always be among the servants of the kindness of God, as Rabbi Abba teaches that King David placed himself in four categories: among the poor, among the pious, among the servants, and among those who are ready to sacrifice themselves and their lives for the sanctification of His Holy Name.²⁶

We can learn of piety from Rabbi Abba, as he said to Rabba ben Marl in tractate *Bava Kamma*: If one calls you a camel, put a saddle on your back, do not quarrel with him; if one has any reproach in him let him be the first to say it; a duck keeps his head down while his eyes look afar; one should know that sixty Pains reach the teeth of one who hears another eating while he does not; the wine belongs to the householder, but one should always give thanks to the wine butler; a bad palm will make its way to a grove of barren trees; into a well from which you once drunk, do not throw clods; when we were young we were treated as men but now only as babies, as God led Israel by the Pillar of Fire and

23. Ibid. 3:35b.

24. Ibid. 3:54a.

25. Ibid. 3: 115b.

26 Ibid. 3: 195a

Cloud and then by an angel; behind an owner of wealth, chips are dragged along.

Rabbi Chanah teaches that one who invokes judgment on his fellow will be judged first. Rabbi Abbahu teaches that a man should rather be among those persecuted than among the persecutors, as the dove and pigeon are the most persecuted of birds yet they alone are eligible for the altar.²⁷ From these words one can learn many lessons in piety. The ideas involving moral virtue can be very deep and far reaching. Who can see the ultimate result of his actions?

In tractate *Bava Kamma*, Rabbi Yochanan teaches that to steal even one *prutah* is like taking away one's life from him.²⁸ One must forever feel content with his lot in life. Rabbi Chaninah in tractate *Bava Batra* teaches that he

who has a merry heart has a continual feast. King Solomon in his wisdom stated, "All the days of the poor are evil; a good heart has a continual feast" (Prov. 15:15).²⁹ By being satisfied with one's lot, one may always rejoice. It is not what we have that brings us pleasure or sorrow as much as the way we receive it.

The sages teach in tractate *Avodah Zarah* that lacking things is not poverty as much as the oppression by other nations, as it is taught that four are considered dead: the poor, being those oppressed by the nations of the world; the blind; the leprous; and the childless.³⁰ Obviously, one who has no children can still walk the face of the earth in his body and is not dead in a physical sense, so these words need some consideration. The righteous may be granted children when they die. Even if they have no children during their lifetime.

We must avoid, at all costs, being blind-blind to the Torah, Heaven forbid. To avoid this, Rabbi Shimon ben Pazzi

27. *Bava Kamma* 92a.

28. *Ibid.* 119a.

29. *Bava Batra* 145b.

30. *Avodah Zarah* 5a.

teaches that one who walks toward the wicked will stand with them, and he who stands with them will sit with them, and he who sits with them will scorn Godliness. It is obvious one should stay far from this degrading path of blindness.

Rabbi Eliezer teaches that one who scorns will be afflicted as the Prophet Isaiah warns, "You mockers, lest your blinders be made strong, I have heard from yhv"h Elokim of Hosts that it is decreed and determined concerning the whole land" (Is. 28:22). Rabbi Kattina adds, "His sustenance will be reduced." Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches that he falls to Gehenom, and

Rabbi Hanilai adds that he brings destruction to the whole world. Rabbi Shimon ben Pazzi concludes that at first one goes to the theaters of the wicked, then says, "Since tonight I am not going to the theater, I will go and indulge in sleep," thus abandoning the learning of Torah.³¹ Thus, one should not think of himself as so rooted in the way of God that he can go and rejoice much in secular affairs, especially at the gatherings of the wicked, for one who walks toward them, as said before, will sit with them. This is the way to a tragic end.

Always take hold of the Torah no matter what you may be doing, as King Solomon states, "It is a tree of life for those who hold fast to it" (Prov. 3: 18). There *is* a way one can partake of this world, and that is by seeing the Divine within it, as Rabbi Shimon Gamliel saw a beautiful Gentile woman and said, "How beautiful are your works, God." This is a very high level, for one should not stare at a beautiful woman or her attractive garments, as such thoughts during the day can bring one to defilement at night, Heaven forbid.³² To reach these great heights and avoid defilement, one should follow the path taught in the name of Pinchas ben Yair that study

31. Ibid. 18b, Sni Luchot haBrit

32. Ibid. 20b.

leads to precision, precision leads to zeal, zeal leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to restraint, restraint leads to purity, purity leads to holiness, holiness leads to meekness, meekness leads to the fear of sin, fear of sin leads to piety, piety leads to the Ruach haKodesh (Spirit of Holiness). and the Spirit of Holiness leads to the Eternal Life.³³ Each part of this path is spoken of in some length through this writing, and from this we see a direct approach to the Holiness of God. It is clear that the path to God through His *mitzvot* is something that continually requires much development and is always evolving.

Rabba bar bar Chanah in the name of Rabbi Yochanan taught that one who ate the Pascal lamb offering as if merely enjoying a large meal has this verse applied to him: "The transgressors stumble therein" (Hos. 14: 10). The fulfillment of the superficial letter of the Law is not enough. To eat a festival meal as just another big feast is not enough. One must strive for precision, zeal, and perfection in fulfillment of the commandments. An extreme example of this is taught by Rabbi Nachman ben Yitzchak, that a transgression with good intent is more meritorious than the performance of a commandment with no *kavanah* (intention). For we see that Tamar committed adultery but kings and prophets descended from her. From here we see the difference one's *kavanah* can make. Even if we do fall short of the mark, sometimes doing *mitzvot* almost lifelessly, we cannot despair but should turn to the teaching of Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rav, who teaches that one should engage in study of the Torah and commandments even if he does it *not* for its own sake, because he will come to do it for its own sake; one should always perform a good deed as soon as possible.³⁴

33. Ibid. 20a.

34. *Horayot* 10b

Even if we do not know what it is to do a commandment for its own sake, if we run to their fulfillment, the knowledge will come to us. Through doing, one will come to learn the fulfillment of the commandments for their own sake, each at his own level.

The sages teach in tractate *Menachot* that if a man is learned, it is well: if he has noble ancestors, it is better; if he has noble ancestors and is not a learned man, let fire consume him.³⁵ Those among us of noble ancestry have greater responsibility and are required to be learned so as to perform their proper roles in the fulfillment of the commandments, fulfilling

each part of the commandments to the best of each one's ability. If one falls short of his potential in the performance of a commandment, he has not lived up to his role in the creation, thus creating a lacking. Each one of us must do his best for we depend on each other, as one bodily organ depends on another and together they make up an organic system. There is really no mountain one must overcome, as Rabbi Shimon ben Azzi teaches: Whether a man offers little or much, so long as he directs his heart toward heaven it is of sweet savor to God. ³⁶

In tractate *Chullin*, the sages teach that grave is the sin of idolatry, in that he who denies it is as if he accepts the whole Torah.³⁷ By turning our hearts to heaven, as taught by Rabbi Shimon ben Azzi, our service brings a sweet savor to God. This is the key literally: that one always has God upon his heart, whether washing clothes or preparing a meal. as idolatry-avodah *zarah* in Hebrew-translates literally as "strange service." This way one will never find himself involved in "strange service." With God always before him,

35. *Menachot* S3a.

36. *Ibid.* 1 IOa.

37. *Chullin* 5a.

his life will be a statement of denial of idolatry by refusal to embrace the strange ways of this world, continually cleaving to God. This way the service of God will never be strange to us and we will never walk away from it even for a moment, Heaven forbid. This way, even the most mundane things become elevated, reflecting in them some level of Divine service. This way we can take activities that to most are purely mundane and devoid of Godliness and, by incorporating them into our Divine service illuminate a place that is vacant and dark, thus turning darkness into light.

Just as we can elevate the physical raising it

to reflect a change, turning darkness into light. we must be careful and heed the warning of Rabbi Yitzchak in the name of Rabbi Ammi, who teaches us that whoever emits his seed in vain is as though he sheds blood and worships idols, as the seed is light that has the potential to bring forth life; to discard it, Heaven forbid, is to cast the light into darkness. Rabbi Yitzchak further adds concerning this, that whoever sexually excites himself is inciting his evil inclination against himself; he is called a renegade. This is the way of the evil inclination: to get one to do something wrong, and then tell him to go worship idols.

Rabbi Ammi teaches that one who arouses himself with lustful thoughts cannot enter the division of the Holy Blessed One.³⁸ Such foolishness of a destructive nature cannot occur if one is occupied with the work of God. thus cherishing his soul, having God always before him. To help us reach this end, Rabbi Yehuda haNassi teaches in the Midrash in the name of the holy brotherhood, we should divide our day: one-third Torah study. one-third prayer. and one-third occupation. Others engage in their occupation in the summer and

38. *Niddah* 13a.

learn throughout the winter.³⁹ By organizing one's time in such a manner, one isn't left time to fall into folly. Further, concerning managing our life and our time the sages teach in tractate *Niddah* that a man should engage much in study, little in business pray for mercy from Whom comes wisdom and marry a wife worthy of him and he will have male children if he pleases his wife before himself. 40 The sages teach us that a good wife can help make a man worthy in his Divine service. Likewise, a wicked woman one must avoid, as she can have an adverse effect on any man. One needs a wife who desires the Torah and is not obsessed with material possessions. With such a woman for a wife, one

will be able to face all his tests and trials better, as she will be supportive.

One area of danger in the home where a pious woman is of much help concerns money, as Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that wealth is a blessing when it induces increased religious activity and one does not set his heart on it or trust in it. It is a test when one is sensitive to retain it and increase it, and it is a punishment when one enjoys it and draws pleasure from it to the extent that he is not fulfilling his obligations to his Creator and his fellow man. when a man believes that he presently is fulfilling his obligation to heaven and is happy and fortunate in all his ways. And he thinks that he does not fall short in his Divine service. This man is really lost forever and there is no remedy or recovery for him in his life time. He certainly has not even begun his Divine service.⁴¹

Another important rule for life, we learn from the sages in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, is that whoever hates another is considered as if he is a murderer.⁴² We see in tractate *Yevamot* that Rabbi Akiva's twenty-four thousand students died because they did not treat each other with respect.⁴³ With this in mind we can become aware of the gravity of our actions. To further emphasize this point, Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches us in *Tanya* that whoever is in a rage is as if

39. Midrash Rabba *Kohelet* 9:8.

40. *Niddah* 70b.

41. *Duties of the Heart* 2:84., *Safer Ahavat Dodim*

42. *Kallah Rabbati* 54b.

43. *Yevamot* 62b.

he worships idols, for were he to believe that whatever happens to him is God's doing, he would not be angry at all.⁴⁴ One can avoid anger by being careful how he speaks. In this way, one can at least limit the amount and severity of anger that one feels. To accomplish this, Rabbi Avraham teaches that one should only reprove a man who is, to some extent, God-fearing and

worthy of God's people.

Do not reprove scorners or the wicked.⁴⁵ One should never allow the Torah to become an object of scorn as a reaction to his rebuke. To judge who and for what reason it becomes necessary to rebuke another is a difficult matter, but the sages do teach that there is only One who is qualified to judge alone, and that is the Holy Blessed One.⁴⁶ This by no means exonerates us from the obligation to give rebuke to one it will help, as Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches that whoever shows mercy where he should be pitiless will in the end be pitiless where he should be merciful.⁴⁷ Remember, as Rabbi Huna teaches, that strife is as the opening made by water that widens as water passes through it. Shmuel said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda that happy is he who hears abuse and ignores it; one hundred evils will pass by him.

Rabbi Nachman teaches in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that one who renders judgment in perfect truth causes the Shechinah to dwell in Israel; one who does not render judgment in perfect truth causes the Shechinah to depart, Heaven forbid, from Israel.

We hear from Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that a judge who unjustly takes from one and gives to another has his life taken by God. In judg-

44. *Tanya* 535.

45. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 67.

46. Midrash Rabba *Devarim* 1: 10.

47. Ibid. *Kohelet* 7:16.

ment one should always see a sword dangling above his head and Gehenom under his feet opening before him.

Rabbi Chiyah bar Abba teaches in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that if a matter is as obvious to you as the prohibition against incest, give a decision-and only then. Resh Lakish teaches that placing into power an improper judge is as

planting an *aherah* (idolatrous tree). In the end all will be known, as Rabbi Chanah ben Chaninah teaches that one who gives improper judgment in the end is only causing the Holy One to correct his misjudgment, as stated in tractate *Sanhedrin*.⁴⁸ As we see, the judgments one must make can be difficult, so one must think deeply before acting in these matters. Everything we do involves some level of judgment. Concerning the matter of giving rebuke which involves the very careful judgments concerning whom to rebuke and how it must be done, Elijah the Prophet teaches that if one is like you in obedience to the commandments you are to rebuke him if the occasion arises, but a wicked man who hates you, you are not to rebuke. Concerning this occasion for rebuke, the masters teach in tractate *Sanhedrin*⁴⁹ concerning the verse "It is said that one will stumble through another," that each of us is responsible for the other. If it is within one's power to prevent another from doing evil he must do so.⁵⁰ Again, one must be careful to see that this is done only in the proper place and time. as is taught in tractate *Menachot* that a holy scholar who commits a misdeed must not be reproached publicly. ⁵¹ It is important that rebuke is given only in a proper way, otherwise it be something that is ugly-even evil. To better understand this, Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman teaches in tractate *Tamid* that

48. *Sanhedrin* 7a.

49. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*. ch. 18.

50. *Sanhedrin* 27b.

51. *Menachot* 99b.

one who reproves his neighbor for a purely spiritual motive is deemed worthy of a portion of the Holy One, Blessed is He.

Rebbe tells us to love reproof. As long as it is in the world, evil departs from the world and good blessings come. Let a man have scrupulous honesty. ⁵² He must be honest with those around him and with himself. If one finds, in truth, that

the rebuke he wants to deliver has any self-motivation, perhaps through arrogance, Heaven forbid, one should swiftly depart from such a course. As stated before, one must have a purely spiritual motive. One must remember that all the Holy One's ways are kindness.

The Holy One's kindness has many ways of expression, as Rabbi Bachyah teaches us that it is not sufficient to rebuke once, but if needed one must rebuke his friend again and again.⁵³ One can receive the necessary understanding and motivation to act upon this matter from contemplation upon the words of our teacher Rashi, in his commentary on Deuteronomy. There we learn that the guilt of Israel falls upon the heads of the judges. They should have protested against inequity and directed people along the path of righteousness.⁵⁴ If one becomes elevated to the point where he can see an error in the ways of his brother or sister, this awareness is to be acted upon and not to be repressed. With awareness comes responsibility and, as spoken of before and brought to our attention here, we are responsible for each other. If the roots of a tree are rotting, how can the leaves grow? How far should one go in carrying out rebuke? Rabbenu Bachyah relates that there was a dispute between Shmuel and Rav as to the extent one should go to rebuke

52. *Tamid* 28a.

53. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Baseless Hatred."

54. Rashi on *Devarim* 1:13.

another. One said till the rebuker is himself rebuked for the rebuke, while the other said till the rebuker is attacked.⁵⁵

Rabbi Bachyah also teaches us concerning this matter that the Creator publicly exposes a wicked man so we in turn are obligated to do so, otherwise people would consider him to be a reputable person when he is indeed wicked.⁵⁶

One must use the utmost discretion in this matter,
as to publicly embarrass is equated with murder.

55. *Duties of the Heart* 237.

56. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Flattery."

20

Supernal Speech

Concerning speech, it is taught by Rabbi

Schneur Zalman in the *Tanya* that the faculty of speech in the soul is analogous to the supernal speech referred to as "Malchuth" or "Shechinah." Hence when speaking words of Torah, one arouses the supernal speech to unite the Shechinah. Lips preserve Torah knowledge, they transform theoretical Torah learning to practical Torah knowledge. ¹ This is what one must strive for: bringing about this glorious unification. To help reach this goal, we learn from Rabbenu Bachyah, one should curb the movement of his limbs, beginning with his tongue, as the tongue's sins are more numerous than those committed by other parts of the human frame as it moves more easily and rapidly. Only speak that which is indispensable in the furtherance of your spiritual and secular

1. *Tanya* 543, Alshich on Proverbs

interests, and escape injurious results. This is why exhortations to limit speech occur so frequently in the Torah. It is good to review by night what one has spoken during the day to see what was necessary and what was perverse and defective, the tongue being the gate of the inner

being. So guard this portal. By guarding it one guards the treasury and what is contained therein. When speech is employed in a constructive manor it is called **דבור** and it makes positive impact in the celestial regions²

In tractate *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* it is taught that a man should speak calmly and not in anger, so his words will not be forgotten.³ How carelessly do people speak, not giving so much as a thought to what it is they are saying. People little realize the potential impact of the power their speech holds. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that everything is dependent on the tongue.

If a man has used his faculties in the study of the Torah, he has merited life, for the Torah is the Tree of Life. The Torah is the remedy for slander, as the wise King Solomon states: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Provo 18:21).

Hashem both loved and hated Israel because of her voice. The sin of speech is not limited to damage in the sphere of speech, but also in the sphere of deed. If you charge one of a crime punishable by death, your tongue acts like a sword.⁴ Not only is the damage of slander not limited to the sphere of speech, but its damages are beyond the immediate sphere from which the slander originates. It also brings condemnation down upon Israel, as Elijah the Prophet teaches that when slander spreads out on the earth and mounts up to the Throne of Glory, destroying angels descend at the command of Divine Power to seize the slanderers and throw them into Gehenom. But first the Mighty One sends out his arrows as stated in Psalms: "What shall be done to you false tongue,

2. *Duties of the Heart* 2:317.

3. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* 17a.

4. Kad *HaKemach*, chapter "Evil Speech."

sharp arrows of the Mighty" (Ps. 120:3-4). Then

Gehennom shall receive them.⁵ We see from this that all slander joins together collectively, and can, Heaven forbid, reach such a level that the severity of Divine intervention through destroying angels may be brought upon the earth to rectify the damage created by the defilement of speech.

With this knowledge concerning the effect of evil speech, we can begin to understand why Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the Talmud (tractate *Sotah*) said that it is better for a man to cast himself into a fiery furnace than to shame his fellow in public.⁶ One must strive so that all his speech will eventually fall into the category of supernal speech and separate himself completely from defiling himself with evil speech.

We have reviewed a bit concerning the proper expression of speech in corrective rebuke and the destruction created by slander. Now let us look at other ways and places in which we must learn to sanctify our speech so as to be vessels for supernal speech—the purpose for which we are endowed with the ability to speak, and what separates us from other created beings. The sages teach us concerning proper conduct that one should never address a neighbor without calling him first. Also, what another tells you is to be held in confidence unless he tells you to "go and say"⁷ as seen so frequently in the Torah: "Said God to Moshe: Go tell the children of Israel" Only when this permission is given may one go and repeat what others have told him. We need to be ever so careful in what we say. Yosef never told his father his brothers sold him.

Rabbi Bachyah teaches us that if one states "no" or "yes" twice in succession, it is considered like an oath.⁸ One may think that a word uttered hastily, without thought, is insig-

5. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*. ch. 18.

6. *Sotah* 10b.

7. *Yoma* 4b.

8. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Faith.", Sni Luchot Vayashev

nificant and of little importance, and that if no one seems directly hurt by the words they can have no adverse effect, but this is far from the truth. Rabbi Chayah teaches in the Holy *Zohar* that a man should never begin his speech with an ill-uttered omen, as he does not know who will be brought to grief by his words, but he should begin his discussion with words of peace.⁹

Just as our supernal speech rises above to join us with our Father in Heaven, accusers and angels of destruction are always there waiting for an ill utterance to act upon. Only by the tender mercies of the Holy Blessed One can we be spared from their scrutiny. This is illustrated when Rabbi Chiyah teaches that one who curses his neighbor in his presence is as if he spills blood; one who curses his neighbor not in his presence arouses emissaries of judgment until the place of the great Abyss is aroused. Woe to him who lets an evil word leave his mouth.¹⁰ Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that when speaking evilly concerning an individual, one may have merits to his credit taken from him and given to the one he slanders. Or, the one so slandered may be freed from some of his transgressions, as the Holy One removes them from his soul and places them on the slanderer.

¹¹

So profound is Divine judgment concerning speech that the sages teach, in tractate *Bava Metzia*, that He Who punished the generation of the Flood and the generation of the Tower of Babel, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gemorrah, and the Egyptians at the Red Sea will exact vengeance on him who does not stand by his word. ¹² From this, we see that God Himself Who brought us out of Egypt and parted the Red Sea, allowing us to walk on dry land while drowning the Egyp-

9. *Zohar* 1:195b.

10. *Ibid. Kedoshim*.

11. *Duties of the Heart* 2:107.

12. *Bava Metzia* 48a.

tians, personally scrutinizes our word, and does not leave this function only to His angels. So many people will be negligent and blame their irresponsibility upon not thinking before they speak, thereby failing to fulfill obligations, but it is really something more than this, as Ravina explains in the Talmud (tractate *Bechorot*) that to retract one's word indicates a lack of honesty.¹³ If a person realizes that his life is hanging on his word, he will be sure to fulfill it just as one would never separate himself from his only source of water.

The great power unleashed by the tongue is symbolized by how different it is from other organs of the body. Its structure is as different from all other organs in the body as is its function. Rabbi Joseph ben Zimra teaches that all members of the body stand, while the tongue lies down, guarded by a wall of bone and flesh. All this guarding is necessary, as one who bears evil speech denies the root of faith, as his faith must be lacking to let such defilement affect him.

Resh Lakish teaches that one who slanders causes his sin to reach Heaven. Of him who slanders, the Holy One says, "He and I cannot live together in this world." This is reflected in the words of King David in Psalms, who says in the Name of God, "He who secretly slanders, him will I cut off" (Ps. 10 I: 5). The Holy One says to the Prince of Gehenom, "I will be against him from above, and you from below, and we will condemn him." It is taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael that whoever speaks slander increases his sins up to the level of idolatry, shedding blood and incest as taught in the Talmud (tractate *Arachin*).¹⁴

Since we can now begin to see the gravity of the effect of one's speech, we need to look closer into its many aspects so as to bring sanctification into it and keep ourselves far from defilement.

13. *Bechorot* 13b.

14. *Arachin* I5b.

The sages teach in tractate *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* that one should not speak before a person greater than himself. It must be noted here, as in all laws, that the proper context of expression is most important. The sages go on to teach that one should not interrupt the words of his fellow; one should always face the greater, but when in anger face the lesser; speak to the point; and acknowledge the truth. ¹⁵

One destructive act of speech we must avoid is slander, as Rabbi Huna teaches in the Midrash that slander brings consumption and inflammation to one's bones and sinews and causes them to fail within him. ¹⁶ With this knowledge, it becomes obvious that we must distance ourselves far from words of slander. But why is slander so severely destructive? Rabbi Yochanan explains that a man does not utter a word of slander without denying God's existence. ¹⁷ We see that slander reflects a great degree of corruption existing within the soul, corruption of the highest order of confusion. This corruption is so abhorrent because it creates separation of all of us from our Father in Heaven, as it is taught by Rabbi Huna in the Midrash that whoever speaks slander causes the Shechinah to rise from earth to Heaven. ¹⁸ This is reflected in the teachings of Rabbi Bachyah, that because of the severity of the sin of slander, those guilty will not be permitted to see the Shechinah, and those who slander are not fit to study the Torah. ¹⁹ For what is Torah study but receiving the Shechinah, and how can one expect his lips and breath to be a vessel for the Holy Words of the Torah if he just spoke words of slander?

The damage of slander is so great that the sages teach in the Talmud (tractate *Kallah Rabbati*) that there is no healing

15. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* 32b.

16. Midrash Rabba *Kohelet* 5:5.

17. Ibid. 9: 11.

18. Ibid. *Devarim* 5: 10.

19. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Evil Speech."

for one who slanders. 20 The power of the mouth is so great, as taught by Rabbi Bachyah, that a murderer spills blood outside a body, but by shaming another in public he does not actually spill his blood but stirs it to leave his body. It is by shaming that God disgraces the wicked.²¹

One should not slander another even when the person is not present; rather one should honor and not bring shame to another even if he is not present. A good guideline to follow in all cases is, as the sages teach in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, that whenever you speak of your fellow man let his image be before you.²² This is especially true concerning men of holiness, as Elijah the Prophet teaches that if you see a disciple of the Wise committing a transgression one day do not think evil of him the next as, most likely, he has repented that night. He who gossips about the failings of disciples of the wise is as one who gossips about the Shechinah,²³ and the Holy One is deeply concerned with those close to Him, those who call upon Him in truth.

In *Pesikta* it is taught by Rabbi Kahana that the children of King David's generation, before they knew sexual desire, knew the subtle distinctions of the criteria to distinguish the spiritually clean from the unclean, but because of their foul tongues they would perish in battle. Conversely, though King Ahab's generation worshipped idols they would stand in battle as they did not inform upon each other.²⁴ Here we see that death and life depend on the tongue.

One must walk in a way of righteousness toward being sanctified in each of his activities in order to be able to call upon God in truth, and it is unto these the Holy One

20. *KaLLah Rabbati* 53a.

21. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Shaming."

22. *Kallah Rabbati* 53b.

23. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 3.

24. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana*, *pesikta* 4.

turns. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches us that repentance is difficult when one has accustomed his tongue to tell lies, talk scandalously about people, and malign them; it is all held up against him, as evil speech is equal in heinousness to theft and adultery.²⁵ Just as these transgressions require action below in their correction—for a thief must make payment according to the damages he has done, and the adulterer must be separated from his mate—so too one who transgresses with his speech is separated more from God, making his repentance more difficult.

Rabbi Avraham, in *Meditation of the Sad Soul*, teaches that no iniquity is greater before the King than lying, which is as grave as murder.²⁶ Here we see abuses of the faculty of speech compared to theft, adultery, and murder. These expressions and others similar exist throughout the Torah. Such strong warning is not repeatedly given concerning any other single transgression. It does not state that one who does not make a fence upon his roof is as a murderer or adulterer; it is only speech that is so central to all our activities of holiness.

Rabbi Kahana teaches that whoever speaks up out of concern for Israel. God raises him up in the world. It was only when Moses spoke compassionately on behalf of Israel that he was called a man of God.²⁷ We see that speech can make all the difference—either elevating or bringing one down, Heaven forbid, to the emptiness of shame.

Rabbi Chiyah taught in the name of Rabbi Chizkya that one who calls his neighbor wicked will be thrown into the very jaws of Gehenom, for the only people one may call wicked are those who speak impudently or blasphemously against the

25. *Duties of the Heart* 2: 169.

26. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 126.

27 *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana*, supplement 133

Torah. 28 The tongue is like a two-edged sword: It can be a tool for saving one's life in this world, or if one is not careful, it can slay, Heaven forbid. Another evil speech one must avoid is quarreling, as Rav teaches in the Midrash that one should not persist in a quarrel as all who do transgress a command. Rashi adds to this that they are deserving of leprosy.²⁹ One must build a fence around his speech, ever striving to make each word a vessel to attach himself to his Father in Heaven. We have already shown many places where one is to build this fence to protect the soul from damage or approaching harm. Concerning this, Rabbi Yochanan teaches that if one accustoms the tongue to speak against a brother who is not of his nation, in the end he will slander the son of his own nation.³⁰

If one distances himself from sin he will not approach it on his way. So we must stay clear in our course of activities and not accustom ourselves in the least bit to these evil ways, to protect against them growing as habits. One habit of speech one must guard against is projecting one's own failings onto others, rebuking them for these shortcomings when it is not even appropriate, as Rashi warns us, in the Book of Genesis (*Parsha Vayara*), that if one has a defect, he should not reprimand his fellow concerning the same.³¹ Rabbi Nachman teaches us from the commentary of Rashi that the difference between moral guidance and rebuke is shown by the fact that our father and teacher Moses did not rebuke the Children of Israel until immediately prior to his death³²-and the difference is that in Moses' rebuke, he made mention of their sin.

