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Drasha L'Shabbos Terumah: The Purpose of Creation

The Midrash describes the significance of the Mishkan with the following parable:

> "***I gave you a good acquisition, My Torah, do not abandon it***" (Mishlei 4:2). There are some acquisitions in which the seller sells himself along with his merchandise. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Klal Yisrael, "I 'sold' you the Torah, and it is as if I sold Myself to you together with it." As is written, "***You shall take for Me a donation***" (which can also be read as, "You shall take Me as a donation") (*Shemos* 25:2).
>
> This can be explained by means of a parable. Once there was a king who had an only daughter. Then, another king came to marry her. When it came time for the second king to return to his land with his new wife, the father said to him, "My daughter whom I gave to you is my only child. I cannot bear to be separated from her. On the other hand, I cannot tell you not to take her, since she is your wife. Therefore, please do for me this favor. Wherever you go, prepare for me a small room so that I can stay with you, since I cannot bear to part from my daughter."
>
> So too, HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Bnei Yisrael, "I gave you the Torah, but I cannot part from it. On the other hand, I cannot tell you not to take it. Therefore, wherever you go, make for Me a house in which I can stay with you," as is written, ***"Make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell among them"*** (ibid 8).

This Midrash parallels Chazal's teachings (Berachos 8a): "***'Hashem loves the Gates of Tzion more than all the dwelling places of Yaakov'*** - Hashem loves the Gates of the yeshivos in which halachos are studied, more than all the places of prayer," and "HaKadosh Baruch Hu has nothing (i.e. no place for His Shechinah to rest) in His world except for the four *amos* of halachah" (ibid).

In several places I explained this concept, that the creation of the world and its continued existence are only for the sake of the Torah studied by Bnei Yisrael, as the Gemara (Shabbos 88a) states, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu stipulated with creation that if Bnei Yisrael would not accept the Torah, the world would revert to nothingness." We can explain this by means of the following Gemara.

The Debate with the Elders of Athens

The Gemara (*Bechoros* 8b) tells the story of a debate between Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chanania and the Elders of Athens, in which they conversed with one another using a series of cryptic metaphors which can hardly be understood at face value. One of the questions that the Elders posed to Rebbe Yehoshua was, "Where is the center of the earth?"

He answered by holding up his finger, and saying, "Right here."

"How can you prove that this is so?" they asked.

"Bring a rope and measure it," he answered.

In these terse and mysterious words, they referred to an age-old debate between the philosophers of the world and the Sages of the Torah. Which of the creations are most important in Hashem's eyes? For whom was the world created?

The philosophers asserted that the ministering angels and ethereal beings have a greater purpose than mankind, since they are more spiritual, they are immortal, they have no physical form to draw them after lowly, animalistic desires, they have greater capacity for understanding, and they are not subject to demise but are made to live and endure.

Mankind, on the other hand, finds his place in the physical world, which is the lowest of all planes. He is fated to return to the earth from which he was taken. He is materialistic, with lusts and desires for everything. His capacity for understanding cannot reach even a fraction of that of the ethereal beings.

Nonetheless, the Sages of the Torah insist that man is greater than angels. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 78:1) comments on the verse (*Tehillim* 91:11), ***"'He will instruct His angels to guard you on all your paths.'*** - Who is greater, the guard or the one he was sent to guard?" Obviously then, man is greater than the angels.

Hashem is infinite. From Hashem's perspective, we cannot say that the angels and ethereal beings are any closer to Him than mankind, even though we are formed from the earth. Saying so would be to imply that there is some limit to Hashem's greatness, such that one creation is more similar to Him in some way than another, *chas v'shalom*. Only of a human king can such a thing be said. His advisors and ministers are closest to him, since the par between him and them is smaller than the par between him and his common subjects.

Such is not the case with Hashem's relationship to His creations. Hashem cannot be approached or understood by any thoughts or reasoning in the world. There is no limit or boundary to His greatness. Before His infinite greatness, man and angel alike are as nothing. Therefore, the relative greatness of the angels as compared to man is really inconsequential.

However, man has an advantage over the angels in terms of the ultimate purpose of creation. The purpose for which Hashem created the world was not to have His honor exalted, *chas v'shalom*. The purpose was to grant goodness and reward to those who would fulfill His will from their own free choice. This purpose is only relevant to man, who was formed from the earth and is under the sway of the *yetzer hara*, with material passions that tempt him to throw off the yoke of Hashem's service. Only man is capable of earning reward, by grappling with the *yetzer hara* against which he was created to contend.

As such, Hashem's purpose in creation is only for the sake of man, who dwells here below in this physical world. All the other creations, including the angels, were created only to serve him, as Chazal say, "***'For this is the entirety of man'*** (*Koheles* 12:13) the entire world was created only as an accompaniment for man" (*Berachos* 6b).

The Purpose is at the Center

In philosophical terminology, the aim and purpose of anything is called its center. It is like the center of a circle, from which a radius of equal length can be drawn to any point on the circle, and back again to its center.

Throughout the six days of creation, before man was created, the world had not yet reached completion. Hashem's purpose in creating the world had not yet been fulfilled. Only at the end of the sixth day, after the creation of man, was Hashem's handiwork completed. The pinnacle and purpose of creation now came into being, and Hashem ceased from His labors.

For this reason, we do not find the Name יהו"ה appear anywhere in the story of creation before this point. Until the creation of man, only the Name Elokim is used. Then, after the creation of man marked the completion of Hashem's purpose in creation, we find the Name יהו"ה used for the first time: ***"These are the generations of Heaven and Earth … on the day that יהו"ה Elokim made the Earth and the Heaven"*** (*Bereishis* 2:4). These two Names join together to form the complete Name of Hashem, and its use here denotes that His Name and His Throne were now completed (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 13:3; Rashi, *Shemos* 17:16).

Also for this reason, we find in this verse a sudden switch in order. Until now, Heaven was always written before earth: ***"In the beginning, Hashem created the Heavens and the Earth."*** Now, for the first time, Earth is placed before Heaven: ***"… on the day that יהו"ה Elokim made the Earth and the Heaven."*** Before man was created, the Hosts of Heaven had precedence and superiority over the inanimate objects, plants and animals of the lower world. Therefore, the Heavens came first. However, once man was created in this lower world, the purpose of creation was completed through him, and the Earth took precedence over Heaven.

Another hint for this can be found in the verse, ***"These are the generations of Heaven and Earth when they were created."*** The Hebrew word for "when they were created" is בְּהִבָּרְאָם. Chazal comment that this word should be rearranged to read בְּאַבְרָהָם – for the sake of Avraham Avinu (*Bereishis Rabbah* 12:9). The main purpose that Hashem planned to achieve from the creation of mankind was realized when the light of Avraham Avinu first shone upon the earth. His arrival marked the true completion of creation. At that point the first epoch of history, the two thousand years of chaos (*"tohu"*), came to a close.

The second epoch, the two thousand years of Torah, began when Avraham was forty-eight years old and first recognized his Creator (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 95:3). At that point, he started drawing followers to Hashem's service. These were ***"the souls that they made in Charan"*** (*Bereishis* 12:5). Before then, Hashem's plan for creation was not yet fulfilled. The world was in a state of chaos, like raw material ready to be formed into its proper shape by a Godly spirit.

All this was alluded to in the debate between Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chanania and the philosophers of Athens.

"Where is the center of the world?" they asked, meaning to say, "Who sits at the center of Hashem's intention for creating the world? The ethereal beings above in Heaven, or humankind down here below on earth?"

Rebbe Yehoshua answered by holding up his finger and saying, "Here is the center of the world." He had an awesome depth of meaning in this response.

The verse states, ***"Who measured the waters with His fist, prepared the Heavens with His measuring stick, measured the dust of the earth in His cup, arranged the mountains with His level, and the hills with His scales?"*** (*Yeshayah* 40:12).

This verse was meant as an assurance to Bnei Yisrael, as we await the ultimate Redemption, that our future reward will be complete, as the previous verse states, "***Behold, Hashem Elokim will come in strength, with His reward with him and the wages (for those who served Him) before Him."*** This refers to the reward destined for those who justify the work of creation by fulfilling its purpose through their Torah and mitzvos.

Hashem created all the worlds, comparing Himself to a builder who works with his five fingers. The five fingers parallel the five building tasks listed above: measuring the waters, and so on. The third task ***"He measured the dust of the earth"*** parallels the third finger, the longest of them all, which is in the middle of the hand. Dust is the lowest element of creation, yet it is represented by the middle and longest finger, since it is the central purpose of creation and the focus upon which Hashem invested His powers. Therefore, Rebbe Yehoshua lifted up his middle finger to show them that here, in the lowest world, is the center point of creation.

"How can you prove that this is so?" the Elders of Athens asked.

"Bring a rope and measure it," Rebbe Yehoshua answered. He explained to them that from the highest planes of Heaven all the way down to earth, all the worlds are connected to one another as if by a rope. ***"For there are guards one upon another, and even higher guards above them"*** (*Koheles* 5:7). Each level is drawn by the level beneath it, in a series of causes and effects, with the bottom of the "rope" (so to speak) reaching down into this world. Here the rope ends, and here creation reaches its completion.

We see this in the verses of creation, as we explained above, that the name יהו"ה is expressed through the first letters of י ם הַ . . יוְיִכֵ הַ מָיִם, only after the world reached its completion through the creation of man. The worlds of Heaven had not yet achieved their purpose and could not be considered complete, until man was created on this lowest of all worlds, since the worlds of Heaven were created for the sake of man. This was the condition upon which the rest of the world was founded – that there must be a human being with free will to be rewarded for his good deeds. Otherwise, there would be no purpose in creation.

The Completion of Hashem's Name

This helps us to understand the union of Hashem's Names, יהו"ה אלהי"ם, which join together to form the complete Name of Hashem. Elokim in gematria equals "The Throne" (הכסא). This Name represents Hashem's ultimate power. He created everything out of nothing. He alone rules over all creation, and everything is a Throne to His Majesty. However, the support to this Throne is the revelation of His Kingship

in this lower world, as the verse states, ***"So says Hashem, the Heavens are My Throne and the Earth is My footstool"*** (*Yeshayah* 66:1). By way of analogy, a footstool supports the legs of a king, as he sits upon his throne. So too, as far as it may be said, Hashem's Kingship is supported by the mitzvos of Bnei Yisrael in this lower world, through which we "strengthen the Court of Heaven" (*Eichah Rabbah* 1:33).

As the verse states, ***"Give strength to Elokim"*** (*Tehillim* 68:35), by fulfilling His will. The verse then continues, ***"Upon Yisrael is His pride, and His might is in the Heavens."*** Hashem's might is more evident in the Heavens, which were created with greater power, as is written, ***"My hand founded the Earth and My right hand measured the Heavens"*** (*Yeshayah* 48:13). Since the right hand is stronger than the left, this verse shows us that the Heavens are a place of greater power.

Nonetheless, His greatest pride is among Bnei Yisrael in this lowest world. When a person in this lower world recognizes the Creator and fulfills His will, he reveals the Name יהו"ה, which is Hashem's essential Name, thus letting it be known throughout the world that Hashem fills all worlds and surround all worlds.

The letters of the Name יהו"ה represent how Hashem created everything that exists with Ten Utterances (*Rosh Hashanah* 32a), which – so to speak – represent the ten fingers of the two hands, five on each hand. These Ten Utterances originally existed in primal thought as the letter *yud* (10) of Hashem's Name, but in actuality they were expressed in the world as the two letters of *heh* (5) from His Name, one for the Heavens and one for the Earth, with the right hand exerting its influence upon the left. All this took place during the six days of creation, represented by the letter *vav* (6) from His name. For this reason, the combined Name יהו"ה אלהי"ם was used only after the world was completed with the creation of man, at which point Hashem's Throne was completed and He sat upon it in His glory.

All this is alluded to in the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 12:11):

> Rav Huna said in the name of Rav Yosef: Everything that exists in Heaven and Earth was created only from the Earth, as is written, ***"Just as the rain and snow fall from the Heaven***" (*Yeshayah* 55:10). The rain descends from Heaven, but it is formed on earth. So too, everything that exists in Heaven and Earth was created only from the Earth.

Rain is formed from moisture that evaporates and ascends from the Earth. Then, once the cloud of moisture from the Earth is formed, a drop of water from above the Heavens is added to it. This is the spiritual power, the soul of the water, which is hidden within the lower waters. When the letters for the Hebrew word for water, מים, are spelled out, they read מ"ם יו"ד מ"ם, such that the inner letters מ, ו+ד=י, מ also spell out מים. This shows us that in addition to the water visible to our eyes, which is formed from the moisture that ascends from the earth, there is also an inner, spiritual force in the water that gives it the power to make plants grow, just as the human soul animates the body.

Of this the verse says, ***"I placed the clouds as its garment and the fog as its shawl"*** (*Iyov* 38:9) and ***"they pour rain into its cloud"*** (ibid 36:27). This means to say that the moisture from the earth ascends like a physical body, which serves as a garment to the soul. In

this case, the "soul" is the spiritual water from Heaven, from the ***"stream of Elokim that is full of water"*** (*Tehillim* 36:27). "Full of water" is also a reference to the inner letters that fill out the word מים, which, as we explained above, refers to the spiritual waters from above.

In this respect, mankind's role in creation is to elicit the blessings of Heaven through our good deeds. All the blessings that descend to the world, and the ultimate perfection of creation, depend on the degree to which we perfect ourselves through Torah and mitzvos. Everything else that exists in this world was created only in order to help us reach this goal.

Our good deeds are like the cloud of moisture that ascends from Earth to Heaven, in order to receive the blessings of the Heavenly waters and bring them back down to Earth. Without our intervention, all the Hosts of Heaven would be meaningless and cease to exist, since there would be no channel through which the blessings of Heaven could descend to Earth. For this reason, only after the creation of man does the verse state, ***"The vegetation of the field did not yet appear upon the land … for there was not yet man to work the land … and then a cloud ascended from the earth"*** (*Bereishis* 2:5-6).

This is also the meaning of the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 13:13), which states that for every drop of water that falls from Heaven, two drops of water ascend from the depths of the Earth to accept it. The "two drops of water from the Earth" are the good deeds of mankind that ascend to unlock the Gates of Heaven.

The Midrash states that the lower waters tell the higher waters, "You are Hashem's creations, but we are His messengers." We are Hashem's messengers in the sense that we act on His behalf to elicit spiritual blessing from the higher worlds, and draw it down into this world through our Torah and mitzvos. We were created to guide the course of creation through our deeds, and to act as if we were members of Hashem's household.

In this regard, the Midrash cites the verse, "***The Heavens will rain from above, and the firmament will pour forth righteousness. The earth will open to produce fruit of salvation, and charity will sprout together with it. I am Hashem who created him***" (Yeshayah 45:8). Our good deeds and charity cause the fruit of salvation to sprout. The verse concludes, "I am Hashem who created him," referring to man, who was created in order to perfect the world and instill strength and might in the Court of Heaven.

Bringing Peace to Creation

Man was created expressly for this purpose, so that his deeds would bring unity and might to Hashem's Name, and Hashem would unite with His creations to bestow His blessing and illuminate all things. If not for man's good deeds, there would be no way for creation to unite with the Creator. Of this it is written, ***"… or strengthen with My might, make peace for Me, peace he will make for Me"*** (*Yeshayah* 27:5). The definition of peace is unity between the parts.

There is a deep meaning behind the double usage of the word peace. A clock is made out of many fine parts that work together. When all the parts are present and working properly in unison, the clock can serve its function. If the smallest part is missing, the entire clock is worthless.

So too, man's body is composed of 613 parts, including 248 organs and 365 sinews. On a spiritual level, he also has 613 components which correspond to the 613 mitzvos. He must complete himself and perfect his soul by observing the 613 mitzvos, through which all the parts of his being reach their fulfillment and their purpose in having been created. Then, like the clock in our analogy, all the parts of man function properly and he is fit to perform his function – which is to correct the Heavenly worlds and draw their blessing down into this world. This is the meaning of the first half of the verse, "***make peace for Me*** – יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם לִי, which can also be interpreted to mean, ***"he will be made perfect for Me"*** יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלֵם לִי By perfecting himself in all his parts, he is enabled to serve the function for which Hashem intended him.

This is one aspect of the word *shalom*, in the sense of *shleimus* – perfection. The second aspect of *shalom* is unity. Through our mitzvos, we unite creation with its Creator, such that the world is drawn after Hashem's will, and Hashem interacts with the world according to the original benevolent design that He had for His creation. This is the meaning of the second half of the verse, ***"Peace he will make for Me"***- שָׁלוֹם יַעֲשֶׂה לִי, meaning that he brings creation to a state of unity with the Creator.

This is also an aspect of what we described above, that the two Names of Hashem, יהו"ה and Elokim, actually combine to form Hashem's complete Name. Chazal tell us that Shalom is also a Name of Hashem (*Shabbos* 10b). Shalom, in the sense of *shleimus* – completion, represents the perfect state of interaction between Hashem and His world.

Shalom also depicts a state of love and attachment, in which there is nothing to divide between two loving friends. When we defy Hashem's will, we empower the forces of evil that oppose holiness. These forces separate us from Hashem, weaken our connection with Him, and block the flow of blessing that He wants to bestow upon us. Of this the verse states, ***"Your sins separate you from your God"*** (*Yeshayah* 59:2).

This can be compared to how the moon reflects the light from the sun. The moon produces no light of its own. When the shadow of the earth blocks the sun's light from shining on it, the moon turns dark. When the shadow passes, the moon shines again. In a similar way, the entire Creation can reflect Hashem's light, provided that there are no *aveiros* to separate between Creator and creation. This is one aspect of Chazal's teaching that the sun and the moon originally shined with equal light, but circumstances then caused the moon's light to be restricted (see Rashi, *Bereishis* 1:16; *Zohar*, *Bereishis* 20a).

The Light of Torah

The only way that the world can reach a state of fulfillment and alignment with Hashem's original intention, is through the Torah study of the Jewish people. Torah is the covenant that Hashem made with His creation when He first made the world, as the verse states, ***"If not for My covenant studied day and night, I would not have placed into effect the statutes of Heaven and earth"*** (*Yermiyahu* 33:25).

For this reason, the Name Elokim appears 32 times in the story of Creation, representing the Torah that was given in 22 letters and 10 vowel sounds. Without the vowel sounds, the letters cannot be pronounced. The verbal expression of *divrei Torah* is the basis for the world's continued existence, as the verse states, ***"I will place My words in your mouth … to plant the Heavens and establish the earth"*** (*Yeshayah* 51:16).

Just as the world was brought into existence through Hashem's speech, so too the world's continued existence depends upon the speech of Bnei Yisrael in Torah study, day and night without fail. Rav Chaim of Volozhin *zt"l* warned that if there would be any single moment in which no Jew anywhere in the world would be learning Torah, the world would immediately revert to nothingness (*Nefesh Hachaim* 4:26).

We can easily imagine that the world could not possibly function without light. No one could get anything done while stumbling around in the dark. So too, the world could not exist without Torah. Light makes things real.

The Torah describes the state of the world before light first shone upon it as, ***"chaos, emptiness and darkness on the face of the depths"*** (*Bereishis* 1:2). Chazal teach us that this refers to the deeds of the wicked (*Bereishis Rabbah* 3:8). Like a dark cloud, their evil deeds block Hashem's light from shining upon the world. Without the light of Torah, the world has no meaning and cannot really be said to exist.

For this reason, the very first thing to be created was light. The word "light" is mentioned five times in the first day of creation, corresponding to the five books of the Torah. This also corresponds to the letter *heh* added to *yom* ***ha****shishi*, from which we learn that the world cannot exist without Torah (*Shabbos* 88a).[1] It also corresponds to the letter *heh* in the verse, ***"These are the generations of Heaven and Earth when they were created"*** (*Bereishis* 2:4). The Hebrew word for "when they were created" is הִבָּרְאָם. Chazal interpret this to mean "they were created with the letter *heh*" (*Bereishis Rabbah* 12:10).

The Mishkan Parallels the World

Chazal tell us that just as light was the first thing to be created in the world, so too the first thing that we were commanded to build for the Mishkan was the Aron, which housed the light of the Torah (*Shemos Rabbah*, 34:2).

The Mishkan and its vessels paralleled in perfect detail all the works of Heaven and earth (*Zohar, Pikudei* 331b). Every detail of creation was somehow incorporated into

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[1] The Gemara there explains that whereas the other days of Creation are counted by number: day one, second day, third day, etc., the sixth day is referred to as יום הַ – implying not just ***a*** six day, but ***the*** sixth day – a specific and momentous sixth day, the 6th of Sivan, on which Bnei Yisrael received the Torah.

the Mishkan. The laws of Shabbos are learned by association from how the Mishkan was built (*Shabbos* 102b, *Bava Kama* 2a), since the same creative actions employed in the construction of the Mishkan were employed on a Divine scale in the creation of the world. We are commanded to rest on Shabbos, just as Hashem rested from the creation of the world, by refraining from these same creative actions.

The first thing we were commanded to make was the Aron, since the Luchos HaBris (Tablets of the Testimony) that it held inside were the purpose of the Mishkan, and the very purpose of creation. Through the Torah, Hashem "sits on His Throne", so to speak, revealing His kingship over all creation. For this reason, the Shechinah rested in the Mishkan between the Cherubim that stood on the Aron, since the resting place for Hashem's majesty in the world is upon the holy Torah.

For this reason, the berachos for Shema in the morning place Yotzeir Or alongside Ahavah Rabbah. In the first, we praise Hashem for the sunlight that shines upon the earth. In the second, we thank Hashem for the light of the Torah that shines upon creation.

Creating Our Own Reward

With this in mind, we can understand why Chazal interpret the word "*Bereishis*" to mean "for the sake of the *'reishis,'* for the first and most important thing, which is the Torah" (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:1). Hashem's purpose in creating the world was so that Klal Yisrael could learn Torah and thereby cause His light to shine throughout all the planes of creation.

This leads us to an important disclaimer regarding the concept of Divine reward. A person should not think that Hashem gave us the Torah and mitzvos in the same way that a kindly benefactor might try to protect the recipients of his charity from disgrace, by finding some sort of odd job for them to do, which he does not really need, but at least lets them feel that they earned their bread. There, the reward is totally disproportionate to the service done. Furthermore, in that case the reward is one thing and the service is something else entirely.

Such is not the case in the reward given for Torah and mitzvos. Torah and mitzvos are the opportunities that Hashem gave us to create our own reward. The Ramchal (*Kinas Hashem Tzvakos*) writes: " Hashem's awesome wisdom decreed that His creations would have the power to do a mitzvah and create its reward, such that the reward and the mitzvah are inseparable, one and the same, revolving around itself, with the result planted in the deed, and the deed planted in the result."