28. *Zohar*2:122a.

29. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 732.

30. Ibid. *Devarim* 126.

31. Rashi *Vayara*.

32. *Advice* 304.

If one sees that he himself has a difficulty, he should be all the more considerate upon seeing another facing the same difficulty or shortcoming. In these circumstances, one can empathize and treat the other the way one would like to be treated, as this is the way the Holy Blessed One intended it to be. Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches in the *Tanya* that all who are humiliated and do not humiliate others, and all who pass over their feelings, have all their sins forgiven.³³ Just as we must see that our emotions do not get out of hand, leading to rebuking someone for something we do not like about ourselves and taking it out on the other, so we must not let our emotions send us to humiliate another especially out of anger even if we are humiliated by the other first. As stated in the *Tanya*, we must pass over our feelings and not become angry or saddened by another's derogatory remarks. By passing over our feelings and seeing through the perspective of pure understanding, we are able to ascend from responding emotionally to responding calmly with proper balance.

Thus we have been given some guidelines from our sages on what to avoid concerning our speech, but Rabbenu Bachyah gives us an example of a good path of conduct when he teaches that on seeing the carcass of a dog a student remarked about its foul smell, whereas his teacher said. "But look at the whiteness of his teeth." From here we see that it is not good to make a disparaging remark even concerning a dog; all the more so concerning another man.³⁴ The Holy One's kindness is upon all his works; thus we must deal accordingly.

Because so much is dependent on speech, one must beware of the evil wrought by association with fools-even

33. *Tanya* 385.

34. *Duties of the Heart* 2:99.

the people one regularly associates with-enjoying their company when conversation is not urgent, as Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that one should bridle superfluous movement of the tongue and not talk about people, recall their failings. nor relate anything to their discredit. Of course, one must avoid falsehood, pride, scoffing, contemptuousness toward a portion of the group and indulgence in frivolity with groups. Mixing with people can, Heaven forbid, create the absence of fear of God in one's heart because of frivolous conversation. If one is able to prevent wicked people from committing evil deeds it is a duty to do so, for the masses are not free from shortcomings. The Alshich HaKodesh HaKodesh teaches that when a Chuchum has to contend with a arrogant fool, who thinks he is wise. Putting on a pleasant face to humor the person will only backfire. As the fool will only think more highly of himself and will give the chuchum no relief. Therefore it is better for the chuchum to confront the evil directly.³⁵ It is only for these higher ends that man was given the faculty of speech, so he must be careful not to degrade it. It has been mentioned that we need to be moderate and not severe in our speech, to avoid quarreling or embarrassment, but Rabbi Bachyah teaches that it is permissible to slander quarrelsome people; one who does not discredit those who act improperly is liable for punishment.³⁶ Still one must beware of one's speech, as the opening of the mouth can be the door of punishment.

As has been shown in the discussion above the various abuses of speech, or the opening of the mouth can be to one a gate of reward as so many blessings can be uttered, so many Divine Names may be spoken. Eliyahu Ha Navi teaches that if a man. as he prays, utters thanks for deliverance from lesser dangers, he will be regarded as one who offers thanks from great dangers.³⁷ Just as the parting of the sea was deliverance from great danger and the people offered thanks, so too will God regard the thanks we offer Him for the small things He does for us, as Elijah the Prophet teaches that it will be accorded to them as if from great

dangers.

- 35. Ibid. 237., Alshich HaKodesh on Mishle
- 36. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Evil Speech."
- 37. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu* 256.

There is a brilliant closeness one achieves with the Holy Blessed One at such a time. He designates His personal Providence to disturb the laws of nature to miraculously facilitate one's deliverance. "Nedarim" (vows) are rooted in Bina.. It translates to the "dwelling of 50". The final redemption will be rooted in Bina (Divine understanding).

Alshich on Proverbs

Rabbi Avraham, in *Meditation of the Sad Soul*, teaches that the speech of a man's mouth if sanctified in holiness, keeps him far from the pleasures of this world, which he has rejected and binds him to the World to Come which he has chosen and loves and he will be surrounded by peace on all sides and will not resemble anything of this world.³⁸

38. Alshich on Proverbs,
Meditation of the Sad Soul 65,

LEARNING

Rabbi Moshe Alshich teaches us that since God is totally abstract there needed to be a linkage between the spiritual to the physical. So the world was made with the word of God, which is his Torah. By neglecting and undermining Torah we sever the link between the spiritual and physical. Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman teaches us that the Creator has given us access to the total picture to Infinite knowledge to answers for all our questions via the Torah which includes aspects of the Infinite. We know that one who genuinely desires can know everything; all the mechanisms of creation, all the fifty gates of wisdom that exist in the world are to be found in the Torah. It is God's knowledge, and it unlocks regions that man cannot reach with his own finite mind. The Aor haChym teaches that from God's right hand flashed forth a fiery law to them. The sea saw God 's right hand and split. Any *sadeek* (righteous person) who lives after Yisrael received the Torah can present a copy of the agreement God made with his creation causing it to submit to instructions issued by those who have mastery of the Torah. They can effect changes in the laws of nature and inflict penalties if nature refuses to obey.¹ Elijah the Prophet explains concerning the nature of this Divine Knowledge the nature of the Torah as he teaches that the Holy One. Blessed be He said to Israel, "Come my children enter deep within the Torah, and see what I wrote

1. *Beginning and Upheaval Aor HaChyim*
Bishalach.

for you to do so as to enable Me to bear your transgressions, to put away your iniquities, and to have your sins pass out of My sight. Now come to Me with words of Torah and you will find yourself face to face with Me”² This is the purpose and ultimate goal of the Torah: face-to-face revelation. This is not to be confused with a simply intellectual pursuit because learning Torah is not learning in the sense of pursuit of wisdom. Wisdom is only used as a vessel for revelation in Torah learning, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains in the *Tanya* that in the Torah it says, "Know God." However, the essence of this knowledge is not merely knowing from an intellectual awareness gained from books. The essential thing is to immerse one's mind deeply into the greatness of God, fixing one's thought on the Blessed One with all one's strength and vigor of heart and mind until one's thought is bound to God with a strong and mighty bond as one is bound to a material thing he sees with his eyes and concentrates his thoughts on it.³ Gaining this strong and mighty bond of face-to-face revelation is the purpose of our Torah study. To achieve this end, Elijah teaches us that blessed is the man who makes himself submit like an ox to the yoke and a donkey to the burden. The man who makes himself sit and meditate every moment of every day upon words of the Torah will cause Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit) to suffuse him when Torah has taken deep root within him. A man should read Chumash (the five books of Moses), the Prophets, the Writings (the other books of the Hebrew Scriptures), Midrash, Halachah, and Aggadah (the homiletical teachings of the Talmud), so that Ruach haKodesh will suffuse within him to his very depths, and God's word will come readily to his tongue. Both Halachic studies and immersion in Kaballah are desirable, One must not neglect one

aspect of the Torah. The book of proverbs helps the clever person to unlock meanings of the Torah as David and Soloman did, unraveling its hidden meanings in both the Written and Oral Torah⁴

2. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 9.

3. *Tanya* 217.

Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah., ch. 2, Alshich on proverbs

If the only thing one saw in this writing was this order of learning I would say it was sufficient. I personally follow this method of learning and have found that its order provides a vibrancy to the words of the Holy Torah. As one goes around the wheel of Torah learning from Chumash to Midrash Aggadah the Torah is always fresh, new, and exciting.

The sages teach in the Jerusalem Talmud (tractate *Peah*) that if the Torah's laws are a trifling thing to one, it is because he does not labor devotedly in the Torah. As mentioned above, diversity in learning provides a great balance, for each area of the Torah strengthens different aspects of the soul.

Within each of the five divisions of the Torah one can study one or all four levels of *pardes* (an acronym for *pshat*, *remez*, *drush*, and *sod*-the simple means, hints, homiletical teachings, and secrets of the Torah), depending on what one wants to learn. Under the category of halachah (Jewish law), I begin with Mishnah, learn Gemora, and then *Shulchan Arukh* and discourses concerning legal decisions.

Under the category of Midrash Aggadah are included Aggadah and its commentaries. Chassiduth, Kabbalah and other writings concerning the secrets of the Torah. In this category is a book to which one should pay special attention, as Rabbi Nachman teaches that study of the *Zohar* can give one enthusiasm in all his sacred studies.⁵ This is by no means a strict rule that one must always follow as a course in learning, but only a guideline to enhance the Torah experience. One really should learn where

he finds joy, but be aware that the greatest joy can sometimes come after one forces himself to learn areas of the Torah, such as Halachah, that one might think he really does not want to. This can be a most rewarding process, yielding great unexpected joy

4. Advice 272

through revelation. One must always have joy in one's learning and it should never be seen as a burden. It is said that one should fulfill the Torah as an ox carries a burden. This is not to say the Torah, Heaven forbid, is as a burden, but that one should be like an ox that has no options, completing whatever task is assigned. Similarly, we must strive to rise higher and higher in holiness and purity. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches in the Midrash that if one's discourse of Torah is not as pleasant to hear as the bride is pleasing to her spouse, then it is best not said at all. ⁶

Elijah the Prophet teaches us that the Holy One for nine hundred seventy-four generations before the world was created sat analyzing, testing, and refining the words of the Torah—every one of them. ⁷ The Torah is so deep because of God's nurturing of it. It yields endless delights from its mysteries that are waiting to be explored. Rabbi Elazar in the Holy *Zohar* gives a little insight into what God created by examining, analyzing, testing, and refining the Torah when he teaches us that anything that is included in a general proposition and then made the subject of a specific statement is not to be understood as limited to itself, but is applied to the whole of the general proposition. ⁸ In an even more general sense, each word is in specific context of the words surrounding it, and so for each letter. There is nothing arbitrary in the Torah. Each letter holds many lessons. Each letter, law, and idea can be understood on all four levels of *pardes*- *pshat*, the, simple; *remez*, intimated; *drush*, expounded; and *sod*, secret. *Pshat* is the superficial meaning. *Remez* is that to which the

Torah alludes but does not directly state, the idea being obvious in context. *Drush* brings forth the meaning in a

6. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 41 :5.
7. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah.*, p. 61.
8. *Zohar* 3: 149a.

less obvious way and must be expounded upon to be understood. *Sod* is the secret hidden meaning that generally is an explanation concerning explicit flow mechanisms of the Divine Energy. Together these are the *pardes*, the holy orchard of fruit of the sweetest taste. One's attainment in the orchard, the level of revelation, depends on the preparation one has for his Torah learning.

In the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the prophet states, "They have forsaken my Torah." Concerning this, the sages tell us that during Jeremiah's time obviously the Torah was studied, yet they did not learn with the proper intention. One must truly learn Torah with proper devotion. To open one's heart is to realize the awesome unique nature of God's will in the earth, which is the Torah, With this, one will be provided with proper devotion and be moved to *teshuvah*, to truly begin the return to the Father in Heaven.

Torah study must be such that a person is prepared to endure death in order to acquire its insights. He is even to study Torah at the point of death in order to acquire its insights.⁹ When one learns, one must put oneself into a state similar to the beginning of creation-that is, a state of "nothingness" then grow, occasionally reflecting on past conceptions. Learning is like the creation. One step builds on the previous steps, similar to the growth of a tree, which may start out with only a few branches that branch off into a few more branches. As the tree continues to grow the trunk itself may branch off into two, and accordingly, there may be produced twice as many branches and leaves and fruit.

Likewise is the learning of the Torah. The more one learns, the more rewarding and less difficult the learning becomes.

Rabbi Kahana, in tractate *Shabbat*, teaches that a man should learn even if he does not understand, for soon he will. Rabbi Levi warns us that in the process of learning, one should be careful not to teach Torah before a sage, as he who does goes down to the Sheol childless, as is taught in tractate

9. Jeremiah 86, Aor HaChym Yitro

Eruvin.¹⁰ This is not to say that one is always to remain silent before those greater than himself, for there are times when our words are necessary and needed to clarify a Torah matter. With the proper intent in Torah study one can reach great heights, but one must always strive to learn the Torah purely for its own sake.

Torah is called "beginning" for in the beginning it weakens a man's strength; he must do battle with his evil inclination and crush the inclinations of his body in the House of Study, till he has accustomed himself to learning, it becoming his great joy and might-and there is certainly no lack of material to cover in the Torah, no matter what level one is on.

Everything in the Torah holds deep secrets. Rabbi Yochanan teaches that all fixed measures used in the Torah were revealed to "Moses on Mount Sinai." Know, Shabot is 1/60 of Olam Haba. Forbidden foods mixed with that which is permitted containing less than 1 part of the forbidden food to 60 of the permitted food is Kosher. Many secrets are hidden in these laws called to "Moses on Mount Sinai." Rabbi Isa ben Yehuda teaches in tractate *Yoma* (10a) that there are only five verses in the Chumash where there is a question as to grammatical meaning.¹² This lets one know that when learning, one need not ascribe new meaning to verses, for the meaning of the Torah is understood and can be found in the tradition as explained to our teacher Moses by God, as we find in the Talmud, Midrash, and other sources.

There are those who have implied meanings other than those intended to the words of the Torah, saying, "We believe this to be the true meaning," as they understand it, but their words are far from the truth. As Isa showed us above, it is all understood except five verses. This is not to say one cannot learn innovative teachings through the letters and vowels-even permuting the letters of words can reveal wonders-but they err who imply a meaning that is contradictory to the simple meaning

10. *Eruvin* 63a.
11. Yerushalmi *Chagigah*.
12. *Yoma* 52b.

known to be true. These false scholars thus bring to error others who hear their teachings.

The Torah has many levels of understanding, as it bridges fifty gates, but this is not to say that the simple meaning is left purely to our interpretation or whims. One must be careful to share only the true meaning of the Torah. We have a rule that a word which is capable to be interpreted in 2 ways, we give equal weight to both explanations. If the fulfillment of a commandment is involved the requirements of both interpretations must be met. Even if much responsibility is involved in teaching Torah, one cannot be dissuaded from doing so, as the purpose of learning the Torah is to be able to share it, as Rabbi Yochanan in tractate *Rosh Hashanah* teaches, that one who studies the Torah but does not teach is like a *hadas* (myrtle) in the wilderness whose scent is wasted. ¹³ If one finds himself overwhelmed and perplexed by the many explanations of the Torah, some of which seem contradictory, he need only recall the teaching in tractate *Chagigah*, where we learn that all seemingly contradictory opinions were given by the one shepherd, from the mouth of God, as it says, "God spoke all these words." Make your ear as a grinder and get a perceptive heart to understand

the words.¹⁴ It is from this perspective that one is to share the Torah with others, thus unifying the words of the Torah, for the Torah is one. One must be careful not to make the mistake, so commonly made, that when hearing an explanation different from that which one has learned, to think it incorrect and discard the wisdom, as such a person loses much. One should always strive to get and give the most from the Torah that they can. Rabbi Shetiah teaches in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that if one reads Chumash without a melody or Mishnah without a tune, the Torah says of him, "I made statutes that are not good" (Ezek. 2:25).¹⁵

The ways to acquire the Torah are many and as diverse as

13. *Rosh Hashanah* 23a, Oar ha Chym Bishalach

14. *Chagigah* 3b.

15. *Megillah* 32a.

its revelation. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches that all manner of service a slave renders to his master must be rendered by a student to his teacher. Rabbi Chiyah bar Abba adds that one should not deprive his student of the opportunity of doing an act of kindness. We also learn in tractate *Ketubot* from Rabbi Nachman ben Yitzchak that a teacher depriving his student of a chance to do acts of kindness deprives him of the fear of Heaven. ¹⁶ By learning the proper traits needed to learn the Torah, and then acquiring them, one can then see them realized, as Rabbi Shimon teaches that through each discovery in the Torah a new Heaven is made. ¹⁷

Elijah the Prophet teaches, concerning new ideas in the Torah, that blessed is he whose mouth gives words of Torah within the *yeshivahs* that have grown numerous in Israel. as such a man is permitted to hear the Holy One speaking to him from Heaven. ¹⁸ Yet let one beware, as Rabbi Shimon teaches, that one must not derive any new doctrine that he has not

learned or heard from his teachers. Such a *neshama* (soul) is cast away from the "bundle of Life" when he passes on, as God is a jealous God. ¹⁹

From meditation on the Torah one can come to have revealed to them, with the help of the Holy One, the Torah's secrets. But the law of the Torah is clear and determined. The law is recorded in the tradition of our sages in the Shulchan Arukh, and its simple meaning is not open to interpretation, being clearly defined. One cannot deduce any new laws, but only apply the law Moses received from the Holy One at Sinai. When one comes to understand a part of the

Torah that gives him delight he should share it, as Rabbi Meir teaches that it is said of him who learns the Torah but does not teach that he despises the Word of God.

To find great insights in the Torah, we learn from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha that whoever studies and does not review is like one who sows without reaping. One must go over the words repeatedly till they speak, revealing their secret. Rabbi Akiva teaches us concerning the Torah itself that when a word is repeated, it is for the purpose of encompassing another matter?²⁰ Rabbi Yehoshua teaches that one who studies and forgets is as a woman who bears a child and then buries it. When one reviews what he learns, the Torah will not be forgotten but will become a revealed part of him.

16. *Ketubot* 63a.

17. *Zohar* 1:4b.

18 *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*. p. 55.

19 *Zohar* 2:87a

Rabbi Yitzchak ben Avdimi teaches that for one who toils at one place in his learning, the Torah toils in another. It is as if by gaining a

depth of understanding in anyone area of the Torah, one will be equally exposed to other areas of the Torah. Secrets of the Torah can come from the least expected places, as Rav teaches that all human bodies are vessels.

From Rabbi Alexandri we learn that he who learns Torah for its own sake makes peace in the upper and lower family. Rav adds that it is as if he built the Heavenly and earthly Temples. Rabbi Yochanan teaches that he shields the whole world and hastens the redemption. Toward these things we must go and we will merit, as Rabbi Eliezer describes in tractate *Sanhedrin*, being joyous, worthy receptacles of the Torah?²¹ Once one is a receptacle of the Torah, he can, like any receptacle, be filled and refilled, as Elijah teaches us that when a man has words of Torah within him he is to feed others, so that the wisdom he already has will increase

20. Yerushalmi *Yebamot*.

21. Ibid. *Balak*.

And even more will be given to him.²² The more one gives, the more he receives.

The sharing of Torah is a very personal thing between the individuals who are learning and the Holy Blessed One. One who shares the Torah in a correct manner, sensitive to the souls in the group learning with him, will be able to speak to each soul individually with words of Torah. Such an individual transcends worlds and can bring great holiness down to illuminate even the darkest places in this lowly corporeal world-but also, Heaven forbid. one who lacks sensitivity to sense the awareness of those around him finds it difficult to share the appropriate Torah, especially for the specific given situation. One must try to reveal the Torah needed by the souls that are present to hear it, so that they may be elevated, receiving the correction they need, and then the Holy One can dwell in greater revelation in this lower world, as the sages state that since the Temple has been destroyed. the Holy One dwells in the four cubits of halachah

(Jewish law) alone, as mentioned in tractate *Berachot*. The 16 weekly temple offerings correspond to the 16 reading from the Torah each week.

When revealing God through *halachot* beware as Elijah the Prophet teaches, that one who teaches halachah without reasoning is among those who bring destruction to the world.²³ Only when one brings halachah relevant for the group of people learning, revealing the specific aspect of the Torah for the situation is the optimum result achieved. The reasons for the halachah, the way they are explained can if improperly revealed, such as in strictest severity push people away from the Torah, Heaven forbid. Conversely, the same *halachot* with the right perspective can draw others near to the Torah. To help us bring others closer to the Torah. Rashi teaches

²² *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, p. 137

²³ *Ibid.* 475

that we should begin teaching Aggadah (expounded teachings, stories, etc.) as this draws out and attracts the heart. ²⁴ The Malbim teaches us that sometimes Aggadah is not to be understood literally.²⁵ The deep meanings that are hidden under the surface of Aggadah help one get engaged in learning Torah, as it takes the depth of one's being to penetrate into these mysteries. The Aggadah also makes us aware of the many levels at which the Torah can be learned and the multitude of secrets hidden within. Aggadah gives us a glimpse of the nature of the Torah. Its transcendent nature will open one's eyes to the wonders of the Torah filling one with awe. This is the level of Torah learning we should strive for, seeing each lesson as part of the Torah being the blueprint of the creation the voice of Elokim Chaim (the Living God).

In achieving this depth of revelation, we can learn from the descendants of Moses' father-in-

law Yithro. The *Zohar* explains to us that Yithro's descendants made a nest in the wilderness to study Torah for there one does not require luxuries nor merchandise but need only labor day and night.²⁶ In the wilderness one is free from distractions and can reach the heights of concentration. Such meditation on the Torah can give new breadth to Torah learning. So many never see past the surface of the Torah, but Elijah the Prophet teaches us that the Torah is like a hide given to a man who would tan it, smooth it out, and stretch it until he brings it to a delicate finish.²⁷ For one to be accustomed to this level of probing into the Torah, one needs to learn to direct his undivided attention to each subtlety—just as a tanner in doing a perfect job must pay attention to each fold and crease in the hide, as it is very easy for one to go unnoticed.

24. Rash! *Shemot*.

25. *Malbim parsha Bereshith*.

26. *Yerushalmi Sotah*.

27. *Zohar* 3:9a.

To miss such a point in the Torah can leave so much obscured from sight.

In order to uncover these things, the search begins with the Holy Blessed One, as Elijah the Prophet explains it is He Who reveals the Torah to those who merit Her. Elijah tells us a man should do good deeds first and only then ask for Torah from Him Whose Presence is everywhere.²⁸ A man should first emulate the lives of those who are righteous and spotless and only then ask for a grasp of reasoning in the Torah from Him Whose Presence is everywhere. A man should first hold fast to the ways of humility and only then ask for understanding from Him Whose Presence is everywhere. It was from God that we received the Torah and it is from God that we receive the Torah. This is made clear by Rabbi Chiyah, as he teaches in the *Zohar* that if a man cannot find a proper teacher, yet because of his love for the Torah he pours

over it, God rejoices in his words and plants them around the river, where they grow into mighty trees and are called willows of the brook.
 29 These willows relate to the gates of prophecy.

One should always turn to God and ask Him to reveal His Torah, as its revelation is the desire of God. Rabbi Yehuda teaches in the name of Rav, in tractate *Sanhedrin*, that whoever withholds a halachah from his disciple is as if he robbed him of his ancestral heritage.³⁰ Such ideas exist only because God wants to bestow upon his children their heritage, the inheritance that is rightfully theirs. Concerning this, Rabbi Eliezer teaches that he who withholds the Torah from Israel is like one withholding the good from

28. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 3.

29. *Ibid.* p. 31.

30. *Zohar* 3:85a.

Heaven. ³¹ As the Torah is the good from Heaven, so one must always concentrate upon it, revealing it in this lowly physical world and illuminating it, and to this end we should direct all *our* might day and night. If sleep tries to overcome one in his learning and yet he is ready to go on, it is known that the High Priest on the night of Yom Kippur reads the Hebrew Scriptures in order to stay awake³² the Scriptural teachings being Song of Songs, Proverbs, Psalms, etc. These will help one to make it through the night to the morning, enabling him to unify the Holy Name with the first rays of light of a new rising sun. Each part of the Torah has its time, as shown earlier by the instructions of Elijah in his order of learning. One should try to learn regularly from each aspect of the Torah, as each brings different strengths to the soul.

The sages teach us in tractate *Bava Metzia* that one should always run to Mishnah more than

Gemora (Talmudic explanations of the Mishnah).

³³ Concerning the learning of the different aspects of the Torah, the sages teach us in tractate *Bava Batra* that being rich in fields and vineyards and cattle grazing in public view, this is the Master of Aggadah; rich in money and oil, this is the Master of Wisdom who is always seeing new ideas; rich in storehouses and products, this is the Master of Ready Advice. Yet, all depend on the Master of Wheat, one in possession of Gemora.³⁴

It is taught in Gemora that a child does not have understanding till he has tasted wheat-yet wheat, fields, vineyards, cattle, storehouses, and products can be purchased with money, and money is the possession of the Master who is always seeing new ideas, as new ideas are a revelation of the

31. *Sanhedrin* 91 b.

32. *Zohar* 3:268b.

33. Mishnah *Shabbat*.

34. *Bava Metzia* 33a.

Torah itself from God. To such a one God comes to reveal all aspects of His Torah revealing all secrets, as King David said, "Open my eyes that I may see the wonders from Your Torah" (Ps. 119: 18). The wonders of the Torah make *all* things of mundane matters fall into their proper place of insignificance.

Rabbi Abba teaches us in tractate *Sanhedrin* that even anxiety has no effect on Torah study for its own sake as King David states, "The counsel of God shall stand forever."³⁵ This is because the Torah is of a supernal nature, and truly not of this world. Its contemplation bonds one to a level of supernal thought that transcends the things that so needlessly trouble our minds and are of little concern, with ultimately little effect on our lives. Yet, we allow ourselves to be troubled by these mundane, futile matters needlessly.

In order to hear the voice of Torah clearly one

must clear his mind of all futile matters so as to direct himself completely to God's Torah. As a result of learning Torah for its own sake one can clear his mind from preoccupation with apparent problems and other distractions, freeing the way to contemplation of higher things.

It is from the Torah that all things are brought into order reflecting the Divine Will. As Resh Lakish teaches in tractate *Avodah Zarah*, one who learns at night will find grace over him during the day, as King David states in Psalms, "God will command His kindness and at night His song is with me, my prayer to the God of my life" (Ps. 42:9).

The contemplation of the Torah late at night is profound even if one can do so only for a short while. Rabbi Pinchas explains that at night, wisdom walks below the firmament.³⁵ To aid us in our learning. Rabbi Abba ben Mari teaches us

35. *Bava Batra* 145b.

36. *Sanhedrin* 26b.

tractate *Makkot* that studying within a multitude brings increase. Rabbi Yose bar Hanina adds a warning that one who sits and studies *alone* waxes foolish and becomes a real sinner. Rebbe said, "I learned much from my masters, more from my fellow students, and from my disciples most of all." It is the Torah that binds all of Israel together- how beautiful this is. It is further taught that Israel has a foothold in war because of the students engaged in study of the Torah. Better is one day of Torah study than a thousand sacrifices.³⁷ It is when Israel gathers together to study the Torah that the Divine Will of God in giving the Torah to Israel is fulfilled. This coincides with the teaching of Rabbi Shmuel ben Unyah in the name of Rav, that study of the Torah is more important than the daily offering.³⁸ Just as the daily offering was offered for each day, so too must one learn his portion of the Torah for each day.

Rabbi Amram teaches in the name of Rav that happy is he who does *teshuvah* (repentance) in the vitality of his youth, ruling over his evil inclination. Rabbi Avraham ben Adimi ben Chanah teaches that one should be like a servant who serves his Master, delighting in His commandments and not in the reward for his labor. By following our delight in the Torah, one may always serve God with the vitality of one's youth. This is in accordance with the teaching of Rebbe that a man can only learn well that part of the Torah that is his heart's desire. If one finds his desire in God's Torah, his desires will be fulfilled, as is taught by Rabbi Avraham.

Rabbah teaches that one should always study that part of the Torah that his heart desires. One should study the Torah first. then meditate upon it; even if he does not understand

37. *Makkot* 10a.

38. *Sefer Shnei Luchot HaBrit* 191a.

studies, let him learn. Rabbah teaches in the name of Rabbi Saschorah in the name of Rabbi Huna that he who studies heaps will gain little, but one who gathers little will gain much. Rabbi Acha bar Adah teaches in the name of Rav that even the ordinary talk of scholars demands studying. We learn from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that whoever studies the Torah, his possessions shall prosper, as it says in the Torah:

"Keep, therefore, the words of this covenant and do them so That you may prosper in all that you do" 39

In tractate *Horayot*, we learn from Rabbi Masharshyah that one should review his subject first, then come to the master. When one sits with him, look at his mouth, as it says in Isaiah: "Your eyes shall see your teacher" (Is. 3:20).

Practice your lessons by a river of water. As the waters advance continually, so may your acquired knowledge.⁴⁰ By doing these things, one can always learn with a excitement unsurpassed. This is the way one should learn, as in tractate *Menachot* a *Tanna* of the school of Rabbi Yishmael teaches that words of Torah should not be to one as a debt, where one's whole desire is to discharge his duty and be free from it.⁴¹

Rabbi Yochanan teaches that one who studies the Torah at night is credited as if he were occupied with the Temple service. One who occupies himself with laws of the Holy Temple is considered as one in whose days the Temple was built. Resh Lakish teaches that whoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah is as though he were offering the burnt offering, meal offering, and guilt offering, and yet needs none of these.

Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that if one studies the laws of a sin

39. *Avodah Zarah* 19a.

40. *Horayot* 12a.

41. *Menachot* 99b.

or guilt offering, it is as if he is offering it.⁴² It is by learning the laws of the Torah that for some reason such as the exile we are unable to do, they become fulfilled.

In tractate *Chullin*, Rabbi Yehuda teaches in the name of Rav that a wise man must learn *safrut* (scribal arts), *schechitah* (ritual slaughtering of animals), and *milah* (circumcision). Rabbi Shalomyah adds in the name of Rav: tying the knot of *tefillin*, blessings for marriage, and tying *tzitzith*.⁴³ When we learn these complicated halachic matters, we must always avoid learning them as if being engaged in secular academic matters. One way to remember the holiness of what we learn is by remembering the teaching of Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rav that when we recite a tradition in a scholar's name in this world, his lips murmur in the grave.⁴⁴ This is a selfless type of learning with no room for arrogance, as Elijah the Prophet teaches that one must be willing to endure humiliation when asking questions so he will be lifted up, otherwise he will never understand the Torah.⁴⁵ One must put himself aside when he learns.

The sages teach in tractate *Temurah* that if a student asks a question of his teacher and the teacher teaches him, God enlightens the eyes of both.

He who can make one wise can make him a fool, and he who can make one a fool can make him wise. It is likewise with giving assistance to the poor.⁴⁶ By understanding these thoughts, one can see that Torah knowledge is nothing to wax arrogant about, as it is not one's own but revealed by God.

42. Ibid. 110a.

43. *Chullin* 9a.

44. *Bechorot* 31b.

45. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, p. 64.

46. *Temurah*.

In the Midrash, the sages state that a man pours forth wisdom from his heart,⁴⁷ and this is good to contemplate.

A sharp difference between learning Torah and secular learning can be seen in the teaching of Rabbi Yitzchak, where we learn that it is good that a man learns and forgets, for because of this he will never forsake Torah study.⁴⁸

In pursuing the Torah, the sages teach us in tractate *Soferim*. one should not skip Chumash and Mishnah and come directly to Gemora, but one should learn Chumash and Mishnah with the idea of approaching Gemora.⁴⁹ One of the great steps in acquiring the Torah is acquiring a teacher, and this is no easy matter as there are many ways and paths within the Torah.

As a general rule, we learn in the Midrash, if your study has been hard as iron and your teacher does not come to you to make it clear to you, denounce him with all your might. ⁵⁰ It is your teacher who helps to open or close, Heaven forbid, the Torah to you, so in this matter you must be careful and beware. Do not be mistaken in denouncing your teacher because of your lack in understanding, as the Torah is deep and requires much work to acquire. Only after much work can much be accomplished-and this level of work is not easy, as Rabbi Levi teaches us in the Midrash that a man will sit and talk all day without growing tired, but as soon as he gets up to pray or study he becomes tired.⁵¹ One must go beyond all of this. If one stays at this level, finding learning a burden, he has not truly begun to see the Torah, and such can lead to grave consequences, as Rabbi Betzazel teaches that when those versed in Torah despise it, common people

47. Midrash Rabba *Kohelet* 1:7.

48. Ibid. 1: 13.

49. *Soferim* 41a.

50. Midrash Rabba *Kohelet* 10:10.

51. Ibid. 1:16.

despise the Torah and see its words as a harlot.
 52 This does not have to be the case, as the Torah is an endless resource of delight and its many secrets are waiting to be revealed, as Rabbi Shimon teaches us in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi and Rabbi Chamah. Rabbi Chamah, father of Rabbi Hosea, teaches in the name of Rebbe that the Book of Chronicles was given only for the purpose of the midrashic interpretation. 53 To reach such a level of vision in the Torah revealing its innermost meaning found underneath its external garment, takes great devotion. One needs to begin by having set times for learning, day and night. One should learn as much as possible, but always keep set times for learning without fail. From regular study, this dedication allows one to be free when he meditates on the Torah, and his connection with it is as with an ever flowing brook. Such a man is a free man.⁵⁴ To such a man the secrets of God are revealed, as Rabbi Levi teaches in the name of Rabbi Chama ben Hanina that from the beginning of the Book of Genesis to the thirty-first verse, it is the glory of God to conceal a thing; from there onward, it is the glory of kings to search out a matter. All decisions by kings in earth are approved in Heaven.⁵⁵

To find God's secrets, one need not look at the Book of Chronicles or the works of creation, but one should know that the whole Torah is full of God's secrets.

In Midrash *Pesikta*, we learn that a wise man ponders the order of the Torah's precepts, the way they are arranged. It will help you not to depart from Hashem's words. Once you inquire how one commandment is connected to another. A paragraph that starts **אֵלֶּה** represents a contrast and criticism to what was previous, **וְאֵלֶּה** suggests a continuation. **זֶה** and **זֶהוּ** refer to the Written and Oral Torah. The word **אֲמַר** designates something as optimal except in ex. 22:24, then it means when. Debor involves stern warnings, amor is friendly speech.⁵⁶ There are so many ways of looking into the Torah and so much to be seen. The Torah is a world in itself as one goes from

wonder to wonder. As we learn in *Pesikta*, one who

- 52. Ibid. Ruth 1 :2.
- 53. Ibid. 2: 1.
- 54. *Kallah Rabbati* 54b.
- 55. Ibid., Alshich HaKodesh on Proverbs
- 56. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 9: 1, Sni Luchot Vayashev, Sni Luchot Pekudy, Alshich on Proverbs

engages in the Torah while in exile, whose feet are worn from travel in order to study, does not have imposed upon him the yoke of the kingdom of exile.

One can go so far into the Torah that from looking out, worldly burdens seem of little concern. Thus one is deeply absorbed in the Torah, which is ageless and removed from the burden of exile.⁵⁷ Another way to explore the Torah is through the secrets of Masorah (traditions of the scribes).

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar tells us in the Midrash that when more letters are dotted than plain interpret the dotted letters, but if most are plain, interpret the plain letters only.⁵⁸ This refers to the dots found above some words in the original Hebrew text of the Torah. This is just one of the infinite ways of understanding the Torah. These revelations of infinite understanding of the Torah are given to us by God. This is why we must revere our teachers, as we learn in the Midrash that God told to Moses that Aaron would be his spokesman to the people, and to Aaron that Moses shall be to him in God's stead.⁵⁹

When the Torah is being revealed we are merely conduits for the voice of Elokim Chaim (the Living God). In the Midrash, the sages teach that there are auspicious times when God

reveals the Torah, and that we should learn new Torah by day and revise at night.⁶⁰ Of all the aspects of Torah, Rabbi Huna teaches that the exiles will be gathered up only through the merit of the study of the Mishnah, as this is building the house and offering the sacrifices.⁶¹ It is by this learning that great light is revealed. This learning is an act of revealing the Divine Will as found in the Mishnah. Even if one

57. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana. pesikta 23.*

58. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 48: 15.

59. *Ibid.* 10:7.

60. *Ibid. Shemot* 47:5.

61. *Ibid. Vayikra* 7:3.

does not remember what he has learned, as Rabbi Levi teaches, even if one forgets what he learns, the Holy One rewards him for his labor.⁶²

Rabbi Banah teaches that a man should always plunge deeply into study of the Mishnah, because if he knocks, the gates of knowledge will open for him. If he desires Talmud or Aggadah then this will open them for him. Concerning the Mishnah, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi describes it as a pillar of iron.⁶³ Just as a pillar of iron is made to stand upright and hold its place, not yielding to pressure, so will be one who is full of Mishnah. One's intent while learning is so important, Rabbi Acha teaches, that he who learns with the intent to practice will be privileged to receive Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit),⁶⁴ but this happens only when one learns with the intent to practice. One can easily fall into the trap of learning Torah as if it were any secular learning if he does not see God before himself continually. This is the learning that yields the greatest result. When one learns it must be the labor of Love. As long as you do not abandon Torah and its ways it all ways guards you. But if you display a active love for Torah it will not only guard you, but it will protect you actively at all times. Torah study saves one from the

evil urge not only when one is actively learning but even when one is doing something else. Rabbi Nachman teaches us that one who loves the Torah cannot have a sufficient amount of it because of being intensely eager to accumulate learning. The true love of the Torah is selfless. It is for this reason that Rabbi Acha teaches that there is no greater vanity than a disciple who learns but does not raise disciples to teach.⁶⁵ If one truly loves the Torah, he will enjoy sharing Torah with as many people as possible, since it is the center and greatest joy in life. This is joy that increases and is without end, as the sages teach in the Midrash that the Torah produces fruit as a fig tree. A little is harvested today and

62. Ibid. 19:2.

63. Ibid. 21 :5.

64. Ibid. 35:7.

65. Ibid. *Devarim* 2:25, Alshich on Proverbs

much tomorrow,⁶⁶ as is shown to us by King Solomon in the Song of Songs: "The fig tree puts forth her green figs" (Song 2: 13). Eating these new figs, sharing new ideas in the Torah, brings healing to the tongue, helping the tongue-tied speak easily, and aids digestion, as the sages teach in Deuteronomy.⁶⁷ Further explanation of the eating of these precious fruits is explained in the holy teachings of the *Tanya*, where Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that when meditating on knowledge of the Torah the mind encompasses a concept, it being encloded within the intellect at the time the mind grasps and comprehends fully and clearly, although no one can grasp the Holy One, except when He is clothed in a law of His Torah that is grasped by the intellect. Thus one grasps the Will of the Holy Blessed One, and when the Torah is clothed in the soul and the intellect of a person is absorbed in it, it is called food for the soul by which the soul is nourished by the Giver of life, as one becomes united and

one with the Torah. 68

By studying *haLachot* (laws) of the Oral Torah, which is a level surpassing even the *Chachmah* (Wisdom) of the Holy Blessed One, being the level called Supreme Will, one gives *Netzach* (Victory) and *Hod* (Splendor) to the loins to support and sustain the power of the head and arms, the loins being girded and embodied in this Will, fortifying the "arms," namely, natural awe and love, and sustaining the head, the intellect that contemplates.⁶⁹ To reach this end, when learning for a number of consecutive hours one should hourly take time to reflect upon the idea being learned for the sake of uniting the Holy Blessed One and His Shechinah, so that one may be blessed with the optimum revelation of the Torah in

66. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 21:15.

67. Ibid. *Devarim* 1: 1.

68. *Tanya* 21.

69. Ibid. 391.

that hour, as each hour is permeated by a different radiance of Divine Energy. 70 All of these things will set one upon a path of revelation in Torah learning so that the teaching of Rashi-if one does not see a good sign in his Torah learning after five years, he never will-does not apply to him.⁷¹ Anyone who follows the prescribed ways that God has taught our sages to learn the Torah will find himself upon the Great Mountains of Torah. It is his right by inheritance.

In Rashi's commentary on the Chumash, he describes these mountains when discussing what is the way of the wise man versus the man of understanding. Just as mountains have peaks, so is the wise man to all others, as King David reveals in Psalms when he states. "Lift me on a rock; my head is lifted high above my enemies" (Ps. 27:6). With his wisdom the wise man sees over the head of others. Rashi compares this to the difference between a wealthy money changer and a merchant money changer. The wealthy

money changer waits for people to bring him money to exchange, and when they bring it he considers, but when no one comes to transact, he sits and gazes. The merchant money changer, like the man of understanding, when he has no business he tries to bring it out of his own.⁷² The wise man, when the Torah is not being shared with him will in the wealth of the Torah he has already acquired gaze, meditate, and contemplate till a new idea comes, instead of merely continually reviewing that which he already knows. Yet one can never review the Holy Words of Torah enough.

We learned before that each law is given a specific order and there is a reason why this order is given to the unfolding of the Torah. Rashi also teaches us that the sections of the

70. Ibid. 215.

71. Rashi *Bamidbar*.

72. Ibid. 215.

73. Rashi *Bamidbar*.

Torah are joined because in fulfilling one commandment one is given the opportunity to go on to the next.⁷³ Thus we have many holy writings that teach the commandments in the order in which they appear in the Chumash. It is good to adjust one's learning around the commandments that are discussed in the weekly *parsha*, sometimes learning a Mishnah because it coincides with the Halachah taught in that week's portion of the Torah as this is the backbone of the Torah.

Learning Halachah will allow one to have the ability to become a vessel to receive illumination of the great lights the inspiration of the Holy Blessed One, revealing insights deep into the hidden places of the Torah. Yet in this one must be careful, as Rabbi Yitzchak teaches not to err concerning words of the Torah, not to derive any doctrine that he has not learned from books or his teachers, for one should not give

his own interpretations to the Torah, as he who does so is as one who is making another Torah, and this is the making of a graven image.⁷⁴ Here lies the wisdom the ability to discern truth from falsehood. Moshe received the Torah and explained its meaning to us as we wandered forty years in the desert. This tradition has been passed down through each generation; likewise the teachings of the prophets. So many others have forged their own interpretations and have thus fallen into error-and even worse, have led others astray into confusion and folly. The *halachah* of the Torah are all clear and established forever, as truth is eternal. Only in some minor areas have the sages told us we are unsure. Everywhere else there is no question as to the proper path, and the minor points that have been left in dispute will be resolved when Elijah the Prophet reveals himself to us, settling these

73. Ibid.

74.Zohar 2:87a

halachic matters once and for all. All this negates the idea of creating new Halachah as folly. But God is always ready to bestow the warm embrace of a new creative thought, as Rabbenu Bachyah explains in *Duties of the Heart* that if one studies a science, working zealously and industriously to understand its fundamentals, the Creator will teach him the abstract and his knowledge becomes an ordered system so that he can do the most difficult work resembling prophecy.

If the pupil studies zealously, he will feel a higher spiritual power, which no man can give him. If this applies to the study of the truth in science, which is such a diminished light compared to the Torah's revelation, how much greater closeness and revelation of truth will come from diligent study of the Torah? The Torah is the blueprint of creation and encompasses all truth, as Rabbi Bachyah teaches in

KadHaKemach that the seven lamps of the menorah symbolize seven types of wisdom: wisdom of constellations, measurements, the ways of the soul, nature, expression, math, and the wisdom of values. One should not be mistaken: Divine Light may be drawn when seeing truth in scientific disciplines. yet this must be seen without absorbing the impurity of falsehood that is mingled in secular thought.⁷⁵ As Rabbi Bachyah teaches, other wisdoms are not considered refined silver because of their dross, but with Torah knowledge one can understand rational principles and not be led astray in his thinking.⁷⁶ One needs first to be firmly rooted in the wisdom of the Torah before delving into Divine secrets that can be seen through science, as the misunderstandings one can reach could, Heaven forbid, attach one to empty, false concepts that do not give life but may hinder one in truly seeing the Torah in the purest light.

75. *Kad HaKemach*. chapter "Chanukah Lamp."

76. *Ibid.*, chapter "Passover."

Do not tarnish your vessel with impure thought. Rabbenu Bachyah tells one to imagine standing in front of a certain spot, above which and behind you is a figure you cannot see with your eyes. Take a plate of wrought iron and polish it till its dullness disappears, then place it in front of you. Now you will be able to see the high figure you could not see. This wisdom that you could not see with your eyes is the wisdom of the Exalted Creator, the steel plate is the human soul, and the polishing represents its training and instruction.⁷⁷ We see that impurity must be elevated so that the light of wisdom may shine through.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman teaches us in the *Tanya*. Concerning this purification, that the celestial beings are not able to disencumber and elevate sparks that fall into the *klippah nogah*, "the hide of the snake," but we, by crushing passions, suppressing the *sitra achra*, cause the

klippot to be dispersed. This is why celestial beings come to terrestrial beings to hear novelties in the Torah, when they reveal secrets of wisdom that until then were in bondage and exile, and why everyone in Yisrael is able to reveal secrets of wisdom, to discover new insights each according to the level of the soul's root. Indeed, one is obligated to do so in order to perfect his soul by elevating the sparks that fell to his lot. ⁷⁸ Each one of us must learn his portion of the Torah so that we may make our corrections in this world, removing the obscurity from our eyes so that it is like navigating with a map that has been used many times to an area we often go, where our treasure is before us.

To gain such a familiarity with the Holy One requires, like in any relationship, considerable time and commitment, but through this work one will reach the place where he will

77. Duties of the

Heart 2:281

78. Ibid. 359.

acquire the Torah at all times. This is so beautiful that Rabbi Eleazer teaches that students who come later into the world and find the Torah clearly expounded, yet manage to find new expositions everyday, the Shechinah rests upon them and listens to their words. ⁷⁹ In these later generations we can see the love God has shown to our sages in their teaching, and grow from their teachings and the love within them, and rise to reach our vision of our portion of the Torah—that the Torah of all the previous generations reveals to us.

We have so much before us in this generation and so far we can go in the Torah, but do not think for a minute that this is the end we strive for. As God gave us the Torah because God wanted to bestow good on His creations, so too our desire to learn is so that we elevate our souls to be vessels for revelation so that others near us may also benefit. We learn so that we may share

the benefits of the Torah, as Rabbi Bachyah teaches that it is our duty to contemplate the manifold aspects of the Divine Commandments, thereby attaining a conception of God so that we may attract others to love Him.⁸⁰

This love has many faces of revelation, depending on the aspect with which one is occupied. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that from the *chukim* (statutes) one may learn the secrets of the Torah, the hidden teachings of wisdom, the knowledge of the Creator.⁸¹ As the statutes are beyond normal rational understanding, they require a Divine Perception to really penetrate them. It was from contemplating the statute of the Red Heifer that King Solomon, the wisest of men, realized how limited his knowledge was. The statutes are a gateway to Divine Consciousness. One should not be

79. *Zohar* 3:197b.

80. *Kad. HaKemach* Chapter love "Love."

81 *Ibid* chapter "Blessing."

misled into believing that such great depth can be found only in the statutes of the Torah, because the whole Torah has hidden aspects. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that most of the words of the Talmud are covert and concealed.⁸² In many parts of the Talmud the discussion is so bizarre that this should be obvious, yet so many pass over the Agaddah so quickly, though this is some of the most wondrous Torah. God should open all our eyes.

Another indication of a hidden teaching is revealed by Rabbenu Bachyah: The more esoteric the subject, the shorter the account that is given of it in the Torah. This is true so that true knowledge is reserved only for erudite individuals.⁸³

If one is occupied in the Torah with proper intention, he will find wonders in these matters and God will show him secrets; if one does not have this awe, there is something wrong at the foundation of his learning-and this is dangerous

for the soul, as Rabbi Banah said that whoever occupies himself with the Torah not for its own sake it becomes a deadly poison to him, as taught in tractate *Tynis*,⁸⁴ but if one learns with proper intention the doors of the Torah will open to him so many wonders.

Elijah the Prophet teaches that Makom revealed to Daniel the depths of the *Merkavah*, from which he could look out over all the world to provide for it. ⁸⁵ All these wonders are there just waiting for us to explore them; what is there to compare to these? Let us take the advice of the wise King Solomon as he says in the Song of Songs: "Come my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages, let us get up early to the vineyard" (Song 7: 12 -13). To each of us is this quest, and a grand portion it is to all who truly desire.

82. Ibid., chapter "Atonement."

83. Ibid., chapter "Rosh Hashanah."

84. *Taanit 7a*.

85. *Tanna d'Bei ELiyahu Rabbah*, p. 64.

Elijah the Prophet teaches that a nut has four segments, so each and every sage in Yisrael who truly has words of Torah within him comes to have wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and insight within him. ⁸⁶ This is not to be accomplished alone; there are at times a need for seclusion from others for deep contemplation and meditation, but Eliyahu teaches that even if a man sits privately and occupies himself with the mysteries of God's *Merkavah* and all His beneficent ways in the world, occasionally he should put aside his own occupation to go to the Synagogue or to the House of Study any place new insights into the Torah are discovered. Because of a man's presence in the Synagogue or House of Study, joy is renewed for him every day without fail.⁸⁷ We cannot go further without noting Eliyahu Ha Navi's teaching that one who recites Chumash and Mishnah in a secluded place abides with the Holy One.⁸⁸ Shabot is a aspect of

the completion of the creation. So a Talmud Chuchum (Great student of Torah) is called Shabot. When a man sanctifies himself from endless Torah study and prayer. He becomes totally subservient to Torah. His body is likened to parchment of the Torah. His prayers and learning is like its letters. One should never become arrogant over how much they have learned. As the Alshich HaKodesh on Mishle teaches that if a person refuses to hear words of Torah saying they already learned it. Hashem will reciprocate by not listening to his prayer saying He already has heard that.

The path of the Torah has many diverse ways, but the key to it is balance, harmony, and beauty in all its ways together. One must always remember that the Torah is an oral tradition and has been learned this way since the beginning. Rabbi Eleazer teaches that whoever contemplates what he learns from his master while at the same time seeing the wisdom reflected in his face can thereby obtain an additional portion of spirit.⁸⁹ Here we see an additional bit of the advantage of learning with others, as our spirits can then combine in searching of the Torah, allowing thereby to be revealed that which none of those learning would have seen on his own. In further explanation, Rabbi Shneur Zalman in the *Tanya* teaches that a man's very descent into this world is for the purpose of his ascent, of which there is none higher-

86. Ibid .. ch. 18.

87. Ibid .. p. 137.

88. Ibid. 339.

89. *Zohar* 1:192a.

this being the in-dwelling of his might, which is in the heights of the upper realms and becomes magnified through ten people learning the Torah, causing an in-dwelling of Holiness, an immense, radiation without limit or end. So it cannot be vested In a finite vessel but surrounds

a group of ten.⁹⁰ The Oar Hachym teaches that the final redemption will be in Mose's merit. This is evoked by dedication to Torah study. Thus the long wait for the final redemption is do to a lack of vigor and diligence in Torah study. May we soon see many such yielding to us Messianic revelation.

90. *Tanya* 523

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12

TZEDAKAH

The "Yesharim" (up right), are people who belong to the top group of 7 categories of Sadeekem (righteous men). They distinguish themselves by doing good to and for others. Rabbi Miller teaches that there is no word for "charity" in Hebrew; the closest term is *tzedakah*, which means "justice." The rich giving to the poor is not, according to the Torah, an act of mercy, but an act of justice, as the poor have a right to share in the wealth of the nation and the individual. It is merely an act of returning a person's share by one who is entrusted with its custody. I Many have adopted the foolish attitude that one is doing a favor to another by giving *tzedakah*, but ultimately, as shown above, he is only doing that which is right, returning a lost object, fulfilling a responsibility. By giving *tzedakah*, ultimately he is doing no one a favor but himself. The recipient of *tzedakah* is only receiving

1. *Secret of Happiness* 87, Sni luchot ha brit Vayachi

what is rightfully his. Rabbi Abin teaches us that it is God standing in front of a poor man asking for a donation; it is He Who rewards and punishes you. Rebbe Nachman teaches that the world is a pumping wheel through which the filled is emptied and the empty is filled; vengeance comes to Israel through the hands of the poor.² It is our job to make sure that the poor are given all they need as this wards off the judgment of Heaven.

Rabbi Moshe Alshich teaches us that poverty is willed by God so that the rich have the opportunity to treat the poor as equals and give to them. If the poor are put to a task that makes their dignity suffer, it is the rich that are at fault for failing their test. Even a servant must be given food, work, and housing as an equal.³ The sages teach that each class wins credit for itself by the medium of another; by this one is joined to the tree of life. The rich help the poor, the righteous collect charity to distribute. The Sni luchot haBrit on parsha Vayachi teaches that each person is like a limb of man, The rich and poor are all part of the same organism. Just like the heart and other organs are parts of one body. So the poor need not feel ashamed accepting donations as how would the body work if the heart refused to pass on blood ? Each needs to contribute what God has given it.

Concerning *tzedakah*, Rabbi Ashi teaches in tractate *Baba Batra* that *tzedakah* is equal to all the other religious precepts combined. Rabbi Pappa teaches that even if a beggar goes door-to-door we provide him with a small gift. Rabbi Eliezer teaches that one who causes others to do good is greater than the doer. If one does not give *tzedakah*, heathens come to take it forcibly. Rebbe teaches that every piece of charity comes together as a suit of armor. We learn from Rabbi Yitzchak that one who gives even a small coin to a poor man obtains six blessings, but the one who gives him comfort receives eleven blessings. Rabbi Nachman ben Yitzchak teaches

that if one is anxious to do *tzedakah*, God will make sure he has the means to, and recipients fitting so that he may be rewarded for assisting them. Rabbi Yehoshua ben

2. Midrash Rabba *Vayikra 34:9*.
3. Torah Moshe.

Levi teaches that he who habitually does *tzedakah* will have wise, wealthy children well versed in Aggadah. Rabbi Meir lets us know that the poor exist so that we may be saved from Gehenom. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha teaches that whoever turns away his eyes from one who appeals for *tzedakah* is as if he worships idols. We learn from Rabbi Eliezer ben Yose that *tzedakah* and deeds of kindness bring peace and good understanding between Israel and her Father in Heaven. Concerning the strength of *tzedakah*, Rabbi Yehuda teaches that ten strong things have been created in this world: Rock is hard yet it is cleaved by iron, iron is softened by fire, fire is quenched by water, water is brought by clouds, clouds are scattered by the wind, wind is strong but the body bears it, the body is strong yet it is crushed by fright, wine banishes fear, sleep works off wine, and death is stronger than all-yet *tzedakah* delivers from death. Only charity given with empathy with the needy has a life giving effect. The Aor Ha chyim in Vaira teaches that by giving Sadakah to a Sadeek (Holy man) he includes himself in the sadeek and is thereby brought to perfection of the Ayn Sof (Infiniteness of God). Taking one from where they are trapped to the most lofty spiritual level.⁴

As we can see from what is stated above, the merit of *tzedakah* is so great that it can ward off the judgment that comes to one in the future. This is partly so because the *tzedakah* that we do is always with us; it is a way of life.

Let us now look at its opposite, so as to know what to avoid. Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that taking interest on loans is a matter that affects

the length of one's life. The Prophet Ezekiel reveals this when he states, "He has given money at interest, he has taken interest; shall he live? He shall not live" (Ezek. 18: 13). Just as *tzedakah* delivers from death, we see here what its opposite does. Why is lending money on interest so bad? Rabbi Acha bar Adah teaches that it is a matter of fearing God. Now we see how *tzedakah* is central to all the *mitzvot* we do. Lending money on interest is so far from the way of life of *tzedakah* that Rabba compares lenders to shedders of blood. Just as murderers cannot make

4. *Bava Batra* 9a, Sni luchot Vayachi

restoration caused by loss of life, so lenders on interest are not required to make restoration.⁵ "That which is crooked cannot be made straight" seems to apply here. *Tzedakah* has the opposite effect, as we find in the teaching of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov that giving *tzedakah* enables one to overcome difficulties and opens up new opportunities; therefore, one should always give *tzedakah* when beginning any new venture.⁶

Selfish behavior, such as lending money on interest, closes doors so that they cannot be opened, while acts of *tzedakah* are the door to new opportunity. But what should one do when he makes a great deal of money and has already given his twenty percent as declared proper in the Code of Jewish Law-though, to them, this is not much. Have they fulfilled their obligation? Rabbi Nachman teaches that in fulfilling the mitzvah of *tzedakah* in a proper way one must break his natural instinct to be cruel and turn it into love, desiring to give *tzedakah*.⁷ For this question we can turn to Rabbi Schneur Zalman's teaching that charity can be dispensed without limit for the purpose of rectifying one's iniquities. Only one who has not sinned, or has rectified his sins by means of fasting or self-mortification, should give no more than one-

fifth. For all others, *tzedakah* has no limit.⁸ Here as in many places the law must be understood in its context. Do not be one of those who fall into error by understanding the Halachah in the Shulchan Aruch out of its context. Remember that all of God's ways are peace.