(The Ramchal then proceeds to explain in great depth how the 613 aspects of man's character correspond to the 613 spiritual faces of his being, as expressed through the mitzvos, all of which are represented by higher and higher planes of man's existence and intertwined throughout all of creation. These are the 613 general categories, but they are subdivided into limitless and unfathomable details, all of which are intertwined with one another. Through the Torah that a person studies and the mitzvos he performs, he connects creation to the Creator and draws the Creator's blessing into all of creation.)

The Torah and mitzvos are the means through which Hashem connects with His creation, to enliven, enlighten and bestow His bounty upon us. Chazal tell us, "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah" (*Avos* 4:2), meaning to say that each mitzvah is an aspect of Hashem's benevolence that shines upon His creation. By performing the mitzvah, we connect ourselves to Hashem and are thereby enabled to receive His light. This itself is the reward of the mitzvah.

Chazal refer to this when they interpret the word אָנֹכִי from the Ten Commandments as an acronym for ***A**na **n**afshi **k**esiva **y**ehavis*, which means, "I give Myself with this writing" (*Shabbos* 105a).

How can we understand this concept that Hashem "gives Himself over to us" together with the Torah? Whereas a person's self is one thing, his desires are another, his thoughts are another, and his memories are another, with Hashem it is not so. Hashem is perfect in His Oneness, such that He, His knowledge and His desire are all one and the same, in a way that we cannot possibly understand (see Rambam, *Yesodei HaTorah* 2:5; Ramchal, *Derech Hashem* 1:5).

In His great kindness, Hashem bequeathed His will to His creations, such that by taking hold of His will and fulfilling it, we connect ourselves to Hashem Himself, each person to the best of his ability.

In Hebrew, the word *nefesh* usually means soul or self, but it can also mean desire, as we find in the verse in which Avraham asked Bnei Cheis to help him buy the Maaras Hamachpeilah, "If you have within your *nefesh* to bury my dead" (*Bereishis* 23:8).

In this sense, the word *nafshi* from the acronym *Ana nafshi kesiva yehavis* refers to Hashem's will. When Hashem wrote His will into the Torah, He wrote Himself into the Torah and granted it to Bnei Yisrael. The Hebrew word רצון -"will", equals the gematria of שמו - "His Name." Hashem's will and His Name were written within the letters of the Torah. The letters of the Torah are sketches of all the powers of creation. All of them were brought into existence from the essence of Hashem's will. This is what was meant by "the entire Torah is made up of Hashem's Names" (Ramban, introduction to Commentary on the Torah). These were the details of the expression of His will as revealed to His creations. This is Hashem Himself, as He gave Himself over to Bnei Yisrael.

By accepting the Torah, Bnei Yisrael become eternally bonded to Hashem and His will, as is written, ***"You, who are attached to Hashem your God are all alive today"*** (*Devarim* 4:4). As the souls of Bnei Yisrael fulfill the Torah and mitzvos they fulfill Hashem's will. By attaching themselves to Hashem's will, they attach themselves to Hashem Himself. Therefore, they will live eternal life.

The Crowns of the Torah's Letters

This attachment to Hashem is itself the reward of which Chazal say, "The righteous will sit with their crowns upon their heads and bask in the glow of the Shechinah" (*Berachos* 17a). These are the crowns of the *tagim* that Hashem placed on the letters of the Torah (see *Shabbos* 89a).

The distinction between the letters themselves and their *tagim* is as follows. As we explained above, the letters of the Torah are the sketches for every detail of creation,

outlining their shape, position, structure and function. They were all created by the word of Hashem and divided into their various details, just as a spoken word is divided into letters.

A spoken word is used to reveal the speaker's intent. The speaker might have more in mind, but if he does not express it in words, the audience will remain unaware of it. The same is true of the words through which Hashem brought creation into existence. Only the words that were formed by letters and spoken aloud came into being as the tangible plane of existence that we see before us. This is the physical reality that is sketched by the letters of the Torah.

The *tagim* of the letters are the crowns of creation. These were not inherent in the original creation of the world. They represent the additional illumination and spiritual perfection that is endowed upon creation through the Torah and mitzvos of Klal Yisrael.

Chazal interpret the verse, ***"Give strength to Elokim"*** (*Tehillim* 68:35), to mean that when Klal Yisrael fulfill Hashem's will we "strengthen the Court of Heaven" (*Eichah Rabbah* 1:33). This does not mean that we give strength to Hashem Himself. Hashem does not need us to strengthen Him, as the verse explicitly states, ***"If you are righteous, what do you give Him?"*** (*Iyov* 35:7). Rather, the "Court of Heaven" in this sense refers to the Higher Beings that exist in the spiritual worlds above.

The Torah and mitzvos of Klal Yisrael bring holiness and perfection not only to this material world below, but also to the spiritual worlds above, the "Court of Heaven," which is the abode of Hashem's ministering angels. They are proverbially referred to as "Elokim," since they are the emissaries through which He conducts the world according to His Divine Providence, thus exhibiting His Kindship over creation. For this reason, the Name of Elokim is a plural word.

All the beings of Heaven and Earth exist as an expression of Hashem's will. However, the additional flow of illumination that descends upon them is the proverbial crown, the increased revelation of Hashem's Kingship, which the righteous bring about through their good deeds. Through these good deeds, Hashem pours additional light upon creation, which becomes attached to the depths of their souls. These lights are the crowns that the righteous wear as they bask in the glow of the Shechinah, and these are the *tagim* on the letters of the Torah.

The *tagim* are not heard when the letters are read aloud. They are there only to be contemplated, to add additional depth of meaning to the words. In a similar way, they represent the forces of holiness that were not revealed with the original creation of the world, but are subsequently revealed through the good deeds of Klal Yisrael. These are the meanings behind Hashem's words, which were not immediately obvious. Over time, through our good deeds, we reveal that this was Hashem's original intent in creation.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 89a) referred to this in the following enigmatic conversation between Hashem and Moshe Rabbeinu:

> When Moshe ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, he found HaKadosh Baruch Hu attaching crowns to the letters of the Torah.

"What need do you have for those crowns?" Moshe asked,
"Do they not know how to say Shalom in your city?" Hashem answered him.
"Is it fitting for a slave to say Shalom to his Master?" Moshe asked.
"You should have helped me," Hashem answered.

The crowns that Hashem placed on the letters of the Torah were in fact the *shalom*, the unity that comes about in creation when Klal Yisrael fulfills the Torah, thus uniting creation with the will of Hashem, uplifting all worlds and drawing Divine light upon them. This is the "help" that Bnei Yisrael give to the Court of Heaven, although Hashem Himself obviously needs no help from us.

The Hebrew word for crown, *keser*, equals 620 in gematria, representing the 613 Biblical mitzvos and the 7 Rabbinic mitzvos.[2] These are also represented by the 620 letters in the Ten Commandments. In fact, there are two crowns for each mitzvah: one for fulfilling the mitzvah in practice, and another for learning about it. For this reason, when Bnei Yisrael said "*na'aseh vinishmah* – we will do and we will listen," 600,000 angels descended to crown every Jew with two crowns, one for *na'aseh* and one for *nishmah* (*Shabbos* 88a). One crown was for learning about the mitzvah, and the other crown is for fulfilling it in practice.

When Bnei Yisrael received the Torah on Har Sinai, they were able to experience the pleasure of the World to Come even as they lived in this world, basking in the glory of the Shechinah like the righteous in Gan Eden. They shared in the radiance that emanated from Moshe when he descended from Har Sinai. Every Jew merited this light at Har Sinai, but we lost it through the sin of the Golden Calf and will not be able to experience it again until the World to Come. Only Moshe Rabbeinu kept this light even in this world.

A hint for this can be found in the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 47:6), which states that when Moshe finished writing the Torah, a drop of ink remained in his quill which he rubbed across his head. From that drop of ink, his rays of glory were formed (see *Shemos* 34:29).

These rays were like the crowns of the letters of the Sefer Torah, which were not revealed in how the letters are read aloud. They represent the additional levels of perfection and illumination, which are the reward for the mitzvos in the World to Come.

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[2] Most Rabbinic mitzvos are extensions of existing mitzvos from the Torah. However, there are seven mitzvos of purely Rabbinic origin. The commentaries debate what these seven mitzvos are. According to the Megaleh Amukos (73), these are *netilas yadayim*, *eiruvin*, *berachos*, Shabbos candles, Megillah, Chanukah and Hallel. The Rama of Pano (*Maayan Ganin* I, *Kavanas Haberachos*) removes from this list Shabbos candles and Hallel, and adds in their place mourning and fasting.

The War Against the Yetzer Hara

We have seen that the Torah and mitzvos are the expressions of Hashem's will which gives life to all creation. However, there is a flip side to this, in that *aveiros*, which are contrary to Hashem's will, spread darkness and destruction across creation.

Just as we described the deep bond of unity that is formed between man and Hashem when he observes the Torah, and how this bond enlivens everything that exists, there is also an opposite bond that is formed when a person defies Hashem's will, *chas v'shalom*. He then becomes attached to the forces of evil that oppose holiness, of which it is written, ***"Elokim made one thing to oppose another"*** (*Koheles* 7:14). Man must be left with the choice which side to follow, so that he can be rewarded for his efforts.

If a person chooses to oppose Hashem's will, he attaches himself to the forces of impurity and distances himself from Hashem's light. He prevents Hashem's benevolence from descending into the world, and drives the world towards destruction. For this reason, Chazal teach that the verse, "The earth was chaos, emptiness and darkness," refers to the deeds of the wicked (*Bereishis Rabbah* 3:8).

In this sense, an evil deed is its own punishment (*Avos* 2:4). Since real life is drawn by aligning oneself with Hashem's will, distancing oneself from Hashem's will is itself the opposite of life. Of this the verses state, ***"Behold, I place before you life and good, death and evil"*** (*Devarim* 30:15), and ***"The sins of the wicked will trap him, and in the rope of his sin he will be hanged"*** (*Mishlei* 5:22). The symbolism of this verse is that sin creates a powerful bond that attaches the sinner to the essence of evil, and cuts him off from the spiritual source of life, as is written, ***"He will uproot you from the land of the living"*** (*Tehillim* 52:7).

The Gemara (*Sotah* 3b) states:

> Rav Shmuel bar Nachmeini said in the name of Rebbe Yochanan: Every mitzvah that a person fulfills in this world leads the way before him in the World to Come, as is written, ***"Your righteousness shall walk before you, and the glory of Hashem shall gather you in"*** (*Yeshayah* 58:5). Every aveirah that a person does attaches itself to him and leads him towards the Day of Judgment, as is written, ***"They will cling on to their paths"*** (*Iyov* 6:18). R' Elazar said that the sin becomes tied to him like a dog.

The relationship between a person and his sins is compared to that of a man and his dog. If a person raises a dog in his home and feeds it, it will follow him wherever he goes and never abandon him. If he wishes to be rid of it, his only recourse is to kill it. The same is true of a sin, which damages and draws impurity upon the aspect of his soul to which it corresponds. His sin follows him wherever he goes. Even if he then performs a mitzvah, the merit of the mitzvah cannot protect him from his sin. His only recourse is to "kill" the sin through Torah study.

In this respect, the Torah is compared to water. Just as ritual impurity can only be relieved by immersing in water, so too the impurity of sin can only be relieved by immersing in the proverbial waters of Torah wisdom (*Berachos* 16a).

The "dog" of sin cannot survive in the vicinity of Torah. Chazal (*Sukkah* 52b) tell us, "If the repulsive one (the *yetzer hara*) accosts you, drag it to the *beis midrash* (where Torah is studied). Even if it as hard as stone, it will melt, as is written, ***'Stones have been eroded by water'*** (*Iyov* 14:19)," referring to the waters of Torah (*Bava Kama* 82a).

For this reason the Ten Commandments, which are the general principles of the Torah, were engraved on stone. Stone represents the heart of man, since the desires of our heart draw us after temptation, causing us to trip over the stumbling blocks of sin. The only way to overcome this is through the "writing of Elokim inscribed upon the stone." By constantly toiling in Torah study, the Torah becomes engraved upon our stone hearts, just as it was engraved upon the stone tablets, as is written, "***Engrave them upon the tablet of your heart"*** (*Mishlei* 7:3).

The heart also has two tablets, the left and right chambers, which correspond to the positive commandment and the prohibitions. These mitzvos, which were engraved upon the Twin Tablets, are sketches of Hashem's will through which He fashioned the world, as we discussed above at length. The mitzvos are also called *chukim*, from the same root as the word *chokeik* – engrave, since they were the instruments through which Hashem carved the Heavens and Earth.

The opposite is also true of the wicked, of whom it is written, ***"They engrave carvings of sin"*** (*Yeshayah* 10:1). They bring ruin and destruction upon creation. The *sitra achra* is compared to a ruined wasteland, the abode of dangerous bandits. These "bandits" are the destructive forces that a person creates through his sins and then return to punish him, as is written, ***"Your evil shall afflict you"*** (*Yermiyahu* 2:19).

These forces become attached to him like a dog, with a powerful bond that is hard as stone. The only way to escape them is through Torah, which is the antidote to the *yetzer hara*, and a potion of life for anyone whose soul ails from the illness of sin, no matter how desperate his situation.

The Power of Torah

The kabbalists explain that there is a masculine and a feminine aspect to the *yetzer hara*. Corresponding to these two evil forces, there are also masculine and feminine aspects to the Torah: the Written Torah of Tanach (*Torah She'biksav*) and the Oral Torah (*Torah She'baal Peh*) which was codified in the Talmud. ***"Hear, my son, your father's mussar…"*** refers to the Written Torah, ***"…and do not abandon your mother's Torah"*** (*Mishlei* 1:8) refers to the Oral Torah.

Chazal tell us that HaKadosh Baruch Hu sealed His covenant with Klal Yisrael only because of the Oral Torah. Just as a mother develops and raises her small children into grown adults, so too the feminine aspect of the Torah develops the terse and cryptic hints from the Written Torah into clear halachos. All the wisdom of those ideas already exists, hidden in the letters of the Torah, just as all the potential of the grown adult exists in the small baby. However, it takes the feminine aspect to bring these potentials to fruition.

As we explained above, the letters of the Written Torah are sketches of everything that exists in all the worlds of creation, above and below. This aspect of the Torah is

Written across the Heavens, and Moshe Rabbeinu "transcribed it from one book to another," as it were, when he wrote the Torah in this world. The Written Torah exists on every plane of existence in a fashion appropriate to creations that exist on that plane, according to their composition and their powers. In this world, the Written Torah took its shape in Ashuris letters, standing in direct parallel to the way it is written above.

Thus, the Written Torah exists in all the worlds, and can be comprehended by the angels, each according to its level. However, the Oral Torah stems from a plane high above the angels and is incomprehensible to them. It was transmitted to Bnei Yisrael, whose souls are carved from beneath the Throne of Glory, from a place above the level of the angels. This was the complaint of the angels, ***"Let Your glory be upon the Heavens,"*** (*Tehillim* 8:2) when they demanded that the Torah remain in Heaven and not be given to the Jewish people (*Shabbos* 88b). Hashem overruled their complaint and granted it to the Jewish people, thus forming with us an eternal covenant.

Corresponding to the masculine and feminine aspects of the Torah, there is a masculine and feminine aspect of the *yetzer hara*. The feminine aspect is what lures us into sin with the power of her voice. Of this, Shlomo HaMelech warned, ***"To guard you from the foreign woman, whose words are slippery"*** (*Mishlei* 7:5). The masculine aspect is what records our sins, wages accusations against us, and wrecks destruction throughout creation. Of this it is written, ***"The sin of Yehuda is written with an iron stylus"*** (*Yermiyahu* 17:1).

Chazal hint to these two aspects in Pirkei Avos (3:16): "Everything is given on security, and a net is cast over all living things. The store is open, the storekeeper sells, the ledger is open and the hand records. Anyone who wants to borrow can come and borrow, but the officers make their rounds each day to collect payment from man whether he admits his debt or not. They have sufficient evidence and the judgment is true. Everything is prepared for the meal."

"The store is open" refers to the display of alluring sins that are available, and the storekeeper who entices customers to come and purchase them. "The hand records" refers to the record that is kept of our deeds.

The two hands represent the powers through which Hashem created the world, as is written, ***"My (left) hand established the earth and My right hand measured the Heavens,"*** (*Yeshayah* 48:13) and, ***"When I see Your Heavens, the work of Your fingers"*** (*Tehillim* 8:4).

There are twenty-eight joints on the two hands, representing the Hebrew word for power, *koach* (כח), which equals twenty-eight in gematria. These parallel the Hebrew letters, which are the forces of creation: twenty-two basic letters, the five end letters (ם,ן,ץ,ף,ך), and the letter aleph which is repeated at the end.

When a person sins, "the hand records," meaning that a record of his sin is left across all the forces of creation. The same is also true of our good deeds. They too are inscribed upon the handiwork of creation, and upon our physical hands as well.

This is the depth of the Priestly Blessing, in which Hashem commanded the Kohanim to raise their hands and spread their fingers as they bless Klal Yisrael. The Kohanim devote their time to serving in the Beis Hamikdash and disseminating Torah,

as is written, ***"For the lips of the Kohen preserve knowledge, and you shall seek Torah from his mouth"*** (*Malachi* 2:7), and, ***"They shall teach Your judgments to Yaakov and Your Torah to Yisrael"*** (*Devarim* 33:10). In the merit of the Torah that they learn and teach, the Shechinah rests on the joints of their fingers. As we explained above, the Torah is made up of the Names of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Of this it is written, ***"They shall place My Name on Bnei Yisrael and I will bless them"*** (*Bamidbar* 6:27). Through the Torah study of the Kohanim, the Name of Hashem rests upon their hands as they bless Bnei Yisrael.

Right and Left

From all that we have written, we can understand that it is impossible for a person to purify his soul and draw close to Hashem to merit all the good for which we are destined, except through the merit of Torah study day and night. Torah purifies our souls and causes us to despise all the lowly temptations of this world. Compared to the awesome joy of Torah, all the trivial pleasures of this world are meaningless. "***If a person would offer all the riches of his house in exchange for love (of Torah), he would be scorned with contempt"*** (*Shir Hashirim* 8:7).

Torah enables a person to recognize the greatness of his soul and realize that he is connected in his spiritual roots to the Living God, by means of the Torah. In truth, a person who experiences the passion for Torah takes little heed of the pleasures of this world. He is not drawn after the desires of this world when they are present, and he is not upset by the wants of this world when they are absent. Nothing can distract him from his attachment to Hashem and his determination to fulfill the will of his creator.

Of this Shlomo Hamelech said, ***"A multitude of waters cannot extinguish the love"*** (ibid). Water serves as a metaphor for both ends of the spectrum. It can represent affluence, prosperity and all the succulent fruits of this world, which grow when watered. Chazal tell us that when rain falls a blessing descends even upon the money in our pockets (*Taanis* 8b). On the other hand, water can also represent the waves of suffering or poverty that pass over a person in this world.

In both senses of the word, Shlomo Hamelech said that the waters of this world cannot extinguish the love for Torah and for serving Hashem. A person who is attached to the Torah looks with scorn at all offers to trade his Torah for even the greatest wealth in the world. The pleasures of this world are empty and insubstantial. They last for a fleeting moment, like a passing shadow, and then they are gone. A person who has experienced the sweetness of Torah has the sense of perspective to recognize all this.

The Merit of Supporting Torah

For those who are unable to apply themselves to Torah day and night, *chas v'shalom*, there is no recourse other than to support those who study Torah, as is written, "It is a tree of life for all who grasp hold of it, and its supporters are fortunate" (*Mishlei* 3:18). The Gemara suggests at first that only Torah scholars will merit to rise for the resurrection, since "the dew of Torah enlivens them," but the Gemara then concludes that this merit also extends to those who support Torah scholars (*Kesubos* 111b).

In Mishlei, Shlomo HaMelech writes in the name of the Torah, as it addresses in first person both those who study the Torah and those who support it. Regarding the Torah scholars themselves, the Torah says:

> Wisdom is better than pearls and nothing can compare to it. I am wisdom. I dwell in cleverness. I will find understanding and wit. Fear of Hashem is to despise evil and arrogance. The path of evil and the dishonest mouth I hate. Counsel and resourcefulness are mine. I am wisdom. Mine is might. With me kings rule and rulers engrave just laws. With me officers rule, and all who judge righteously (*Mishlei* 8:11-16).

Shlomo Hamelech describes how the Torah teaches its scholars to despise the sordid pleasures of this world. It breaks the power of the *yetzer hara*, and instills *yiras Shamayim* and love for Hashem instead. "I am wisdom. I dwell in cleverness. I will find understanding and wit." The Torah teaches one to see through the deceptions of the *yetzer hara* and outwit all its machinations to harm us. It imparts the "fear of Hashem to despise evil and arrogance."

Regarding those who support Torah, the Torah says:

> I love those who love me, and those who search for me will discover me. Wealth and honor are with me. Riches, strength and *tzedakah*. My fruit is better than gold, and my produce is better than choice silver. I walk on the paths of *tzedakah* and on the roads of judgment. To bequeath something substantial to those I love, and fill their treasure-houses (*Mishlei* 8:17-21).

The promises of wealth and honor are for those who love the Torah, but do not actually study it. They admire Torah and spread their wealth to support Torah scholars and provide for poor children so that they can study Torah. The Torah loves those who love its scholars. They too will discover the reward that the Torah has to offer. They too will find the path that leads to the Shechinah.

The Purpose of Prosperity

Wealth and honor are not given to a person so that he can surrender himself to the foolish distractions of this world. They were given to him so that he could use them in a way that is good and proper in Hashem's eyes. ***"Hashem created everything for His sake"*** (*Mishlei* 16:4).

The verse, "Wealth and honor are with me. Riches, strength and *tzedakah*," comes to teach us that wealth, honor, riches and strength can all be good things, but only when they are used for the sake of *tzedakah*, to serve Hashem by supporting Torah and those who study it.

"All the treasures of the nations shall come and I shall fill this House with honor, says Hashem, Lord of Hosts. Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold, says Hashem, Lord of Hosts" (*Chaggai* 2:7-8). Mine is the silver and gold can be interrupted to mean, "For My sake." All the precious gems, treasures and riches in the world were created only in order to glorify the Beis Hamikdash.

Now that the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim lies in ruins, the Shechinah rests instead on the places where the Torah is studied. upon us. Of these places it is written, ***"Make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell among you."***

The concept of honor that exists in the world is also meant only for the Torah and those who support it. This is an extension of the honor of Hashem, which He shares with those who fear Him. "All those who honor the Torah are honored among mankind" (*Avos* 4:6).