In the way of *tzedakah*, Rashi teaches that whoever gives gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and corners of the field to the poor is credited as if he built the Holy Temple and brought the

5. *Temurah* 6b.

6. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 286.

7. *Advice* 239.

8. *Tanya* 433.

offerings within it.⁹ It is *tzedakah* that builds the Temple, just like in the Sinai desert, where the Children of Israel gave up their silver and gold to make the works of the Tabernacle.

The sages teach us that three gifts, if not given by the Holy One, ultimately fail a man: wisdom, strength, and wealth. One who because of wealth separates from his brethren does so to his own hurt.¹⁰ Such is the way found so commonly today. People become wealthy thinking it is by their own might: instead of sharing the blessing that is bestowed upon them, their hearts become puffed up and they become arrogant and separate from others, thinking that their wealth confers upon them a superior status—but this is no more than vanity, and in the end it will be no more than a source of emotional turmoil and pain. The proper path is its opposite, as Bar Kappara teaches us to regard the poor man's flesh as one's own,¹¹ for we are all one in the eyes of God. One should never turn his eyes away from the needs of the poor.

The sages teach concerning one who causes the practice of hospitality to wayfarers to be forgotten that the Holy Blessed One says his life shall be forgotten.¹² The sages show, in tractate *Sukkah*, one who tries to collect twice on the same debt, lends money on interest, fails to

protest wrongdoing, or declares an intent to give *tzedakah* publicly and does not give, causes his personal property to go into the hands of the government. Rav adds that private property is confiscated by the state treasury on account of deferring payment of a laborer's hire or withholding a laborer's wage. Such is also the case with people who put the burden upon others

9. Rashi *Vayikra*.
10. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 22:7.
11. Ibid. *Vayikra* 34: 14.
12. Midrash Rabba *Kohelet* 2:2.

by evading taxes, and who are arrogant, which is equal to them all.¹³

It is only by arrogance that one can foolishly raise himself so that he thinks that he is under no obligation to help his fellow man when it is within his power. It is only the coldness of arrogance that prevents his heart from being pained over another's condition. It could easily be one's own circumstance, so one must open his heart to others.

Rabbi Eliezer teaches that the reward of *tzedakah* depends entirely on the extent of kindness in it, and that *gemilut chasadim* (acts of kindness) are superior to giving charity. It all rests on intention, just as Torah that is learned in order to teach is the Torah of loving-kindness.¹⁴ In all things we should hope to receive so that we can give. Unfortunately not everyone has this awareness. Sometimes we must persuade others to give *tzedakah*. as we see in tractate *Ketubot* that Rabba used coercion against Rabbi Watsom ben Ammi, exacting four hundred zuz of *tzedakah* from him.¹⁵ It is of course better if one gives *tzedakah* voluntarily, but if we need to persuade them, that is better than if they did not give at all. Likewise, when the situation arises we should provide others with the opportunity to

give *tzedakah*.

Concerning who should give *tzedakah*. Rabbi Avirah, in tractate *Gittin*, teaches in the name of Rabbi Ammi and Rabbi Ashi that if a man sees his livelihood is barely sufficient he should give *tzedakah* from it; all the more so if it is plentiful. The school of Rabbi Yishmael teaches that just as a sheep is shorn of its wool, so should one shear off some of his possessions, dispense it for *tzedakah*. and thereby be delivered from Gehenom. Mar Zutra teaches that even a poor

13. *Sukkah* 29b.

14. *Ibid.* 49b.

15. *Ketubot* 49b.

man who subsists on *tzedakah* should give *tzedakah*.¹⁶ We should all share according to the means that we have been blessed with.

As for the reward for our *tzedakah*, Rabbi Yudan teaches in the name of Rabbi Zeira and likewise Rabbi Yochanan teaches in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that great is the merit of supporting the needy, it bringing the resurrection before its time.¹⁷ This is clarified by Rabbi Schneur Zalman in the *Tanya*, where he teaches that all the acts of charity and kindness that the Israelites perform in this world out of the generosity of their pure hearts are alive and subsist in the physical world until the time of the resurrection.¹⁸ The acts of *tzedakah* accumulate as the weight of offerings of silver to make the Tabernacle accumulated till enough had been collected, and Betzalel built the Tabernacle. So too have all the acts of *tzedakah* done during our exile continue to accumulate, bringing us closer to the ultimate redemption. One should be quick to give *tzedakah* because we see that it brings ultimate redemption closer, but also try to give where it is really needed. Rebbe Shimon teaches that when dealing with Esau, cunning and craft must be employed, as the serpent is cunning and tries to mislead.¹⁹ *Tzedakah* is greater when it is

a greater act of kindness. As with any mitzvah, the more preparation and thought involved, the greater is the revelation. We learn in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* that one who gives money is blessed; whoever lends is greater; but one who sets a poor man in business, sharing the profits with him, is best,²⁰

As we can see, there are many levels of doing *zedakah*,

16. *Gittin* 7a.
17. Midrash Rabba Song of Songs 2:5.
18. *Tanya* 591.
19. *Zohar* 1:138b.
20. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* 34a.

and *zedakah* is not analogous to the Western concept of charity, but has many forms. As stated earlier, *zedakah* literally means "Justice," and is concerned with all areas of our lives. To be a vessel for the light of Divine Revelation, a person must fill his life with acts of *zedakah*.

Concerning such acts, Rabbi Eliezer teaches that if one restores the soul of a poor man even if it is his time to depart from the world, God restores his soul and gives him a new lease on life. But to withhold the wages of a poor man is like taking his life and the life of his household; as he diminishes their souls, so too God diminishes his days and cuts off his soul from Olam HaBa. Even if by his deeds length of days is decreed for that man, it is withdrawn, nor does the soul soar aloft. One who pays wages on the proper day is not taken from the world before his time.²¹ All things rest on the proper course of action in matters of this sort. That is why the holy men upon whom the world depends are called *tzadikim*, for *zedakah* is the foundation of the world, as will be explained later in a kabbalistic writing with the help of the Holy Blessed One. Rabbi Levi lets us see the importance of *zedakah* when he teaches in tractate *Yebamot* that the punishment for using false measures in commerce is worse than that

for forbidden sexual relations. 22

A *tzadik* is a righteous man, but one who lets greed grow within him to such an extent that he cheats and steals from others cannot be called "righteous." Unfair practices in business are the same as stealing. The rules that regulate honorable business practices are great and manifold. One should do his best to learn these laws so as not to act improperly but become a blessing to his community in all that he does. If one allows this path in business, he will have a much greater

21. *Zohar* 3:84b.

22. *Yebamot* 21a.

chance to succeed. We learn in tractate *Megillah* from Rabbi Yitzchak that if one labors in Torah he will succeed: not so in business as this requires the assistance of Heaven,²³ but the memory of Torah also requires the assistance of Heaven. It is by *mazel* that the bestowing of financial blessing is decreed. Likewise, in order to be a vessel for such blessing, a person's actions should reflect Divine Will so that Divine Will may be bestowed upon him. Do not be mistaken to believe that all money comes as a blessing, because it can also be a curse. Many a man has fallen away from a Divine awareness because of money. Financial success is controlled by *mazel*; one should not waste his time chasing riches, though one certainly has to do work so as to have a medium to receive financial blessing—for if one has no tool to obtain money, how can it come? Yet, this end is of little importance compared to the needs of one's soul. When it is your time, your financial efforts will be blessed, but to chase desperately after such things is a waste of time when so many neglect the needs of their souls completely, and become swallowed up by the quest for money. Such is only foolishness.

Concerning the true nature of making a living, Rabbi Nachman teaches that the time a

person spends working is a battle against the forces of the other side. The goal is to sift out the sparks of holiness and elevate them. Sifting out the sparks is the main purpose of all business and commerce. One has to be *literally* perfectly honest. Every word he speaks should be true, but he must also keep his mind bound to Torah.²⁴ Only one's exterior thought should be involved in the work itself; one's inner thought should always be bound to Torah. Rabbi Meir teaches in tractate *Kiddushin* that one should teach his son a clean and easy craft and pray ear-

23. *Megillah* 6b.

24. *Advice* 148.

nestly to the One to Whom all wealth and property belongs for from Him it comes, not from one's calling. And Rabbi Shimon ben Eliezer teaches that animals are sustained without trouble. and they are only created to serve man, while man was created to serve his Maker. If animals are sustained without trouble, how much more so should we be? We see the futility of wasting time chasing wealth. This is further taught by Rabbi Naharta, that every man's craft leaves him in his old age exposed to hunger, but Torah is not so. as it stands by him in his youth and gives him a future and a hope in old age. ²⁵

There is no use in wasting time gaining mountains of physical sustenance as one cannot take any physical thing with him when he leaves this world, which is in a short time compared to the immortality of the soul. or even our years of incarnation since the Revelation at Sinai. The aim should be to traverse the mountains of separation between oneself and the Father in Heaven. As King Solomon says in the Song of Songs (Song 2: 17), "Turn my beloved and be like a roe or young hart on the mountains of separation." Do not make these mountains greater by unfair business practices, as Rashi teaches that one who measures things

out (i.e., engages in business practices) is called a judge. If he deals falsely in judgment, he is one who corrupts judgment and is called unrighteous, hated, accursed, abominable, detested. He defiles the land, profanes the Divine Name, causes the Divine Presence to be removed, and casts Yisrael to the sword and exiles her from her land.²⁶ Rashi also teaches that Amalek (transmigratory souls whose main drive is the hatred of God and Yisrael) comes to attack Yisrael when they use

25. *Kiddushin* 82b.

26. Rashi *Vayikra* 19:35.

false weights and measures,²⁷ and we can take this to mean all devious business transactions.

After seeing these warnings involving business practices and their apparent dangers, one should not be altogether discouraged, for if one follows the proper path in these matters, he sanctifies the Divine Name by his actions in many ways.

The Malbim teaches that it is necessary to be engaged in toil to acquire bread lest one become overwhelmed by thoughts of envy, passion, and the seeking of honor.²⁸ Working in the secular world gives us a chance to earn merit, brings God into the common world, and keeps us from doing what we should not. Some work will also allow us the freedom to do more good, as Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that if one becomes fully engaged with providing for maintenance and livelihood, it can be difficult to find leisure to devote himself to spiritual interests. Because of this our teachers, peace unto them, labored in secular affairs in which they could keep their thoughts and feelings focused on Torah. Abba Hilkiyah was a ditch digger, Shammai was a builder, Hillel was a wood chopper.²⁹ There are many ways in which one can work righteously while earning money to support his family and help others.

It cannot be stressed enough, concerning the

money one gets, that much rests on using it wisely. The sages, in Midrash Rabba *Shemot* teach that a rich man who lends to a poor man so that he can make money from interest, and takes his belongings if he cannot pay his debt, will be regarded as if he inflicted a wound upon him.³⁰ The way of God is kindness, so obviously such behavior does not

27. Ibid. *Devarim* 25:17.

28. *Malbim parsha Bereshith*.

29. *Duties of the Heart* 2:317.

30. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 31: 13.

find favor before Heaven, but only promotes selfish desire in this world. All such behavior must certainly be avoided and should never even come to mind. In tractate *Soferim*, Rabbi Yehuda tells us to be especially careful in certain occupations, as even the best physicians are destined to Gehenom and the most worthy butcher is Amalek's partner.³¹ Obviously, these occupations involve major responsibility, as a physician can help save a life while a butcher does so spiritually by ensuring that Jews eat kosher meat. In both of these professions there is no room for error. How important it is for a physician to remember that his role is as a healer by helping patients; he should not be selling services to customers as a common businessman. Such was the behavior of the ancient Canaanites, whom God could not tolerate as we learn in the Book of Numbers. Canaan was so called since *Canaan* was the word for merchant. ³²

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that one who robs the poor by unfair business practices and does not satisfy his liability with restitution is liable to death by the hand of Heaven. ³³

Rashi teaches that so great is the power of gifts to the poor that it changes the attribute of anger to mercy.³⁴ Rabbi Shneur Zalman further explains that charity is superior to all the commandments, protecting from death and

saving from sufferings lighter than death in this world. So we should be as zealous with this commandment as possible, and whoever performs it frequently is praiseworthy, as its effect is to solicit supreme life from the Fountainhead of Life, the *Ain Sof*, to the abode of the living and to the land of the Shechinah the

31. *Soferim* 41a.
32. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 23: 10.
33. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Robbery."
34. Rashi *Bereshith* 18: 16.

sukkah of David that has fallen, bringing about a supreme unification many times, bringing close the Redemption.³⁵

The Torah ordains a complete order of righteousness in its economic system. We see some of its implications in the Jubilee year. Rabbi Miller explains that the Jubilee year prevents the misappropriation of property, keeping houses and poverty from accumulating in the hands of a few rich men. This prevents extreme poverty by assuring a race of independent, free landholders.³⁶ The Law of the Torah ensures the sustenance of all, as we learn from the Torah of Rabbi Shneur Zalman that when one has only enough water to sustain himself he is not obligated to share this with another, but when the poor need bread for the mouth of babes, and wood and clothes to protect from the cold, their needs take precedence over fine clothes, family feasts, meat and fish, and all the delicacies of a man and his household.³⁷ We see from this that we must live as a tribal people, taking care of each other's needs and seeing to it that everyone has his basic needs met before any of us can really afford luxuries. Rabbi Bachyah teaches that wealth enables one to perform suitable and desirable deeds. Riches were created so that one could fulfill the commandments, as the sages say, "All gold was

created for the making of the Tabernacle” 38

If a person gives but a small coin to a poor man, he will be worthy of receiving the Divine Presence. The sowings of *tzedakah* are as enduring as treasures in Heaven, but *tzedakah* given with an unhappy countenance and reproach is a sin and this forfeits the merit of the *tzedakah*. 39

As conclusion, we will cite the teaching of

35. *Tanya* 513.

36. *The Secret of Happiness* 178.

37. *Tanya* 479.

38. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Wealth."

39. *Ibid.*, chapter "Charity."

Rabbi Nachman Of Breslov, that the door that does not open for the collector of *tzedakah* will open for the doctor.⁴⁰ As one goes through life and sees he has given great amounts of money to *tzedakah*, he should not feel proud, as the money had been granted only to be shared. By distributing the money, one establishes justice, which is to be expected. The sages in the Midrash teach that a man should not bring himself with pride before the Omnipresent, for whoever displays pride before God suffers disgrace.⁴¹ Pride can open the door to many kinds of transgressions. Rabbi Yose ben Chaninah teaches that whoever elevates himself at the cost of his fellow's degradation has no share in Olam HaBa.⁴² An apt description of behavior to avoid is found in tractate *Beitzah* in the teaching of Rabbi Nathan bar Abba in the name of Rav. There we learn that the rich Jews of Babylon will go down to Gehenom, for once a rabbi went to Babylon and asked for facilities to help his trading, but they would not accommodate him or give him food. These are the mixed multitude (Egyptians who joined the Children of Israel during the Exodus from Egypt). Whoever is not merciful to his fellow man reveals that he is not a descendant of Abraham. 43 Concerning the arrogant, we learn in tractate *Baba Batra* that the arrogant fall to Gehenom; so too when one strays from the word of the Torah. He that departs from the way of

understanding shall rest in the congregation of Shades, and He will not know their guests, and will enter in the depths of Sheol. 44 In tractate *Kallah*, Rabbi Yehuda teaches that the boldfaced are destined to Gehenom and the shamefaced to Eden.⁴⁵

- 40. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 290.
- 41. Midrash Rabba *Bamidbar* 4:20.
- 42. Ibid. *Bereshith* 1 :5.
- 43. *Beitzah* 32b.
- 44. *Bava Batra* 79a.
- 45. *Kallah Rabbati*.

13

HUMILITY

In the Talmud (tractate *Sanhedrin*) we learn from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that one of a humble spirit is accounted as if he brought all the offerings in the Holy Temple, and his prayers are not despised, as it says in *Tehilim* (Ps. 51: 17) "The sacrifices of Elokim (God) are a broken spirit and a contrite heart; Elokim you will not despise."¹ So much depends on humility. We learn that if the ruling power should come to you, cast not away your humility, as whoever casts away his humility causes death to befall him and the world by

causing his generation to sin.² A man cannot be arrogant if he has true spiritual awareness, knowing before Whom he stands.

1. *Sanhedrin* 43b.
2. Midrash Rabba *Kohelet* 10:4.

In the minor tractate of the Talmud *Kallah Rabbati*, the sages tell us not to be impatient, as this alienates one from his fellow man.³ A humble person will always have the patience to accept each one as he is. If he sees things in people that the Torah teaches are evil, he will not in impatience push the person away, but as one would a sick person he will draw him closer to heal him. Each soul is most precious. There is no person who does not deserve your attention. There may be those you are unable to help for some reason, but this is no reason to despise them. As your wisdom expands, God will guide you to be able to help more people in more situations. Rabba explains that wisdom is guided by humility as a door fits to its threshold. You must become accustomed to extend yourself in this trait of humility. Then your door will become larger, and you will be able to help and share with more people.⁴

We learned that the highest order of wisdom is obtained through fear (i.e., awe, not fright). Now, we add that humility is what gives us a certain capacity to receive this wisdom, just as wisdom will open the door to many good things as shown above. The sages teach that the haughty spirit will in the end stumble through an unfaithful married woman. A lowly spirit will be

free from the judgment of Gehenom and saved from evil visitation of the world. If one through arrogance is unfaithful to God, God will equally turn away from him. We can see that one who opens his door in arrogance has different results than one who does so in humility. One can avoid many judgments in this world through humility. Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches in the *Tanya* that for every favor the Holy One, Blessed is He, bestows on a Jew, resulting in bringing him closer, as he sees God's hand in his life, he

3. *Kallah Rabbati* 53a.

4. *Ibid.* 55a.

becomes ever more humble to the lowest plane much more as nothing and non-existence.⁵ The righteous man through his humility sees that all his blessings are from his Creator, while the wicked receives judgments from God and, through arrogance, sees them only as chance occurrences-until things come to such desperate' straits that he will be forced to humble himself and ask for help.

There is a type of pride that is good that does not breed arrogance, as Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that laudable is the pride of the wise man in his wisdom or the righteous man in his work when it is an expression of gratitude to his Creator for the benefits bestowed upon him and of his joy therein inducing him to increase these endowments and be zealous in their use.⁶ It is necessary to teach this, as so many never ascend into holiness because they cling to the feeling of lowliness, feeling inadequate because of their past transgressions. This teaching is necessary also to remove false conceptions of humility. Moses, our teacher, was the humblest of men yet knew who he was-that he was the greatest leader. Before you can reach pride in holiness you must act upon the words of Rabbenu Bachyah, as he teaches that one is obligated while in this world to avoid sloth and inertia, and to work with humility, lowliness, and renunciation of pride.

keeping away from haughtiness, presumptuousness, and arrogance.⁷

In *Kad HaKemach*, Rabbi Bachyah teaches that shame entails discretion and humility as well as aspects of scorn and disgrace. Discretion and humility require one to be ashamed before God and man. People will observe many of the commandments of the Torah out of shame. Divested of

5. *Tanya* 395.

6. *Duties of the Heart* 2:114.

7. *Ibid.* 271.

this shame they cast off the yoke of the Torah and the fear of God to uphold injustice and pervert the truth.⁸ The Revelation at Sinai and the mighty and fearful visions were intended to invest Yisrael with qualities of discretion and shame, but pride causes a person to speak perversely. Pride forces him to deviate from the way of truth and speak things that are unfounded.⁹

To be meek means to be gentle in word and deed to all people. Humility procures for one a four-fold benefit in this world: fear of God, wealth, honor, and life.¹⁰ Of all traits King Solomon said to proceed on an intermediate course, but regarding humility He instructed us to bend toward extreme self-effacement. Humility is one of the traits that distinguishes one as a descendant of Abraham.¹¹

8. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Shaming."
9. *Ibid.*, chapter "Haughtiness."
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, chapter "Humility."

14

JUST WAY

Gate Six

After much Torah learning, one is able to clearly see the errors of the past and realize ways he can begin to do complete *teshuvah*, which means returning to God and rectifying the damage of past errors. Rav Kahana in *Pesikta* teaches that repentance, like the sea, is always open; prayer is a *mikvah*, having set times when open. If one is at the sea, he can find a suitable place to immerse (do *teshuvah*). One can repent at any time in any place. ¹

Rebbe Nachman teaches that to return to God one must be an expert in *halachah*, which literally means "going,"

1. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana, pesikta 24.*

so that wherever one goes, nothing discourages him-not even his own backsliding.²

Rabbi Yehuda teaches, concerning the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah, that the Holy Blessed One gave 613 counsels unto man in order that he might attain perfect attachment to God.³ Even in the lowest pit of Gehenom it is possible to draw oneself closer to God. From every place, no matter how low, the very act of seeking God-asking, "Where is the place of His glory?" the most exalted essence brings healing and reconstruction. Through this alone will the ultimate ascent be attained.⁴

The evil inclination is like a stone. We must keep chipping away at it till it is entirely removed so that no one will trip over it.⁵ Even the biggest obstacles if worked upon, will gradually be overcome. The Holy One does not expect anything from us that we cannot do- but that which we can do *is* expected from us. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that persistence in transgression indicates that one despises the word of God and so prepares him self for punishment, but if a sinner beseeches pardon and abandons his sin out of fear of God his iniquities are gradually diminished and become less and less until they are entirely cleansed and cleared by *teshuvah*.⁶

Teshuvah has many expressions and aspects ultimately tailored for each soul. Yet the sages

teach us that the Holy One asks no more of Yisrael except repentance by way of words. This is confirmed in the words of the Prophet Hosea as he states. "Take with you words and return to God."⁷ Of course these words must come from one who calls upon Him

2. *Advice 88.*
3. *Zohar 2:82b.*
4. *Advice 88.*
5. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana. pesikta 24.*
6. *Duties of the Heart 2: 157.*
7. Hosea 14:3.

in truth, and with a true heart you will always find the action corresponding to the word.

The sages teach us that when a man does *teshuvah* he converts into pious deeds every one of the many sins of which he is guilty Great is the power released from the *klippot* (spiritual husks) by true *teshuvah*. In accomplishing *teshuvah*, remember this guideline: that only offerings brought willingly and cheerfully are for God, but if brought as fulfilling an obligation it is to His fires and not to His Name.⁹ For *teshuvah* to be complete it must be more than just a going through the motions, but must be offered in a manner at least as willingly and joyfully as the transgressions were done.

Rabbi Bachyah teaches concerning *teshuvah* that we can learn from the laws of koshering vessels: "An impure vessel must be broken." One must leave arrogance and come to submissiveness. ¹⁰ This is essential, as one can make correction for past misdeeds-but one must submit to the yoke of the 248 positive commandments, for their lack of fulfillment cannot be rectified, as taught by Rabbi Schneur Zalman that when one does *teshuvah* for not fulfilling a positive commandment, the illumination that he missed by not fulfilling the commandment is still withheld from him. If one transgresses a negative injunction, by *teshuvah* and Yom Kippur one can be cleansed of his transgression, but on Yom Kippur one cannot

gain the illumination that he lost by not fulfilling one of the 248 positive commandments. each being one of the spiritual limbs of the king. ¹¹

In another place concerning an explanation of the nature of *teshuvah*. Rabbi Schneur Zalman teaches that the *Nefesh Elokit* (the Godly Soul) that has fallen from a lofty peak, the

8. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 31: 1.

9. Ibid. *Vayikra* 27: 12.

10. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Rosh Hashanah."

11. *Malbim parsha Bereshith*..

true life, into a deep pit, the chambers of defilement, the *sitra achra* (the other side), must be raised in *teshuvah* by arousing supreme compassion to the *Neshama* and *Nefesh ELokit* from their life-giving source, emanated from the Shechinah that has descended into the chambers of the other side from one's evil thoughts and schemes. By arousing these to *teshuvah* and holiness, the Shechinah is returned out of exile.

There is a need to crush and subdue the husk of the *sitra achra* by attaining, at times, a broken spirit and heart over the exile of the Shechinah. ¹² We further learn by meditating on the greatness of the Eternal in deep contemplation over *pesukei d'zimra*, which form the beginning of the liturgy of the morning prayers, and the *Shema* and its two preceding blessings. One can then approach the *Shemona Esray*, the central prayer service, which is *teshuvah iLah*, the higher *teshuvah*. This is accomplished through humility that arouses Divine Compassion, which is *teshuvah tataah*, the lower *teshuvah*. ¹³ One should experience *teshuvah iLah* all his days so they are filled with great joy. ¹⁴

Rabbi Avraham teaches us in *Meditation of the Sad Soul*, concerning one of *teshuvah's* highest ends, that Yaakov is described as a "man dwelling in tents," showing that he did not occupy himself with acquiring objects of this world. The reward of the World to Come

the Torah describes as the "Heritage of Jacob," showing us that the man who separates himself from this world inherits the glory of the World to Come. This is the nature of *teshuvah* that brings redemption.¹⁵ Rabbi Avraham further teaches that one undergoes great change when he does *teshuvah*. A transgressor who

12. *Tamid* 32b.

13. *Tanya* 379.

14. *Ibid.* 385.

15. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 82.

does not believe in the commandments can be called a seeker or convert to the way of faith when he returns to the right way. ¹⁶ The seeker has many teachers with many paths before him; God has many faces to which one can return.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman teaches that one embarks on worship only through joy. If one is not capable of going from extreme humility to joy it is advised that the time of *teshuvah* for him is *Tikkun Chatzos* (the Midnight Meditation). If this cannot be accomplished nightly, one should attempt it at least one night every week before Shabbat. The Hebrew letters for Shabbat can be arranged to spell *teshuvah* as it is on the order of the higher *teshuvah*, as worlds ascend to their source at this time. ¹⁷ Even the coarsest soul, if brought to the service of the Holy Blessed One by meditating on the Torah and doing *tikkun chatzos*, can come to break the shell around his heart and shed true tears over the exile of the Shechinah, but few ever make this effort, unfortunately. The service at midnight is only one part of a long path that has helped Jews in many generations do *teshuvah*.

To understand the way of *teshuvah*, one is advised to learn the book *Shaarei Teshuvah* (Gates of Repentance). In this very holy book the way of *teshuvah* is explicitly shown for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, but here I will bring forth a summation of its teaching, as no discussion of *teshuvah* can be complete without its concepts discussed.

Teshuvah finds its beginning in the forsaking of transgression. One feels sorrow over his transgressions, suffers because of the past, experiences worry and shame, humbles himself before all people, practices humility in deed, and breaks the physical desire for transgression. One must do the opposite of the transgression, become aware of the penalty of

16. Ibid. 88.

17. *Tanya* 379,

each transgression one has been involved with, begin regarding lesser transgressions as severe, confess, pray, correct misdeeds, pursue loving-kindness and truth, see one's sins constantly before him, forsake sin when the desire is strong, and turn other people from transgression. All these are the ways of *teshuvah*. Do not become discouraged, as the accomplishment is not easy and requires much work. For example, it is difficult at times to abstain from transgression, and to actually break the physical desire for it is another matter, but persistence in these matters will yield success. In each of the activities of *teshuvah* listed above there is much to contemplate and understand. For example concerning the concept of confession of sins, the sages teach that transgression against God should be "covered," and our confession should be to God alone. During the time of the Temple, when one committed a transgression unintentionally he could bring a sin offering, but for intentional transgression one had to do *teshuvah*. The path of *teshuvah* has been well trodden over the generations. As in all Divine service, there is the element of love and fear. Rabbi Moshe Ashlich teaches that *teshuvah* through love turns sins into merit and *teshuvah* through fear transmutes intentional sins to the level of unintentional.

¹⁸ Every man has his own portion in Gan Aden (Garden of Eden) and Gehenom (hell). If he is worthy he acquires not only his own portion in Gan

Aden but his fellows also. A man who is not worthy must pass over his portion in Gan Eden to another who is more worthy than themselves. Do not console yourself that even if you suffer in Gehennom for your indulgences, such a sojourn is only temporary, and you will later receive reward for your Torah learning and enjoy all the the world to come has to offer. King Solomon warns that one can forfeit all the merits that they have accumulated and these may be given to someone else. Teshuva done from love converts sins to merit and protects man as a shield. So do *teshuvah* **now**.

In tractate *Berachot*, Rabba bar Chaninah teaches that if one commits a sin and is ashamed of it, all his sins are forgiven.¹⁹ God wants our hearts, not empty rituals performed over and over. True *teshuvah* can change the world in a moment. We learn in tractate *Rosh Hashanah* from Rabbi Yochanan that great is the power of *teshuvah* for it rescinds a man's final sentence.²⁰ Concerning such *teshuvah* Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that *teshuvah* is only effected by the sur-

18. Torah Moshe.

19. *Berachot* 12b, Alshich Mishley

20. *Rosh Hashanah* 17b.

render of one's soul.²¹ How blessed is one's soul if it departs from the body while engaged in a state of *teshuvah*. In tractate *Avodah Zarah*, the sages teach that even if Yisrael does but a few good deeds at a time, God makes them accumulate as a great sum. Each of our acts of *teshuvah* builds together, bringing us closer, step-by-step, to God. Rabbi Abba teaches that God sometimes will deprive one of monetary possessions in this world so that he will be worthy to merit the Eternal World to Come. God, Blessed is He, does these things to help us, guiding us step-by-step in *teshuvah*, bringing us closer to Him. Rabbi Abbahu teaches that God will visit the iniquities of the righteous man upon him so that he may pay his debt rather than

have it collected as a lump sum; here too we see God guiding our lives in kindness in a concealed way. God shows us these patterns of supervision, which are superficially hidden, when we look into the stories of our forefathers and other narratives in the Torah. Avraham and Yitzchak did not give birth to Holy female souls. For this reason they were forced to roam the world to find soulmates who were sparks of Holiness trapped among the gentiles.

Rabbi Yochanan teaches us in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai that the sin of the golden calf and King David's incident with Bat Sheva were contrary to the nature of both Yisrael and King David. God created these situations only to show us that no matter how grievous the sin, there is *teshuvah*. Everyone carries with him all the tools needed to do *teshuvah*, and these tools are light from their *mitzvot*. Rav Shmuel ben Nachman teaches that every good deed one does precedes him and walks in front of him in the World to Come, as Prophet Isaiah states: "Your righteousness shall go before you" (Is. 58:8). Likewise, every transgression clasps and leads him on the day of judgment. Rabbi Eliezer teaches that it is tied to him as to a dog.²² For these things we must do *teshuvah*. Even if one has committed

21. *Zohar*3:122b.

22. *Avodah Zarah* 8a, Alshich on Proverbs,

grievous transgressions after *teshuvah*, he will find himself in a place of honor. Rebbe teaches that repentants are not only accepted in the World to Come, but are even called "Rabbi." ²³

In tractate *Menachot*, Rabbi Ashi teaches that if one puts his trust in the Holy One, He is his refuge in this world and the World to Come. Rabbi Yehuda ben Illiah teaches. concerning *teshuvah*, that this world is like the letter *Hay*, which is like a building, closed on three sides

and open on one; whoever wishes to go astray may do so, but the leg of the *Hay* is suspended to show that whoever does *teshuvah* after leaving may reenter. If a man does *teshuvah* he is assisted; if he comes to defile himself, they open the door for him; if he repents, the Holy Blessed One sets a crown upon him. ²⁴

How great is the power of *teshuvah*! Rabbi Yochai bar Yehoshua teaches that whoever diverts his mind from sexual thoughts, turning from temptation, is worthy to function as the *Kohen Gadol* (the High Priest), offering a burnt offering on the altar, and is sustained by the luster of the Shechinah. Such is the merit of one who turns away from transgression instead of being as Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov describes, one who by masturbating commits murder and is destined to be slaughtered as an animal having no portion in the World to Come. He forfeits his life, as taught in tractate *Kallah Raboti*. ²⁵ One must be careful in what he allows to enter the sight and mind, so as not to be led astray with impure thoughts.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel tells us of another way of destruction that we must avoid in tractate *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*: that the nations destroy their inhabitants by taxes,

23. Ibid. 17a.

24. *Menachot* 29b.

25. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 16:2.

spend their days going after something that is of no worth at all. Everyone knows the phrase "You can't take it with you," but things of this category, unfortunately, are the only things most people ever pursue. If one spends his life pursuing these things, never thinking about the joy of sharing and giving, there will be none with whom to share. In the end, one's selfish ways will return unto him when he is left with nothing. Why should one expect the Heavenly-Court to

show mercy to him who never does so himself. As Abba Yudan teaches in the Midrash: If a man spits up in the air, it will land on his face. ²⁹

What do we need of this world? Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel praised the men of the east for meeting in a field. ³⁰ God does not grant men favor for building the biggest building. Meeting in a field is more than adequate and praiseworthy, but there is an advantage to praying indoors, as will be discussed later with the help of the Holy One. The main point is that so much is wasted that could have been used better. In commentary on tractate *Berachot*, the sages teach that it is a precept of the Torah not to destroy any object, such as food or clothing, that is required to sustain human life, even an amount the size of an olive.³¹ If we do not need a lavish building to worship in, how much more waste is there in building one's personal home in such a manner?

Our father Avraham gave us a perfect example of how to use our property, eliminating waste, as Rabbi Chaninah ben Dosa teaches in *Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer* that nothing of the ram offered by Avraham instead of Yitzchak went to waste. All was used: Its ashes became the base of the inner altar, its sinews were strung on King David's harp, its skin became Elijah's

29. Ibid. 7:8.

30. Ibid. 7:23.

31. Rav Bartenura Mishna *Berachot* 8:4.

garment, the left horn Moshe blew at Mount Sinai, and the right horn will be blown in the World to Come.³² Rabbi Eliezer teaches that the money of the righteous is more dear to them than their persons; to waste is as robbery.³³

In all ways, we must proceed with humility; everything one does must be purely for the sake of the Holy One, for in that way, there will be no self-indulgent waste. In tractate *Semichot*, the sages teach that one who honors his parents after

their death does so only for the sake of Heaven.³⁴ In all our Divine Service, we should strive for this selfless lowliness if, in some ways, it is difficult to attain. In the fulfillment of each commandment, one must strive to involve all powers of his soul and all his might. This is the selfless service that is expected.

Know, every human faculty can become perverted if one allows their evil inclination to gain the upper hand. Misused imagination becomes fantasy, the greatest enemy of man, seducing him to believe momentary pleasure is the solution to all his problems. Lust drives the chariot of the evil inclination. The seat on which it sits is pride. In *Pesikta*, it is explained that when, with a heated imagination, a man commits an act of unchastity, all his limbs are quick to obey, but when setting out to fulfill a commandment the body protests from deep within him, as the evil inclination is king over the two hundred forty-eight limbs. The inclination for good can be likened to a king in a prison. Thus we see that the king must be freed from prison so that we may fulfill the commandments with greater zeal and enthusiasm than when we engage in mundane physical pleasures. This discussion raises a question because it is known that the two hundred forty-eight limbs correspond to the two hundred forty-eight positive commandments of the Torah. Yet if this is so, why do we learn in *Pesikta* that the evil inclination is king of the two hundred forty-eight limbs? We find a bit of the answer in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, where the sages teach that a man's sins are engraved on his bones.

32. *Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer*, ch. 31.

33. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* I :21.

34. *Simchot* 48a.

Even if the bones are vessels for the light of the two hundred forty-eight commandments, as taught in Kabbalah, we see here that the evil inclination engraves one's transgressions on his bones. As the evil inclination is active from

one's youth, one must overcome these scars so that he may completely fulfill the positive commandments, making the vessels of his bones conduits of Divine Light.

We also learn, in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, that all one's merits are written on one's right hand. The sages conclude that one should be industrious and full of energy.³⁵ With this energy we can go forward in fulfilling the instruction of our sages, letting our words be only for the sake of Heaven; love Heaven, fear Heaven, and be eager to rejoice in all the commandments.³⁶ The revelation of Divine Light and elevation of the soul is only a matter of directing energy, taking inspiration in activities that are in the path of correction for our souls. We need to elevate those traits that prevent us from being effective conduits of light. A *tzadik* is a conduit of light, a holy man, but the word literally means "righteous one." It is by obtaining the nature of uprightness that we can fulfill our role in the creation.

We are taught some important guidelines for our behavioral traits in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, where we learn that the shamefaced cannot learn, the impatient cannot teach, those occupied in only physical things cannot be pious, the empty-headed cannot know the fear of Heaven, and those engaged in business cannot acquire wisdom.³⁷ These are all areas in which people commonly fail and thus are unable to reach their spiritual objectives. One must be bold enough to ask the needed questions when learning, yet humble enough to not

35. *Kallah Rabbati* 52b. Gra on Agada

36. Ibid. 53a.

37. Ibid. 53b.

be impatient with others. One's spiritual purpose in his activities should never be far from mind and action, for the spiritual awareness can fade quickly, as is the case with those who empty the Holiness from their minds by being completely

preoccupied in business matters. Do not ever forget that your employment is only a means of physical sustenance; do not let it become your life. A similar danger exists in emptying the mind out and doing nothing but wasting time, as it is taught that the empty-headed cannot know the fear of Heaven. It is only by cleaving to the Holy One in thought that we can gain the fear of Heaven. Remember these rules and search them through and you will always find yourself able to learn and teach God's Torah with the fear of Heaven close at hand, and your days will bring you closer to reaching the height of your soul's power of revelation. With this you will see, as Rabbi Bachyah describes, that the soul nourishes the entire body by the cluster of joy derived from perceiving God.³⁸

In a more specific context the sages, in tractate *Kallah Rabbati*, teach that the Torah is acquired by forty-eight distinctions. I shall list them here for you in the rudimentary form in which they appear in the Gemora, and I will leave it for you to search out and contemplate these distinctions, as they are vast enough that a book should be written on them alone. Therefore here are the forty-eight distinctions by which the Torah is acquired: sedateness; knowledge of the Torah; good manners; moderation of sleep; moderation of conversation, business, hilarity, pleasure, and intercourse with the world; patience; goodness of heart; confidence in the wise; resignation to affliction; study; hearing; ordered speech presentation; an understanding and discerning heart, rising out

38.Kad *HaKemach*, chapter "Mourning."

of respect; reverence; wisdom; meekness; attending scholars; painstaking examination with colleagues; keen discussion with students; knowing one's place; rejoicing in one's lot; making a fence of one's words; claiming no credit

for oneself; loving God; loving reproof; loving just courses; loving rectitude; keeping far from worldly honor; not priding oneself concerning one's learning; not delighting in giving decisions; bearing a fellow's yoke; judging in a scale of merit; guiding others to peace and truth; being deliberate in study; asking and answering questions; hearing and adding to what is heard; making one's teacher wiser; concentration on one's discourse; and repeating a statement in the name of a sage. This brings redemption to the world. ³⁹ Understand these well and you will be on your way to applying a proper understanding of the ways of the Torah, and appear justified before His creatures as before the Holy One,⁴⁰ as is taught by the sages. The sages in the "small" tractates of the Talmud enumerate many good discourses concerning the path that is just, and much great Aggadah where the secrets of the Torah may be found; it is good for one to look there. There are 63 tractates, Bava Kama, Bava Batra and Bava Metzia are counted as one. There is more than a lot to learn.

In *Kallah Rabbati* the sages teach that one should not leave his teacher or his friend without asking his permission.⁴¹ The circle of people with whom we become close is by no means an arbitrary arrangement but is so in order that corrections can be made in this incarnation. Upon our social interaction the primary judgment of our soul rests, as we learn from the words of King David when he states: "God judges the people; judge me according to my righteousness, according to that which is in me" (Ps. 7:8). The word "judge" in Hebrew is *mishpot*, and the laws that regulate social

39. *Kallah Rabbati* 54a.

40. Ibid. 54b.

41. Ibid.

behavior and community interaction are called *mishpotim*. So many secrets are held in the words of the house of the Mashiach. Let the *Tehillim*

(Psalms) be very close to your heart. Concerning the way of the *mishpotim* the sages teach that one should not weep in the presence of those who are rejoicing or rejoice among those who are weeping, or be awake among those who are sleeping.⁴² One may always be rejoicing for the Shechinah can be found in all places, as we learn in *Pesikta* from Rabbi Kahana that God showed Himself to Moshe in a lowly thorn bush to show that there is no place on earth devoid of the Shechinah.⁴³

One should always take advantage of the different revelations of the Torah to be found in different places. The sages speak in many places about the revelation of Torah learning at rivers. As a river flows to meet the sea, so too the whole continually is progressing toward its completion. The Malbim teaches that there is nothing within the creation that does not require completion; the works of creation were not finished to perfection so that man should merit in completing them. Man must remove the husk and residue from everything that came into existence during the initial creation, and in doing so bring the creation into a state of perfection. This process begins with circumcision.⁴⁴ This is as we learned, that the Shechinah is to be found in all places. and it may be revealed in all things with the elevation and removal of the husks, revealing the sparks of light that have fallen, as spoken of in Kabbalah, this being the purpose of the creation.

Each of us makes permanent contributions. being active participants in the ongoing creation.
Rabbi Moshe Ashlich

42. Ibid. 54a.

43. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana. pesikta 1.*

44. *Malbim parsha Lech lacha.*

reveals that the effects of our *mitzvot* are eternal, as it says in the Torah: *chuk olam*, "an eternal statute."⁴⁵

These commandments continually bring kindness into the world, as is taught by Elijah the Prophet that the people Israel were at first shocked by the harshness of the Torah as given at Mount Sinai, but came to realize that in each and every regulation the compassion of God is abundant.⁴⁶ The Law may be made in severity, the force of restriction, as it limits behavior, but all these limitations only create a vessel for revelation of the Great Love of the Holy Blessed One that He wishes to bestow upon the creation. When one fails to fulfill a commandment then that aspect of the Creator's Love is not bestowed upon him. Just as two people are drawn together by love creating a bond between them, so our souls are bound to God. It states in the Torah that whoever does not properly observe the laws of *Shabbat* as well as other great commandments will receive karet-"excision"-which the sages teach is the opposite of "being gathered unto his people" - as is described in the passing of Moshe and Aharon. By fulfilling the commandments we receive God's love, and by neglect of the precepts we fail to draw the love of God to our souls. When the body has finished its Job and is no longer able to function, the soul rises from the body, but if it failed to perform the commandments, it is not drawn to God-it has not established a bond of love with God while in a body so it is not "gathered to its people," as Moshe and Aharon, but ends up "cut off" from its people. Such is the sad state for one who does not express his love for God in this world.

In expressing this love of the fulfillment of the commandments Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon teaches that a father's honor

45. Torah Moshe.

46. *Tanna d'Bei ELiyahu Rabbah*. p. 122.

is on the same level as a mother's,⁴⁷ by honoring the parents who brought us into this world, we honor God who brought us into this world. The

sages continually remind us to not be overly occupied with things of this world, and in doing so they give us instruction in its many ways.

Rabbi Levi teaches that one should spend according to his means on food, spend less than he can afford on clothing, and on a home spend more than he can afford, as it says: "They dwelt in the whole world."⁴⁸ It is important to live in an environment that is favorable for Torah learning and fulfillment of the commandments. One should spend more, if necessary, to achieve this end, for in all matters good judgment rests on moderation and balance. Balance is what the world rests upon, being harmony, which is an expression of beauty, a revelation of God's Will.

Concerning this, Rabbi Kahana teaches that whenever Israel performs God's Will they enhance the power of *yesod* (foundation).⁴⁹ According to Kabbalah, the *sefirah yesod* is the trait of *tzedek*-righteousness. By our doing the Holy One's Will, the Power of Righteousness is enhanced, this being the foundation of all righteousness in the earth. Our individual actions can seem of little consequence, but are of great significance in the big picture. Likewise, evil causes great damage to the big picture.

Rabbi Kahana tells us that three are called wicked: he who raises his hand against his fellow man, he who borrows but does not repay, and he who makes strife.⁵⁰ As the righteous man increases righteousness in the earth, men like these three do the opposite. So much rests upon our actions. as we learn in *Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer* that whoever preserves one life

47. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 1: 15.

48. Ibid. 20: 12.

49. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana. pesikta* 25.

50. Ibid., *pesikta* 28.

is as if he kept alive the whole world, earning this world and the World to Come.⁵¹ The whole Torah will be for us as an inheritance if we fill

the days of our life with righteousness.

Rabbi Kahana teaches that all Torah, all wisdom, is of little matter, but in the heart of a man who fears God and carries out the Torah's precepts is the entire Torah and wisdom. ⁵² Our righteousness, from fulfilling God's Will in fear and love, makes us a vessel with desire to learn the wisdom of God's Torah. The acquisition of the Torah is possible by fulfilling the commandments in fear of God. All that stands in the way is the evil inclination. Yet Rabbi Kahana teaches that the evil inclination is as iron: when put in fire one can make with it that which he desires-the words of the Torah are fire. ⁵³

Concerning elevating the sparks by fulfilling the commandments, the sages teach in the Midrash that to call on the Name of God is to make converts. ⁵⁴ While we are in exile we can share the seven Noachide precepts and their implications with the people around us. This is a unique opportunity that exists during our exile, and among these people we can reclaim the souls of converts. The sages teach that he who attempts to resist the wave is swept away, but he who bends before it is not swept away. ⁵⁵ In exile we may not be able to fulfill many precepts such as those involving the Holy Temple, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days, but we are given the opportunity to sanctify the Holy Name before the nations as it says in the Torah: "Recount His glory among the nations" (Chron. 16:24). We must take advantage of all the unusual opportunities that we are given in exile among the nations to

51. *Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer*, ch. 48.

52. *Pesikta d'Rabbi Kahana*, supplement 1.

53. *Ibid.* .. supplement 3.

54. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 39: 16.

55. *Ibid.* 44: 14.

fulfill the commandments. If one has flexibility, he can do much.

Again it should be mentioned how important

our social interactions are before God, as they allow us so many opportunities to direct our hearts toward Heaven. In this manner, Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that when one mentions the name of a righteous man one should also offer him blessing.⁵⁶ In the course of our social interactions we are given many opportunities to bring the Holy Name to mind. Thus even in what can seem the most mundane circumstances. God is ever before us. In the marketplace, God is close to us and watches over us as we fulfill the commandments. Our prayer protects us from the nations that could, Heaven forbid, persecute us, as the sages teach that when the voice of Jacob rings out in the House of Prayer, Esau has no hands. ⁵⁷

I hope by now it is becoming clear that in all your ways, you should know God. There is an aspect of Torah in all situations. Rabbi Levi teaches that the meditation of the mandrake roots was so acceptable that two tribes arose from them; Yissachar and Zevulun.⁵⁸ Many are the ways of the Torah in this world and the next.

Rabbi Ishyan teaches that the dead hear their praises as in a dream. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches that the only difference between the righteous dead and the living is that the living can speak. ⁵⁹ The sages teach that love shown after one's death is true love.⁶⁰ The mitzvahs we do for the living and dead in the market and houses of study give us our place in relation to God. Rabbi Yannai teaches that God is

56. Ibid. 49: 11.

57. Ibid. 65:20.

58. Ibid. 72:5.

59. Ibid. 96.

60. Ibid.

King and the world is His orchard, in which he has placed Israel to keep the orchard, to do His work and receive full reward having entry into

Gan Eden, but he who does not keep it is faced with Gehenom.⁶¹ We either walk with God in His ways, bringing us to Gan Eden or, Heaven forbid, turn away from God, distancing ourselves from Him by our behavior as the approach is made to Gehenom.

To the righteous retribution is slow in coming, yet a good decree is quickly fulfilled.⁶² Even if one is walking toward Gehenom, Heaven forbid-even if his two hundred forty-eight limbs are stained with transgression-as long as the ear harkens to the Torah the whole body is vivified.⁶³ From this we see that even if one seems very far from the ways of the Torah, the right words will draw the ear near and vivify the body with God's Will. A few words can open up so much, but the sages teach that nothing good or peaceful ever results from strife.⁶⁴ Thus, the right hand can bring one who is distant close, but to find the strife of argument accomplishes no good.

In the teaching of Rabbi Nachman we learn that all disputes exist because people do not have faith, reverence, humility, and truth. Disputes can lead to causeless hatred. A dispute arises when one party wants to enter into the space of another; all disputes exist on the level of space.⁶⁵ If one can bring his fellow closer with words, let it be- but if their words only lead to strife they are better left unspoken, as there is always something more constructive to do.

Rabbi Yehoshua teaches that God has rewarded us by

61. Ibid. *Shemot* 2:6.

62. Ibid. 3: 13.

63. Ibid. 27:9.

64. Ibid. 30:17.

65. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 405.

giving us many commandments, which are our very life. 66 Why waste time arguing when one can cling to the source of his life? By doing so,

he brings life to himself and even the angels, as the sages teach that angels are sustained only by the splendor of the Shechinah.⁶⁷ To bring such revelation into the creation by way of avoiding argument, thus bringing others closer to God, we need to understand a teaching of Elijah the Prophet found in the Midrash. There we learn that we never find God's Strength fully displayed toward His creatures for none can withstand it. So that His creatures will not be troubled with burdensome laws, He reveals to each according to his own strength.⁶⁸ We see that the severity of the law can push one away, and we must allow others to come back gradually to the ways of the Torah.

Each has a portion of the Torah at his own level; because of this Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Levi teach that when leaders allow themselves to be led by the common man, they share in the visitation that follows.⁶⁹ Leaders cannot succumb to lowering themselves in the quality of their Divine Service to find favor with the masses; for example, if everyone rushes through the *Minhah* (afternoon) prayer while the leader of the group is not accustomed to rush through rather it is his way to contemplate the words of prayer-let him do so and set an example.

Concerning leaders, Elijah teaches us that every sage in Israel is in anguish because of the iniquities of his generation, the wise bearing the iniquities of their generations. No mortal is aware of their anguish.⁷⁰ It is easy for anyone to become sad over the fallen state of the Shechinah, when we see our

66. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 30:20.

67. Ibid. 32:4.

68. Ibid. 34: 1.

69. Midrash Rabba *Devarim* 1: 10.

70. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, p. 136.

brothers who do not even know that it is the Torah that is the heritage of Israel, others fulfilling the Torah as a burden, or prayer done

over and over again with no excitement or joy. Such is not the way the Torah was meant to be fulfilled. This can certainly bring one to sadness. But there is a remedy, because the sages teach in the Midrash that those who study the Torah give forth light wherever they may be. It is like standing in a dark room with a light in hand.⁷¹ While in exile, there are so many places we can bring light. We can learn Torah in places that have never before seen the light of Torah. While others may fulfill the Torah as a burden, in sadness, we can see the infinite opportunities to fulfill the Torah each time as never before, in joy. It is with this attitude that we can overcome the anguish of exile. Not only do we overcome the anguish of exile by finding opportunities in the exile that can bring joy to our Divine Service as spoken of above, but this type of service helps all Israel. As Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha teaches that all Israel is as one soul.⁷²

For one who has this level of Divine Service, there can be found peace-and great is peace, as taught by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, since all blessings are comprised therein. It is the only commandment one is bound to pursue, as all others are incumbent only when opportunity for them arises. Even a lie can be said for the sake of peace. The Mashiach will commence with peace.⁷³ Ultimately, not only will we have peace but, Rav teaches, the precepts were given with the express purpose of purifying mankind.⁷⁴ Thus, the precepts bring purification to the world. The precepts bring salvation, as Rabbi Levi teaches that salvation comes from the holiness of the deeds to one's credit. Because of this, we must fill our

71. Midrash Rabba *Shemot* 36:3.

72. Midrash Rabba *Vayikra* 4:6.

73. Ibid. 9:9.

74. Ibid. 13:3.

deeds with holiness. Our fulfillment of the commandments has to touch the Divine. To reach this goal of holiness, keep in mind the teachings

of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi that whoever fences himself from sexual immorality is called holy.⁷⁵ With this as a foundation, one can go on to perform deeds of holiness. Concerning such deeds, Rabbi Chiyah teaches that a man should learn Torah, observe and perform precepts, teach others, maintain scholars if possible, and protest against wrongdoing even if he feels he is not strong enough to do so. Such a one is called "blessed."⁷⁶

Rabbi Abin teaches that entertaining a wise man in one's home is as bringing the first fruits to the Holy Temple. When entertaining wise men, one must throw himself open to all like a wilderness to acquire wisdom and Torah, acquiring and imparting the Torah with all men.⁷⁷ In each thing that we do we can bring God to mind, as He has instruction for us, as the sages teach that God left not a thing in this world in which He did not charge Israel with a commandment.⁷⁸ This is in accordance with the teaching of Rabbi Meir that for every single breath a man breathes he may praise his Creator.⁷⁹ That way, impure thoughts do not have a moment to take refuge in the mind. To dwell on something stupid for a moment may seem harmless enough, but Rabbi Yehoshua teaches that it is better to die one hundred times than to feel envy even once.⁸⁰ Though it may seem insignificant to us, such is not the case.

Let us all learn from the teaching of Rabbi Eliezer that the whole wisdom of the whole Torah is comprised in one thing:

75. Ibid. 24:6.

76. Ibid. 25: 1.

77. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 1:7.

78. Ibid. 13: 15.

79. Ibid. *Devarim* 2:37.

80. Ibid. 9:9.

the fear of God. ⁸¹ With this fear one will approach all the commandments with proper perspective, and not take any action lightly.

This fear will keep one fulfilling the commandments with strength and awe of God and thus clear of transgression.

How essential is this fear? Rabbi Shimon teaches: Woe to the generation whose members, high and low do not rise when the scroll of the Torah is displayed. Who shall come to its aid when the world is in distress and requires protection? We see here that fear opens the gateway for our prayers to reach Heaven.

Concerning annulling decrees Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman teaches in tractate *Bava Metzia* that he who teaches the son of an ignoramus, unlearned in Torah, has the Holy Blessed One annul decrees upon him.⁸² We can see an allusion to this idea in *Sanhedrin*, where Rabbi Ashi teaches that if two boats going in opposing directions meet on a river, both will sink if they try to pass simultaneously, so it is proper to let the one with a greater distance to travel proceed first.⁸³ Likewise when one has the choice to share the Torah with one less learned or go on in his own work, he should help the one who has farther to travel than himself. Rabbi Zeira showed friendship to lawless men in his neighborhood in order to lead them to do *teshuvah*.⁸⁴ Even if one has spent his life in transgression. Rabbi Zeira teaches not to despair: *teshuvah* can be accomplished very easily, and the weight of transgression can be lifted.

It is taught in the name of Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rabbi Chiyah that exile atones for half a man's sins. Rabbi

81. Ibid. 11 :6.

82. *Bava Metzia* 85a.

83. *Sanhedrin* 32b.

84. Ibid. 37a.

Yochanan teaches that exile atones for everything. Now a days, our strength against Asev is confined to the power of prayer. Fighting the

Romans in our situation is not appropriate. We must exhaust every other possible means to achieve better conditions till Mashiach comes. The equivalence of war is "teshuva". Asev represents Jealousy and hatred.⁸⁵ God knows the difficult situations we face, but one must not think to use the exile as an excuse for allowing transgression. During exile, the power of self-sacrifice is strongest; while we live amongst temptation and a lack of open Divine Revelation, we most need to support our faith. The key is as has been taught over and over again that one must keep his mind contemplating God and His Torah, as there is a Divine aspect in all things. Then one's mind and heart will be toward Heaven and the Holy Blessed One will be always before him in all his ways.