The Left Supports the Right

Of this it is also written, ***"Length of days are in its right hand, and in its left hand wealth and honor"*** (*Mishlei* 3:16). As we explained above, the Heavens were created with the proverbial right hand, and the Earth was created with the left. ***"My (left) hand founded the earth, and My right hand measured the Heaven"*** (*Yeshayah* 48:13).

The right hand is the stronger of the two, representing the greater power of holiness that is found in Heaven. That is the place of eternal life and the reward of the World to Come for the souls of the righteous. The Torah scholars and tzaddikim who devote themselves to Hashem's service are compared to the ministering angels who perform Hashem's will, as is written, ***"The lips of the Kohen preserve knowledge, and you shall seek Torah from his mouth, for he is an angel of Hashem,"*** (*Malachi* 2:7) and as Chazal say, "Who are the ministering angels? These are the Sages" (*Nedarim* 20b). Although they walk on this earth, they are like angels who belong to the spiritual world of Heaven.

On the left hand, the weaker of the two, we have this temporal, natural world, with all its "wealth and honor." Together, the two hands comprise the twenty-eight letters of the Torah, fourteen (the gematria of hand – *yad*) on the right hand and fourteen on the left.

Sometimes, the stronger right hand is unable to accomplish a task on its own. It then needs the left hand to assist and support it. This is the role of those who involve themselves in worldly matters to amass wealth. If they do so in order to support those who study Torah, which was given with Hashem's right hand,[3] then the left hand becomes subservient to the right. Both of them together receive their reward in the World to Come, "length of days" in the world of eternal life. For this reason, the Kohanim bless Klal Yisrael with both hands, in order to extend their blessing to the right and to the left, both to those who study Torah and to those who support them.

Shlomo Hamelech said ***"My fruit is better than gold,"*** (*Mishlei* 8:19) referring to the reward for those who support Torah. However, this verse ("ט ב .רְיִי מֵחָר ץ מִ ָז") can also be interpreted to mean, "My fruit, which grow from gold, are good." In this sense, it means to say that just as mitzvos produce spiritual fruit in Heaven, so too does wealth, when it is used to support Torah.

Through their Torah study and devotion to Hashem, Torah scholars and *tzaddikim* produce proverbial "fruit" above, bringing light and perfection to the upper worlds and strengthening the Court of Heaven. In a sense, we can consider creation as an

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[3] "From His right hand, a fiery Torah to His nation" (*Devarim* 33:2).

investment that Hashem made, the "profits" or "fruits" of which are realized through the Torah and good deeds of the righteous.

Silver, gold and all the seemingly worthless desires of this world are also capable of producing spiritual fruit in Heaven, through the monetary contributions of those who support Torah. Tremendous spiritual profits can be reaped from these physical things, when they are used in fulfillment of Hashem's will.

The verse then continues, "…***and my produce is better than choice silver***." The Hebrew word for silver, *kesef*, means shame, *kisufa*, in Aramaic. The expression *nahama d'kisufa* is used for the "bread of shame" that the Heavenly creations are forced to eat, since they cannot earn their reward through their own hard work, as we do here in this world by struggling against the *yetzer hara*. This is the very reason why we were created in this lower world, subject to material temptations. The reward for overcoming our greed and contributing our wealth towards lofty goals is greater than the highest spiritual pleasures experienced by those who dwell above, since theirs is a bread of shame, while our reward is hard earned.

The opportunity to earn our own reward is an expression of Hashem's kindness and His desire to benefit His creations in the greatest possible way. Of this, the verse continues, ***"I walk on the paths of tzedakah."*** For this *tzedakah* to be complete, it must be justly earned, as the verse concludes ***"… and on the roads of judgment."***

"To bequeath something substantial to those I love …" refers to the eternal reward that they will inherit through their own free choice, as a result of their own decision to use their wealth for Hashem's sake. *Yiras Shamayim* is the one thing that is not in Hashem's hands (*Berachos* 33b). He leaves it for each person to choose his own path and earn his own reward.

"…and fill their treasure-houses." Chazal tell us that "Hashem has nothing in His world except a treasure-house of *yiras Shamayim*" (ibid). Treasures are things that are rare and hard to come by. Often, they are brought with much difficulty from distant lands. Therefore, they are the most valuable things of all. The "treasure-house" that Hashem has in store for the righteous in the World to Come is filled with the reward that they earned for the *yiras Shamayim* that they gathered through their hard work in this distant world.

Supporting the Torah Study of Children

Therefore, let us strengthen the hands that have grown lax in their support of Torah study. Most importantly, let us take care of the children of the poor, from whom Torah is destined to spread throughout Klal Yisrael (*Nedarim* 81a). The entire world depends upon the Torah study of children (*Shabbos* 119b).

I found it necessary to explain all of this, in order to challenge the foolish notion that we need not invest our money to teach the Talmud to poor children to such great proficiency that they can delve into its depths. "Suffice it to teach them *aleph-beis*, so that they can daven from a siddur and learn Chumash. Leave the Talmud for big rabbis who are responsible for making halachic rulings for the generation. No one else needs it," they say.

As I explained above, the entire world stands on the pillar of the *Torah She'baal Peh*, as it is has been passed down through the Mishna and Talmud, codified into halachah, and studied day and night.

All this can be seen from the account of how the Torah was given to Bnei Yisrael on Har Sinai. In fact, the Torah was given on two different levels. The first was a spectacular public display. Hashem descend to Har Sinai amidst thunder and lightning, with an open revelation of the Shechinah. The second was a quiet, intimate meeting, in which Moshe alone ascended for forty days and then returned to teach what he had learned to Bnei Yisrael. Why was Kabbalas HaTorah divided into these two different stages, so radically different from one another?

In truth, the Torah is also divided into two categories: *Torah She'biksav* (the Written Torah) and *Torah She'baal Peh* (the Oral Torah). The Written Torah was given in a public display, directly from Hashem to the entire Jewish people. When Bnei Yisrael heard Hashem proclaim the Ten Commandments, they simultaneously heard the entire Written Torah, with all the 620 mitzvos[4] corresponding to the 620 letters of the Ten Commandments, as we explained above.

The second category is the Oral Torah, given in a soft whisper, representing a level of intimacy that is not meant to be exposed. The essence of the Torah is the Oral Torah. This is the "hidden treasure with which Hashem rejoiced before the world was created" (*Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, 5:10). Hashem desired that this wisdom remain hidden to the world at large, and revealed only to His holy, chosen nation.

Hashem did not allow the Oral Torah to be written, since He knew that the gentile nations would eventually copy the Written Torah for themselves. If the Oral Torah were to be written, they would take that too (*Gittin* 60b, Tosefos s.v. *Atmuhei*). Hashem told Moshe, "I know that the nations of the world will subjugate them and take the Torah from them. Therefore, I am giving them only Mikra in writing, but I leave the Mishna, Talmud and Aggadah to be transmitted by word of mouth alone. Thus, even if the nations subjugate them, they will still remain distinguished from the nations (through their knowledge of the Oral Torah)" (*Shemos Rabbah* 47:1).

The verses from Mishlei, which we cited above, publicize the greatness of the Torah. This publicity is a facet of the Written Torah, which was given with great fanfare, as Hashem in His Glory descended upon Har Sinai together with the Divine Chariot and the Hosts of Heaven. By doing so, He showed that all the angels of Heaven would be subjugated under the Torah that was now being delivered to those who dwell upon the Earth.

Of this the verse states, ***"The Chariot of Elokim with twenty thousand leading angels, with Hashem among them, on Sinai in holiness"*** (*Tehillim* 68:18). All this refers to the spectacular display that accompanied the bestowal the Written Torah upon Bnei Yisrael.

However, the following verse adds, referring to Moshe Rabbeinu, ***"You ascended to Heaven. You caught captives and brought gifts to man, so that even the wayward will dwell with God Elokim."*** Quietly and alone, Moshe ascended Har Sinai in order to "catch

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[4] This refers to the 613 Torah commandments and 7 Rabbinic mitzvos, see above ___.

captives" in secrecy. This refers to the levels of the Torah that were kept hidden in the highest secret recesses of Heaven. This was the greatest gift that Hashem had in store for Klal Yisrael. It had to be given in secrecy, so that if *chas v'shalom* Bnei Yisrael would go on wayward paths and be exiled for their sins, Hashem would still dwell with them in their exile. The Oral Torah would preserve their distinction from the nations and ensure Hashem's continued attachment to Klal Yisrael.

The Dwelling Place of the Shechinah

From all this we can see the great importance of those who toil to understand and explain the depths of the Oral Torah, through Mishna, Talmud and Aggadah. Because of the Oral Torah, Hashem sealed a covenant with Klal Yisrael that could never be broken throughout all the travels and travails of our exile.

Since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the Shechinah has been exiled from its home and forced to wander from place to place. It finds rest only in the *batei midrashos* where the halachos of the Oral Torah are studied. ***"Hashem loves the Gates of Tzion,"*** the gates in which halachos are studied, ***"more than all the dwelling places of Yaakov"*** (*Tehillim* 87:2).

Even while the Beis Hamikdash stood, the Shechinah dwelled there in the merit of the Torah. That was where the Sanhedrin was seated, in the Chamber of Hewn Stone. There, halachic rulings were decided and disseminated throughout Klal Yisrael, as is written, ***"If you will have a question on a matter of judgment … you shall get up and ascend to the place that Hashem your God will choose. You shall come to the Kohanim and Leviim, to the judge that will be in that time, and seek their counsel. They will tell you the ruling on the matter of judgment"*** (*Devarim* 17:8-9).

The Sanhedrin was seated near the Mizbei'ach to show that the sacrifices were accepted only in the merit of the Torah. ***"Does Hashem desire sacrifices? He wants us to heed His voice"*** (*Shmuel* I 15:22). Hashem has no desire for our sacrifices if we do not heed His word.

The main dwelling place of the Shechinah in the Beis Hamikdash was the Aron which held the Luchos HaBris. In the second Beis Hamikdash, the Shechinah was not revealed, since the Aron and the Luchos were absent. But now, even after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, His holy Name rests on every place where Torah is studied. These are His holy dwelling places in our times, as the Gemara says, "***'In all places, fiery offerings are brought to My Name'*** (*Malachi* 1:11) - this refers to the Torah scholars who study halachah" (*Menachos* 110a). Through the Torah, Hashem's Name rests upon Klal Yisrael even in our exile. ***"Even as they are in the lands of their enemies, I have not despised them or rejected them to destroy them or annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem your God"*** (*Vayikra* 26:44).

Bilam hoped to curse Bnei Yisrael that we would have no *batei midrashos*. He foresaw that one day we would be exiled among the nations and the Beis Hamikdash would be destroyed. Without *batei midrashos*, where scholars would toil in Torah, we would be lost in our exile, *chas v'shalom*. Hashem in His mercy transformed Bilam's curses into blessings. Rather than cursing us that we would not have places of Torah, Bilam was forced to bless us, ***"How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov"*** (*Bamidbar* 24:5). In

every area that he thought to curse us, he was forced to bless us instead. However, when we later sinned, all these blessings reverted to curses except for this one (*Sanhedrin* 105b). Despite our sins, even when we were cast into exile, we were left with *batei midrashos* in all the places of our wanderings. These are what ensure our survival and cause Hashem's Name to remain upon us.

"How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov… Like flowing streams, like gardens planted by the river … like cedars beside the water. The waters will flow from his wells, and his seed will be upon many waters"(ibid)**.**

Here too we find a hint for the two different levels of Klal Yisrael. The first are the scholars who toil in Torah. They are compared to flowing streams, just as the Torah itself is compared to water.[5] The second are those who support them. They are compared to cedar trees, since they are as strong as cedar wood to support the edifice of Torah. They take responsibility to support the Torah schools so that children can have a Torah education, as Chazal warn us, "Be careful of the children of the poor, since Torah will spread from them throughout Klal Yisrael" (*Nedarim* 81a). Water spreads from the wells of the Torah supporters, to nurture the seeds of Torah greatness. "Fortunate are those who cast their seeds upon the water," (*Yeshayah* 32:20) refers to those who invest in Torah and kind deeds (*Bava Kama* 17a).

Supporting Torah Schools

In times of financial difficulty, when poverty abounds and many families lack their basic needs, one might think that it is the wrong time to invest in building Torah institutions, since the community cannot bear the financial burden. Such were the thoughts of Bnei Yisrael when they returned from the Babylonian Exile. Due to the terrible poverty of the times, they were lax in rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash. Chaggai the Navi then chastised them, saying:

> So says Hashem, Lord of Hosts, to tell this nation who say, "This is not the right time for the House of Hashem to be built." The word of Hashem was upon Chaggai the Navi saying: Is this the right time for you to sit in your roofed homes while this House lies in ruins? And now, so says Hashem Lord of Hosts, set your hearts upon your paths. You have planted much but harvested little. You have eaten but are not satisfied … your profits are gathered into a torn purse … You turn towards plenty and it becomes sparse … "Why is this?" says Hashem Lord of Hosts. "It is because My House is in ruins while each person runs to his own house" (*Chaggai* 1:2-9).

Upon their return to Eretz Yisrael, they claimed that the times were too hard for them to take on the expense of building the Beis Hamikdash. The Navi chastised them for this claim, by showing them how they found the means to engage in their own worldly pursuits and build fancy homes for themselves, while the House of Hashem which is the source of our lives lay in ruins.

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[5] See page ___

He called upon them to take note of their difficulties in making a livelihood, and to realize that this was because Hashem's blessing was absent from their lives. They planted much and harvested little since the Gates of Prosperity in Heaven were shut. Their efforts were compared to a person whose money spills out through a hole in a torn purse. All his efforts are lost.

This was all because the House of Hashem was in ruins. Had the Shechinah rested upon them, they would have found abundant blessing in their homes and fields. The same is true of our own situation in exile. Our prosperity and livelihood depend on the merit of toiling in and supporting Torah.

One Last Treasure

Exiled from our land, with our Beis Hamikdash lying in ruins, with no Navi or Kohen to guide us, and without all the spiritual treasures that we once enjoyed, we still have one last treasure that is equal to them all. This is the Torah, which Hashem promised would never be lost to us. ***"For it shall never be forgotten from among their descendants"*** (*Devarim* 31:21). ***"This is My covenant with them, says Hashem: My spirit that is upon you and My words that I placed in your mouth, shall not falter from your mouth, or from them mouth of your offspring, or from the mouth of your offspring's offspring, so says Hashem, from now and forever"*** (*Yeshayah* 59:21).

Hashem promised that His holy spirit, which rested upon us when we received the Torah on Har Sinai, will remain with us forever to protect us from our enemies. This is the Presence of His Glory, the proverbial "sukkah of peace." As a mother bird spreads her wings over her offspring, so to does the Shechinah spread its wings over us to shield us from all harm.

Together with this protection is the promise that the words of the holy Torah that Hashem placed in our mouths will remain with us forever. These are none other than the words of Hashem Himself, which He spoke to the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael. They could actually see the words that were spoken, as the verse states, ***"The entire nation saw the sounds"*** (*Shemos* 20:15, Rashi). These words are the projection of Hashem's will in sustaining the existence of creation, which depends on the letters of Torah that were placed in the mouths of Bnei Yisrael as we toil in Torah study at all times.

Through these words of Torah, we draw close to Hashem. Chazal tell us that when the Torah scholars toil in Torah, HaKadosh Baruch Hu quotes their teachings in their names, "My son Evyasar says like this, and My son Yonasan says like that" (*Gittin* 6b). In this way, we attach ourselves to Hashem's words as we study His Torah.

Bound to the Torah in All Three Worlds

The Torah became one with the Jewish people, to our souls and housed within our physical bodies even as we live upon this world. When the time comes for us to leave this world and our bodies rest in the grave, a spark of this holy fire will remain within our bodies. The Zohar calls this the "warmth of the bones." This is what will enable the body to rise for the Resurrection and live for length of days in the seventh millennium.

"When you walk, it will guide you. When you rest, it will guard you. When you rise, it will be your speech" (*Mishlei* 6:22). This refers to the three periods of each person's existence. The first is the years of life he is given in this world. The second is after death, when the soul separates from the body and the body returns to the dust. The third is after the Resurrection.

"When you walk, it will guide you." Our life in this world is called "walking" since this is our only opportunity to advance. We were not born to remain in one place, but to move forward and change our positions, from place to place and from time to time. This world was created with the letter *heh*, the fifth letter of the *aleph-beis*, which represents how our lives in this world are segmented into five kinds of divisions: years, months, days, hours and minutes.

Furthermore, the letter *heh* is written with three lines, symbolizing past, present and future. It also symbolizes the three dimensions of space. These divisions of time and space exist only in this world. The World to Come is not subject to time or space. It was created with the letter *yud*, a single dot, which has no length or width. Without any notion of time or space, it is impossible to advance.

Therefore, while a person lives in this world, he must seize the opportunity to ascend from one spiritual level to the next. In the World to Come, he will have no opportunity to do more good deeds. He will remain stable in whatever position he earned while he was in this world.

Therefore, the verse states, ***"When you walk, it will guide you."*** When we walk in this world, the Torah guides us to follow its ways. Then, ***"When you rest, it will guard you."*** After our souls leave our bodies, the Torah will guard us with the warmth that remains in the body, left over from the soul's attachment to Hashem's word while it lived.

Then, in the third period of our lives, when we return from our slumbers for the Resurrection, ***"When you rise, it will be your speech."*** The capacity for speech shows the complete union of spirit and body, since the spirit is what enables the body to speak, as we find regarding the original creation of man, ***"He blew into his nostrils a living soul, and man became a living nefesh"*** (*Bereishis* 2:7). The Targum translates "living *nefesh*" as "a speaking spirit."

Before the Throne of Glory

Seven things were created before the world (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4). Among them are the Throne of Glory, as is written, ***"From then, Your Throne was established"*** (*Tehillim* 93:2), and the Torah, as is written, ***"Hashem acquired me (the Torah) at the beginning of His path, before His deeds from then***" (*Mishlei* 8:22). The Midrash then adds, "I would not have known which came first, the Torah or the Throne of Glory, if the verse had not stated that the Torah came ***'before His deeds from then***.'"

This is an important insight which disproves the misconception of twisted philosophy, into whose net many of our Jewish brethren have been caught. They propose that the Torah has no Heavenly power to illuminate and empower the higher worlds of holiness, but that it is simply a convention of human interaction, designed to improve our behavior and distance us from theft, dishonesty and the like. They

suggest that even the mitzvos whose reasons are beyond us are just to help us remember the Exodus, or to distance us from heathen rituals.

Those who try to base the entire Torah only on the worldly, social benefit that it has to offer, fail to recognize the awesome power that Torah has to draw a flow of blessing and perfection upon all the higher worlds of creation. Many have fallen into this misconception, and have even claimed that this is the meaning of the verse, ***"This mitzvah … is not in Heaven"*** (*Devarim* 30:11-12). Yet this is a false interpretation, which must be refuted.

In truth the Torah and mitzvos are celestial lights from the highest worlds, which have descended to this world in material garb. When a person performs a mitzvah with intention to fulfill Hashem's will with all his heart and soul, he connects himself to the celestial light of the Torah. This light is itself the reward of the World to Come, as we explained above.

When the Midrash says that the Torah was created before the Throne of Glory, it means that the will of Hashem as revealed to His holy nation came before any other creation. Before there was any kind of foundation for the Kingdom of Hashem to be created and the Throne of Glory to be established, there existed only Hashem, His Torah and the souls of the Jewish people, which are all bound one to the other in perfect unity (*Zohar* III 73a). For this reason, just as the Torah is made up entirely of Names of Hashem (Ramban, introduction to commentary on the Torah) so too Klal Yisrael is called by Hashem's Name.

Each mitzvah is a facet of Hashem's will, which we comprehend through 613 roots that divide into many branches. Much of the depth and meaning of these mitzvos are hidden from us, just as the depth and meaning of Hashem's Name is hidden, such that in essence the Written Torah is really something far beyond our comprehension. It descended from Heaven. Only there can its true depths be known. However, the Oral Torah was given to this world, and revealed to the scholars of each generation.

On a conceptual level, the true depths of the mitzvos are far beyond our understanding. They involve worlds of purity, love and awe that are beyond our ken. They are revealed to us only on the physical plane, where we can connect to them through our deeds, as we fulfill the mitzvos in all their halachic details. For each mitzvah, there is a deep correspondence to a certain combination of the letters of Hashem's Name, since each mitzvah is a different path through which Hashem's will and benevolence shines through all the worlds. As we attach ourselves to the mitzvos, we attach ourselves to Hashem Himself, as is written, ***"You who are attached to Hashem your God are all alive today"*** (*Devarim* 4:4).

Were we to entertain the foolish notion that the Torah was given for nothing other than to improve our character and guide our social interactions, then the Throne of Glory should have preceded the Torah. There is no reason that resolving the childish disputes of mankind should be any more important than glory of Hashem among the angels in Heaven. However, the truth is that the Torah transcends even the highest planes of Creation. It preceded even the Throne of Glory, both in terms of order and in terms of importance.

Regarding this debate, the Midrash states, "I would not have known which came first, the Torah or the Throne of Glory, if the verse had not stated that the Torah came ***'before His deeds from then."***" In other words, I would not have known if the Throne of Glory came first, as the philosophers believe, or if the Torah came first, as Chazal teach us. To resolve this question, Shlomo Hamelech said, ***"Hashem acquired me (the Torah) at the beginning of His path, before His deeds from then***." The Torah is the first, foremost and highest revelation of Hashem's will and of the attributes through which He bestows His blessings upon creation. It comes before any of the other deeds of creation, all of which fall beneath the Throne of Glory.

The Torah was not given only for the sake of this lowest world, to preserve order and justice in human interactions. It was given to purify the roots of the souls of Klal Yisrael, which emanate from the highest spiritual heights.

The Souls of Klal Yisrael

Chazal tell us that when Hashem gave the Torah to Bnei Yisrael, the nations of the world complained about the special favoritism that we were shown. "Why were they found worthier than us to be drawn close to You?" the nations asked.

Hashem silenced their complaints with the answer, "Show me a book of lineage for yourselves that compares to the lineage of Bnei Yisrael," as the verse states, ***"To their families, to the houses of their fathers"*** (*Bamidbar* 1:2; *Yalkut Shimoni,* Torah 684),

What is the meaning of Hashem's response? What relevance does a person's lineage have to his worthiness to receive the Torah? Hashem cares only for the sincerity of a person's heart. He makes no distinction between families of illustrious or simple descent.

Rather, this Midrash comes to teach us something deep about the source of our souls in Heaven, the spiritual lineage of Bnei Yisrael. Our souls stem a source entirely different from that of the gentiles. It is a source intrinsically attached to the Torah.

The Vilna Gaon (Gra on *Shir Hashirim* 1:6) explained that there are two different aspects to each person's soul, as expressed by two different verses in the Torah. The first is the *nefesh* that is born of the earth, like that of all living creatures, of which the verse states, "***The earth gave forth a living nefesh***" (*Bereishis* 1:24). The Midrash explains this refers to the *nefesh* of Adam (*Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria* 1).

The second is the *neshama*, of which the verse states, "***Hashem blew into his nostrils a living soul***" (*Bereishis* 2:7). This is the *neshama*, carved from the "***spirit of Elokim that hovered over the face of the water***" (*Bereishis* 1:2). Chazal tell us that this verse refers to the Throne of Glory (Rashi), from which the souls of Klal Yisrael are carved.

In a spiritual sense, the *nefesh* and *neshama* can be compared to a father and mother. The *nefesh* that comes from the earth is like the mother, providing nourishment and the ability to grow. The *neshama* from above is like the father, providing the flow of life. These two parts of a person's composition are represented by the letters *yud* and *heh*. Chazal tell us that the woman (אשה) provides the letter *heh*, while the man provides the letter *yud* (איש), such that together they spell Hashem's Name and cause the Shechinah to rest upon them and their children (*Sotah* 17a).

This Name of Hashem was attached to the Tribes of Bnei Yisrael when they were counted by the names of their father's houses. For example, ***"For Chanoch, the family of Ha-Chanoch-y"***(*Bamidbar* 26:5). The letter *heh* was placed at the beginning of their name, and the letter *yud* at the end, on which Rashi comments, ***"The Tribes of Hashem (ה-י) are a testimony to Yisrael"*** (*Bamidbar* 26:5). Hashem's Name testifies to the purity of their lineage.

As such, the lineage of the ***"To their families, to the houses of their fathers,"*** which made us worthy of the Torah was not just a biological ancestry, but a spiritual source of our souls, which are rooted in the Name of Hashem and inseparable from the Torah, which is One with Hashem. For this reason, it is also impossible to separate Klal Yisrael from the Torah. The Torah must come to Klal Yisrael and Klal Yisrael must come to the Torah, since our souls are deeply rooted in Torah.

This was why Hashem hung Har Sinai over the heads of Bnei Yisrael and threatened to bury them beneath if they would not accept the Torah (*Shabbos* 88a). What need was there for such a threat? They had already agreed to accept the Torah, willingly and joyously proclaiming "*na'aseh vinishmah*."

The answer is that even after they agreed to accept the Torah, Hashem imposed it upon them by force, in order to show that this was not a matter dependent on their choice and free will. They should not think that had they not agreed to accept the Torah, they would not have been under any obligation. Rather, the Torah is intrinsically obligatory due to the essence of their being and the source of their souls, as the Maharal explains (*Tiferes Yisrael*, Chapter 16). Even if the Torah would be forced upon them at first, Hashem knew that they would ultimately observe the Torah with eager hearts, love and awe, since they are attached to the Torah from the source of their souls.

This point is demonstrated by the Gemara, which states that when Hashem grants the reward for those who toiled in Torah, the gentile nations will complain that had they been forced to accept the Torah, as Bnei Yisrael were, they too would have accepted it and received its reward. Hashem will answer their claim by giving them one last chance to do a mitzvah. The mitzvah chosen to test them will be sukkah. Then, Hashem will make the sun pierce down as in the hottest parts of the summer. When they find it too hot to sit in the sukkah, they will kick down their sukkos and leave (*Avodah Zarah* 2b).

This is because they do not have a real connection with the Torah from the depths of their souls. In truth, the Torah can only belong to Klal Yisrael.

The Feast of the Leviathan

This is also represented by the Feast of the Leviathan, which will be held in a "sukkah" made from its skin, as the Gemara states:

> Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Everything that Hashem made in the world, He made with male and female counterparts. He also made a male and female Leviathan. Were they to reproduce, they would destroy the entire world. Therefore, Hashem neutered the male and killed the female, salting her meat for the *tzaddikim* in the future ….

> Rabbah said in the name of Rav Yochanan: Hashem is destined to make a feast for the *tzaddikim* from the meat of the Leviathan …
>
> Rabbah also said in the name of Rav Yochanan: Hashem is destined to make a sukkah for the *tzaddikim* from the skin of the Leviathan. Hashem will then take the skin that remains and drape it on the walls of Yerushalayim, from where its glow will shine from one end of the world to the other (*Bava Basra* 74b-75a. See also *Zohar* I, 136a).

The Hebrew word Leviathan is based on the word *leviyah*, which means accompaniment.[6] In this sense, the Feast of the Leviathan represents our attachment to the Shechinah.

As we explained above, our attachment to the Shechinah is through the Torah. The male and female Leviathan represent the masculine and feminine aspects of the Torah, which are the Written and Oral Torah.[7] Chazal tell us that Hashem neutered the male Leviathan and killed the female Leviathan, salting it to preserve it for the *tzaddikim* in the future. This represents the depths of the Torah that are hidden from us for now, but will be revealed in the future. The verse, ***"You created the Leviathan with which to play"*** (*Tehillim* 104:26), also refers to His rejoicing with the Torah, of which it is written, ***"I (the Torah) will be His pleasure each day"*** (*Mishlei* 8:30).

From the skin of the Leviathan, Hashem will make a glowing sukkah for the *tzaddikim*, which will shine across the world (*Bava Basra* 75a). This represents the secret of Hashem's Name, which both surrounds us to protect us, like a sukkah, and also shines upon us. This is the glory of the Shechinah that the *tzaddikim* are destined to enjoy.

In this sense, the mitzvah of sukkah shows the greatness of Klal Yisrael, and how the Torah, Klal Yisrael and HaKadosh Baruch Hu are all One (*Zohar* III, 73a). Chazal tell us that Hashem hid the primordial light of creation for the *tzaddikim* to enjoy in the future (*Chagigah* 12a). This light is in fact the hidden wisdom of the Torah that is destined to be revealed to us. Since the entire world was created from the letters of the Torah, the light of this wisdom will "shine from one end of the world to the other."

This light is currently hidden within the two "great luminaries," which are the Written and Oral Torah. Chazal tell us that in the future, Hashem will draw the sun out of its sheath (referring to the revelation of the hidden light of the Torah). The righteous will be healed by its light, while the wicked will be judged by it (*Nedarim* 8b).

Chazal tell us that Hashem will hold the Torah in His lap and invite all those who toiled in it to come and receive their reward (*Avodah Zarah* 2a). The imagery of "holding the Torah in His lap" was used, in order to show how closely attached the Torah is to Hashem. All those who toiled in Torah share in this attachment. This itself is the reward for the Torah. For Bnei Yisrael, this closeness to Hashem will be the greatest possible reward. For the other nations, it will be unbearable.

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[6] As we find in the verses ִי לִוְיַת חֵן הֵם לְרֹאֶ ךָ (*Mishlei* 1:9), and וְלִי ת מַ ַר אִי (*Melachim* I, 7:36).

[7] See page __

Spiritual and Physical Torah

The Torah is written on parchment, with the letters representing the deep meaning of the Torah and the parchment representing the external form on which that meaning is imprinted. So too, the light of the Torah from Above is a wondrous, spiritual phenomenon. There are deep secrets to it, which impart a spiritual pleasure that only the soul can enjoy. On that level, it has no relevance to physical form or action.

Nonetheless, this spiritual light descended into this world, cloaked in an external, physical form. These are the simple interpretations of the Torah and the physical mitzvos that were given to us to study with our mouths and perform with the physical limbs of our bodies. Hashem's intention in this was to give the physical body an opportunity to fulfill mitzvos and thus be purified, uplifted and enabled to receive the spiritual reward of the World to Come, when it will be reunited with the soul and continue to live forever, body and soul together.

In this sense, the physical body is like the physical parchment on which the spiritual Torah is written. On a spiritual level, man also has 613 spiritual faculties, which are "dressed in" and attached to the 613 parts of the body.

Eating the meat of the Leviathan represents the light of the Torah that shines upon spiritual side of man's being. We find this metaphor used in the Torah, ***"They saw Elokim and they ate and drank"*** (*Shemos* 24:11). The Targum Yonasan explains this to mean, "They gazed upon the glory of Hashem, and rejoiced as if through eating and drinking."

The skin of the Leviathan represents the external, simple aspect of the Torah, which we fulfill through the physical mitzvos performed in this world. Just as a sukkah provides shelter to protect those within, so too these physical mitzvos protects the bodies of the righteous, allowing them to rise for the Resurrection and live on forever.

For this reason, the mitzvah of sukkah represents the reward for the tzaddikim and the punishment for the wicked, as we saw above, that Hashem will "make the sun pierce down" on the sukkos built by the other nations. Hashem will "remove the sun from its sheath," referring to the revelation of the hidden light of the Torah. The righteous will be healed by this light. Since they are attached to it at the source of their souls above, the light will also shine upon their physical bodies, granting them new life in the future.

However, the wicked will be judged by this same light. They are not attached to this light at the source of their souls. Their *nefesh,* which is drawn only from the maternal aspect of the earth,[8] will melt before such an awesome revelation of spirituality. ***"As wax melts before a fire, so too shall the wicked be destroyed"*** (*Tehillim* 68:3).

With this we can understand the Midrash cited above, that Bnei Yisrael were worthy to receive the Torah since they could provide a book of lineage "to the houses of their fathers." This refers to the paternal aspect of the soul, which stems from Heaven, as we explained above.[9]

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[8] See page ___.
[9] See page __.

The Festival of Our Rejoicing

With this we can understand why Sukkos, more than any other holiday, is called the "Festival of Our Rejoicing." As we have seen, the sukkah is the symbol of the greatness of Klal Yisrael, our attachment to the Torah, and the reward that awaits us in the future, which is the time of true rejoicing of which it is written, ***"Hashem will rejoice with His creations"*** (*Tehillim* 104:31). Then, Hashem's glory will be revealed throughout the world, after all the wrongs have been corrected and the spirit of impurity has been swept from the earth. All the souls of Klal Yisrael will be attached to the light of their source, and all creation will be uplifted by this same light. This is essentially the revelation of the light of Torah in the world, which is our greatest joy.

We now return to reinvestigate the Midrash with which we began our discussion: "HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Klal Yisrael, 'I sold you the Torah, and it is as if I sold Myself to you together with it.'"

As we have seen, the Torah is Hashem's will, which is indivisible from Hashem Himself. Through the Torah, we study and observe Hashem's will, thus attaching ourselves to Hashem Himself, as is written, ***"As a belt is attached to the waste of man, so too I have attached to Myself the entire House of Yisrael and the entire House of Yehuda, says Hashem, to be My nation in renown, praise and splendor"*** (*Yermiyahu* 13:11).

May Hashem plant in our hearts love for Torah, and may we merit the fulfillment of the verse, ***"You who are attached to Hashem your G-d are all alive today,"*** (*Devarim* 4:4). Amen.

Bereishis: Connecting Heaven and Earth[10]

Questions

The Midrash comments on the verse, "'***Hashem is my light and my salvation***': *My light* – on Rosh Hashanah, *and my salvation* – on Yom Kippur" (Tehillim 27:1; Vayikra Rabbah 21:4). What is the significance of this parallel? What does it mean to teach us? Elsewhere, the Mishna (Yoma 85b) states:

> Fortunate are you Yisrael. Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as is written, ***"I shall sprinkle upon you pure waters"*** and ***"Hashem is the mikveh of Yisrael."*** Just as a mikveh purifies those who are impure, so too does HaKadosh Baruch Hu purify Bnei Yisrael.

The double wording of "before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you," seems redundant. Furthermore, what point is meant to be drawn by comparing Hashem to a mikveh?

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[10] (Sovalak, Shabbos Shuvah 5609)

The Division of Creation

To explain all this, we will begin with an introduction from the Sages regarding the purpose for which Hashem created the world. So that man would have the free will to choose between good and evil, and thereby be fully rewarded for his efforts, it was necessary for Hashem to hide Himself from man. In this way, the planes of creation were brought into being, descending from one level to the next. With each level of descent, Hashem's light was progressively hidden more and more, until He created this bottommost level, in which Hashem's glory is almost entirely hidden.

The concealment of Hashem's presence creates a vacuum in which the forces of evil and the *yetzer hara* can exist. The holiness and light must be hidden, so that the *yetzer hara* will have an opportunity to tempt man into sin with the claim that there is no Judge and there is no judgment, *chas v'shalom*. Man is thus challenged to overcome the *yetzer hara*, and thereby claim his due reward.

Towards this end, creation was divided into two categories: those above and those below. Above in Heaven, the light of Hashem's holiness is more revealed. There, they all recognize His glory. Therefore, the hosts of Heaven and the supernal angels are all far from sin. The forces of evil have no power there at all. The second division is here on Earth below, where Hashem's light is hidden, which allows for evil to exist and hold sway.

These two divisions are also known as light and darkness. The light is found in Heaven, where all can see Hashem's blessed glory and splendor. The darkness is found here below on this Earth.

Therefore, the verse states, "***Bereishis bara Elokim***" (Bereishis 1:1) – in the beginning, God created. The word for beginning starts with the letter *beis* which signifies the number two, thus teaching us that there were two parallel worlds of creation, two different beginnings, and two roots from which sprouted everything that exists. One is the root of good and the other is the root of evil.

The verse thus continues, "***the Heavens and the Earth***." These are the two worlds of light and darkness that we described above. The *yetzer tov* is from the Heavens, from the side of holiness. The *yetzer hara* is from the Earth, of which it is written, "***The Earth was chaos, nothingness and darkness***."

Chazal tell us that the "darkness" in this verse refers to the deeds of the wicked, of which it is written, "***Their deeds are done in darkness***" (Bereishis Rabbah 1:6). These deeds are made possible by the removal of Hashem's holiness and the concealment of His glory in this lower world. The world remained dark until Hashem sent His holy spirit from the heights. This is the holy soul of man, which descends below to illuminate his path through the darkness, allowing him to follow the side of holiness. Of this the verse continues, "***God said, 'Let there be light,***'" referring to the deeds of the righteous.

All of this was set in place from the very first day of creation. The stage was set for a conflict in which creation must inevitably reach its perfection, as the forces of evil will ultimately be subdued before the forces of good. Evil is like a chained dog, which can only go so far as its chain allows. The limit of the chain allowed for evil is the six thousand worlds for which this stage of existence will exist, after which everything

will return to perfect holiness, the world will reach its perfection, and Hashem's oneness will again be evident throughout all of creation. Then, the world will no longer be divided between good and evil. Everything will revert to perfect goodness, as the verse concludes, "***God saw that the light was good, and it was evening and it was morning, one day***."

Preserving the Balance

After explaining that light refers to the deeds of the righteous and darkness refers to the deeds of the wicked, the Midrash asks, "It is still unclear which Hashem desired, the deeds of the righteous or the deeds of the wicked, until the verse came to clarify, ***'God saw that the light was good'*** – referring to the deeds of the righteous."

How could the Midrash have possibly wondered what Hashem preferred? Is it not obvious that Hashem desires the good? Are there not many verses throughout the Torah to this effect: "***Behold I have placed before you life and good, death and evil… Choose life***" (Devarim 30:15,19), and "***Do I desire the death of the wicked? I want him to return from his path and live***" (Yechezkel 33:11). What then was the uncertainty of the Midrash over which path Hashem desires?

Rather, it is clear that the Midrash had a very deep intent. Hashem removed His control from man's free will and placed before him two equal paths, with an even balance between the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara*. Had one side exerted more power than the other, man would lose his free will. Although good is really infinitely more powerful than evil, this can be compared to a wrestling match between a strong man and a weak man. The strong man restrains his power, and fights with the same strength of the weak, so that the contest will be evenly matched.

If Hashem wishes that both sides will be equal, the contest between good and evil could go on forever, and there is no assurance that the world will eventually reach its perfection at the end of its allotted time. If Hashem wishes that good must ultimately conquer evil, then the power of good must be stronger, and this infringes on the free will of man.

Unlike human beings, who want something and then must do something to bring their desires into reality, Hashem's will is itself the creative force that brings things into existence, as is written, "***My thoughts are not like your thoughts … as the rain and snow descend from Heaven … so are the words that leave My mouth"*** (Yeshayah 55:8-11).

If Hashem wants good to conquer evil, this is what will happen. What room is left for the free choice of man?

The World of Thought

The answer to this is that Hashem created His world on two levels: a level of thought and a level of speech. Through the initial thought and will of "***Bereishis***," the potential for all things was created. However, Hashem's thoughts are high above this world, and their influence cannot be seen down here. They remain above, waiting to be revealed at the completion of the time allotted for this temporary world, which is

six thousand years. After this will come the seventh millennium, "the day when all will be Shabbos" (Sanhedrin 97a).

Throughout the six days of creation (and the six millennia of this world's existence), everything was created with words, "***And Hashem said ….***" Speech is sound constricted by the vocal organs. It is a metaphor for the power of Hashem that is active during these six days, constricted in accordance to the descending levels of existence, as He conceals from the world the perfection of His goodness. This is how time comes into existence. Time is also a constriction, in which existence is divided into moments and hours joined together, just as speech is sound constricted into combinations of letters.

In the six days of creation, everything that was destined to exist throughout the six millennia of this world was brought into existence through Hashem's word. These were included in the final six words of the verse, "***Bereishis bara Elokim es hashamayim ve'es ha'aretz."*** The first word, *Bereishis,* refers to the creation of the world of thought, which is above time and speech. This is the seventh millennium. It is the first word in the verse, since "that which is last in deed came first in thought" (as we say in Lecha Dodi regarding Shabbos).

In that final stage of existence, Hashem's original thought to bring the world to perfection will come about. The *yetzer hara* and the forces of evil will be undone, as the power of holiness overcomes them. Then, ***"Death will be swallowed forever"*** (Yeshayah 25:8). However, this thought will not be revealed during the six millennia of the current stage of existence, when man still has free will to choose good or evil.

The world of thought is above time and does not influence it. This resolves the question (posed by the Rambam) of how Hashem's knowledge of everything that will occur does not contradict man's free will to choose whatever path he wishes. Thought is a point that can only exist at the present, and cannot be divided into future and past. Therefore, such knowledge does not force man's actions.

We can now understand Chazal's question of which Hashem prefers, the deeds of the righteous or the deeds of the wicked. They meant to ask that it would seem that Hashem views both paths equally, since if He preferred good over evil, there would be no room for free choice. Good would immediately conquer evil and the *yetzer hara* would be powerless.

The answer to this is found in the verse, "***God saw that the light was good***" – from which we learn that Hashem prefers the deeds of the righteous. Hashem wants good to triumph over evil. This was Hashem's intent, and this will be the final result in the seventh millennium when the world reaches its perfection. The victory of holiness is symbolized by the light, which is the radiance of Hashem's holy Name in the world. This light was hidden for the righteous to enjoy in the World to Come, when Hashem's glory will be revealed in this lowest world just as it is revealed in Heaven. "***On that day Hashem will be One"*** (Zechariah 14:9) and the power of evil will disappear forever.

The current world, however, is a world of free choice. Now, in this lower world, Hashem's Name is "not one," so to speak, in the sense that His holiness is hidden, which allows the powers of evil to have sway. Now, creation is divided between Heaven and Earth. His glory is revealed only in Heaven but not on Earth. In the

seventh millennium, both worlds will be united and Hashem's Name will be One, with His glory equally revealed in both. Then, all will recognize His Kingship and glory.

Hashem Helps Us to Return

With this we can understand the verses:

> Seek Hashem when He is to be found, call Him when He is near. Let the wicked abandon his path and let the sinful abandon his thoughts. Let him return to Hashem and be shown mercy, and to our God Who is abundant to forgive. For My thoughts are not like your thoughts, and your ways are not like Mine, says Hashem. As the Heavens are high above the Earth, so are My ways high above your ways, and My thoughts high above your thoughts. As the rain and snow descend from Heaven and do not return to there … so will be the words that leave My mouth. They will not return to Me emptyhanded, but shall do as I desire and succeed in the mission for which I have sent them (Yeshayah 55:6-11).

Here, the Navi means to encourage those who have become so steeped in sin that they despair of ever being able to return. The *yetzer hara* has so much power over them that they need Hashem's special assistance to break free, as Chazal teach, "Those who come to purify themselves are assisted" (Yoma 38b). They may worry that since each person must have his own free will to do good or evil, Hashem will not override their free will to help them overcome the *yetzer hara*. If Hashem in His omniscient thought saw that the good in them would conquer the evil, there could be no room for free choice.

Therefore, the verse assures them that Hashem's thoughts are unlike those of mortal men. Hashem's thoughts are above the flow of time in this temporary world. They remain in Heaven for now, and will be revealed in this world only when the final perfection is reached in the seventh millennium.

"***As the Heavens are above the Earth, so are My paths above your paths, and My thoughts above your thoughts."*** Hashem thoughts do not act upon this lower world. Only His word descends from Heaven to shape the course of events in this world. "***As the rain and snow descend from Heaven but do not return to there, so will be the words that leave My mouth."*** His words descend to direct the world, but for now His thoughts do not.

Nonetheless, there is a still a spark of the hidden light that shines down into this world at all times to help those who aspire to improve. The light is kept concealed such that just enough is revealed as is necessary to help people do *teshuvah*, but not enough to take away their free will.

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Taanis 2:6) describes this Heavenly assistance as follows:

> HaKadosh Baruch Hu attached His Name to Bnei Yisrael. This is like a king who had a tiny key to his palace. He worried that if he would leave the key by itself, it might get lost. Instead, he attached to it a chain. That way, if it ever got lost, he could find it through the chain.

> So too, HaKadosh Baruch Hu was concerned that if He would leave Bnei Yisrael as they are, they might get lost and assimilated among the nations. To prevent this, He attached His Name to them.

Although this was said in the context of the nation as a whole, it also applies to every individual in his own fight against the *yetzer hara* and his struggle to escape the quagmire of evil, as Rav Chaim of Volozhin explained (Nefesh Hachaim 1:19).

Hashem foresaw the great power that the *yetzer hara* would have in this world. He was concerned that if man was left to nothing but his own free will, he might stray so far onto the path of evil that he would never be able to return. Therefore, he tied a chain, so to speak, to every Jewish soul, through which every Jew can pull himself out of quagmire and purify himself.