85.Ibid. 37b, Sni
Luchot Vayashev
Luchot Vayishlach

15 THE MEDITATION OF PRAYER

To understand prayer, we can look to our teacher, Moses. Rabbi Eliezer the Great, in tractate *Berachot*, teaches that Moses stood praying to God till fire burned in his bones. ¹ In the Midrash, Rabbi Chayah bar Abba taught that Moses left no corner in Heaven to which he did not prostrate himself in prayer. One must not rely on the fact that God is aware of our unspoken thoughts. As the very letters used in prayer are Holy. They are able to penetrate the outer shell of Heaven and penetrate to God's throne. ² In tractate *Rosh Hashanah*, Rabbi Yochanan teaches that God drew a "talit" (Prayer Shawl) around him like the leader of a congregation and showed Moses the order of prayer. ³ The 39 windings of the "Talit" allude to God is one as, 39 = י"הו"ה (God is one). The Ben Eish Chy said there can be 26 windings. The sanctity of Tefillin is of an extremely great Holiness. All the time that Tefillin are on the hand and the arm of a man he is humble, fears Hashem and is not inclined to revelry or useless speech. He has no evil thoughts. Instead his heart is turned to words of truth and righteousness. A man wearing Tefillin is an ideal man. In Shari Aora it is taught one must know the purpose of the Holy names so that when he needs to request

something of Hashem he can concentrate on the name created to fulfill his request. If one does so not only will his request be granted but he will be beloved both in this world and the next.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches concerning the way of

1. *Berachot* 32a.
2. Midrash Rabba *Devarim* 3:2., Sni Luchot Vayishlach
3. *Rosh Hashanah* 17b.

prayer that it is impossible to experience the sweetness and pleasantness of God without leaving the husk, so that one can be nullified like a flame in the torch. This nullification is like Moses vesting himself in the cloud on the mount.

Rabbi Elai ben Yebrachiah tells us that if it had not been for the prayers of King David, all Israel would have been sellers of rubbish. Look to these prayers, the Psalms of King David and keep them close to your heart. The sages teach that when you go to pray, run like a man running after a king.

In prayer, the moment of absorption is the transforming of the words of prayer as they are said, though one is no longer saying them-rather it is the Shechinah that speaks through him becoming naught by the self-proclaiming praise of God.

Prayer in Hebrew is *tefilah*. By rearranging the letters, we have *petilah* (thread). The deeper the dedication in prayer, the greater the distance we may travel up the "thread" connecting us to the highest soul powers. Each day is an

extension of the time of prayer. From good prayer the higher levels of the soul's influence are in revelation all day. An aroused heart is as the fire burning the burnt offering rising whole. Prayer is answered only for one who takes his heart in his hand, as is taught by Rabbi Ammi in tractate *Tannit*. *The Ben Eish Chy teaches* In Avot DRebbe Natan that it says one should not merely pray words but put all one's effort and concentration into them as explained in chapter 98 of the Shulchan Aorch (Book of Law), the teachings of the Ar"i and the Zohar. Many legal authorities rule that if one prays only words they must pray again.

Rabbi Eliezer teaches that prayer is born from above, but a stirring above is produced only in response to an impulse below and depends on the longing of that below. We learn from Rabbi Dov Ber, the Mittler Rebbe of Lubavitch, that one must serve God with the soul in the blood, not just the blood, to reach true ecstasy. When in ecstasy one is unaware of it, for he becomes nullified. If otherwise, how could it be true ecstasy, for without nullification it is the self, and not the cleaving of the *yechida* (essence of the Godly soul) in action. Self must be nullified for union to be made. This is further explained in the teachings of Rabbi Nachman, where we learn that when you reach the point where sense of self and physicality totally disappear, as if you were not in the world at all, then you will discover the hidden secrets of the Torah. All this can be achieved through secluded meditation.⁴

Through meditation, Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit) ascends higher and higher while defilement sinks to the lowest depths as is taught by Rabbi Shimon.⁵ Thus we see that the revelation of the level of our soul. *Yechida*, which is one with the Will of God reveals to us Ruach haKodesh through the meditation of prayer.

Rabbi Eliezer teaches that true prayer is directed on high to the place from which all blessings and freedom issue to support the universe. It is attached to the *Chachmah Elyon* (Supernal Wisdom). From there blessings descend to one who sits on the thoughts of the

patriarchs. Then there is given seventy-two lights to the hosts, of which seventy form a circle through the world. From a point in the center the circumference is fed.⁶ Thus those who understand Kabbalah can see the sustenance of Heaven administered by our prayer.⁷

Exactly how is the sustenance drawn down and revealed below? Most words of prayer have no life till God's Name is spoken.

Baruch, the first word of many prayers, is His Name. All is His Name to those who understand. The word *Baruch* (blessed) the first word of many prayers, has the same numerical value as the Names of 52 and 45 and 63 and 72 (numerical values of the letters) combined as is taught by Rabbi Cuffel in *Siddur Kol Yaakov*. The usual name for Hashem in our uncompleted world is יה"י instead of יהו"ה. In prayer the soul, which is part of God is united in its outpouring being then unified. This is done through speaking the letters used in creation returning them to their source-and you, since they

4. *Advice 80*.

5. *Zohar 2239b*.

6. *Ibid.* 1229a.

7. *Ibid. Sifra d-Zenuita*.

are your source. A person should enter the letters so that their light may be seen. This is so because the Hebrew letters were the instruments of creation.

Letters of prayer are garments of God. In *Tanya*, Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that there are three aspects of letters: Those written in the Torah scroll are in the world of *Assiah*; hearing the letters is in *Yetzirah*; and in thought they are in *Briah*. One may speak words of prayer and be thinking of something else while he is saying what he has said before many times over. Such prayer is of the lowest level. It is the desire in

prayer that rises, not words or letters.

We learn in the Book of Concealment that the Supreme Will comes to be revealed through those below.⁸ Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that it is known that meditation alone cannot take the place of speech. In order to fulfill the commandment, prayer must be uttered with one's lips, for the Divine Soul cannot express itself except through the organs of the body. The lips, tongue, and mouth are, therefore, vestments of the animal soul. The more strength one puts in his speech, the more one is vesting the strength of the Divine Soul in his prayer, vitalizing the two hundred forty-eight limbs and pushing away the forgetfulness that is one of the *klippot* (spiritual husks) of the body and animal soul, as this *klippah* is then absorbed in the holiness of his prayer.

In the Book of Concealment, we learn of nine ways one can arrange his meditation before his Master: meditation on the *alp bet*, reciting the attributes of God, His Holy Names, or the Ten *sefirot* (Divine Emanations); enumeration of the righteous; and songs and praises containing the true mystical tradition. Superior to any of these is the man who knows how to arrange in meditation the adornments of his Master in the proper manner. There is also the secret knowledge on how

8. Ibid., Alshich on Proverbs

to ascend from the world below to the world above, and likewise knowledge on how to draw forth Divine Abundance from above to the world below. But let it be known: Rabbi Yirmiyahu teaches that one hundred twenty elders and eighty prophets ordained the *Shemona Esrai* (the standing prayer). This hints at its awesome depth.⁹ Pray and pray again, and you may light upon the hour when your prayer will be answered, when the gates are open. The prayer of the community never remains unanswered. One should pray for the sake of God alone, not for one's own needs; then his needs are fulfilled.

Whatever the individual lacks is considered as if it were a lack in the Shechinah also; then when the lack has been filled, one is closer.

Rabbi Yehuda teaches that a man provides prayer of joy and singing by entering the house of worship through the gates of love and awe. He should fix his mind on the Holy of Holies, which is the Holy Name, for this is how one has joy in the prayer of exile. ¹⁰

In achieving the transcendent joy of prayer, Rabbi Shimon teaches: "When praying I raise my hand on high."¹¹ It is known that from the polarity through the hands we can circumcise our lips and mind to reach further to the unreachable *Ain Sof*. But let it be known, we are also taught in the *Zohar* that only those who know how should raise their hands. Here we can apply the words of the King of Peace that King Solomon spoke in the Song of Songs: "I charge you daughters of Jerusalem by the roes and the hinds of the field. do not stir or awake my love till it please. The voice of my beloved comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills" (Song 2:7 -8).

9. Yerushalmi *Berachot*.

10. Ibid. 3:8b.

11. Ibid. 1 :65a.

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that prayer is purer by night than by day. ¹² Since all is God, one must see himself in Gan Eden in his prayer, devoid of all corporeal desire. It is good to pray letter by letter till forgetting one's corporeal nature. Letters join in *yichudim* (unifications), causing joy; this is the world of *Yetzirah*, letters in thought only, when we do not hear our speech, which is in the world of *Briah* as spoken of earlier. To see where all of the physical is nullified to the Nothingness quality of wisdom is the revelation of the world of *Atzilut*. Just because *Atzilut* is without

physical foundation for revelation, do not be mistaken, concerning the meditation of prayer, that it can remain silent. The sages teach that one must vocalize prayer, as the words spoken become vessels for the influx of Divinity to enter the worlds. Communing with the letter *Hay* is a source of joy; it is from that letter that the world is established; it is the root of all existence.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches us to pour out our hearts to God, speaking all our thoughts in a field so that even the grass will pray with us. The Ben Eash Chy teaches that a Bait Kanaset should have 12 windows and 7 steps. It is best to pray at night. Torah study, sadakah, Teshuva and Tefilla correspond to the 4 winds of the world. They are like 4 walls. Truth and teshuva, avoda and tefilla, din and Torah, sadakah and gimilot chasadim. Shalom is the seal of all 4 qualities. Only when there is shalom can the other categories achieve their purpose. The Alshik HaKodesh on Mishly teaches that one who thinks they are too great to learn other people will have God say to them “Why should I listen to this man's prayers. ?

If you have no words just repeat one. Pray to *Atik Yomin* (the Ancient of Days) for sustenance. Our requesting things of God allows God to fulfill His desire to impart, giving Him joy. Rabbi Yossi teaches that prayer should be carried out with gladness and singing, specifically the morning prayers in gladness and the afternoon with singing, so that one performs the unification in a fitting manner. The afternoon is a time of the "shadows of the evening" of accusers; one should pay special attention to this prayer. ¹³

Also concerning our meditation of prayer, Rabbi Shimon teaches that whoever reflects on and recites the incense

12. *Duties of the Heart* 2:369.

13. *Zohar* 1 :229a.

offering every day will be saved from all the evil things and sorceries of this world-mishaps, evil imaginings, death-no harm will befall him that day. The *sitra achra* has no power over him. Every word makes a crown of gold for his head. The *Kohen Gadol* would watch the letters of the Name rise in the pillar of smoke. The incense in the Holy Temple was not brought for the atonement of sin but to place a crown on the head of its rightful owner. The Hebrew for incense "Kitoret" share the root of the Aramaic word "kitor" which means connection. The smoke of the incense creates a connection. Scent is very spiritual compared to other physical things. It is something close to "Ruach" (spirit). Thus the incense was designed to create a close communion with Hashem. ¹⁴

The Sni Luchot haBrit Teaches that the movement of our lips reciting the "korbonot" (sacrifices) is only considered a deed if one feels saddened because they can not offer up the sacrifice itself. The 2 sheep (offered daily) correspond to the negative and positive commandments. The soul travels during its incarnations within different bodies, including being incarnate in the animal offering of the daily sacrifices this helps those incarnations achieve their purpose. They are refined and cleansed through these offerings. Now since we do not have the actual Temple sacrifices the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) Michia"l offers the souls of the righteous on the alter above. These righteous are those who offered sacrifices (in the prayer service) in this world. Speaking during prayer between "Baruch Shamar and Yistabach" can prevent a major part of our prayer from reaching heaven. Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that the primary service at these times, for those who have knowledge, in deep contemplation of some profound meditation, is to praise God in *Pasukei d'Zimra* (Psalms and prayers in the beginning of the morning service) and the two blessings of the *Shema*; through them he can arouse the love latent in the heart of every Jew.

¹⁵

In the Midrash we learn that the *Shema*, said in its proper time, is more beloved than

one thousand sacrifices a fool offers. ¹⁶ This is in accordance with what was said above, that such prayer is the primary service during these times, but regarding the words of Rabbi Shneur Zalman this applies to those with efficacy of contemplation of a profound meditation; this is what we should strive for in its proper time.

Our service of prayer, its depth of meditation, must always change, as we learn from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov that the evil inclination is like a thief who waits to steal our prayers, but if the path of our meditation continually deepens he cannot anticipate our course.

Rabbi Acha teaches that one must add new dimension each day to one's prayer.¹⁷ Rabbi Bachyah teaches that for one who prays with his tongue while his heart is occupied in other matters, his prayer is a shell without a kernel. ¹⁸ There is little fruit to such empty labor. One must open his heart to

14. Ibid. 2:218b., Sni luchot ha brit Tzavah

15. Sni Luchot Vayikra, *Tanya* 629.

16. Midrash Rabba *Kohalet* 4: 17.

17. Yerushalmi *Berachot*.

18. *Duties of the Heart* 2:207.

God. This is the result of one's service and preparation. We learn from Rabbenu Bachyah that once a person confesses his sins to God, no angel is permitted to harm him. Confession atones for the wicked; once they accept the judgment, they merit life in Olam HaBa. The words of confession stand in the place of sacrifice. Thus, to avoid grievous Judgment one must confess even for inadvertent sins, as these require a guilt offering. Many have been saved from death by confession. ¹⁹

The offerings God desires, as in the daily prayer service, are a broken spirit and contrite heart. The confession is central to our meditation, it being in the morning and afternoon prayer. Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that morning prayer is a time of strengthening

and fortifying the arms (natural fear and love) and the head (intellectual love and fear).²⁰ Natural love and fear are innate in the heart of each of us; all we need to do to engage this power in our prayer is call upon it by concentration on our prayer- but intellectual love and fear, which are great wings to our prayer, is learned from contemplation upon the greatness of God.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches that only when the three character flaws are corrected - the appetites for food, money, and sex-is prayer released from its exile, and then it is possible to attain true prayer. A Jew who attains this level of prayer has dominion over the very angels themselves; for this he was created.²¹

In tractate *Berachot*, the sages teach that one should not stand up to say prayer while immersed in sorrow, idleness, laughter, chatter, frivolity, or idle talk, but only while rejoicing

19. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Confession."

20. *Tanya* 391.

21. *Advice* 292.

in the performance of a spiritual act. ²² Elijah the Prophet teaches that one should not stand up for prayer unless he has uttered at least one law or verse from God's Torah. ²³ With proper preparation, one becomes bound to Divine thought, and then through prayer one can bring blessings into the world. The amount of preparation is up to us. The sages teach: To aid in meditation at its finest, separate for three days (for past, present, and future) from bodily things. Then by meditation on the Divine Name, speaking it deep and long, a person can be raised to a level where the speaker and the word are one with the Name and its Owner. The less physical and more spiritual are the things we are involved in, the less the physical will try to

dominate us and the stronger our souls will shine through when we pray. Three days is a long time for many to fast, but when each does what he can in this direction, the rewarding results, when applied to meditation, are great.

Concerning preparation for our prayer, we learn from Rabbi Shneur Zalman that giving *tzedakah* before prayer causes a manifest illumination and infusion of knowledge and reason to contemplate on the greatness of God, so that one may beget intellectual awe and love; by this we separate good from evil. Understand this well.

In the Midrash we learn that a man's prayer is answered when he uses his money for charity. We learn in tractate *Berachot* from Rabbi Yosi ben Chaninah in the name of Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov that one beginning to pray should not stand on a chair or high place to pray, the feet should be together, and one should not eat before he prays.²⁴ In the Jerusalem Talmud, the sages teach that *birchat hamazon*

22. *Berachot* 31a.

23. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 2.

24. Midrash Rabba *Kohalet* 10:19.

(grace after meals) may be said in any language so that one may know to Whom he says the blessing; likewise prayer, so that one may know how to beseech for what he needs.²⁵ Ultimately, one should strive to do his meditation in the Holy Tongue.

In addition to the holy blessings and prayers given to us by God through our forefathers, the prophets, and sages, when praying our own prayers what should we pray for? The sages teach that Abraham's wife Sarah was given a child only after Abraham prayed for the healing of Avimelech's (the Philistine king's) family. From this we can see how important it is to pray for others. In tractate *Bava Kamma*, Rabbi Abba teaches that one who solicits mercy for

his fellow while he is in need of the same will have his prayers answered first.²⁶ In tractate *Makkot* the sages teach that one should implore Divine Grace to avert the suffering of his generation.²⁷ The sages teach us to pray for our leaders to be good, for a good year. and for a good dream. A man must pray constantly that he will not damage others. This is why Bava Kama begins speaking of man as a damager.²⁸ In tractate *Sanhedrin*, Resh Lakish teaches that one should offer up prayer before misfortune comes. He who devotes his strength to prayer below has no enemies to overcome above.²⁹ Rabbi Yochanan and Resh Lakish teach that one who says *amen* with all his might causes a sentence decreed against him to be torn up, even for idolatry; the gate of Gan Eden is open to him. The *Zohar* teaches that that the lowest place in "Gehenom" is called "Avadon". It is for those who scorn concerning the saying of "amen", from "Avadon" none rise.³⁰

Few have any idea of what *amen* really is or what our blessings are. In the Holy *Zohar*, we learn that blessings are the beginning of the creation of the world.³¹ We learn from

25. *Berachot* 10b.

26. *Bava Kamma* 92a.

27. *Makkot* 11a.

28. *Berachot*, Sni Luchot haBrit

29. *Sanhedrin* 44b.

30. *Shabbath* 11gb., *Zohar Davarim* 286 b

31. *Zohar* 1 :3a.

Rashi that if the lips of a person are fluent in prayer, he may be assured that his prayer is heard; likewise if one's heart is intent on his prayer.³² Rabbi Eliezer teaches that one can only raise his hands above his head for prayer, blessing, and supplication; if he can arrange his prayer thus before his Master and sincerely carry out this purpose, then his prayer will not go unanswered.³³ The sages teach that nobody composed more prayers and supplications than our teacher Moses. In Midrash Rabba *Bereshith*, the sages teach that when the Patriarch Jacob was departing the world, he asked his sons

whether they would later break away from their Father in Heaven. They answered, "*Shema Yisrael, Ado-nay Elo-haynu, Ado-noy Echad.*" Jacob responded, "*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchutho l'olam va'ed-Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Kingdom Forever and Ever*"³⁴

32. Midrash Rabba *Vayikra* 16: 19.

33. *Zohar* 3: 195b.

34. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 98:3.

16

THE MEALS OF God

We learn in the name of Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Eliezer that while the Temple stood, the altar made atonement for man. Now that the Temple no longer stands, a man's table makes atonement for him. ¹ A meal can be a spiritual experience, the joining of worlds, or just a self-serving meal. The choice is ours. It all depends on our thoughts. Our meals should have 10 aspects 1) washing, 2) 2 loafs, 3) courses, 4) candle as Manora, 5) Blessing over wine, 6) Torah, 7) Have the poor at the table, 8) *Mym Achronim* (cleaning water) 9) *Bircat HaMazon* (prayer), 10) Drink cup of Blessing

We learn from Rabba bar Chanah in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that to one who eats the Passover Lamb as if to merely enjoy a large meal, we apply the words of the Prophet

. *Minchot* 97a.

Hosea: "But the transgressors stumble therein" ² (Hos. 14: 10). We see again that the fulfillment of the form of the commandment is not enough; it must have meaning to us. We must be physically, emotionally, intellectually, and inspirationally involved with the fulfillment of the commandment.

How many go through the motions of a Divine Service without being really involved in it, doing it only because it is their custom? It should be noted that the word in Hebrew for custom is *minhag*. The word contains the same letters as Gehenom (purgatory hell). In the Talmud (tractate *Nazir*), Resh Lakish clarifies this further when he teaches that to a man who eats the Passover offering as a regular meal, not intending to fulfill the commandment, we ascribe "the transgressors stumble therein," even if he fulfills the physical requirements. It is analogous to a man who intends to have relations with his wife but cohabits with his sister unwittingly.³

In the *Zohar*, Rabbi Abba teaches that before preparing a meal, those who fear God pray first for the food, then say:

"The time has arrived for the King to give us food; prepare the meal"⁴

Like all commandments, the degree of revelation is dependent on one's preparation. The supernal nature-or, at least, the potential nature-of our meals is revealed in the fact that they are sanctified by eight blessings, as taught by Rabbi Bachyah: first by washing hands, then over bread, four said in the meditation after the meal, and two over wine.⁵ We know that the number eight is associated with supernal things, as the Chanukah Menorah burned eight days, the *Kohen Gadol*

2. Sni Luchot haBrit, *Horayot* 10b.

3. *Nazir* 32a.

4. *Zohar* 2:62b.

5. *Kad HaKemach*. chapter "Trust."

wore eight garments, eight instruments were played by the Levites in the Temple, there are eight spices in the oil of anointing and eight staves were used in the Temple vessels (two for the Holy Ark, two for the Showbread Table, two for the Golden Altar, and two for the Burnt Offering Altar), sacrificial animals must be at least eight

days old, a child is circumcised on the eighth day, there are eight threads on the *tzitzit*, and there are eight prerequisites for prophecy. Thus, we see that the eight blessings of the meal place it in a category with many supernal things.

Looking into the supernal nature of the meal, we find that animals and plants elevate to a higher level by becoming part of a human through eating and then through the blessing, as is taught by Rabbi Moshe Cordovero in *The Palm Tree of Deborah*. This is further explained by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, who teaches that the 288 sparks in the three higher worlds of *Briah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiah* are superior to the three inner aspects of the Divine Soul (*nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshama*), as they are of *Shem SAG* (Name of 63) while the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshama* have been corrected through the *Shem MAh* (Name of 45), which issues from the "forehead." For this reason, man sustains himself on foods of the inorganic, vegetative, and living beings classes and purifies them through the Name of 45 and lives through them because they are of the Name of 63 (a higher level).⁶ Thus is explained the elevation of food according to Kabbalah and Chassiduth. By contemplation on this, one can see that eating is far from purely a mundane matter but is directly involved in the purpose of creation. Eating is one of the most spiritual things we do or can do, but the sages teach in the Talmud (tractate *Kiddushin*) that one who eats in the marketplace is as a dog

Tanya 609.

and is unfit to testify in a Jewish Court of Law.?
The choice once again is ours.

We learn in the *Zohar* that God assigns food above so that food may be dispensed below. This is so that one who offers the food he eats for the preservation of his soul may be rewarded by God blessing him by directing to him sustenance from

on high for the world.

In the Talmud (tractate *Chullin*), the sages teach that prior to a meal, the first washing of the hands is accomplished with either hot or cold water. After the meal, we wash only with cold water. One can wash a third time between courses of cheese and meat. Crumbs left on the floor bring poverty through an angel.⁸ Look into the *Shulchan Arukh* for a complete exposition of these laws.

It is taught in the name of Rabbi Awiri, Rabbi Ami, and Rabbi Ashi that one who eats bread without ritually washing his hands is as if he had intercourse with a harlot. Rabbi Zirka ben Eliezer adds that such a person will be uprooted from the world. This may seem a bit harsh, but let it be known that before offering a sacrifice, Aharon and his sons washed their hands, as it states in the Torah; "Aharon and his sons will wash their hands and their feet from it (the Laver) upon entering the Tent of Meeting; they will wash with water so that they do not die; or whenever they approach the Altar to serve, to burn a fire offering to God, they will wash their hands and feet so that they do not die" (Ex. 30: 19-20). The phrase "so that they do not die" is repeated here. This emphasizes the importance of this washing, and we know that when the Temple is not standing, one's table serves in place of the altar. So we can see the gross error of the many who have said that when our hands are clean, we do not need to wash before a

7. *Kiddushin* 40b.

8. *Chullin* 105a.

meal. Their error is in the presumption that this washing is for the purpose of physical cleaning, but it is a ritual spiritual washing. It parallels the first phase of the sacrificial offering in the Temple.

The nature of washing before a meal and the

eating itself becomes more understood when we turn to the teaching of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the *Zohar*. where we learn that after sleep the soul does not resume its previous place, even after purifying oneself with water, as the *sitra aehara* (the realm of spiritual impurity) prevails over the soul during sleep and the person is sustained by the life blood. the *Nefesh* Only after the worship of *shachrit* (the morning service), does one reach the proper sphere of the *Nefesh* below and the *Neshama* above. Therefore, if one prays before he eats, he is in spiritual alignment. But if he eats before worship, he nourishes the *sitra achara* as a soothsayer who degrades the realm of holiness. 9 Do not let this discourage you from eating in the morning. especially if you have been up learning all night and have not slept, or after the morning meditation, as we learn in the Talmud (tractate *Bava Kamma*) that Rabba said to Rabbi Mari that during the winter because of the cold and during the summer because of the heat one should have bread with salt early in the morning followed by a pitcher of water, to avoid eighty-three kinds of illness. 10

The common saying "We are what we eat" is true on many levels. The sages in the Talmud (tractate *Bava Metzia*) teach that morning bread is an antidote against heat and cold, winds, and spiritual evils; instills wisdom in the simple-minded; causes one to triumph in a lawsuit; enables one to study and teach; causes him to retain scholarship and his words to be heeded; prevents perspiration; prevents lusting

9. *Zohar* 2:215b.

10. *Bava Kamma* 92b.

after women; kills worms of the intestine; expels jealousy; and induces love. 11

Rabbi Chaya teaches us in tractate *Gittin* that to avoid stomach problems one should dip bread or food in wine or vinegar. 12 The sages speak much of the properties of different foods

and we shall, with the help of God, discuss these matters later. The importance of what we eat is alluded to by the fact that the sages have a tradition describing the meal that the Patriarch Abraham prepared for the angels when they came to visit him. As we learn from Rashi, he made a pot covered with dough, and tongue with mustard. It is also contained in the scriptural verse that there was a first course of dairy food before the meat was served.¹³ The sages recorded a tradition of this meal and passed it down through all the generations to signify to us the importance of what we eat.

Rabbi Avdimi of Haifa teaches that if a man eats and drinks his two hearts become one. We learn in tractate *Bava Batra* that Rabbi Chunah ben Yehoshua teaches that if a man is a wine drinker, wine will open his closed heart.¹⁴

The sages teach that our ten fingers represent the ten commandments concerning bringing forth bread from the earth—commandments such as the prohibition against plowing with an ox and a donkey together, not planting diverse seeds together, leaving the gleanings of the field for the poor leaving a forgotten sheaf of grain in the field, leaving the corner of the field unharvested, not muzzling an ox when threshing, the waive offering in the Temple, the first tithe, second tithe, and the separation of *challah*. These also correspond to the ten words contained in the blessing we make over bread. When making the blessing, we raise the bread on

11. *Bava Metzia* 107b.

12. *Gittin* 70a.

13. Rashi on *Bereshith* 18:6-7.

14. *Bava Batra* 12b.

the Divine Name, and emphasize the *hay* of *Elo-hay-nu*, pausing between *lechem* and *min haaretz*. At all times but *Shabbat*, score the bread with the bread knife on the hardest part before making the blessing.

The mitzvah of taking *challah* is sharing

with those who serve God. We share bread at our table with others and many times, when we buy bread from a bakery, the *challah* taken from the dough of our bread is from the same dough many other loaves come from. Thus the *challah* offering unites many tables sharing bread. The Torah tells us to have salt with all our offerings. In explaining this, Rashi teaches that salt is wholesome and lasting and it keeps other things wholesome. Salt never becomes putrid. Our offerings will have these qualities if our meals are eaten according to Divine Will.