The Lifeline of Torah

This proverbial "chain" is the holy Torah, which connects Heaven to Earth. Of this Hashem said, "I created the *yetzer hara* and I created the Torah as its antidote" (Kiddushin 30b). The main power of the *yetzer hara* lies in the division between light and darkness, such that the domain of light is in Heaven while the domain of darkness is on Earth.

To rectify this issue, Hashem sent to this world the holy Torah, which includes all the good traits and paths of Hashem that we must follow. The Torah, although purely spiritual in essence, was dressed in the physical form of this world, through the practical mitzvos that we perform. As a person studies the Torah, it sanctifies and purifies him. In this sense, it is compared to water which cleanses a person from his filth. The Torah is also compared to light, in the sense that it shines down from Heaven (the dwelling place of light) to illuminate the dark Earth.

As a person engages in Torah and mitzvos, all four letters of Hashem's Name rest upon him. The first two letters of His Name, *yud* and *heh*, were used to create this world and the next (Menachos 29b). They rest upon man whose soul came from Heaven and whose body was made from the Earth. Man's body and soul are joined together by means of the Torah – the five books of the Written Torah (represented the second letter *heh* of Hashem's Name), and the six orders of the Mishna (represented by the letter *vav*). Thus, Hashem's awesome Name rests upon every Jew as he studies Torah.

This is the chain that is attached to the Jewish soul, through which a Jew can always return to Hashem. No matter how low he might have fallen, the light of the Torah can help him return to good (Eichah Rabbah, Introduction 2). Our Sages tell us, "Let a person arouse his *yetzer tov* against his *yetzer hara*. If he defeats it, good. If not, let him toil in Torah" (Berachos 5a).

This is also the meaning of the verse, "***Sanctify yourselves and be holy. Observe My statutes and perform them. I am Hashem who sanctifies you***" (Vayikra 20:7-8). Since man starts his existance in the physical world, at the lowest level of creation, entirely bereft of holiness, he must draw holiness upon himself through his Torah study and mitzvos. He should not despair and say, "How can I ever become holy? The *yetzer hara* rules my life and I am sunk up to my head in sin." There is no place for despair among Klal Yisrael. Through the Torah, we remain attached to the highest source of holiness. This

is the proverbial chain, which we can always grasp hold of to pull ourselves up. ***"Sanctify yourselves and by holy,"*** since, "***I am Hashem your God" -*** you are attached to Hashem by means of His holy Name that rests upon us.

However, this depends on our observing His statutes and performing them. "***Observe My statutes"*** refers to Torah study (Sifra, Emor 9). Thereby, we will come to "***perform them,"*** since study leads to action. Through this, we connect Heaven to Earth and merit the assistance of "***I am Hashem who sanctifies you."***

Like a Tree Planted by the Water

As we explained, Torah is the only means by which a person can overcome his *yetzer hara* and cleanse himself from the impurity into which he has descended. Torah is the antidote for all spiritual maladies, as is written, ***"For they are life to all who find them, and healing to all his flesh,"*** (Mishlei 4:22).

With this we can understand the opening words of David Hamelech in his Psalms: "***Fortunate is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, did not stand in the path of the sinners, and did not sit in the gathering of the scoffers. Rather the Torah of Hashem is his desire, and he toils in his Torah day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by many waters, which produces fruit in its time and its leaves do not wither. Everything he does will succeed. Not so are the wicked, who are like chaff blown before the wind. Therefore, the wicked will not be able to stand in judgment, or the sinners in the congregation of the righteous***" (Tehillim 1:1-5).

This refers to three different aspects of evil. The first is evil deeds, of which the verse states, "***He did not walk in the counsel of the wicked***." The second is evil thought, of which the verse states, "***He did not stand in the path of the sinners***." The imagery here is of a person who stands at a crossroads and stops to think whether or not to continue forward on a dangerous path. The third is a person who sits and does nothing. He does not learn Torah, nor does he actively engage in sin. Nonetheless, he will certainly end up sinning, since he does not have the Torah to protect him, of which Hashem said, "I created the *yetzer hara* and I created the Torah as its antidote" (Kiddushin 30b).

The verse therefore continues, "***The Torah of Hashem is his desire."*** Through the Torah he will be rescued from sin and will not have to work so hard to defeat his *yetzer hara*. ***"He shall be like a tree planted by many waters"*** - irrigated by the waters of Torah, ***"which produces fruit in its time"*** – the fruit of good deeds, each one in its proper time, such as matzos on Peach, and so on.

In truth, it is easy to escape sin through the power of Torah study, which helps a person see how insubstantial are the fleeting pleasures of this world, and how the *yetzer hara* really has no power at all. "***Not so are the wicked"*** – wickedness has no substance. It is ***"like chaff blown before the wind."***

Therefore, "***the wicked will not be able to stand in judgment."*** They will have no excuse on the day of judgment to claim that they were unable to withstand the *yetzer hara*. Had they studied Torah, they could have overcome it.

Spiritual Sense of Smell

Chazal tell us in Pirkei Avos:

> Each day a Heavenly voice goes forth from Har Sinai and proclaims, "Woe to the creations for their disgrace of the Torah." All those who do not toil in Torah are rebuked to Hashem, as is written, ***"Like a golden ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman*** who strays from good counsel***"*** (Avos 6:2).

The spiritual soul that was placed in the physical body is compared to a golden ring in a pig's snout. The ring itself is precious, but if the pig digs through the refuse with it, it becomes filthy and disgusting.

The spiritual pleasure of the soul, which is the reward for mitzvos, is compared to a fragrant aroma. Chazal use the metaphor of "thirteen rivers of balsam oil" (Bereishis Rabbah 10:2) to describe the reward of the souls in the World to Come. Chazal call fragrant smells "something enjoyed by the soul but not by the body" (Berachos 43b). This is because smell is something so ephemeral that it can hardly be called a physical pleasure. It is enjoyed only by ***"the spirit of life that Hashem blew into man's nostrils"*** (Bereishis 2:7). So too, Chazal teach us that with each word that Hashem spoke on Har Sinai, the entire world was filled with fragrant smell (Shabbos 88b).

The opposite is also true. The punishment of the soul in Gehinnom is compared to an awful stench. Chazal tell us that some sinners are punished by being boiled in feces (Eruvin 21b).

The metaphor of the ring in the pig's snout comes to teach us that without Torah, we have no guarantee that the soul will have a fragrant aroma when its time comes to ascend above to stand in judgment. The *yetzer hara*, which is compared to a pig that wallows in filth, makes the soul filthy as well, until it becomes so repulsive that it cannot ascend to produce a fragrant aroma before Hashem.

In this sense, the soul is compared to a beautiful woman, of which the verse states, ***"A woman of valor, who can find?"*** (Mishlei 31:10). It is pure when it first descends into the body. However, when it "strays from good counsel," and turns away from the sweet taste of Torah study, it stands in dire peril of drowning in the depths of impurity.

A Call for Torah Study During the Days of Judgment

In previous generations, the Jewish people had a deep sense of appreciation for Torah study. When the days of judgment approached, the shuls and yeshivos would be packed day and night, as people came to toil in Torah study, each according to his ability – some in Talmud, some in Shulchan Aruch, some in Midrash and some in Mussar. People were scared of the impending judgment and they would return in sincere *teshuvah* before Yom Kippur. Therefore, there were not so many harsh decrees in the world as there are in our times, when the hardships of each day are worse than the day before (Sotah 49a).

In the past three or four years, we have seen the four harsh judgments that Yechezkel the Navi foresaw, "***I shall send upon you famine, wild animals will kill you,***

pestilence and blood will pass over you, and I will bring sword upon you" (Yechezkel 5:17). We have seen all these things in our times, may Hashem have mercy. The wild animals are the nations of the world who subject us to cruel decrees that threaten our very lives.

All this has come about because of our failure to apply ourselves properly to Torah study. Had we studied Torah as we should, we would understand the severity of sin and refrain from it. If we would occasionally stumble in sin, we would return in *teshuvah*. Torah is a precious light that shines upon our path and guides us through the darkness.

Due to our *bitul Torah,* we are like blind people who stumble through the darkness. We do not consider the path on which we walk, "***and the way of each person seems straight in his eyes***" (Mishlei 21:2). It seems as if the *yetzer hara* will never be satisfied with the sins he draws us into, and with the terrible bloodshed that results from it. What will be with us in the end? The wicked rise in power. The masses of our people have come to disdain Torah and those who study it. Our only consolation is that our Sages foresaw the depths to which the final generations would fall (Sotah 49b, Sanhedrin 97a). This is how they described the generation before Moshiach's arrival, but Moshiach has still not arrived.

The Tents of Torah Study

I stopped to think about the cause for all of this. How did it happen? We have been in exile for close to two thousand years, during which we have endured countless hardships. Death, destruction, exile and wandering have been our lot, yet throughout it all we have remained faithful to Hashem. All the winds of the world have never succeeded in blowing us off of the course of His service. To the contrary, we have established yeshivos and Torah teachers in all the places of our wanderings, as is clear to anyone who studies the history of our nation.

Chazal tell us that the curse with which the prophet Achiya cursed Bnei Yisrael was better than the blessing with which the wicked Bilam blessed us. Achiya cursed us by comparing us to a reed, while Bilam blessed us by comparing us to a cedar. The wind blows on the reeds and bends them over, but when the wind stops, they stand back up (Taanis 20a). So too, after the winds of hardship pass, Klal Yisrael stands strong again, renewing our efforts in Torah and mitzvos.

A cedar, on the other hand, does not even sway in the wind. However, when the powerful southern wind comes, it knocks the cedar over entirely and it does not rise again.

After considering what has changed in our own times, it seems that this too is part of Bilam's curse. Chazal tell us that he wanted to curse us that there would be no *batei midrashos* (places of Torah study) in Klal Yisrael, and Hashem transformed his curse into a blessing: "***How goodly are your tents, O Yaakov***" (Bamidbar 24:5, Sanhedrin 105b).

Although the curse was transformed into a blessing, some vestige of the curse still remains. This is what has brought such devastation upon our times. Since the Beis

Hamikdash has been destroyed, Hashem dwells with us in exile in our shuls and *batei midrashos* (Megillah 29a). These are the places that inspire a person towards *teshuvah*.

Unfortunately, in recent years people have stopped coming to daven in the shuls and *batei midrashos* where Torah is studied. Instead, they make small minyanim in their homes, and do not bother to come to the shuls where they would find inspiration in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. These are like private altars, upon which each person offers his own sacrifices, rather than bringing them to the Beis Hamikdash. Their small minyanim are places for chatting during davening, *lashon hara, rechilus* and disdaining Torah scholars. They have no opportunity to hear words of Torah and mussar. All this is part of the plot of the *yetzer hara*, which has grown powerful in our times.

A River of Purity

"***Like flowing rivers … like tents stretched by Hashem***" (Bamidbar 24:6). Chazal explain that rivers are mentioned alongside tents, to teach us that just as immersing in a river brings a person from impurity to purity, so too studying in the tents of Torah brings a person from guilt to merit. This verse was also among the blessings of Bilam, from which we see how he intended to curse us, before his curse was transformed to blessing. He wanted to curse us that there would be no places of Torah study in Klal Yisrael. Without Torah, we would have nothing to purify our souls and we would remain submerged in the impurity of our sins.

Torah is compared specifically to a river, and not to a regular mikveh. The difference between a river that flows from a spring and a mikveh formed from gathered rain water, is that a mikveh is valid only if it contains forty *se'ah* of water, enough for a person to immerse his entire body in it at once. A river, on the other hand, has no minimum amount (Mikva'os 1:7).

This distinction teaches us an important lesson about *teshuvah*. After a person sins, he must purify his entire body and soul. The 365 prohibitions correspond to the 365 sinews and the 248 mitzvos correspond to the 248 organs. All are infected by his sins, and they all must be purified. One way of cleansing sin is by subjecting oneself to suffering equal to the enjoyment he received from his sins. However, a person who toils in Torah does not need to subject himself to suffering to atone. The light of the Torah guides him back towards the good path.

A person should not think that the light of Torah is available only to the great Torah scholars who can learn for many hours, and that those who must work for their living and cannot learn so much have no hope. To refute this notion, the Torah is compared to a river, for which there is no minimum amount of water. One need not submerse oneself in Torah throughout the entire day and night, as one submerses his entire body in a mikveh. Torah is like a river, with no minimum amount.

The purification of Torah is available to each person, however much he is able to study, provided that he does not let his time go to waste, and that he uses his free moments to make set times for Torah to the best of his ability. The light of the Torah will then purify his soul, without his having to endure suffering or fasting in

atonement. The Torah is a potion of life for the soul. It heals the soul like medicine heals the body.

Honest Business Dealings

A person might think that he does not sin and is not in need of *teshuvah*. Unfortunately, people are inclined to believe so. Each person's path seems straight in his eyes. He thinks that only idolatry, illicit relations or bloodshed are really serious sins, or perhaps even theft or eating non-kosher food too. The religious Jews of whom we speak are not suspected of any of these things, *chas v'shalom*.

However, there are other serious sins that the *yetzer hara* makes light of as if they are not so bad. Many of them are in fact unbearably severe. The Gemara (Chagigah 5a) comments on the verse, "***I will draw close to you in judgment and be a swift witness against the wizards, adulterers, those who swear falsely and those who fail to pay their workers***." When R' Yochanan read the following verse he would cry, "Woe to us, that the verse equates mild sins to severe sins." These are the sins that people take lightly but are in fact as severe as idolatry, adultery and murder. Among them are theft, dishonesty in business and false weights and measures, of which the Torah says, "***An abomination to Hashem are all who do these things***." It is just like idolatry, which the Torah also calls an abomination.

There is great depth in the comparison between idolatry and dishonest business. Idolatry began when people thought that Hashem was so high that He does not descend to interact with the Earth. Instead, they worshipped the stars and constellations. So too, a person who is dishonest in business denies Hashem's providence in providing sustenance for all His creations. Hashem decrees each year on Rosh Hashanah how much a person will earn that year (Beitzah 16a). Nothing can add to or detract from that decree.

A person who is dishonest in business obviously believes that his prosperity depends, not on Hashem's providence, but on his own efforts. By stealing and lying to make money, he serves the false god of "***my power and the might of my own hand***" (Devarim 8:17).

I am amazed that such people are not ashamed to ask Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, "Inscribe us in the book of livelihood." Do they really imagine that Hashem will inscribe them for a livelihood made from theft, cheating and usury? Do they think He will help them violate the prohibitions that He wrote in His Torah? Obviously, they think that their livelihood comes from their own efforts, and not from Hashem. Why then do they go through the insincere motions of davening to Hashem for livelihood?

Chazal tell us that, "From a box filled with sins, theft rises to the top and is the first to cry for punishment" (Yalkut Shimoni, Yechezkel 345). For any other sin, a person might find an excuse that his desire overcame him. Theft, however, is not just an issue of desire. It is a denial of Hashem's providence.

Chazal also compare hurting another person's feelings to cheating in business. Hurting someone's feelings is in fact worse than cheating, since stolen money can be

returned but hurt feelings cannot always be repaired. Whereas other sins are punished through an intermediary, those who hurt other's feelings are punished by Hashem Himself (Bava Metzia 58b-59a).

Those Who Will Not Merit to Greet the Shechinah

Other sins that must be addressed are those of which Chazal say, "Four groups will not merit to see the Shechinah" (Sanhedrin 103a). The first group is flatterers. Chazal tell us that a congregation that allows flattery is disgusting like a niddah (Sotah 42a). The impurity of a niddah is so great that she makes those who come in contact with her impure just like her (Pesachim 68a). The same is true of those who flatter the wicked. Since they fail to rebuke the wicked for their sins, they are punished as if they committed those same sins themselves. Therefore, it is written, "***Rebuke your kinsman and do not bear on his account a sin***" (Vayikra 19:17). In other words, if you fail to rebuke him, you will bear his sin too.

The second group that will not merit to see the Shechinah is the liars, as is written, "***Those who speak falsely will not stand before My eyes***" (Tehillim 101:7). Falsehood is from the side of evil. It is the opposite of reality. It is emptiness. Chazal tell us that falsehood has no legs on which to stand (see Shabbos 104a). It has no standing in reality. It is like the forces of evil, which also have no real substance. They exist only from the small grain of truth within every lie, which is like the narrow points at the bottom of the letters *shin, kuf, reish* on which these letters stand, spelling the word *sheker* - lie.

The third group is those who speak *lashon hara*. What can we say about this terrible sin, after our great teacher, the Vilna Gaon, wrote so much against it in his letter. It is the worst sin of all. The entire Gehinnom was created only for this sin, as is written, "***All of man's troubles are for his mouth***" (Koheles 6:7). It causes a person to be cut off from Hashem, as is written, "***Hashem will cut off all slippery lips***" (Tehillim 12:3).

Chazal warn us that this sin towers up to Heaven (Erchin 15b). Man's whole distinction from animal-kind is in his power of speech. His speech stems from the spirit invested in him from Heaven, as is written, "***Hashem blew into his nostrils a soul of life and he became a living spirit***" (Bereishis 2:7). The Targum translates this as "a speaking spirit." Therefore, when a person blemishes his tongue by speaking *lashon hara*, his sin ascends to Heaven to the root of his soul. Other sins stem from the tendencies of the physical body which was formed from the Earth. To some degree, they also ascend to Heaven, but not to the same extent as *lashon hara*, which is essentially a sin of the spirit.

Chazal also tell us that speaking *lashon hara* is like denying Hashem (Erchin 15b), as is written, ***"With our tongues we will conquer… who shall rule us?"*** (Tehillim 12:5).

The fourth group that will not merit to see the Shechinah is the scoffers, of whom it is written, ***"Draw Your hand away from the scoffers"*** (Hoshea 7:5). Chazal warn us to keep a safe distance from them and not live in their neighborhood (Pesachim 112b). Unfortunately, this sin is very prevalent among those who congregate around the street corners and make fun of people, eventually coming to *lashon hara* and *rechilus*.

Hatred, Anger and Arrogance

There are other sins that are just as bad, including senseless hatred, which is equivalent to idolatry, illicit relations and murder. The Gemara tells us that the first Beis Hamikdash was destroyed as a result of idolatry, illicit relations and murder. In the time of the second Beis Hamikdash, they learned Torah and observed mitzvos, but the Beis Hamikdash was still destroyed as a result of the senseless hatred among them (Yoma 9b).

The sin of senseless hatred still dances among us. It is the main reason we still languish in exile. If this sin destroyed the Beis Hamikdash and caused us to be banished from our land, then certainly it can prevent us from being redeemed and the Beis Hamikdash from being rebuilt as long as we do not correct it.

Anger is also a terrible sin, which Chazal compare to idolatry. The Arizal taught that when a person gets angry, his holy soul departs him (Shaarei Kedushah II, Ch. 4). For this reason, anger makes the wise lose their wisdom and the prophets lose their prophecy (Pesachim 66b). When a person gets angry "all forms of Gehinnom rule over him" (Nedarim 22a), since anger is a foreign fire, drawn from the flames of Gehinnom.

Arrogance is also compared to idolatry (Sotah 4b). An arrogant person does not care about the Shechinah.[11] He is disgusting to Hashem (Mishlei 16:5), and Hashem cannot stand to be in his presence (Sotah 5a). He will not rise for the resurrection, and he is fit to be cut down like an idolatrous *asheirah* tree (ibid).

This comparison can be understood based on the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 45a), which states that it is forbidden to derive any benefit from something that was worshipped as an idol. However, when idolaters worship mountains, the mountains do not become forbidden, since the prohibition does not apply to something attached to the Earth. If so, why does an *asheirah* tree become forbidden? The Gemara explains that this is because the tree was once a sapling, which people then planted in the Earth. Since it had a moment that it was in the hands of man, it can become forbidden as an idol.

The meaning of this is that anything worshipped as an idol becomes a resting place for the forces of evil. However, this is possible only for something that was made by man. Something that was made by Hashem as part of nature cannot become a resting place for evil.

An arrogant person worships himself, in a sense. He clearly does not reckon with the Shechinah. Had he done so, he would have realized that he is under Hashem's control at all moments and there is no reason at all for him to be arrogant over others. How could he think that he was so great and important, if he realized that in one second Hashem could take his soul and leave his body for the grave. Avraham Avinu had this realization, and therefore said, "***I am just dust and ashes***" (Bereishis 18:27). So too did Moshe, who said, "***What are we***?" (Shemos 16:7).

When a person does not realize this, and haughtily believes that his life and success are in his hands, and that he alone is responsible for his strength, health, prestige and wealth, he is like the sapling tree of idolatry that was "in the hands of man." Therefore,

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[11] See Nedarim 22b.

the forces of evil can rest on him, as they rest on an *asheirah* tree, and he is fit to be cut down.

Chilul Hashem

The sin of *chilul Hashem* is equivalent to all of these sins combined. Chazal tell us that some sins can be atoned through *teshuvah* and Yom Kippur. More severe sins, which are punishable by *kareis* or execution, require suffering as well to complete the atonement. However, *chilul Hashem* is unique in that it cannot be atoned through *teshuvah,* Yom Kippur or suffering. Only through death can it be atoned (Yoma 86a).

From here we see that *chilul Hashem* is even worse than sins punishable by *kareis* and execution, such as idolatry, illicit relations and murder. *Chilul Hashem* is defined for each person differently, according to his level. For some people, walking four steps without learning Torah is considered a *chilul Hashem* (ibid).

If a Jew sues another Jew in a secular court, this is also a *chilul Hashem*, since he places the honor of their system of justice above that of the Torah (Rashi, Shemos 21:1). There could be no greater disgrace to Hashem and His Torah, as Eliyahu the Navi said to Achazyah son of Achav, "***Is there no God in Yisrael, that you seek from Baal Zvuv the idol of Akron?***" (Melachim II, 1:3).

This is true even when the secular courts rule exactly the same as Beis Din. How much more so when he sues in a secular court to extract money from another Jew that he does not deserve according to Torah law. He is a lowly thief, and is considered as if he took the soul of his victim. May Hashem protect us from such sins and their punishments.

Here we have seen many terrible sins that a person might transgress without even noticing it. Therefore, it is so important for us to contemplate our ways and investigate our deeds as the days of judgment approach. When a person pays close attention to what he does, he will catch himself transgressing sins that would otherwise have slipped by unnoticed, as the Navi said, "***Let us search our ways, examine them, and return to Hashem***" (Eichah 3:40).

The Paths of Teshuvah: Torah and Forgiveness

Many methods of atonement are discussed in the books of *mussar*, including the fasts and self-afflictions appropriate for each individual sin. The Kabbalists had a tradition through which they understood the root of each sin, the damage it causes, and how to repair it. They are like expert doctors who understand the maladies of the body, and know which medicines or surgeries are most beneficial for any particular illness.

However, in our weak generation, it is hard for people to endure the suffering that would counter-balance the enjoyment we derive from our sins. How then can we regain Hashem's good favor? How can we atone for our sins?

For this Chazal revealed to us the special medicines that heal all wounds. The first is Torah study, which cleanses all kinds of impurity. The holiness of the Torah is very

powerful, and the forces of evil cannot overcome it. For this reason, when the Torah was given on Har Sinai, the Satan could not be present (Tosefos, Shabbos 89a).

Another remedy for all spiritual wounds, which is accessible to everyone, is being forgiving towards others. When a person forgives offense, all his sins are forgiven, as is written, "He removes iniquity and passes over transgression" (*Michah* 7:18). Chazal comment on this that Hashem removes iniquity from those who pass over transgressions (meaning for those who forgive transgressions done against them) (Rosh Hashanah 17a).

There is great depth to this expression. Hashem placed all of creation under our care, to maintain and improve it through our good deeds, or darken and destroy it through our sins. Rav Chaim of Volozhin (Nefesh Hachaim, 1:4) writes:

> When a wise person contemplates this, he will shudder to think about the damage he causes through even the slightest sin. It is even worse than the damage caused by Nevuchadnetzar and Titus who destroyed the first and second Beis Hamikdash. When they did so, they caused no damage to the spiritual worlds above, since they had no connection to those worlds and no ability to influence them either for good or for evil.
>
> When we sin, however, we weaken the powers of holiness above and desecrate the Heavenly counterpart of the Beis Hamikdash. Only after we destroyed the Beis Hamikdash in Heaven, were our enemies able to destroy the Beis Hamikdash here on Earth, as Chazal say, "They ground flour that had already been ground."

The only way that a person can repair the damage that his sins caused to the upper worlds, is to sweep away the darkness he caused, by drawing down new light from an even higher world untouched by sin. This is the world of *teshuvah*, which preceded and transcends the work of creation in which man operates (see Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer, Chapter 3). Drawing down new light from the pristine world of *teshuvah* is no less than a renewal of creation, similar to that which will occur in the seventh millennium, when the world will be illuminated by the hidden, supernal light that is above the reach of man.

When a person forgives offense, he "sets aside his measurements," so to speak. He sets aside the measures of his own ability to interact with the world, for good or for evil, and draws down new measures of holiness from a higher world untouched by his sins. A new light then descends to repair the damaged he caused, cleanse his soul from impurity, and atone for all his sins.

The Atonement of Shame

Another kind of atonement that does not involve suffering is found in the Gemara, which states, "If a person sins and is then ashamed of it, he is forgiven for his sin" (Berachos 12b).

The capacity to feel shame is a sign of greatness. Chazal explain that the verse, "***In order that His fear may be upon you so that you do not sin***" (Shemos 20:17), refers to the ability

to feel shame (Nedarim 20a). If a person contemplates the greatness of Hashem and the many kindnesses that He grants us despite our sins, he will be ashamed to ever sin again.

The Tomer Devorah comments on the verse, "***Who is like You, Hashem? You carry iniquity***." He explains that with every sin a person commits, a force of destruction is created, which then demands that Hashem provide it with the sustenance it needs to exist. It would be just and fair for Hashem to say, "Go to the person who made you and take his soul to feed off of." However, He does not do so. He "carries the iniquity," providing sustenance for it until the sinner does *teshuvah* and corrects the force of evil he created. Thereby, the life of the sinner is spared.

There can be no greater shame than this. If a person harms or steals from his friend and his friend discovers his crime, he is ashamed to look his friend in the face. How much more so when a mortal man sins against Hashem and creates a force of evil that destroys Hashem's handiwork. How could he not be ashamed of himself?

The Shame of Yosef's Brothers

When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and reminded them of their sin against him, they were so ashamed that they could not speak. Chazal comment on this, "Woe to us on the day of judgment! Woe to us on the day of rebuke! Yosef was the youngest of the brothers, but they were unable to answer him. How much more so when Hashem confronts each person with his judgment" (Bereishis Rabbah 93:11).

The double wording of, "Woe to us on the day of judgment! Woe to us on the day of rebuke!" is used to signify two kinds of distress. When Yosef confronted his brothers, they were ashamed of him, but they were not scared that he might kill them in revenge. Their father was still alive and he would not want to cause his father this grief. Only after Yaakov died, does the verse state, "***His brothers saw that their father had died and said, 'Perhaps he will take revenge***'" (Bereishis 50:15). As long as Yaakov lived, they had no reason to fear.

The distress that rendered them speechless was only due to their shame in having harmed him, and even that was mitigated by the fact that they had thought they were right in doing so at the time. They feared that he planned on killing them in order to take control of the family line. They saw that he spoke badly of them to their father. Then he announced his dreams in which the entire family would bow to him. Therefore, they thought that the only way to be safe from his ambitions would be to kill him.

In the end, when they saw that he indeed ruled Egypt, they realized that his dreams were true, and that they had sinned against him. Therefore, they were ashamed.

We can see that they did not realize their sin at first, since when Shimon was seized, they said, "***We are guilty for our brother, since we saw the plight of his soul when he begged us for mercy***" (Bereishis 42:21). They recognized their guilt in forgetting their bonds of brotherhood and cruelly ignoring his pleas for mercy, but they did not recognize their guilt in plotting murder and selling him into slavery that might have led to his death.

They thought they were right in doing so, but were still held accountable for ignoring his pleas for mercy.

Such was the case with Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi, who once had a calf run to him for protection when it was led to slaughter. "Go. You were created for this," he told it. There is no sin in slaughtering a calf, but Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi was held accountable for failing to show it mercy, and was punished with many years of illness (Bava Metzia 85a).

With this we can understand why Reuven told them, "***Did I not tell you not to sin against the child? Now his blood is also being demanded from us***" (Bereishis 42:22). He saw that they had not confessed their guilt in the deed itself, but just in having failed to show the high level of mercy expected of them at their great spiritual level. Therefore, Reuven told them that they were not being held accountable for having failed to show special mercy. They were held accountable for murder.

In light of all this, we can explain the double wording, "Woe to us on the day of judgment! Woe to us on the day of rebuke!" When a person contemplates his sins, he must take into account two things. First, even if he would not be punished for them, he should still be ashamed for having rebelled against Hashem and causing damage to all the worlds.

We learn this from Yosef's brothers. He was the youngest of them all, and they thought they were right in preventing him from claiming control of the family line – which might have led to strife and bloodshed. Still they were ashamed when the truth came to light, and they saw that Yosef really was destined for kingship.

This is the point of, "Woe to us on the day of rebuke." Rebuke in Hebrew is *tocheichah*, which comes from the same root as *hochachah* – which means to prove or clarify. After a person's death, he will be shown everything he did in his life. He will then understand how much damaged he cause above through all of his sins. How he could help but be ashamed before the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu? The second point is, "Woe to us on the day of judgment," which refers to the punishment through which his sins will be corrected.

Chazal refer to these two points when they say, "Against your will you are destined to give judgment and accounting before the King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu" (Avos 3:1). Judgment refers to the punishment he will have to endure for his sins. Accounting refers to the shame he will feel when he sees an accounting of how many sins he committed and how much harm they caused.

Shame and Fear of Sin

For this reason, Chazal interpret the verse, "***In order that His fear may be upon you so that you do not sin,***" as a reference to shame, as we cited above. The main *yiras Shamayim* comes from being ashamed before Hashem.

A person does not do things that other people find disgusting, even if he will not be punished for it, simply because he is ashamed to do it. How much more so when a person realizes that he is constantly in the presence of Hashem, whose glory fills the world. He will be ashamed to do things that are disgusting to Hashem.

The highest kind of fear, which is awe of Hashem's greatness, is nothing other than a recognition that Hashem rules all worlds, His Presence fills all worlds, and nowhere is empty of His Presence (Zohar I, 11b). Such a recognition prevents a person from sinning, as David Hamelech said, "***I place Hashem before me at all times, and I will not slip from the right***" (Tehillim 16:8). He was confident that he would not slip from the right path, since he was always aware of Hashem's Presence.

This can help us understand the Gemara (Chagigah 5a) which states:

> When Rebbe Yochanan reached this verse, he would cry, "***Hashem will bring all deeds under judgment, and everything that is hidden***" (Koheles 12:14). What recourse is there for a slave whose master equates accidental ("hidden") infractions to deliberate ones! What does "*everything* that is hidden" come to add? Rav said that this includes killing a louse in front of someone else and causing him disgust.

This verse is the conclusion of Koheles. The verse before it states, "***In the end, after everything is heard, fear God … since this is the entirety of man***." This means that the basic premise of our devotion to Hashem is *yiras Shamayim,* as the Gemara states, "Hashem has nothing in his treasure-house but a store of *yiras Shamayim*" (Berachos 33b).

Yiras Shamayim is distinct from fear of punishment, which is a lower level. The real fear of Hashem is an awe of His exalted greatness. This sense of *yiras Shamayim* is also a kind of shame. When a person contemplates Hashem's greatness and splendor, and that His Shechinah is everywhere, he can imagine how he would act were he to be standing before mortal king. He would be ashamed to do anything that would detract from the king's honor.

This kind of *yiras Shamayim* is experience by the angels in Heaven, who are free from sin and therefore have no fear of punishment. Still, they have tremendous fear of Hashem in terms of their awe of His greatness, as Yechezkel described in His vision of the Divine Chariot, "***They have height and fear, and their height is covered with eyes on all four sides***" (Yechezkel 1:18). Since they are so high, they have a clear, unhindered perception of Hashem's glory and greatness. This is expressed as their having eyes on all sides, as if to say that they see Hashem's glory all around them.

This is in contrast to man, who can only see in one direction at a time. There are obstacles to his sight, such that if a king were to stand behind him, he would not be able to see the king and act as befits the king's honor. Man is dressed in a physical body, surrounded by the *yetzer hara* which distracts him and blinds him to Hashem's glory. In this sense, his awareness of Hashem and his *yiras Shamayim* are limited. Not so are the angels, who have no physical body and no *yetzer hara*. It is as if they have eyes on all sides to see Hashem's glory and fear Him.

The Entirety of Man

When a person perfects himself in the service of Hashem, such that he is constantly aware of Hashem's glory surrounding him at all times, he has merited to achieve true *yiras Shamayim*. This is the same *yiras Shamayim* experienced by the angels in Heaven.

This is the goal that Hashem wants us to achieve. "***In the end, after everything is heard, fear God … since this is the entirety of man***." The entire world was created so that man could reach this awareness of Hashem, even from this lowly physical plane in which Hashem's holiness is hidden. This is the purpose of the constriction of Hashem's revelation that we discussed above. Hashem rescinds His holiness from this lowest world, so that man – through his good deeds and pure thoughts – can draw that holiness back down from Heaven until the holiness visible in this world equals that which is visible in Heaven. Such is the state of the perfect servant of Hashem, whose heart and mind recognize Hashem's Presence surrounding him at all times, as do the angels.

Of this, Shlomo Hamelech said in Koheles, "***In the end, after everything is heard, fear God … since this is the entirety of man***." Chazal explain this to mean that the entire world was created for this (Berachos 6b). This is hinted to in the words, "*Bereishis bara Elokim*." Hashem created the world for the sake of the "*reishis*," the foremost thing, of which it is written, "***The foremost wisdom is fear of Hashem***" (Tehillim 111:10; Bereishis Rabbah 1:1). The letters of Bereishis can also be rearranged to spell ירא בשת, which means "fear and shame," referring to the awe of Hashem's greatness, as we discussed above.

The Awareness Achieved at Har Sinai

With this we can understand the Torah's description of Kabbalas HaTorah at Har Sinai (Shemos 20:15-17):

> The entire nation saw the sounds, the fires, the blast of the shofar and the smoking mountain, and the nation was afraid. They shuttered and stepped back to stand from afar. They said to Moshe, "You speak to Hashem on our behalf and we will hear from you. Let Hashem not speak with us (directly), lest we die from it." Moshe said to them, "Do not fear, since Hashem has come to test you, so that His fear may be upon you so that you do not sin."

When Bnei Yisrael saw the awesome revelation of the Shechinah, all the layers of Heaven parted before them. "***You have been shown so that you will know that Hashem is God, and there is nothing else besides Him***" (Devarim 4:35). They saw that Hashem is the First Cause of all the worlds; His Presence fills all the worlds; and all the worlds are like nothing compared to Him, as Rav Chaim of Volozhin writes (Nefesh Hachaim 3).

They feared that this revelation of light would cause this lowest physical world to cease to exist. In fact, their bodies were unable to endure this revelation. Chazal teach us that with each word that Hashem spoke, their souls fled their bodies and they had to be resurrected (Shabbos 98b). Therefore, they asked Moshe to act as an intermediary, so that Hashem's word would be revealed indirectly, through a chain of descent that would allow them to experience it in a way they could endure and understand in this low physical world.

Moshe answered them that they should not fear. This level of revelation was not meant to continue. It was necessary only for the moment, in order to instill in them a recognition of Hashem. They had to see, even if just for a moment, that although

Hashem's glory fills all the worlds, He wondrously conceals His Presence to allow rise for the *yetzer hara* and give man an opportunity for free choice.

This revelation imprinted on our nation a recognition that would last until the end of time, such that every Jew would be able to capture in his mind's eye, to some extent, the revelation that was witnessed by our 600,000 ancestors when they received together the Torah at Har Sinai. We would be able to see, on some level, that Hashem is really everywhere.

This recognition is what leads to true *yiras Shamayim*, which is not just fear of punishment, but a sense of shame. It is a fear of the sin itself, as opposed to the punishment for sin. This is what is meant by the verse, "***So that His fear may be upon you so that you do not sin***." They should be afraid of sin itself, and not of the punishment for sin.

This is truly the highest level of all. When a person has this recognition in his mind, he will never come to sin. The capacity for feeling shame is an inheritance of the entire Jewish nation, which we received when we stood at Har Sinai. Therefore, Chazal say that anyone who has no shame can be assured that his forefathers did not stand at Har Sinai (Kallah, 1).

When a person has a sense of shame, he will be ashamed to sin before the glory of Hashem which is everywhere. If he sins, he shows that he is not ashamed before Hashem.

For this reason, Shlomo Hamelech wrote in the final verses of Koheles, "***In the end, after everything is heard, fear God … since this is the entirety of man. Hashem will bring all deeds under judgment, and everything that is hidden.***" From here Chazal learn that accidental ("hidden") sins are equated to deliberate sins. A person cannot claim as an excuse that his *yetzer hara* overpowered him and made him forget about Hashem, until he got into the habit of sinning even without intent.

He should have been ashamed to sin. He should have made use of the trait of shame, which he inherited from his forefathers who stood at Har Sinai with his own soul among them, as is written, "***Not with our forefathers alone did Hashem seal a covenant, but with us who are here today***" (Devarim 5:3).

The example cited by the Gemara of disgusting another person by killing a louse is a perfect analogy. Hashem's glory fills the world. A person who sins rebels against the King in His presence, by doing something that offends the King's honor.

The Revival of Teshuvah

There are three stages of *teshuvah.* First, one must regret one's sins and abandon them. Then, one must to confess before Hashem. Finally, one must commit to improving in the future by making the necessary safeguards that will prevent relapsing into sin.

It is impossible for a person to abandon his sinful ways entirely, unless he has first internalized how bad were the things that he did, and is ashamed of himself to the

point that he is disgusted by the thought of repeating them. As the Navi said, "***Be ashamed, House of Yisrael***" (Yermiyahu 14:3).

It is a high level when a person does *teshuvah*, not out of fear of punishment, but out of sincere disgust of the sin itself. Such a recognition brings a person to loathe his previous sinful ways and humble his heart.

Of this it is written, "***He bears sin and passes over iniquity for the remnants of His nation***" (Micha 7:18). Chazal explain that Hashem bears the sins of those who are as humble as (unwanted) remnants (Rosh Hashanah 17b). Their humility shows that they are truly regretful, which uproots their sins as if they had never been committed.

This also includes an aspect of *teshuvah m'ahavah* – *teshuvah* inspired by love for Hashem. When *teshuvah* is inspired by fear of Hashem, one's deliberate sins are considered as accidental sins. When *teshuvah* is inspired by love of Hashem, one's deliberate sins are transformed into merits (Yoma 86b).

The difference between *teshuvah* inspired by fear and *teshuvah* inspired by love can be understood when we consider the effects of sin and how they are repaired. When a person sins, he drives Hashem's holiness away from the place where the sin was committed. This leaves a vacuum in which a destructive spirit of impurity is formed. Impurity is nothing other than a lack of Hashem's light, as is written, "***All the nations are as nothing***" (Yeshayah 40:17).

The 365 prohibitions of the Torah correspond to the 365 physical sinews of the body, and the 365 spiritual sinews of the soul. The 248 positive commandments correspond to the 248 organs of the body and the corresponding spiritual organs of the soul. When a person commits a sin with his body, or fails to uphold a mitzvah, he drives away the holiness of his soul from that sinew or organ. A vacuum is left, into which a spirit of impurity arises. If a person sins to the extent that he banishes the holiness of his soul from his body entirely, he is left with no spiritual lifeforce in his body, and he is considered as dead, as Chazal say, "The wicked even as they live are considered as dead" (Berachos 18b).

The spirit of impurity that a person creates through his sins remains attached to his soul. Since the soul is attached to the body, it would make sense that the spirit of impurity would drain the lifeforce from his body until he actually died. It is nothing other than an act of great kindness on Hashem's part, that the spirit of impurity is nourished by Heaven instead, until a person does teshuvah and rids himself of the impurity (as we explained above on page 49).

When a person does *teshuvah* out of fear of punishment, he does not free himself from the impurity entirely, since he does not really regret his sin. He just regrets that he will have to be punished for it. Had he been able to do the sin again without getting punished, he would do so. Therefore, although his *teshuvah* weakens the spirit of impurity, it does not destroy it. Of this kind of *teshuvah* it is written, ***"Even if you wash it with cleansers, your sins are a stain before Me"*** (Yermiyahu 2:22).

However, when a person does *teshuvah* out of love for Hashem, his sin is uprooted entirely and the spirit of impurity is destroyed. The light of his soul then returns to the place that it left. A person who does this kind of *teshuvah* experiences a resurrection.

The aspects of his soul and body that were considered as dead due to the impurity that rested upon them, are revived by the light of the soul that returns to shine upon them. Of this it is written, "***I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that he shall return from his ways and live***" (Yechezkel 18:23).

With this we can understand the verses, "***When the wicked returns from the wickedness that he did, and does justice and righteousness, he revives his soul. When he fears and returns from all his sins, he shall live and not die"*** (Yechezkel 18:27-28). At first glance, the second verse seems to be a needless repetition of the first. However, upon closer inspection we see that they refer to the two kinds of *teshuvah* that we discussed above.

The first verse refers to a person who does *teshuvah* out of love for Hashem. He is not just afraid of the punishment for his sin. He is disgusted by the sin itself. Since he is so remorseful and pained over his sin, he makes for himself boundaries and fences that will prevent him from ever repeating it. He becomes even more pious than ever before, just to make sure that he will never slip back into sin. As such, his sins drive him towards greater heights of merit.

"He does justice and righteousness." "*Justice"* refers to the law. He follows the law from now on and no longer sins. *"Righteousness"* refers to the extra boundaries and fences that he accepts upon himself, which are not required by law. "***He revives his soul,"*** in a manner akin to the ultimate resurrection of the dead.

When the resurrection comes, the bodies will be revived with a strength greater than they had when they first lived. So too, when a person returns in *teshuvah* from love of Hashem, he draws down upon his physical spirit a new light from his supernal soul above.

The second verse refers to a person who does *teshuvah* out of fear of punishment. He does not seek to add boundaries and fences that will make his life unnecessarily difficult. Suffice it for him to stop sinning and spare himself from punishment. ***"When he fears and returns from all his sins,"*** – when his *teshuvah* is inspired by fear of punishment, "***He shall live and not die"*** – he spares himself from the death caused by sin, but he does not gain a higher level of life, since his sin has not been entirely erased.

Sackcloth and Ashes

Sincere regret is an essential part of *teshuvah*. This involves mourning over one's bad deeds and over the damage he has done to his soul, as is written, "***This is the fast day that I choose, the day in which a person afflicts his soul. When he hangs down his head like an agmon, and places sackcloth and ashes. This is called a fast and a day that is favorable to Hashem***" (Yeshayah 58:5).

He hangs down his head in shame, like a person who cannot bear to look in the face of the one from who he is ashamed. Since Hashem's glory fills the world, he is ashamed to lift his head anywhere in the world.

Chazal tell us, "When a person haughtily walks with an upright posture, it is as if he pushes away the legs of the Shechinah, of which it is written, ***'The whole world is filled with His glory"***" (Berachos 43b).

By walking proud and upright, he shows that he is not ashamed before Hashem, even after all he has done to drive Hashem's supernal light away from the world. He walks around unashamed, as if Hashem's glory did not fill the entire world, of which it is written, ***"The Earth is My footstool"*** (Yeshayah 61:1). It is as if he thinks that Hashem is not here, and therefore he has no one from whom to be ashamed.

The verse above continues, "***He places sackcloth and ashes,"*** referring to another important aspect of *teshuvah*. The soul descends to the world dressed in a garment of light, which a person loses when he sins. Such was the case with Adam and Chava. After they sinned, "They realized that they were unclothed." They had lost their garment of holiness. When a person sins, his soul is dressed instead in proverbial garments of sackcloth, of which it is written, "***One may not enter the king's presence dressed in sackcloth***" (Esther 4:2). In recognition of the spiritual sackcloth that his sins brought upon his soul, the *baal teshuvah* dresses his body in sackcloth too.

He places ashes upon himself, in recognition of the sins that drew his soul down into dust and ashes. The purpose of man's descent into this physical world is to uplift the body, which is formed from dust, and attach it to its spiritual source in Heaven though his Torah and mitzvos. If he fails to do so, then his soul separates from his body and returns to Heaven, while "***the dust (of his body) returns to the Earth***" (Koheles 12:7). To atone for the sins that cause this, he humbles his body down into dust and ashes.

Sins of Speech

As we discussed above, the worst sins are those of speech, including empty chatter, *lashon hara*, *rechilus*, and informing to the authorities. The reason that sins of speech are so severe is that holy speech in words of Torah creates "***new Heavens and a new Earth***" (Yeshayah 65:17, Zohar I 5a). As a person studies Torah, Hashem speaks the words of Torah together with him (as far as this may be said). Thereby, new worlds are created, as is written, "I will place my words in your mouth … to plant the Heavens and found the Earth" (*Yeshayahu* 51:16).