When eating beware as Rabbi Yaakov teaches that the evil inclination gains strength in a man's body from eating and drinking. ¹⁵ One should, therefore, eat only that which is needed for health and strength to serve God. In the teaching of Rabbi Nachman, we learn that through the lust for food a spiritual blemish is created, which causes one to lose the correct state of consciousness found in the knowledge and wisdom that enlightens him. This leaves a person in a state of lower consciousness, which is tantamount to being asleep.¹⁶ Concerning the proper amount to eat, in tractate *Gittin* Rabbi Nathan was told by Elijah the Prophet to eat a third, drink a third, and leave a third for the time of anger; then one will have his fill. ¹⁷ This way, we will avoid strengthening our evil inclination. An even greater damage than overeating is mixing milk and meat, as we learn from Rabbi

15. *Zohar*2:154b.

16. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 19.

17. *Gittin* 70a.

Shimon that the impurity created by mixing milk and meat is extremely gross, and cannot be done away with by purification as can other defilements. ¹⁸

We see that eating can be a source of blessing or a source of defilement. To achieve the

blessing, Rabbi Shimon teaches that one should keep a loaf of bread on the table while saying the blessing of grace after meals to elevate the food, as blessings do not rest on an empty table. ¹⁹ The sages teach that sweet things after the meal accustom the tongue to Torah. The words of Torah spoken during the meal prepare us for the blessing we make after elevating the food we ate. By these, we fulfill the words of the Torah: "You will eat and be satisfied and bless God Elokecha for the good land He has given to you" (Deut. 8: 10).

In *Pirkei Avot*, Rabbi Shimon teaches that three who eat together and do not speak words of Torah are as if they ate sacrifices to the dead. Indeed, their tables are full of filthy vomit when there is no mention of God. But when words of Torah are spoken it is as if they ate from the table of God.

Rabbi Bachyah teaches that God desires us to recite blessings so that the world may be blessed with abundance and increase of good. From the blessing after meals the food of the world is blessed, bringing into revelation greater abundance. But if one fails to make blessings, Heaven forbid, he robs God of His Providence as he thereby turns over care of the world's creatures to the stars and constellations, causing a diminution in abundance. ²⁰

To say the blessing for the meal properly, Rabbi Chizkiyah teaches, it is necessary to exhibit satiety and joy when

18. *Zohar*2:125b.

19. *Ibid. Yitro*.

20. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Trust."

thanking the Holy One after the meal. To help reach this joy, we learn from Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak that songs were not sung in the Temple except over wine. ²¹ Wine can help open our hearts to give

all that we have to God in joy when making the blessings for our food.

The sages instruct us concerning the blessings that we should hold the cup of blessing in the right hand and spices in the left, and blessings are said over both after the blessings for the food are completed. The cup of blessing should be washed inside and out, and water should be added to the cup on mention of Israel during the blessings over the meal. For the exact way these things are to be done, one should consult the *Kitzur Shulchan Orach*-the Abridged Code of Jewish Law (available in English translation)-as space does not permit these points to be clearly explained here, though they needed to be raised as many are unaware of these beautiful ways of the Torah.

Once one has completed the meal and elevated the food, he should walk at least a little bit before sleeping, as taught by the sages in tractate *Bava Metzia* that it is harmful to go to sleep directly after eating.²² The ways of holiness are varied at many levels and paths.

In tractate *Chulin* we learn that Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair never ate bread other than his own, and in his older years he derived no benefit from his father's table.²³ Very few ever truly stand at this level of service. It is not for everyone. One must always serve God in truth-meaning at one's true level. No good is done acting more pious than one really is. The goal is to serve God in joy at whatever level is one's truth. Falsehood is not established before God.

21. *Sotah* 21b.

22. *Bava Metzia* 113b.

23. *Chullin* 7b.

One must understand, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains, that all living creatures that are considered unclean and unfit for consumption derive their souls from three *klippot* (spiritual husks), which are altogether unclean. One should never defile himself with forbidden foods if he wants to see the radiance of the Shechinah

(Revealed Presence of God).²⁴

Elijah the Prophet warns that one who eats bread with men unlearned in the Torah and becomes accustomed to dining with them frequently, if he is a disciple of the wise, will come to belittle the Torah. His words are not heeded and dissension results through him. He desecrates his Father in Heaven and he does not live out his days. He brings contempt on himself and his children to the end of all generations.²⁵ How much better it is, as Rabbi Bachyah describes, when the blessing is recited over spices placed on coals after a meal, as the custom is to burn incense at the meal so that *birchat hamazon* (grace after meals) is recited amidst a sweet scent of spices.²⁶

*May All Your Meals Be
Blessed with the Pleasantness
of the Shechinah.*

24. *Tanya* 25.

25. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*. p. 61.

26. *Kad HaKemach*. chapter "Lust of Heart and Eye."

17

JUST WAY Gate

Seven

Rashi teaches that the wicked even during life are called dead, while the righteous even while dead are called alive. ¹ True life is cleaving to God for God is the source of life, as it says in the Torah: "Therefore choose life so that you and your seed may live, love so you may obey His Voice, so that you may cleave to Him, for He is your life" (Deut. 30: 19-20). Only those who know God cleave to Him. Knowing God consists of practicing kindness, justice, and righteousness. It is through these traits that God manifests Himself in our world. His kindness in the Heavens is known only to the wise. Knowledge of the kindness of God's commandments can save us from so

1. Rashi *Bereshith* 100.

much hardship, if we follow His ways. Rabbi Schneur Zalman teaches that those who eat kosher food improperly need to be purified by *chibut hakever*-purification of the grave. People who harbor envy or jealousy in their hearts experience *chibut hakever*. Idle chatter requires cleansing by the *kaf hakeleh*- hollow of the sling,

which does not let the soul rest, pushing it about the world; while forbidden speech, scoffing, and slander are cleansed by Gehenom. For a perfect *sadeek* (Righteous person) death is like pulling a hair out of milk where its floating on top. Death leaves no more mark on them than sleep. But with the wicked their parting from their body is like trying to remove hair from a fine brush.² How much better it is for one to walk in the way of Holiness and avoid these corrections as much as possible.

In an analogy, Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains that the light that shines above a man's head needs oil, which is supplied by his good deeds. From these good deeds, the body, which is the wick, is able to burn, yielding the light of the Shechinah.³ To bring out this light, Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains, the Rabbis declared that doing, rather than learning, is the essential thing. One should, therefore, interrupt learning Torah to fulfill an active precept, as this is the purpose of creation. The descent of man into this world is for the purpose of turning darkness into light, so that the Glory of God may fill all the material world. If the precept can be fulfilled by others one does not interrupt the study of the Torah, as learning of the Torah is an infinitely higher order and splendor of illumination from the Blessed *Ain Sof* while the illumination of the commandments are on the level called "organs of the King."⁴

All God's ways are kindness. Whenever He blesses any nation of the world, Israel is also blessed. Rashi teaches that when the nations enjoy prosperity, Israel shall eat with them and it will not be deducted from their account.⁵ When the going is good one should partake. One should always

2. *Tanya* 33., Oar Ha Chyim Mishpatim, Alshich proverbs
3. Ibid. 157.
4. Ibid. 179.
5. Rashi *Bamidbar* on 23:9.

partake in a way of holiness, which is beauty, not as a glutton. Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that when a woman whose beauty constitutes a superior quality is lacking in spiritual grace, her charm turns to ugliness.⁶

The way of God is to rejoice in the commandments. The way of the foolish may superficially seem grand, yet as taught above, such seeming beauty really constitutes ugliness. Here we can apply what King Solomon said: "It is better to be in the house of mourning than the house of feasting" (Eccles. 7:2). Torah Scholars will inherit Glory in a place of permanence. Fools are raised high in this world, those held in esteem are actually being destroyed. Their wickedness caused them to be elevated to distinction in this world. Never be one to follow others into folly but, as Rabbi Miller teaches, learn to emulate our father Abraham.

In *The Secret of Happiness*, we learn that Abraham was a revolutionary who was subjected to persecutions that made him even more determined to devote his life to opening people's eyes to the necessity and benefit of liberty.⁷ At times, it takes a radical, revolutionary spirit to risk being different from the masses who follow without discretion, and to see the injustices of the world for what they are, and to refuse to accept injustice. One must be an individual in these places, and see things for what they really are. It is not difficult to distinguish the ways of true righteousness, for their examples are all around us.

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that if the Torah had not been given we could learn decency from the cat, chastity from the dove, etiquette from the rooster, and honesty from the ant. It is a duty to examine created things and draw deductions from the marks of Divine Wisdom exhibited in them.⁸ One can never learn too many righteous ways. But things that are forbidden are called *ossur*. Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains that *ossur* means "tied down" or "bound," and thus unable to

6. *Duties of the Heart* 2:26, Alshich on proverbs
7. *The Secret of Happiness* 161.
8. *Duties of the Heart* 1:137.

be elevated, as *klippot* (spiritual husks) hover over them. ⁹ One must walk in the ways of righteousness, fulfilling the positive commandments such as doing acts of righteousness and meditation in prayer. And one must avoid *ossur* things, because they will only be as a weight that he cannot elevate.

Rabbenu Bachyah explains that the world is like a fair where people assemble for a time and then separate. One who did business and made a profit, rejoices-so work hard while you can. ¹⁰ One cannot allow the weight of forbidden things to tie him up while trying to work in this world. To this point Rabbenu Bachyah addresses us, saying. "Brother, roll away the curtain from your heart that the evil inclination has spread over you, as it separates you from the light of understanding like a web a spider spins over a window of the house, which, in time, gets so thick and impenetrable that the light of the sun cannot enter the house. Hence, hasten your soul and be helped by God to drive it from you. Take notice now and the task will be easy for you. But if you neglect it, the light of your intellect will fail you, and make it hard for you to remove the evil web." ¹¹ In accordance with your perception of the superiority of your soul over your body, so should you busy yourself with its improvement and salvation. Attend to it more than you attend to your body, and know that it is easier to heal your body from the severest disease than to heal your soul of the maladies caused by the evil inclination.¹² Likewise, anxiety caused by physical things that are really of little importance should be of little concern; such problems are easily dealt with. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that one who takes words of Torah to heart is relieved

9. *Tanya* 555.
10. *Duties of the Heart* 2:22.
11. *Ibid.* 231.
12. *Ibid.* 269.

of anxiety about his transgressions. the threat of war, the government, and other foolish things. ¹³

But too much of anything-even Torah-can have adverse reactions. Because of this, Rabbenu Bachyah teaches us to accept understanding as our king, humility as our prince, wisdom as our guide, and abstinence as our friend. Walk slowly in the gardens of good qualities, as much as your condition permits, but proceed gradually lest you perish, for too much oil in a lamp extinguishes the light. ¹⁴

One who benefits from his labor is greater than he who fears Heaven.¹⁵ However, let one not fear, for as Rabbi Bachyah teaches, if a person has faith he will deserve life in the World to Come. ¹⁶ The concept of faith entails the obligation of truth, avoiding all falsehood, for faith stems from truth. ¹⁷ Having great faith allows one to fulfill the commandments with great force. The rewards of such service are very great. We are taught that simply answering *amen* to another's blessing earns blessings greater than that one who made the blessing-for the one answering *amen* draws forth the specific Divine Power mentioned by the reciter of the blessing from the source of Divine Power. A person answering *amen* is as the second witness, validating the testimony. ¹⁸ We see how great his importance is, as before the court testimony can only be valid if given by two witnesses.

One who has the fear of Heaven in his heart should concentrate on the thought that, in this world, he is but a messenger of the Holy Blessed One. It is his mission to fulfill

13. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*. ch. 16.

14. *Duties of the Heart* 2:379.

15. *Kad HaKemach*. chapter "Lust of Heart and Eye."

16. *Ibid* .. chapter "Faith."

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

the Torah and its commandments. ¹⁹ With this understanding, nothing will get in his way because of his trust in God Who, he knows, is in control. Concerning trust, Rabbi Bachyah teaches that trust is the complete absence of reliance upon man, and the realization that no mortal can benefit him or serve him contrary to God's decree. Trust includes knowing that any incoming trouble is from God, so, accordingly, one should not fear the blow.²⁰ Also, one blessed with wealth should not attribute it to his own good deeds but to God's bestowal of mercy upon him. In a similar manner, when trouble comes upon him he should not attribute them to chance or to the stars but to his own sins and transgressions. One who attributes his misfortunes to chance will be stricken with more trouble.²¹

In order for the soul to be a vessel for such trust and faith in God, one's body must be a proper vessel for the soul, as Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that one should purify himself inwardly and outwardly, purity of the body and heart. This applies to the body totally as the body is the instrument of the pure soul. Only when the body is in a state of purity can the soul reveal itself in deeds.²² This is not to say that one needs to spend a great deal of time in exercise or pampering the body. To be overly engaged in material things is obviously wrong.

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that the fear of God can lead to humility, which will engender the desire to cleave to God. To attain fear one must regard mundane matters as vanity and nothingness. One must disregard worldly matters to make his worship complete.²³ Time spent foolishly on

19. Ibid., chapter "Mourning."

20. Ibid .. chapter "Trust."

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., chapter "Synagogue."
23. Ibid .. chapter "Fear."

mundane matters will in the end yield nothing good. Yet, Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that one who sincerely decides to correct a wrongdoing by performing some favorable deed is immediately forgiven his sin, even though he has not yet performed the deed.²⁴

We must dedicate ourselves to the thing that really matters. We get good direction from Rabbi Bachyah when he teaches that there are eight barriers to prophecy that one must overcome. These are insufficient understanding, difficulty of discernment, passion, conceit, excitement, anger, fierceness, and love of money.²⁵ It is the love of money for its own sake that must be uprooted, as money is necessary and can be used to do much good.

Rabbi Bachyah teaches that one cannot attain perfection of wisdom without wealth. Yet wealth breeds arrogance. Wealth is like fire: The more wood you add, the more the flames increase and the fire blazes. If money was not necessary for sustenance and perfection of wisdom, it would have absolutely no importance. No one pursues boundless riches unless his heart is devoid of any wisdom. A wise person knows that all material objects are inconsequential to him. One should not weary himself by acquiring riches as they are dependent not on a man's effort, but on the Creator.²⁶ Poverty is a wheel that rotates in the world. One must always pray to be spared this, for if it does not come to him it may, Heaven forbid, come to his grandchildren.²⁷ Even if the wheel does turn toward poverty, one need not despair. One is obligated to

24. Ibid .. chapter "Atonement."
25. Ibid., chapter "Chanukah Lamp."
26. Ibid., chapter "Wealth."

27. Ibid., chapter "Livelihood."

put his trust in God; when his home is bare of everything, then he should trust in Him even more strongly. ²⁸

It does no good to continually complain about the hardships that we face: at worst it can establish depression, and the Shechinah does not dwell in a place of depression. Our speech should be a vessel for sanctification. Rabbi Bachyah teaches that we are commanded to fear Torah scholars, as this attests to the fear of God. As the Shechinah rests on a public gathering, one should fear to speak in public without their permission. One should keep his words few so as not to utter inappropriate words-should speak with caution and conciseness because of fear of the public. Control of speech is a sign of knowledge, as Rabban Gamliel said, "I have found nothing better than silence." ²⁹ We should use our speech to bring us closer to God, strengthening faith and trust in God, instead of bringing embarrassment or, Heaven forbid, judgment. As far as speech is concerned, Rabbi Bachyah teaches that one should be sure to greet his fellow man, for greeting brings peace to the world. So great is the offering of a greeting that the sages permitted using God's name in salutations. ³⁰

As a general rule, we learn from Rabbi Avraham that if one loosens the bands of wickedness, which are stubbornness and evil thoughts, he will be worthy to hear and receive. ³¹ The teachings of Rabbi Nachman explain about these bands of wickedness, that it is as if demons dig ditches trying to keep water from the tree, for if the tree were to be watered they would all perish. ³² Let us break these bonds and clear the ditches. Do not underestimate your role in this process of

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., chapter "Jealousy."
30. Ibid .. chapter "Peace."
31. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 71.
32. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 97.

bringing water to the tree, for many never accomplish it and miss their purpose in the creation. Elijah the Prophet teaches that every individual should ask himself when will his deeds match the deeds of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who came to own this world and the World to Come only because of their good deeds and study of the Torah. Each and every man is obligated to say, "The world was created for my sake"³³

In the teachings of Rabbi Nachman, we learn that when one does not realize the potential of his soul, he may think he can never become holy. He becomes spiritually drunk, and ends up transgressing because of there seeming to be no hope for himself. This leads to despair, causing one to be immersed in material desires.³⁴ Opposite this is as When Pinchas saw the tribe of Shimon approaching him. His soul fled and the souls of Nadav and Avihu entered him, restoring him to life, never forget God has a lot of options.

Rabbi Nachman teaches that a person has to break out of evil. He must do something-anything-so long as he does not maintain the status quo. He must do the first thing that he can to serve God, and the rest will follow.³⁵ Sometimes the things we do to serve God seem to have little effect, but their ultimate effect may be great. Rabbi Nachman teaches that when a person tries to correct others, even if he does not have an immediate effect, his words create doubts. If he continues, he can weaken their false beliefs and eventually bring them back to God.³⁶ Regardless of one's place in society, let him not be discouraged about speaking words of righteousness, thinking his words will not be heeded as he is only a pauper.

Concerning this, the Malbim teaches that it

may appear good to have wealth so that one may have respect of society and they will heed his words as wisdom, for the pauper gains little respect. Yet this is not so. The social pattern of honoring

33. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, p. 128.

34. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 239.

35. *Ibid.* 242.

36. *Ibid.* 296.

people because of possessions that establish status is an aberration established by man. The desire for possessions leads men to toil all their lives, while neglecting the purpose for which they were created.³⁷ This is the falseness of this world, which seems so clear and established but really has no basis in truth. Because of the degree to which this illusion has taken hold in this world it can be said, as taught by the Malbim, that the souls of *tzadikim* (holy men) come from a lofty spiritual reality, and come to the physical as an alien people.³⁸

Let one not think for a moment that this alien nature of his souls leaves him immune to the guiles of this world. Elijah the Prophet teaches that as soon as a Torah scholar puts aside his learning he is particularly vulnerable to the evil inclination.³⁹ Even if, Heaven forbid, the evil inclination gets the upper hand for a moment, the love of God is always close at hand: one should look into his heart, and come to be aware of the spirit and soul that the Holy One has planted in mankind from world's end to world's end.⁴⁰ The Shechinah is always close at hand; all one has to do is seek, no matter where they happen to stand, to reveal the power of soul and spirit that binds us to God. Elijah teaches that after one reads Chumash and recites Mishnah with delight, the Holy One in His Mercy gives wisdom and understanding, knowledge and insight, the capacity to do good deeds and to study more Torah.⁴¹ Sons refer to mitzvot requiring concurring the evil urge.

God wants to draw us near; He waits our cry. Because of this, Eliyahu teaches that even if just

a single individual of the people of Israel were dwelling at the end of the world with

- 37. *Malbim parsha Bereshith.*
- 38. *Ibid. Toldot*
- 39. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 6.
- 40. *Ibid. Rabbah*, ch. 17.
- 41. *Ibid.*, ch. 18.

a thousand rivers flowing in front of him, the Holy One would divide them all for his sake and bring him to Himself. ⁴² All that is required of us is to take the first step in Torah and mitzvahs, and with each of our acts God will draw us near. We learn from Elijah that when Israel has both Torah and good deeds, the nations of the world will revere her even under circumstances humiliating for Israel. ⁴³ Always keep the Torah close at hand, as we are warned by Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha that one may learn Torah for ten years and forget all his learning in two years. ⁴⁴ There is a proper time for learning, for teaching, and for eating. Avoid being overly occupied with one mitzvah and burning yourself out. For the same reason it is good to learn from many faces of the Torah. The school of Rabbi Ashlag teaches that if we can learn to cooperate with the strings of the universe and its steadfast, onward movement of evolution instead of stubbornly resisting it, our spiritual growth would blossom. ⁴⁵ We need to serve God where our delight is found. Through following our delight in the Torah, we will grow in our love of God, as King Solomon says in the Song of Songs: "How beautiful and pleasant love in delights" (Song 7:7).

The *neshama* (Godly soul) can make itself at home even in this material world. Each holy action we perform makes this material world more like the upper worlds, revealing the Divine sparks submerged in the creation, the world's true nature. In a sense, the Holy King is submerged deep within the palace of Divine

Thought. When one enters into Divine Thought after traveling many passageways and passing through many chambers of the palace by penetrating to the depth of the thought, one reaches the central chamber. Here

42. Ibid. Zutu, ch. 14.

43. Ibid., ch. 15.

44. Ibid .. ch. 16.

45. *Wheels of the Soul* 93.

is where the King, the Holy Blessed One, dwells in a less concealed manner, much as an earthly king will be relaxed and act as himself and not as the "king" in only the most personal, private setting. "The conclusion of the matter all included. fear God. and keep His commandments, because this is the whole purpose of man" (Eccles. 12:3). Only by fulfilling the commandments and not transgressing can we become vessels to reveal the Divine Light. Then we can walk down the pathways of Torah in the palaces of God, enter the inner corridors, and find ourselves in God's personal places where few have tread and to which King Solomon refers in the Song of Songs: "In the secret places of the stairs let me see your countenance" (Song 2: 14). May we see this actualized with the peace of our righteous Mashiach quickly in our days, Amen.

18

HOLY WAYS

In this chapter we shall look at some of the ways of the righteous, the ways of our holy sages, many of which are obscure to our eyes, for they are founded in the secrets of Elokim Chaim-the Living God. I set these here only to strengthen true faith by revealing the true supernal nature of God's Torah. Henceforth are ways of Holiness. We learn from Rabbi Ashi in tractate *Berachot* that if one is afraid of the evil eye he should take his right thumb in his left hand, and his left thumb in his right hand, and say, "I am of the seed of Joseph, son of Jacob, over whom the evil eye has no power, as it says: "Joseph is a fruitful vine by a fountain."¹ Elijah teaches that all disciples of the wise who busy themselves

1. *Berachot* 55b.

with the Torah every day without fail, in order to increase the glory of Heaven, need no weapon, for the Holy One Himself guards them, the ministering angels stand around them, all of them with swords in their hands.² Take notice that this applies to those who busy themselves with the Torah day in and day out. In general one cannot rely on a miracle. Rabbi Nachman teaches us to speak to the limbs of our bodies, telling them how lowly and coarsely physical they are and how they need to be spiritual.

Continuing with the ways of Holiness we shall look at some of our sacred traditions found in tractate *Pesachim*. The sages teach there that one should not eat or drink pairs, in even-numbered amounts. Rabbi Dimi taught that one should not eat two eggs, two nuts, two cucumbers, or two of something else, as these are harmful, and that this is a law that Moses revealed when he came down from Mount Sinai. Rabbi Pappa teaches that if one consumes pairs by accident, he should take his right thumb in his left hand and his left thumb in his right hand and say, "You and I surely make three."

We learn from Amemar that to overcome the works of a sorceress say, "Hot dung in your perforated baskets for your mouth. Oh witches, may your heads become bald, the winds carry off your crumbs, your spices be scattered, wind carry off the new saffron you are holding. As long as He has shown grace to me and you, I

had not come among you; your grace in my grace has cooled."

Resh Lakish teaches that these bring danger: easing oneself between a palm tree and a wall, passing between two trees, drinking borrowed water, and passing over spilt water. The sages teach that one should not pass between a pair of these, nor should two men allow one of these to pass between

3.Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah, ch. 4.

them: a dog, a palm tree, a woman, or a swine. If this does occur, for a remedy Rabbi Pappa teaches that one should read a verse that starts with *Ae'* and ends with *Ae'L*. The sages also teach us to beware of two women who sit opposite each other at opposite sides of a crossroad, as they could be practicing witchcraft. If one must pass between them let him say, "Igrath, Izlath, Asyaha, Belusia have been slain with arrows."

We learn from Rabbi Yitzchak not to sleep in the shadow of a single palm tree or in the shadow of the moon. If one does, his blood is on his own head. Rabbi Yitzchak also teaches us not to put shoes upon our feet while our feet are still wet, and that demons inhabit crumbs in one's house, leading to poverty-as does dirt on the pitcher. Drinking water from a plate leads to cataracts. Eating cress without washing hands gives fear for thirty days. Fear for three days comes from not washing hands after cutting hair. One will fear for one day, not knowing what scares them, if they do not wash their hands after cutting their nails. Touching ones nostrils causes fear. Touching the forehead causes drowsiness. One should not sleep more than 6 hours. The rest of the night should be devoted to Torah study. To sleep more than 6 hours is not healthy. On nights of Shabot, Rosh chodesh, Ellul and the 10 days of "teshuva" sleeping less is no risk to one's health. The Ar"i said that if one learns after midnight and then sleeps he should rise at least a half an hour before

daybreak.

The sages teach that an evil spirit rests on food and drink hidden under one's bed. On Wednesday and Saturday nights, if one drinks water he should first recite verses 3, 5, 7, and 9 from Psalm 29. When drinking from rivers and pools at night one must take care and say, "Nacheyah ben Eleazer, I am thirsty for water." But if one forgets to say this let him say, "Nachem ben Mosh, my mother told me Shabrire, berire, rire, ire, re; I am thirsty for water in a white glass." Of course to examine any of these expressions by the translation given here is insufficient; rather one should look to the original source.

Rabbi Akiva taught his son Yehoshua not to study at the highest point in town, as traffic walking by will disturb study. Eat early and strive to be on good terms with the man whom the hour favors; go into partnership with him and trade with him. Rav teaches us how to chase beasts with commands: For an ox yell *hen, hen*; for a lion *zeh. zeh*; for a camel *da, da*; but for a ship say *Helani haya hyla vihylukhyyluyah*.

In the month of Nissan one should not eat mullet fish. One should not pour extremely hot water upon himself. One should not tread on eggshells. Rabbi Yosi ben Rabbi Yehudah charged Rebbe not to go out alone at night and stand before a lamp. Never enter a new bathhouse without spitting on the ground first. A bathhouse is considered new within its first twelve months. Rav told Rav Ashi not to live in a town where the dogs and horses are very quiet. Do not dwell in a town where the leader is a doctor. Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of the men of Jerusalem, "Be the last to go to battle so as to be the first returning." Rabbi Yochanan also teaches that one who leaves wine over from *kiddush* for *havdalah*, ushering the Holy Sabbath in and out inherits the World to Come.

The sages teach that the Holy Blessed One loves one who does not become angry, get intoxicated, or take revenge; and that God hates one whose mouth says one thing and his heart another, withholds testimony, or testifies alone.

Rabba bar Hanina said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Yehuda bar Eloy that one should eat and dwell in the protection of his own home. Do not eat geese or fowl lest your heart pursue you.³

As stated previously, these teachings are all found in tractate *Pesachim*, and there is so much more there. The wise will look into these things with wonder and awe and see the secrets of the Torah, and know before Whom they stand.

Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman teaches in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that there are seven cedars that are the best: the cedar includes the acacia tree, myrtle, oil tree, desert cypress,

3. *Pesachim* 114a.

plane tree, adara (Spanish Juniper), and the box tree are the best; also oak and aloe trees are good.⁴

In tractate *Beitzah*, we learn from Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon that a field in which there is an adar tree can neither be robbed nor forcibly purchased and its fruits are protected.⁵

In tractate *Megillah* we learn from Ravina that if one feels fear and does not know why, it is because his *mazal* (spiritual overseer) sees that which he does not. He should say the *Shema Yisrael*, or if at the butcher let him say, "The goat at the butcher is fatter than I."⁶ Also in tractate *Megillah*. We learn from Rabbi Anucham that rain falls when the sins of Israel are forgiven.⁷ In tractate *Yebamot*, Rabbi Pappa teaches that grain grown for personal consumption is a better vessel for receiving a blessing than that which is bought at the marketplace.⁸

In tractate *Gittin*, we learn from Abbaye that anxiety, travel, and sin weaken man's strength. Eating and drinking while standing enfeeble the body, as does rising immediately after one eats and drinks. These are good in small quantities but bad in large quantities: traveling, the way of

the world, wealth, work, wine, and warm baths.⁹ We learn from Rabbi Eliezer that it is permissible for a man to test his *mazal* before returning to his land. If he finds that fortune favors him, good and well; if not, he should wait till his (good) *mazal* returns. ¹⁰ King Solomon says, "Her (the Torah's) byways are pleasantness and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3: 17). The *Zohar*

4. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 15:1.
5. *Beitzah* 15b.
6. *Megillah* 3a.
7. *Ibid.* 7b.
8. *Yebamot* 21a.
9. *Gittin* 70.
10. *Zohar* 1:161a.

explains this verse as follows: Byways are well trodden and open to all, yielding pleasantness of the other world; paths are given from on high, all leading to a covenant of peace. ¹¹ This idea is central to these holy ways listed here, as many of them are far beyond the way most religious, spiritual people walk in the Torah. What we find here are the traits and paths one takes that are given from on High. One must receive authorization from the Holy Blessed One to proceed in many of these paths, as they are not for everyone. One must be sure to take care when walking by the fire to insure that he does not come too close and get burned. Only a vessel that has been prepared by the proper sanctifications can come close to the intensity of the blinding white light without becoming damaged. Thus, in Hebrew the word *zohar* which means "illumination." also means "beware."

In the Holy *Zohar*, Rabbi Yosi teaches that when setting out on a journey, one should prepare himself with three courses, I.e., giving presents, fighting, and prayer.¹² In the *Zohar* we learn about Rabbi Abba that before his discourse he sniffed the fragrances of a lily and said, "I perceive that without smell the soul would pine away"¹³

One must take special care at a funeral, as we learn from Rabbi Shimon that the angel of death is by women at a funeral procession. So a man should walk in front of the women at a funeral or turn his back to them, for if he faces the women, Heaven forbid, the angel of death may see the man's face and shorten the days of his life.¹⁴ From the face of a man much can be known of his character.

The *Zohar* teaches that if a man perverts his ways, his *Neshama* does not cling to him, but a spirit from the side of

11. Ibid. 1: 179b.
12. Ibid. 1:204b.
13. Ibid. 2:20a.
14. Ibid. 2: 146a.

the serpent abides instead. The man becomes defiled and his flesh, his facial appearance, and his whole being is distorted.¹⁵ Likewise, Rabbi Shimon teaches in another part of the *Zohar*, if a man transgresses the Torah, the Torah itself makes marks on a man's face so that all above and below may see it.¹⁶ A sinner causes his head to be lowered because of his sin he can only look at what is below him. He looks at the ground. While Sanctity and Holiness lift up one's head.

Rabbi Measha, grandson of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, in tractate *Derech Eretz Rabba*, teaches that one who looks at the naked part of the body but does not arouse lust will merit to receive the Shechinah.¹⁷

It is related in tractate *Berachot* that Rabbi Gitel would go and sit at the gates of the bathing house. He used to say to the women, "Bathe this way bathe that way." The Rabbis said to him, "Is the master not afraid that his passions will get the best of him?" He replied that to him the women looked like so many white geese. The patriarch and matriarchs had Holiness that was natural, child like innocence. This is why Jacob kissed Rachel on first meeting her. As such conduct was NOT to suggestive **for them**. One

may have relations during the day for therapeutic reasons. The widow of Abaye aroused Rabba. He went home to have relations in the day.¹⁸

Eliyahu teaches to choose to sit on the ground with nothing to lean your back upon for comfort.¹⁹ Rabbi Yosi teaches that a man rises before a scroll of the Torah; likewise one should rise before a man of learning because he exhibits the supernal image and is emblematic of the high priest. God's gift is that the Torah students harvest will be blessed quantitatively and qualitatively.²⁰

Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that a man with a *moom* (physical disfigurement) has no true faith.²¹ If one has a bad dream. We learn from Rabbi Yosi that a fast is good for a dream, but it must be on the same day, as every day is controlled by a day above. That way the day does not pass till the decree is

15. Ibid. 3:46b.

16. Ibid. 3:76a.

17. *Berachot* 20a.

18. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 3., Alshich Mishley

19. *Zohar* 3:87b.

20. Ibid. 3:90a., Alshich on Proverbs

21. *Zohar* 3:92a.

annulled. Rabbi Banah told his dream to 24 interpreters and each one gave him a different explanation, and they all came true. If one interpretation contradicts another, the interpretation made first is fulfilled. Prophetic dreams seem to the dreamer like they are experiencing actual reality. Prophetic influence is given when we sleep as then the body is inactive and gives interference.²² The *Zohar* also teaches that one who has drawn Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit) upon himself, dark side divination cannot harm.²³ If one interrupts his study of the Torah to speak of idle matters, his life will be interrupted in this world and judgment shall be awaiting for him in Olam

HaBa (the World to Come). If one does not lengthen his saying *Amen*, his life will be shortened.²⁴

Rabbi Eliezer teaches that a man who walks in the precepts of his Master never lies down in his bed till he has killed one thousand one hundred and twenty-five evil spirits that abide with him.²⁵

Rabbi Yehuda teaches that a man should place God before him in all his acts.²⁶ Rabbi Chiyah teaches that a man should not step over water settled by the step of a door, as a demon dwells there. We learn from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman that water is associated with healing; the closer something is to the earth the greater the power of evil.²⁷ In tractate *Bava Kamma* the sages teach that a man should not remove stones from his property and place them on public property.²⁸

Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman teaches that when calamity comes to the world it begins with the righteous first. The sages teach that when dogs frolic and no female is among them, Elijah the Prophet has come to town.²⁹ We learn in tractate *Bava Kamma* that one who cuts the front of his hair and lets his *payot* (sidelocks) grow long is following the ways

22. Ibid. 3: 112b., Sni Luchot Vayashev, Alshich on Proverbs

23. Ibid. 3: 162a.

24. Ibid. 3:211a.

25. Ibid. 3:261 b.

26. Ibid. 3:265b.

27. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 412.

28. *Bava Kamma* 50b.

29. Ibid. 60a.

of the Amorites.³⁰ In tractate *Bava Metzia* we learn from Rabbi Yehuda that to prevent strife one should have grain in his house.³¹

Rabbi Ami teaches us in tractate *Horayot* that if one wishes to see if he will live through the

year or not, during the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur he should kindle a lamp in a place where there is no draft; if the lamp continues to burn he will live through the year. To check to see if he will succeed in business let him rear a cock; if it grows plump and fine he will succeed. To check if one will return from a journey let him sit in a dark house; if he sees his shadow he will know that he will return home again. Because of this, though, one may lose his courage to face misfortune. ³²

Rabbi Yishmael ben Yochanan son of Yochanan ben Barokah teaches in tractate *Avodah Zarah* that if one is overtaken by a heathen on the road he should walk on his right. If he has a stick on his left, walk at a higher level than where the heathen stands if possible. If he asks you where you are going always indicate a place beyond the actual destination, as Jacob said to Esau.³³

The sages teach that one forgets his learning by eating from that which a mouse or cat has eaten, eating the heart of a beast, frequently eating olives, drinking the remains of water used for washing, or washing one's feet one above the other. One's learning is restored by wheat bread and wheat, roasted eggs without salt, frequent indulgence in wine, spices, drinking water that has remained from kneading, and also by dipping one's finger. One's studies are adversely affected by passing under the bit of a camel or the camel

30. Ibid. 83a.

31. *Bava Metzia* 59a.

32. *Horayot* 12a.

33. *Avodah Zarah* 25a.

itself, passing between two women, a woman passing between two men, passing by the offensive odor of a carcass, passing under a bridge where water has not flowed for forty days, eating meat out of a soup ladle, drinking water from a stream running through a graveyard, looking at the face of a dead body, or reading the

inscription on a grave.³⁴ Rules of the Bait Ha Chyim (Literally “House of the Living-Graveyard) The Nefesh always dwells by his grave till the Resurrection.

Kever

- 1) Don't visit the same kever (tomb) more than once a day.
- 2) Place a stone on the tomb when you arrive as a resting place for the Sadeeks soul to rest upon and dwell while you are there. **Remove the stone when leaving.**
- 3) circle the kever counter clockwise as Hashem inscribes
- 4) place left hand on Kever and say Isiah 58:11 or 14 (15 words, 15 bones)
- 5) after leaving kever pull up grass and throw it over your shoulder and say "May they flourish in the city as grass in the field"

Rav Dosa ben Horkinas is buried in the cave of Shem and Ever. He lived from the time of the prophet Chagi till the time of Rabbi Akiva. This is 400 years. **On the Hillulla** (day of passing) a soul is more revealed to those of this world so their Torah is more clear and they are more accecabable to those in the this world at this time the **Hillulla** of the Ar"i is on 5 Av, Ramak 23 Tamuz, Moshe Trani 23 Nisson, Yosef Kiro 13 Nisson, Moshe Alshich 12 Nisson and of course the **Hillulla** of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochi is Log bOmer.

In tractate *Chullin* we learn from Abbaye not to eat vegetables tied up by the gardener, as there are then dangers of magic. Do not sit under a drain pipe, as demons are there. Prior to drinking, one should pour off a small amount of liquid from the container to remove the "evil waters." One can wash for fruit, but Rabbi Nathan says that one who does so is haughty. ³⁵ The sages teach in tractate *Tamid* that one should pour liquid from the cup before passing it to his disciple.³⁶ In tractate *Niddah*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that one who eats garlic that has been sitting without its root or peel can forfeit his life due to evil spirits that rest there. Drinking

liquid left uncovered overnight has the same effect, especially if left in a metal container. Rabbi Shimon also teaches that we should not spend the night in a graveyard, or throw fingernails away in public; the pious burn their nails, the righteous bury them, and the wicked throw them away.³⁷

In the Midrash on Song of Songs, we learn from the sages that myrrh is the foremost of spices, corresponding to Abraham. It makes the hands of all who gather it wise. It emits its fragrance only when on fire.³⁸

We learn in the teaching of Rabbi Nachman that the young men of Israel have a beautiful fragrance when they are

34. *Horayot* 13b.

35. *Chullin* 105b.

36. *Tamid* 27b.

37. *Niddah* 17a.

38. Midrash Rabba Song of Songs 3:6.

sexually pure.³⁹ Rebbe teaches that the soul is refreshed by food the size of a date; Rabbi Chaninah teaches the size of a berry.⁴⁰

We learn in Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer that until Jacob, no one sneezed and lived, for when one sneezed his soul flew out. Sinners would die when Rabbi Shimon looked at them. As any good that they had in their soul which sustained them would be attracted to Rabbi Shimon. This spark of light would fly out of the sinner's body to Rabbi Shimon, and the sinner left with out any life force would fall dead. Just as Torah is dear to God so are those who study it. Anyone who is steeped in Torah study does not need to worry about all the destructive forces that abound in this earth. He is able to subjugate all these destructive forces and consign them to the deep.⁴¹ Since life was created for the sake of its potential to achieve closeness to God. When man can no longer live for that potential, life is taken from him.

Rabbi Bachyah, Rabbi Chiyah, and the sages

of Babylon teach in the name of Rabbi Yehuda that not a day passes in which God does not teach a new halachah (Torah law) in the Heavenly court. It is concerning this we have the verse "Hear the voice of His voice, the meditation of His mouth." Here, as in all cases, the word "meditation" refers to Torah. ⁴²

Rabbi Levi teaches that people sleep because of their sins.

We learn from Rabbi Yosi ben Abin that one should not slaughter, circumcise, wipe hands, or pick teeth with a reed stalk, as an evil spirit rests upon it.⁴³ Rabbi Yosi of Moan teaches that like the daughter is the mother, like the generation is its leaders, like the altar is its priests, and according to the garden is its gardener.⁴⁴ Concerning keeping the garden, we learn from Rabbi Yannai that God is King and the world is His orchard, in which He placed Israel to keep the orchard, to do His work and receive full reward. One who does so gains entry into Paradise (Gan Eden), but he who does not is faced with Gehenom.⁴⁵

The Rabbis teach that wherever the Shechinah appears, one must not go about with shoes on.⁴⁶ We find in Rabbi

39. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 382.

40. Midrash Rabba Lamentations 1: 11.

41. *Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer*. Aor HaChyim Bo, Sni luchot ha brit Vayichi

42. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 49:2., Gra on Agada

43. Ibid. 56:6.

44. Ibid. 80: 1.

45. Ibid. *Shemot* 2:2.

46. Ibid.

Nachman's teaching that by dancing with his feet one can restore lost faith.⁴⁷ We learn from Rabbi Eliezer that ninety-nine out of a hundred die because of the evil eye, only one at the hand of Heaven. ⁴⁸ We should learn from this how much one needs to proceed in a careful way with

these ways of holiness, so as to not arouse misunderstandings and, Heaven forbid, draw the evil eye to oneself.

Rabbi Abin teaches that the lily is designated for *Shabbat* and festivals. The sages teach that on seeing the sun complete its cycle every twenty-eight years or the moon every nineteen years, or the stars or planets re-entering their orbits, one should sanctify this time with the proper blessing.⁴⁹ The sages teach that whoever takes up arms in the name of the Omnipresent is loved forever.⁵⁰ We learn in Rabbi Nachman's teachings that baldness represents an inability to produce anything with one's thoughts.⁵¹ We learn from Rabbi Yosi Kersedai in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that if the sun, the moon, or a dragon are on a garment that one has found, he should throw it in the Dead Sea (or otherwise destroy it).⁵²

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches that God forges a weapon for those who are occupied in the truth of the Torah, and this weapon is the truth of the Torah. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches that this weapon was received at Mount Sinai and upon it is written the Ineffable Name.⁵³

In the Midrash it is taught that shedding the blood of the wicked is as offering up a sacrifice.⁵⁴ The sages teach that

47. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 436.

48. Midrash Rabba *Vayikra* 16:8.

49. Ibid. 23:8.

50. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 1:12.

51. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 75.

52. Midrash Rabba *Bereshith* 81:3.

53. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 12:3.

54. Ibid. 21 :3.

King David made himself as a child just born before the Holy One, not ashamed to uncover himself.⁵⁵ In all ways of life, especially for those who try to live a spiritual life, the sages warn that whoever is close to the sanctuary and is not sufficiently careful can be struck

by the attribute of justice. ⁵⁶ Rabbi Abbahu teaches the names of converts are as dear to God as a wine offering poured on the altar. It is called *Lebanon*, as it turns Israel's sins white as snow. Under certain feelings of love for something may transform evil into good and klippa to something Sacred. This allows people to convert from paganism to Judaism.⁵⁷

The "Erev Rav" grew to become the majority of the people in the desert. This is why Moshe was forced to add a extra year every 49 years. This years serves as a warning that Yisrael must not again err by accepting insincere converts.

Rabbi Azariah teaches that if one sees in a dream a sword cutting his thigh, he should rise and go to the House of Worship, stand before the *kohanim*, and pay attention to the priestly blessing. ⁵⁸ There is an opinion in the Midrash that states that the washing of hands before a meal is optional, but the washing after is obligatory. ⁵⁹ This is not the accepted halachah, but the sages say that washing after the meal saves from death.

Shmuel teaches us that astrology is not the Torah, and you can learn astrology in a bathroom. ⁶⁰

In the teachings of Rashi, we learn that through a Tamarisk tree Abraham called on the name of the Holy Blessed One and Moses saw God. The staff of Hashem that Aharon performed miracles with called sometimes "the staff of Ahron" was made of Sapphire. It was a miracle that only Moshe was able to move it. ⁶¹ Jacob made rods of poplar, almond, and plane trees. It was with these rods that he made fertile sheep produce the appropriate offspring for him. Yaakov introduced public baths, coinage, a new marketing technique called "fairs". ⁶²

When approaching the age of one's parents' death, one should begin to worry five years before and until five years

55. Ibid. 4:20.

56. Ibid. 5:2.

57. Ibid. 8: 1., Alshich Mishley

58. Ibid. 11 :3.

59. Ibid. 20:22.

60. Ibid. *Devarim* 8:6.
 61. Rashi *Bereshith* on 21:33, *Shemot* on 3:2. Sni
 luchot ha Brit
 62. Ibid. *Bereshith* 30:37., Sni Luchot Vayishlach

after.⁶³ Moses's staff was of stone,⁶⁴ and Moses officiated in white garments during the sixty-four days of consecration of the Tabernacle.⁶⁵ Cedar is the tallest of trees and hyssop is the smallest.⁶⁶ Rabbi Pinchas Eliyahu teaches that Bdelium is the source of all stones.⁶⁷ The Aor HaChym Yitro teaches that fire burned the stones of Mount Sinai and they turned to Limestone and have remained Limestone ever since.

Concerning conduct, the holy sages of the *Zohar*, Rabbi Yosi and Rabbi Chiyah, approached a stranger, but he would not reply to their offerings of salutation, as the stranger could not discern any sign of religion.⁶⁸ Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches that when speaking, there is encloded within the breath only the smallest amount of the speaker's power and life force, and it is only a superficial aspect of what dwells within him, but when he blows with force, he blows from deep within himself. The breath embodies the internal power and life force of the Vivifying Soul.⁶⁹ Rabbi Shneur Zalman also teaches that a garment dyed only one color cannot be called *tifereth* (beautiful).⁷⁰

Rabbi Shimon teaches that musical instruments were used by all the prophets to reach an ecstatic mood before receiving the spirit of prophecy-except Moses, who did not need any external aids.⁷¹

The sages teach that God revealed Himself to the prophets in exile only in a pure place, such as near water that

63. Ibid. 37:2.
 64. Ibid. *Shemot* 17:6.
 65. Ibid. *Vayikra* 8:28.
 66. Ibid. *Bamidbar* 19:6.
 67. *Sefer HaBrit* 117.

- 68. *Zohar* 1 :205a.
- 69. *Tanya* 357.
- 70. *Ibid.* 469.
- 71. *Zohar Beshallah.*

purifies. ⁷² Rabbi Shimon teaches that if one attempts to unite the Holy Name without bringing himself into a fitting frame of mind, this person does not come in fear and love, no blessing descends upon such prayer, and he evokes upon himself and all things the attribute of judgment.

⁷³

We learn from Rabbi Yosi that it is not proper to cook on one day for another. ⁷⁴ This is so that the blessings of one day do not interfere with those of another.

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that one should make a close study of the original elements of which the world was composed, of the products made by combining these elements, and of the minerals and plants. By doing so, one can see the perfection in the world's orderly combinations. By this, one can see its workmanship, thus giving an indication of the greatness of its Creator, as by looking at architecture one is given an awareness of its builder. ⁷⁵

The names Adam gave the creatures reflect the specific trait each has inherently. Iben Ezra and Radak teach that when Yoshua entered the Holy land some cannanites fled to Germany. Titus exiled Jews to Germany and Slavania and residents of Jerusalem to Spain and other countries of the Roman empire.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman teaches us that *Ein Yaakov* (the Aggadata of the Talmud) is studied between the afternoon and evening prayer services on weekdays. On *Shabbat* toward the afternoon prayers, we study the laws of *Shabbat*.

⁷⁶

Rabbenu Bachyah teaches that if one is living in solitude, he is undoubtedly exonerated from the duties of exhorting the masses to do good and warning them to abstain from evil. Under such circumstances rebuke is difficult, making it hard to fulfill one's duty and completely discharge his obligation. ⁷⁷

72. Daniel 217.

73. *Zohar* 2:45a.

74. *Ibid.* 2:62a.

75. *Duties of the Heart* 1: 139.

76. *Tanya* 529.

77. *Duties of the Heart* 2:239.

One should use one's power of vision to contemplate God's creatures, to investigate and reflect upon them. Through His creatures, one can comprehend the Creator's omnipotence and goodness.⁷⁸ Forgetfulness can be avoided only by constantly uttering words of Torah and meditating upon them day and night; then they will be preserved in a person's heart. This is especially so when one is involved in matters that agitate his mind.⁷⁹ Certain vegetables and pearls can be used as a *segulah* (talisman), as they contain a hidden power. ⁸⁰

Rabbi Avraham teaches that one whose spirit and rational soul has prevailed over the evil inclination does not need to afflict his body unduly when his strength diminishes in old age, unless to fulfill a commandment. ⁸¹

We learn from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman that pronouncing Divine Names can transport a person.⁸² Earthquakes come because of strife and war, and signal the end of a kingdom.⁸³ Thunder destroys demons.⁸⁴

In *Sefer HaBrit*, Pinchas Eliyahu teaches that angels rest on river stones covered with pitch. The Aor haCym teaches us that the cloud in the desert that accompanied Yisrael when they left Egypt and were in the desert smoothed rough passages showing Yisrael where to go. There were 3 distinct clouds one showed Yisrael the direction to travel, the 2nd protected them from the heat and the 3rd cloud was the pillar of fire by night. Yisrael

walked on a frozen layer of water in the midst of the sea. You would be more than surprised by what God can do for you ! ⁸⁵

Rabbi Nachman's teachings tell us that in the era before the Mashiach (our righteous Messiah), one who departs from evil will be considered insane. In *Lekutey mahron* we learn that each person suffers insanity according to the sins that he has committed. There are 2 types of insanity. One when a person is overcome by the spirit of folly. The other when one knowingly pursues foolishness. ⁸⁶ In *Sefer Yetzirah*, one can distinguish the sounds of animals as a song; it is the world of anthromorphism, so animal sounds take on a human

78. *Ibid.* 2:319.

79. *Kad HaKemach*, chapter "Faith."

80. *Ibid.*, chapter "Lulov."

81. *Meditation of the Sad Soul* 74.

82. *Rabbi Nachman's Stories* 96.

83. *Ibid.* 97.

84. *Ibid.* 100.

85. *Sefer HaBrit* 82., Aor HaChyim Bishalach.

86. *Rabbi Nachman's Stories* 173. *Lekutey mahron* 1:88

aspect. Prior to the sin man was able to understand the language of animals and even conversation carried on by inert parts of nature. Some of our sages have written books in which they translate the songs of birds and animals. As they were able to understand their various sounds ⁸⁷ Song refines the human spirit and separates a man from the animal in him. ⁸⁸

Rabbi Pinchas Eliyahu teaches that the greatest danger to man from the sun is in the Hebrew month of Adar, as its voice is strong, stimulating all green plants. It is especially strong at seaports. ⁸⁹ The first of Adar was the date on which new contributions to the Temple were asked for, though they only came due the first of

Nisson. The contribution of the half shekal one month before its actually do, sanctifies the person making this donation. And it makes all the food that he will eat as if he is eating part of a sacrifice.

From Rabbi Nachman's teachings we learn that each finger can check the pulse beat corresponding to its *sefirah* (Divine emanation).⁹⁰ The hand contains channels going throughout the entire body.⁹¹ The ten types of pulse beats correspond to the ten vowel points. The pulse beat is related to the shape of the vowel point, and the vowel points are related to the world of *Briah* (Creation). The ten pulses correspond to the ten forms of song; therefore, by knowing the pulses, one can know which type of song will heal.⁹²

The Malbim teaches us about the nature of different parts of the earth when we learn that man was created with dust from many locations, as each location contributed a different capacity.

Elijah the Prophet teaches that one can draw water from Miriam's well on Saturday night. when Miriam's well travels throughout the world, yielding its creative, restorative power. ⁹³.

Rabbi Kook explains that concerning the extent of Israel's readiness to return to her land in normalcy as in ancient days, so is her initiative to discover a source of spiritual inspiration. Were it not for the "dew of life" of the sanctity of

87. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 252, Aor HaChyim Barashit

88. Ibid. 257.

89. *Safer HaBrit*.

90. Rabbi Nachman's Stories 433.

91. Ibid. 299.

92. Ibid. 417.

93. *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu Zuta*, ch. 16.

the land of Israel, Judaism in exile would have

no actual basis except the vision of the heart founded on hope and rare reflection on the future and the past. However there is a limit to the power of this imagining. Judaism in exile descends drastically and there is no hope for it other than it becoming planted in the source of life of essential holiness that may be found only in the land of Israel. The real sanctity of Judaism cannot be revealed other than by the people's return to their land. The Sni Luchot ha Brit teaches that we must be careful when we reside in the land of Israel as here the land enjoys God's daily personal supervision. Zion is the foundation of the world. Boszra is Betzer, the first city of refuge mentioned in Devarim 4:43. Yitzchak recieved a second soul at the "Akada" when his soul fled and rose up to heaven. Then his physical body was replaced with Sacred flesh. Therefore he could never leave the land of Israel. Yitzchak was "midot ha din" envisioned at the time of creation.

Know, The redemption will come unexpectedly as the revelation of Yosef to his brothers in the Bible. Eliyahu (Elijah) will come when one least thinks of him. Eliyahu will restore 3 items including the jar of "mana". The Sni Luchot ha Brit teaches that the future redemption is clear as God promised Avraham his descendants would inherit all the land of the 10 nations that inhabited Caanon. Yet we have to this day only part of the land of the 7 nations. And the land of the "Kayni" (Amonites), "Knizi"(Moab) and "Kadomi" (Edom) we never captured. The Sni Luchot haBrit teaches that every day that passes contains elements of the eventual total redemption, Yisrael's existence is proof of the ongoing redemption process.

You need to realize things are not as they appear. The sex of lot with his daughters was a transgression for the sake of a mitzvah (commandment). From this union comes the seed of Mashiach. So too Yuhuda thought Tamar was a harlot and had relations with here. From this union comes the seed of Mashiach. Also know, King David's father Yeschi had a grandmother that was a moabite convert named Ruth. The Torah forbids converts from Moab as its written "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; to their tenth generation shall they not

enter into the congregation of the Lord forever." (Deut 23 :3) This raised a question before King David was even conceived. But the prohibition on Moab converts only applies to men. Yeshi, King David's father separated his wife in fear of transgressing this commandment, which he misunderstood. His wife with the depth of insight only a woman can have knew he was mistaken. So she disguised herself as one of his married maid servants (like Tamar), by this David was conceived. Because of this David in his youth was scorned as impure and the son of immorality. The pure seed of the Messiah was seen in the worst light by even his father and brothers.

Yuhuda ben Batra in the Talmud is of the offspring of the resurrection done by Ezekial, they were of those of the tribe of Efriyim who left Egypt early. The Gra teaches that Rav Amram was like a pillar of fire, his evil inclination left him. The Aor HaChym teaches that Rav Amram stated that Jerusalem was destroyed because Torah scholars failed to rebuke their fellow Jews. The Alshich on proverbs teaches that Rav Yosi said any place where there is no admonition does not have true peace. The Sni Luchot haBrit teaches that R. Nahori is R. Meir, R. Nahori reveals secrets of the Torah, R. Meir reveals Torah to the masses. Much is not as it appears "at all". Man's body and soul were created in such a pristine state that they can achieve cleaving of Body and soul. The matter used to make the body of man was of the purist content being that which clothes an angel. Man has destroyed this ideal state and his body has become inferior material. The only way this can be remedied is by death and resurrection. Man's earthly body will once again be composed of pure matter at the time of the Resurrection. Great is the day of Jezreel (Hosea 2:2). this is the time of redemption when the body will be restored to its pristine state. With the arrival of Mashiach the creation will renew itself. A new light will emerge. At that time the body and soul will be able to fuse together.

Thus is completed the first part of the *Owner's Manual to the Soul* on the fifteenth of Av 5753. It was on the fifteenth of Av. after a long

interruption, that the tribes once again began to intermarry with the tribe of Benjamin. And on this day, the dying of the generation of the wilderness ceased and God began to communicate again with Moses. The prophet Hosea removed the guards that King Jeroboam placed, allowing free passage for all to Jerusalem, where the dead of Betar were buried. This is the day that the wood cutting for the altar stopped. May it be Your Will that the Holy words of this book shall join the rest of Your Kindnesses to help hasten the Messianic Revelation, and may it come quickly in our days in peace,

AMEN SELAH.

Thank You God for the work completed.