However, just as the entire world was created by the speech of Hashem, the opposite is also true. When a person sullies his lips with forbidden speech, or even just with senseless chatter, his words give power to the *yetzer hara*, whose first deed was to induce Chava to eat from the Tree of Knowledge by telling her *lashon hara* about Hashem (Taanis 8a). The *yetzer hara* was jealous of man's power to guide and sustain creation through his speech. Therefore, it used the power of speech against him, to destroy what he had made. With every forbidden word that a person speaks, he gives power to the *yetzer hara*, and creates worlds of emptiness and chaos.

With this we can understand the teaching of Chazal, that man's fingers were made to be smooth and pointed like a tent peg ("*yeted*"), so that he could stick his fingers in his ears to prevent himself from hearing *lashon hara* (Kesubos 5a).

The depth of this is as follows. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 26:2) states that snake was asked why it slithers between the fences. "Since I was the first to break down the fence of the world, I became an executioner for all future fence-breakers." As we explained above, Hashem created this physical world by constricting the revelation of His glory, which allowed room for the existence of evil and darkness. This was necessary so that

man would have free choice to choose between good and evil. Through his good deeds, he would shine light into the darkness.

The supernal light of which we speak is divided into two categories. There is the light that is seen in Heaven, where there is the greatest revelation of Hashem's glory. Then there is the light that descends to this world through man's good deeds, revealing Hashem's glory in this world. When Hashem's glory is revealed below, the *yetzer hara* has no power. Such was the case with the Plague of the Firstborn and the Splitting of the Red Sea. The entire world saw His splendor and greatness, and even the nations proclaimed Hashem's Kingship over the world.

Such was also the case before Adam's sin. The whole world was filled with holiness, and the *yetzer hara* had no opportunity to tempt man into sin with its lies. The only way it could find was to tempt Chava into eating from the Tree of Knowledge between Good and Evil. This represents the use of human reason to challenge Hashem's word and deny the truth of anything that is not evident to our understanding. This line of philosophy became a stumbling block that eventually led many of Adam's descendants to deny Hashem's Torah, His involvement with the world, or even His very existence.

In our own times, this trap is all too prevalent. Many of our nation have fallen into the heresy of mocking the words of our Sages, denying prophecy and miracles, and disbelieving in Hashem's interaction with the world – all because they are unable to understanding these things with their limited reason.

Such was the ruse of the snake who spoke falsely of Hashem and thereby brought Adam and Chava to sin. "***Didn't Hashem tell you not to eat from any of the trees of the garden?***" it said (Bereishis 3:1). This same trick exists until today, as the *yetzer hara* leads people with its lies down the slippery path of philosophy, to question, doubt and deny Hashem. When Chazal tell us that Adam was an *apikores* (Sanhedrin 38b), they mean that his sin allowed for the rise of *apikorsim* among his descendants.

The snake was the first to break the fence of the world, in the sense that there had been no entrance point for evil until then. The light of Hashem's holiness that shone into the world was too powerful for evil to exist. Through man's sin, this intensity of light became hidden from the world and continued to shine only in Heaven. The world was then divided in two. The Heavens remained the abode of light, while the Earth became the abode of darkness.

As we explained, the term "light" is used to represent the revelation of Hashem's glory and honor. In Heaven, His glory remains perfectly evident. There is no *yetzer hara* in Heaven, no power of evil, and no room to doubt Hashem's presence or His control of the world. In this sense, Chazal say that light was created from Hashem's garments (Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer Ch. 3). His "garments" are a metaphor for the revelation of His power. The metaphor implies that we do not see Hashem Himself, but only the "clothes" through which He presents Himself.

This is the "light" – the revelation of Hashem's presence – which is evident in Heaven forever. In this world below, it is hidden, and can be seen only through our *emunah* in the words that were given to our prophets and at Har Sinai, and then passed down as an inheritance from one generation to the next, as is written, "***Your emunah is***

from generation to generation…" (Tehillim 119:90). This *emunah* allows for the continued existence of this mundane world, as the verse then states, "… ***You prepared the world and it stands***."

The Hebrew word fence is גדר which is equal in *gematria* to the Hebrew word for light, אור. The "fence of the world" was the light that revealed Hashem's Presence and made it impossible to deny Him. As long as Adam was attached to the Tree of Life, which is the Torah, this light was evident to him, and he was protected from sin[12].

The Light of Torah

For this reason, the Torah is often referred to as light, as in the verse, "***A mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light***" (Mishlei 6:23). When Moshe was born, the entire house was filled with light (Megillah 14a), since Moshe was destined to bring the Torah of light to Klal Yisrael. The "house" refers to the home in which he was born, but it also refers to the entire world, Heaven and Earth, which were reunited at last when Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the Torah and the Heavens were bent down to the mountaintop to give it to him.

The Hebrew word for house is בית which is twice the *gematria* of the inner two letters of light, א-ור. This represents the two aspects of light, that which shines in Heaven and that which descends to the Earth. When Moshe Rabbeinu brought the Torah down to Earth, these two lights became connected, completing the "house" of creation. It was as if a sturdy peg was driven into the ground, to hold up the tent of creation.

When Chazal say that the snake slithers "between the fences," they meant that it divided the fence of Earth from the fence of Heaven, and the light of Earth from the light of Heaven, such that Hashem's glory would be evident only in Heaven, but hidden here on Earth until mankind would be able to reveal it again through our mitzvos. Of this it is written, "***The Heavens are Hashem's, and the Earth He gave to mankind***" (Tehillim 115:16).

The snake was the "***slanderer who separates people from their Master***" (Mishlei 16:28). When a person sullies his lips with forbidden speech, he empowers the *yetzer hara* to spread evil and destruction, and gives rise to the wicked and the *apikorsim* in the world.

For this reason, the punishment for *lashon hara* is worse than for any other sin. No sin has such power to spread impurity in the world, as does *lashon hara*. This sin stands in direct contrast to the mitzvah of Torah study, whose reward is also unparalleled. All other mitzvos count as just one mitzvah. For example, sitting in a sukkah for seven days counts as just one mitzvah. However, when a person studies Torah, each word is counted as a mitzvah unto itself. Each word creates an entire world of holiness.

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[12] I cut things down here

, כל זמן שאדה"ר היה אחוז בעה"ח אשר בתוך הגן, והוא התורה התמימה, חמדה גנוזה, שהוא אור לבושו
ית' ממש, גילוי כוחותיו ומידותיו, שבהם מתגלה לנבראיו, והם כתנות אור שהיה אדה"ר מלובש בהם

The opposite is true of *lashon hara*. Each word creates its own destructive force of evil, which cast impurity upon his soul after he dies, as the Vilna Gaon writes in his letter. For each word of *lashon hara*, the soul is thrown from one end of the world to the other in punishment. Just as *lashon hara* causes division among people and robs them of their peace, so too the soul of the person who spoke it will know no peace.

Of this it is written, "***A man of (evil) tongue will not stand upon the land. A man of evil extortion will be hunted to hell,***" (Tehillim 140:12). A person who speaks *lashon hara* will never find peace. The evil forces he created have no sustenance of their own, other than that which they extort from the side of holiness. These forces will hunt him down and chase him from one end of the world to the other.

With this we can understand that not only is the sin of speaking *lashon hara* so terrible, but the sin of listening to *lashon hara* – even if one does not believe it – is also terrible. The very sound that goes into his ears damages his soul. The evil words infect the air that carries them with a powerful force of impurity. They drive away the holiness wherever they go, leaving in its place evil and destruction. This air enters the ears and mind of the person who listens, confusing his minds with the letters of the evil *lashon hara* that he heard.

To prevent this, Hashem gave us fingers shaped like tent pegs, which we can place in our ears to prevent ourselves from even hearing *lashon hara*. There is deep symbolism in this advice.

The 28 letters of the Torah (22 basic letters and 6 end letters) are inscribed upon the 28 joints of the hands. The various combinations of these letters into words create awesome powers, through which the world was created. Of this it is written, "***When I see Your Heavens, the work of Your fingers***" (Tehillim 8:4), and "***My hand established the Earth and My right hand measured the Heavens***" (Yeshayah 48:13).

Therefore, putting one's fingers in one's ears represents using the 28 letters of the holy Torah to protect oneself from the impurity of *lashon hara*. Protecting the two ears constitutes a fence (גדר) on each side. The *gematria* of two times גדר is יתד (tent-peg), which also equals twice the *gematria* of אור (light), showing that the light of the Torah is a fence that protects us from *lashon hara*.

Chazal tell us that the remedy for those who speak *lashon hara* is to increase their Torah study, as is written, "***The Tree of Life heals the tongue***" (Mishlei 15:4; Erchin 15b). According to what we wrote above, this is well understood. Just as he sinned with his speech, creating forces of evil that destroy the worlds of holiness, each word of Torah that he studies creates holy angels. Every word of Torah that a person speaks is repeated by Hashem, bringing new angels into existence (Chagigah 14a).

Torah study is a remedy not only for *lashon hara*, but for every sin in the world. It is more effective than hundreds of fasts and the most severe self-affliction, as Chazal often teach us.

Rain and Dew

"Let my lessons fall like rain, and my words flow like dew. Like winds on the grass" (Devarim 32:2). The Sifri (Haazinu 1) comments that the word "lessons" refers to the lessons of the Torah.

Torah is compared to rain. Just as rain brings life to man by causing crops to grow from the Earth, and without it he would die, so too a person who sins is dead in the sense that the limb with which he sinned is devoid of holiness (as we explained above). Torah allows that holiness to return and revive him.

Rain descends from Heaven to saturate the Earth and cause plants to grow, but really the potential for that growth already exists in the seed that is planted in the Earth. The entire tree, its branches and its fruit, all exist in potential in the seed. However, this potential cannot be brought out without rain.

The same is true of Torah. Each person has his own mission to accomplish in this Earth. No two people are alike. Each person was born with the special traits and skills that he needs to perform his task. However, all this is only in potential. Like a seed that grows only when watered, so too his potentials come to the surface only when inspired by a spirit sent from Heaven. This inspiration comes from Torah, which is compared to rain.

The double wording of the verse, "***Let my lesson fall like rain, and my words flow like dew,"*** refers to two different kinds of water, with a vast difference between them. Dew falls gently, causing no hardship or inconvenience. However, it has less effect than rain. It is just enough to preserve the moisture in the Earth, so that the seeds do not wither and die. Rain, on the other hand, can cause trouble, as is written, "***Rain drips on the day that people are locked (inside to avoid the storm)***" (Mishlei 27:15). However, it provides much greater benefit, since it provides enough water for the seeds to grow and produce fruit.

So too, there are two kinds of Torah study. A person can learn things that are simple, and do not require great effort. He can learn Tanach or interesting stories of *agadatah*. Such study has a great influence to help a person overcome his bad *middos*, inspire him towards *yiras Shamayim*, and prevent him from being swept away by the foolish distractions of this world. In this sense, Torah study protects him from sin, just as dew prevents seeds from dying in the Earth. However, it will not make him produce fruit, by turning him into a learned Torah scholar who knows the specific details of *halachah*. The study of *halachah* in depth requires hard work, as Chazal say, "The words of Torah cannot be preserved until a person kills himself over them," (Berachos 63b) and, "If a person said that he worked hard but did not succeed, do not believe him. If he said that he did not work hard but he succeeded anyway, do not believe him. If he said he worked hard and succeeded, believe him" (Megillah 6b).

"Let my lessons fall like rain" refers to the parts of Torah that require hard work, concentration and difficulty in order to understand them. The Hebrew word used for "fall" is *ya'arof*, which can also mean kill)as we find in the context of the *eglah arufah* – the calf slaughtered in atonement for an unsolved murder). This symbolizes how a person must "kill himself" with hard work in order to achieve the aspect of Torah that is compared to rain and makes fruit grow.

The Hebrew word for lessons is "*lekach*," which literally means "takings." It is the portion of the *Torah She'Baal Peh* that Moshe Rabbeinu received during the forty days that he stood on Har Sinai, as the Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 11:10) says:

> Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael, "How much difficulty I endured for the Torah. How hard did I have to work for it. I was there for forty days. I walked among the fiery angels, whose breath could burn the entire world. I gave my life and my blood for it. Just as I worked hard for it, so too should you work hard to study it."

"Like Winds on the Grass"

The verse then continues, "***Like winds on the grass."*** Personality traits, both good and bad, are ingrained on a person's spirit from the moment he is born, such as anger, mercy, generosity, arrogance, humility, compassion, cruelty, stinginess, largess and the like. Each personality trait and its opposite can be used for good in the service of Hashem, or *chas v'shalom* the opposite. Each person's spirit contains a mixture of good and bad, as a result of Adam's sin in eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which caused good and bad to become mixed together.

Man was created in order to bring his good potential to the surface, and separate the good from the bad. Of this Chazal say that we must serve Hashem with all our "hearts." The plural form of the word is used, signifying that we must serve Hashem with both hearts, the *yetzer tov* and the *yetzer hara* (Berachos 54a), by harnessing even our bad traits in the service of Hashem.

Chazal tell us, "There is no mussar other than Torah" (Sifri, Haazinu 1), as is written, "***Hear my son the mussar of your father and do not abandon the Torah of your mother***" (Mishlei 8:10). 'Hear my son the mussar of your father,' refers to the Written Torah. 'Do not abandon the Torah of your mother,' refers to the Oral Torah.

A person should not think that character perfection can be achieved without Torah study, for example by following ethical doctrines like those of Aristotle. It is impossible for a person to purify his *middos* and transform his bad traits into good, except through the holy Torah. Torah guides a person on the straight path of Hashem. It teaches him how to use each character trait in the right way, and avoid the opposite.

As a person studies the Torah and the words of Chazal, he will see clearly mapped before him all the paths of Hashem. He will understand the proper guidelines for each personality trait. For example, generosity is a good trait, but it too has its limits. Chazal teach us, "Even the most generous person should not give away more than one fifth of his income, lest he become poor himself and need to take charity from others" (Kesubos 50a).

Humility is also a good trait, but Chazal teach us that a Torah scholar must have "one eighth of one eighth of arrogance" (Sotah 5a), lest he disgrace himself and bring dishonor to the Torah.

Man's character traits are apt to grow haphazardly. That is how Hashem created us. The trial of character improvement is to make order out of them, placing each in

its appropriate place. In this sense, character traits are like grass. When Hashem commanded the trees to grow, He said, ***"Let the earth sprout … fruit-bearing trees by their species."*** When He commanded the grass to grow, He said, "***Let the earth sprout grass,"*** but He did not say "to their species." Nonetheless, the blades of grass also sprouted individually, each in its proper place: "***And the earth gave forth grass according to its species***" (Bereishis 1:11-12).

The Gemara explains that the grass (or rather, the angel that oversees grass) realized that this was Hashem's will. Therefore, the blades of grass grew individually and in proper order, as Hashem desired, even without having been commanded to do so (Chullin 60a).

This is an example of how Hashem's will for creation is carried out, even without His express command. The same is true of our character improvement. He did not decree that we must be righteous, just as He did not decree that the blades of grass grow in proper order. He left room for us to choose for ourselves whether to be righteous or wicked. He created us with good and bad character traits, and left it up to us to cultivate our traits for good.

Still, it is His will that we be righteous. His plan for creation was that we choose good of our own accord. This plan will inevitably be carried out.

Through this we can answer the question we posed at the beginning of this essay. Although Hashem clearly wants us to be good, and His will be inevitably be carried out in the end, He left it up to us to choose good over bad from our own free will. These thoughts of His were never expressly commanded in the Utterances through which the world was created. This leaves us responsible to recognize and fulfill His will by ourselves, just as the grass did when it decided to grow individually without having been told to do so.

Hashem's Unspoken Thought

Whereas everything else was created through Hashem's speech, the Torah was Hashem's thought that preceded His speech. The word "*Bereishis*" is considered one of Ten Utterances through which the world was created (Rosh Hashanah 32a), even though it was not preceded by, "And Hashem said." This was the original intent that preceded Hashem's speech: *Bereishis* – for the sake of *reishis*, for the first and foremost thing in the world, which is the Torah, "***reishis chochma – the beginning of wisdom***" (Bereishis Rabbah 1:1, Tehillim 111:10).

Only through the Torah can a person cause the good within himself to overpower the evil, as was Hashem's unspoken thought and will for creation. Without the Torah, a person is left uncertain whether the good within him will triumph or the evil. Nothing else can help him uproot the evil that has token hold of him and return to a path of holiness. It is impossible for anything within the framework of "spoken" creation to help, since this would undermine the free choice that is integral to creation. The only thing that can help him is the unspoken "thought" of Hashem, which was not vocalized as one of the Utterances of creation. This is the Torah, which is our only

means of defeating the *yetzer hara*, as Chazal say, "I created the *yetzer hara* and I created the Torah as its antidote" (Kiddushin 30b).

Hashem created the *yetzer hara* as an essential part of creation, to maintain the balance between good and evil and ensure that people will have their own free will. It is impossible to circumvent this balance by any means other than reaching up towards something that is beyond the spoken Utterances of creation, which is the Torah, as Rav Chaim of Volozhin writes (Nefesh Hachaim 4:32).

The Torah is the unspoken will of Hashem, which allows a person's *middos* to develop in the proper way, just as the blades of grass grew individually, each in their own correct place, rather than in a chaotic mixture. This goal of cultivating the good *middos* and harnessing the bad *middos* towards good can be achieved only through the Torah. Therefore, the Torah is compared to, "***winds on the grass***."

Wisdom Before Birth

Chazal tell us that in the mother's womb, a candle shines over the head of the fetus. By its light, the fetus can see from one end of the world to the other. There, the fetus is taught the entire Torah, but as soon the baby is born an angel slaps it on its face and it forgets everything. Before it is born, it is sworn to an oath, "Be righteous and do not be wicked" (Niddah 30b).

These teachings seem odd. What point is there in taking an oath to be righteous, if a person will forget it as soon as he is born and be thrown to the devices of the *yetzer hara*? What point is there in learning the entire Torah, if it will be forgotten the moment he is born? The very idea of a fetus studying Torah seems strange to our understanding. What does all this mean?

Such enigmatic teachings of our Sages have been the subject of ridicule for the fools and the wicked, but this is simply because they are so far from the path of wisdom that they do not have the means to decipher its meaning. All these teachings are perfectly true, and can be understood quite literally, to those who have the wisdom to understand them.

The point of these teachings is a follows. The soul of man is an ethereal spirit of understanding, but the physicality of the body forms a partition that blocks its perception. While the fetus is being formed in the womb, the soul is only partially attached to the body. The aspect of the soul that has not yet descended to the body hovers over it, with nothing to hinder its vision. This aspect of the soul is the candle that shines over the fetus, allowing it see from one end of the world to the other.

Before birth, the soul is taught everything it is capable of knowing from the Torah. The soul receives the portion of the Torah allotted to it from Har Sinai, according to its root in Heaven. This latent Torah wisdom assists the person after he his born in overcoming the *yetzer hara*, correcting his deeds and perfecting his inborn *middos*.

Although a person has the free will to act as he chooses, he is assisted by the portion of Torah he received before he was born. This portion of Torah is itself the oath that binds him to be righteous.

He forgets everything when he is born, since he is then chained to the physical body, which blocks his sight and clouds his wisdom, thus leaving room for free choice between good and evil. Nonetheless, the Torah he learned in his mother's womb is a great benefit to him, since it allows him to regain through his studies the Torah that he once knew. As he regains his portion in the Torah, it assists him in withstanding the *yetzer hara* and fulfilling his oath to be righteous.

This dormant wisdom produces the thoughts of *teshuvah* that rise into a person's consciousness. Even the worst sinner sometimes has thoughts to be good. This comes from the holy Torah that was embedded in his soul before he was born. These good thoughts sink to the bottom of his subconscious, as the *yetzer hara* drags him into the vapid frivolities of his times, but in the end the good thoughts will rise to the surface. These thoughts are the chain that we discussed above (see page 38), which is the lifeline attached to each person, through which Hashem draws him back up so that he will not drown in a sea of evil.

The Key to Eternity

The Torah that a person learns before he is born is his key to eternal life. It is the means through which he will merit the World to Come, and to rise for the resurrection after the six millennia of this world are completed.

This is a deep point, to which Gemara (Bava Basra 79a) hints:

> Rav said: Anyone who abandons Torah study will be consumed by fire, as is written, "***I shall set My face against them. They have abandoned the fire (of Torah), and fire will consume them***" (Yechezkel 15:7). When Rav Dimi came (to Bavel), he said in the name of Rav Yochanan: Anyone who is lax in Torah study will fall into Gehinnom, as is written, "***He who strays from the path of wisdom will rest in the assembly of Refaim***" (Mishlei 21:16). *Refaim* refers to Gehinnom, as is written, "***He does not know that that Refaim is there, and in the depths of the Abyss are those she summoned***" (Mishlei 9:18).

Fire is used as a metaphor for a destructive force. Fire has incomparable power to decompose that which it consumes, and disassemble the base elements from which that thing is formed. In this sense, fire annuls that which exists.

The same is true of the proverbial "fires" of Gehinnom. They feed from the forces of evil, which as we explained above are nothing other than the vacuum left from the absence of Hashem's light. Evil is essentially the force of nothingness.

The judgment of Gehinnom is a process in which Hashem's light and kindness are hidden from a person, in order to punish him for his sins. Since the bad deeds that a person committed in his lifetime created forces of evil and destruction, these forces must be removed from him. The side of evil takes back that which belongs to it, leaving the person with only that which is good. This is the meaning of the verse, "***The time in which one man rules over another for his evil***" (Koheles 8:9). These are the "fires" of Gehinnom, which consume that which is evil in a person, and leaves only the good.

A certain element of evil becomes attached to a person as soon as he is conceived, as is written, "***I was formed in sin, and with sin my mother warmed me***" (Tehillim 51:7). Chazal tell us that the Hebrew words for man (איש) and woman (אשה) both contain the Hebrew word for fire (אש). This refers to the destructive force of evil that is present in each person from his conception. To separate this force of evil, everyone who is born must ultimately die. Chazal tell us, "There is no death without sin" (Shabbos 55a). This refers to the vacuum of holiness, which is the potential for evil that exists within each person.

However, the words for man and woman also contain Hashem's Name. The word for man (איש) contains the letter *yud*, and the word for woman (אשה) contains the letter *heh*. This is the root of supernal holiness that joins them in their union and invests holiness in their child. This is what enroots their child in holiness even before his birth. It is another aspect of the Torah that is taught to him before birth, as we discussed above.

Although the evil that was born with him will ultimately cause him to die, so that he can be cleansed of his evil, the holiness that was born with him ensures him that he will then rise for the resurrection. The letters of Hashem's Name, *yud* and *heh*, are so holy that the forces of evil have no power over them. These are the "***might and joy in His place***" (Divrei HaYomim I 16:27), referring to the place of eternal life (Shaar Hakavanos, Tefillas Hashachar 1).

Of this it is written, "***The dead will not praise Hashem*** - לֹא הַ֣תִּים יְהַלְלֹ֖ יָ" (Tehillim 115:17) referring to the letters *yud-heh*, through which the world beyond death was created. This potential for immortality was ingrained in a person before his birth, through the letters *yud* and *heh* of Hashem's holy Name. Throughout his life, whenever he studies Torah, the other two letters *vav* and *heh* also shine within him, causing the complete Name of Hashem to rest upon him. The Written Torah is represented by the letter *heh*, and the Oral Torah by the letter *vav* (see page 39). Through this Name, he merits eternal life and will rise for the resurrection in the seventh millennium.

To create the potential for this destiny to be fulfilled, it had to be inherent from the original inception of man. Therefore, he is given his portion in the Torah while he is in his mother's womb, even before he comes out into the world. This gives him the ability to prefect himself so that he will rise for the resurrection and earn eternal life.

This power is also compared to fire. It is the purifying fire of Heaven, of which it is written, "***My words are as fire, says Hashem***" (Yermiyahu 23:29). Chazal tell us that "fire consumes fire" (Yoma 21b), referring to the fire of holiness that consumes the evil fire of Gehinnom.

This is the holy fire that descended from Heaven to consume the sacrifices that were offered in the Beis Hamikdash (Yoma 53a). When a person sinned, he would offer an animal as a sacrifice, representing the animalistic nature of his spirit, which gave rise to all his sins. The fire that descended from Heaven would consume the animal sacrifice, and purge man's animalistic spirit of its sins.

Therefore, Chazal warn, "Anyone who abandons Torah study will be consumed by fire" (Bava Basra 79a). By abandoning the Torah, he loses his fire of holiness. He is left with only the fire of emptiness and lack that were ingrained within him from the fire

though which he was conceived. This is the fire that burns in Gehinnom, for which reason the Gemara concludes, "Anyone who is lax in Torah study will fall into Gehinnom" (ibid).

The Cleansing Power of Torah

This is another aspect of why the Torah is compared to dew, as we quoted above from the verse, ***"Let my words flow like dew***" (Devarim 32:2). The Gemara explains the verse, "***The dew of light is your dew***" (Yeshayah 26:19) to mean that all those who engage in the "dew" of Torah study will be revived by it for the resurrection. However, those who neither study nor support Torah study will not be revived (Kesubos 111b).

There is great depth to this metaphor. The verses in Iyov compare man to a tree that grows old and dies. However, its roots remain in the ground, and when nurtured by water they sprout new saplings, as if they were just now planted (Iyov, 14:8-9). The Torah that a person learns in his lifetime to the best of his ability is the moisture that causes him to be reborn from the Earth for the resurrection.

The verse states, "***Take with you words and return to Hashem***" (Hosheia 14:3). The Midrash explains that these are the words of the Torah (Sifri, Haazinu 1). This refers specifically to the "words with you," meaning the words of Torah that stem from the root of your soul, were taught to you in the womb, and were born with you into the world. These are the words that help a person overcome the *yetzer hara* and return to Hashem.

In the verses before the repetition of the Ten Commandments in Sefer Devarim, the Torah states, "***Hashem our God sealed a covenant with us at Chorev (Sinai). Not with our forefathers did Hashem seal this covenant, but with us, we who are here and all alive today***" (Devarim 5:2-3). From here we learn that all the souls that would ever be born were present at Har Sinai. Each one received the portion of Torah that corresponded to the root of his soul. All are "alive today," since they received the potential for eternal life. The Ten Commandments encompass the entire Torah, with all the details of halachah and even the insights that students would one day suggest to their teachers (Megillah 19b).

After the Ten Commandments, the Torah states, "***These are the words that Hashem spoke to the entire congregation from amidst the fire***" (Devarim 5:19). Just as the fire that descended to the Mizbei'ach purged the impurities of sin from the souls of those who offered the korbanos, the same is true of Torah study. Torah is a fire from Heaven, as is written, "***My words are as fire, says Hashem***" (Yermiyahu 23:29). It is greater than all the korbanos. Whereas each particular korban atones for a specific sin, Torah study atones for all sins (Zevachim 7a, Menachos 110a).

"Take with you words and return to Hashem. Say to Him, 'Bear all our sins, take instead our good deeds, and let the words of our mouth be in place of cows (korbanos)"" (Hosheia 14:3). Just as the korbanos uplifted the good intents of those who offered them to the highest heights, to give *nachas* to Hashem, so too do the words of our Torah study.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 38:4) comments on this verse that Klal Yisrael say to Hashem that we cannot afford to bring all the korbanos we owe Him. HaKadosh

Baruch Hu answers, "I ask only for your words of Torah, and I will forgive all your sins."

Similarly, the Tana D'vei Eliyahu (Rabbah, 18) compares Torah study to a mikveh that cleanses people from their impurities. "See how great is the power of Torah. It purifies the sinners of Klal Yisrael when they do *teshuvah,* even if they had been guilty of idolatry, as is written, ***'I shall sprinkle upon you pure waters and you will be made pure*** (Yechezkel 36:25)."

The Shofar Blast of Sinai

One of the reasons given for the mitzvah to blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah is to recall the shofar blast that was heard on Har Sinai. For this reason, the beracha for Shofaros in Rosh Hashanah Mussaf begins with a reference to Kabbalas HaTorah: "You were revealed in the cloud of Your glory upon Your holy nation to speak with them."

The first day of creation was the 25th of Elul. The sixth day was Rosh Hashanah, when Adam was created, sinned and banished from Gan Eden. That was when the power of evil rose in the world, and permission was given to the Satan to wage accusations against mankind. Therefore, it became a day of judgment for every year to come, when the Satan demands justice before the Court of Heaven (Zohar II, 32b).

When Adam sinned, darkness fell upon the world. The light of holiness became hidden by the cloud of evil that arose. Therefore, Rosh Hashanah is called "the holiday that is hidden" (Tehillim 81:4). As opposed the other holidays, which fall in the middle of the month when the moon is full, Rosh Hashanah falls on the beginning of the month when the light of the moon is hidden.

In Hashem's great mercy, He taught Klal Yisrael to blow the shofar to awaken the supernal light that shines from a world that is above sin, and untainted by Adam's fall. This is the world of *teshuvah* that preceded creation. This is the same world from which the Torah was given. Therefore, when the Torah was given, the Satan was confounded and unable to interfere (Tosefos 89a s.v. Torah).

For this reason, the Torah was also given amidst a mighty shofar blast and a revelation of light from the supernal worlds, which drove away all the forces of evil. The same shofar blast will signal the redemption, the ingathering of exiles and the destruction of evil forever.

The power of the shofar was introduced to the world by Akeidas Yitzchak. Through this, Avraham Avinu, the first forefather of Klal Yisrael, laid the foundation by which his descendants would be able to receive the Torah, overcome the *yetzer hara*, and escape judgment. By binding his son Yitzchak, who represents justice, he subdued the force of harsh judgment under the hands of his descendants.

The Akeidah created a precedent by which Avraham's descendants would be able to sacrifice their lives in sanctification of Hashem's Name, and devote themselves entirely to Torah and mitzvos to fulfill Hashem's will. This made them worthier than any other nation to receive the Torah. To signify the self-sacrifice that made Kabbalas HaTorah possible, Hashem gave the Torah amidst the shofar blast of a horn made from the ram offered in place of Yitzchak (Rashi, Shemos 19:13).

Each year on Rosh Hashanah, when the Satan raises its accusations as it did on the first Rosh Hashanah when Adam sinned, we blow the shofar to awaken then supernal light that subdues the forces of evil and frees us from their power. Such freedom is made possible through the light of Torah, as Chazal say, "***The writing of Hashem was engraved (charus) on the Tablets*** – Do not read this as 'engraved' (*charus*), but 'freed' (*cheirus*)" (Shemos 32:16; Avos 6:2).

For this reason, the Satan is confounded when it hears the shofar blown on Rosh Hashanah. It senses the awakening of the same light that will shine in the future when evil will be destroyed forever, and feels that its end is near (Tosefos, Rosh Hashanah 16b).

The Light of Yom Kippur

The second set of Tablets were given when Moshe Rabbeinu descended from Har Sinai on Yom Kippur, signifying that Hashem had forgiven us for the sin of the Golden Calf. When Bnei Yisrael worshipped the Golden Calf, they lost all the heights that they had achieved with Kabbalas HaTorah. The forces of evil were empowered, and Moshe was forced to pray for our forgiveness. His prayers succeeded in drawing down a light of *teshuvah* from a world beyond sin, a world where evil has no grasp.

This light is revealed again each year on Yom Kippur. Therefore, it became a day of forgiveness and acceptance of *teshuvah*. The Satan has no power to raise accusations on Yom Kippur (Yoma 20a). When the Beis Hamikdash stood, the shofar was blown every fiftieth year on Yom Kippur, signifying the release of all the slaves (Vayikra 25:9). So too, it signifies our release from the slavery of the *yetzer hara*.

In this sense, Yom Kippur is also a day of Kabbalas HaTorah. Chazal tell us, "There were never such joyous days for Klal Yisrael as Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur … as is written, ***'Go out and see, O daughters of Tzion … on his wedding day and on the day of his rejoicing***'" (Shir Hashirim 3:11; Taanis 26b). His wedding day refers to Kabbalas HaTorah, when we receive the Torah that inspires us to return to Hashem in *teshuvah*.

With this we can understand the Midrash with which we began this discourse. "***Hashem is my light and my salvation***": *my light* – on Rosh Hashanah, *and my salvation* – on Yom Kippur (Tehillim 27:1; Vayikra Rabbah 21:4). Hashem is my light on Rosh Hashanah, when the supernal light first begins to shine into this dark world, through the shofar blast that subdues the *yetzer hara*. This brings our salvation on Yom Kippur, when the Satan is struck silent and unable to accuse. It is then that we are forgiven for our sins.

Call to Action for Yom Kippur

Therefore, my dear Jewish brethren, rise from your slumbers. Awaken before the arrival of the great day of Hashem, Yom Kippur, when the gates of mercy are opened and a Divine flow of bounty descends on the souls of Bnei Yisrael. This is similar to the light that will be renewed in the World to Come, in the seventh millennium, when total forgiveness will be achieved for all the sins of Klal Yisrael from the beginning of time until the end, as is written, ***"At that time, says Hashem, the sins of Yisrael will be sought but there will be none, and the sins of Yehuda will not be found, for I will forgive all***

who remain" (Yermiyahu 50:20), and ***"I shall sprinkle upon you pure waters and you will be made pure"*** (Yechezkel 36:25).

A spark of this great light is kindled each year. Everything that occurs over the course of the year reawakens on Yom Kippur, and all the wrongs of the year are then corrected. So too, everything that occurs over the course of history will reawaken when the seventh millennium arrives, and all the wrongs of history will then be corrected.

However, the gates of forgiveness can be opened only through our own preparations. Therefore, these holy days of *teshuvah* are days of introspection. Each person must set aside time each day to make an accounting with the Creator, examine his deeds of the previous year, and purify himself of his sins through sincere *teshuvah*, remorse, confession and tears. These days include within them all the days of the year. Each of the seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is an opportunity to correct all the sins we committed on that day of the week throughout the year. We receive special help from Heaven to return in *teshuvah*, through the supernal light that now shines upon our souls, as we explained above.

The Ten Utterances through which the world was created are heard during the Ten Days of Teshuvah, when the world is recreated anew each year. All the days of the year are included in these ten days, through which they ascend and are brought to perfection. This mirrors the seventh millennium, which will include and bring to perfection all six millennia of this world. The seventh millennium will be the World to Come, in which there will be no eating or drinking, and the righteous will sit with their crowns upon their heads and bask in the radiance of the Shechinah (Berachos 17a).

So too is Yom Kippur, when all of Klal Yisrael become like pure and holy angels, who neither eat nor drink. Even the Satan is forced to admit that Klal Yisrael are like holy angels on Yom Kippur (Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer, Ch. 45).

Yom Kippur parallels the tenth of the Ten Utterances, "***I have given you all the vegetation that is planted on the face of the Earth and all the fruit bearing trees as your food*** " (Bereishis 1:29). When Adam sinned, he was punished by having his food cursed, with edible and inedible mixed together. This parallels the Tree of Knowledge, which caused good and evil to become mixed together. To correct this, we were commanded to abstain from all food and drink on Yom Kippur, and to become pure and holy like the angels.

Just as Adam did *teshuvah* and was acquitted in his judgment, so too Yom Kippur was prepared as a day of atonement and forgiveness for all future generations. It is a day when Heaven and Earth connect and are bound together by the souls of Bnei Yisrael.

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 21:4) comments on the verse, ***"Hashem is my light***" – on Rosh Hashanah, ***"and my salvation"*** – on Yom Kippur, "***from who should I fear?***" (Tehillim 27:1). The Midrash then adds the verse, "***My song and salvation is Hashem*** (*yud-heh*)" (Shemos 15:2).

The *yud* through which the Heavens were created is attached to the *heh* through which the Earth was created, by means of the Torah studied by Bnei Yisrael, as we explained above. The Torah is the light that shines upon the souls of Bnei Yisrael from

above, inspiring us to return in *teshuvah* so that we will not drown in the evil of this world. Unlike the other nations, every Jew is assured that he will reach his spiritual perfection, and no one will be lost.

When the Satan is Powerless

The verse concerning Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur then continues, ***"When the wicked approach to consume my flesh"*** (Tehillim 27:2). This refers to the angels appointed over the nations of the world, who complain about the favoritism shown to Bnei Yisrael. "Master of the Universe! They also worship idols, commit illicit relations and murder. Why do they not descend to Gehinnom like the gentiles do?" (Vayikra Rabbah, 21:4).

These angels accuse us of the sins we listed above, which are as severe as idolatry, illicit relations and murder. Terrible accusations are raised in Heaven. "How are they any better than the gentiles?" the angels ask. Nonetheless, Bnei Yisrael are indeed distinct from the other nations, through the Torah which maintains our attachment to Hashem no matter how low we may fall.

On Yom Kippur, this attachment is strengthened. A light descends upon us from Heaven to inspire us to return in *teshuvah* and atone for our sins throughout the year. This was the day on which the Torah was given again through the second set of Tablets. Therefore, the Satan has no power to raise accusations against us on this day.

"They are my assailants and my enemies" (ibid). The Midrash comments that there are 365 days to the year, but "The Satan" (השטן) in *gematria* equals 364. It is authorized to assault us on 364 days of the year, but on Yom Kippur it is powerless.

"If an army encamps against me, I shall not fear" (ibid, 3). This refers to the forces of evil, which draw us towards sin. ***"In 'this' I trust"*** – in the power of the Torah, of which it is written, "This is the Torah that Moshe placed before Bnei Yisrael" (Devarim 4:44) and was given to us again with the second Tablets on Yom Kippur.

Before Whom Do You Purify Yourselves

With this we can explain the teaching of Chazal (Yoma 85b) that we quoted above:

> Fortunate are your Yisrael. Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as is written, ***"I shall sprinkle upon you pure waters,"*** and ***"Hashem is the mikveh of Yisrael."*** Just as a mikveh purifies those who are impure, so too does HaKadosh Baruch Hu purify Bnei Yisrael.

We are fortunate in the assurance that Hashem will purify us from our sins on Yom Kippur. However, we should may not rely on this alone, since Yom Kippur atones only together with our *teshuvah* (Yoma 86a). Therefore, we must prepare ourselves for Yom Kippur by purifying ourselves before Hashem in *teshuvah*.

This is comparable to a person who immerses in a mikveh. Even if the waters of the mikveh are perfectly pure and valid, it will not purify him unless he first cleans his

body from the dirt and grime that separates his skin from the water. Otherwise his immersion in the mikveh is worthless.

The same is true of our preparations for Yom Kippur. We must cleanse ourselves of our sins through sincere remorse, confession and resolving never to repeat them. We must also be careful to avoid the twenty-four things listed by the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah, 4:1), which prevent a person from returning in *teshuvah*.

Another parallel between Yom Kippur and immersing in a mikveh is found in the Gemara (Yoma 85b), which states that if a person says, "I will sin and then do *teshuvah*," he is not given the opportunity to do *teshuvah*. If he says, "I will sin and Yom Kippur will atone," then Yom Kippur does not atone. By relying on Yom Kippur to atone for his sins, he shows that he does not really regret them. He is not ashamed of his misdeeds. He feels confident to sin as he pleases, knowing that he can rely on Yom Kippur to escape punishment and then sin again.

This is like immersing in a mikveh while holding a *sheretz* in his hand. He believes that the purity of the mikveh will cleanse him not only from the impurities of his past, but even from the impurities of the present and the future. This is a false assumption. The mikveh cleanses only from the impurities that a person has already abandoned (Nedarim 75b).

Therefore, the Mishna states, "Before Whom do you purify yourselves and Who purifies you?" We must purify ourselves in *teshuvah* before Hashem comes to purify us on Yom Kippur, just as person must remove the dirt from his body before immersing in a mikveh. Then, our Father in Heaven will purify us through the great light that is revealed on Yom Kippur, which distinguishes Klal Yisrael from all other nations. This is the light of the Torah, which is a link that attaches every Jew to his source, so that he will never be lost.

Of this it is written, ***"This day shall atone for you to purify you…"*** (Vayikra 16:30). In truth, the holiness of the day itself brings atonement for Klal Yisrael. The awesome light that is revealed on Yom Kippur crushes all the forces of evil. Therefore, the Satan has no power to wage accusations on Yom Kippur. However, we must lend our own assistance to this, as the verse continues, ***"… from all your sins, purify yourselves before Hashem."*** We must purify ourselves through *teshuvah* before Yom Kippur arrives.

The Mishna cites a proof for all this from the verse, ***"Hashem is the mikveh of Yisrael."*** Hashem compared the purification of Klal Yisrael to a mikveh. First a person must cleanse his body, including the hidden places which represent that sins that we are so accustomed to performing, that we forget they are even forbidden. These sins prevent people from returning in perfect *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* must also include a sincere commitment to change. Otherwise, it is like immersing in a mikveh while holding a sheretz in his hand.

If a person does *teshuvah* properly, there is no doubt that he will be forgiven, purified of his sins, and judged favorably for a good year, Amen.

Siyum HaShas: The Fiftieth Gate of Wisdom

Rebbe Yehuda HaNassi compiled the Six Orders of the Mishna, presenting the general rules and details of all the mitzvos that Hashem commanded us, based on the tradition that Moshe Rabbeinu received from Har Sinai. He then concluded by describing the eternal state of perfection with which the righteous will be rewarded in the World to Come, in return for fulfilling these mitzvos. The final Mishna in Shas reads as follows:

> R' Shimon ben Chalafta said, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu found no vessel capable of containing blessing other than peace" … R' Yehoshua ben Levi said that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is destined to grant each and every tzaddik 310 worlds of reward, as is written, ***"I have*** (יש) ***reward to bestow upon those who love Me and all their storehouses I will fill"*** (*Uktzin* 3:12). (יש equals 310 in gematria.)

The Oneness of Hashem

To explain why this is a fitting conclusion for the Six Orders of Mishna, we must first examine how the Six Orders begin. Since the Torah is infinite, the Six Orders of the Mishna are an unending cycle, such that the first Mishna is a continuation of the last. The first Mishna begins with the laws of reciting Shema, "From what time is Shema recited at night?" (*Berachos* 2a). Shema is a proclamation of Hashem's Oneness, which is the foundation of the entire Torah and the basic premise of our faith. Therefore, R' Yehuda HaNassi began his compilation of the Oral Torah with these laws.

Chazal tell us that the Six Orders of the Mishna are hinted to in the verse, ***"The faith of your times will be the strength of your salvation, wisdom and knowledge. Fear of Hashem is his treasure"*** (*Yeshayahu* 33:6). Faith refers to Seder Zeraim, which describes the agricultural laws, since a person needs faith in order to sew the earth and believe that it will sprout (*Shabbos* 31a, Tosefos).

Just as the Six Orders of Mishna begins with the subject of faith, so too do the Ten Commandments. The first words of the Ten Commandments are, "***I am Hashem your God***" (*Shemos* 20:2). This is a commandment to believe that Hashem created the entire world out of absolute nothingness; that He is One and there is no other; that He watches over every detail of creation; and that He granted the Torah and mitzvos to Bnei Yisrael for our eternal benefit.

The first letter of, "***I am Hashem***," is *aleph* (א). Its shape includes a *yud* facing up and a *yud* facing down, symbolizing Hashem's Oneness in Heaven and on Earth, and a *vav* connecting between them. The *vav* (the sixth letter of the *aleph-beis*) symbolizes time and space: time - since the world was created in six days is destined to exist for six thousand years, and space - since the three dimensions of space point in six directions. The entire physical world exists between these six boundaries of time and six boundaries of space.

The *yud* facing up represents the Oneness of Hashem who created time, space and all of creation. It is a simple point, like the center of a circle, with no beginning and no end. It is like an ungraspable point of thought, representing how Hashem is hidden and cannot be perceived by any sense other than our thoughts.

The *yud* facing down represents that just as He was One, alone and all-powerful before creation, He remains One, alone and all-powerful on earth below, even after He created the world. "***The entire earth is filled with His glory***" (*Yeshayahu* 6:3). He fills all the worlds and surrounds all the worlds (*Zohar* III, 225a). Just as He was before the world was created, so He is since then. He is unlimited and unaffected by time or space. Any change that we might perceive is only relative to ourselves as we change, as Rav Chaim of Volozhin explains (*Nefesh Hachaim, Shaar* 3). Of this it is written, "***You shall know today and place upon your hearts that Hashem is God in Heaven above and on Earth below, there is none other***" (*Devarim* 4:39).

The Imperceivable

This perfect Oneness and Unity has no place in space or time, and can only be perceived in thought. Therefore it is represented by the center point, the letter *yud*, from which all six directions extend, and can only be perceived by the mind. It is called, "The holy chamber at the center of the six directions" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 4:4). This metaphor compares Hashem to a King who sits in His private chamber, where none may enter to see His glory. He is known only through the decrees that He sends forth from His chamber, like the six visible rays that go forth from their invisible point of origin.

So too, we have no capacity for awareness of Hashem Himself. We are aware of Him only as He lets Himself be known outside His chamber, through His decrees that are fulfilled throughout the world, and His providence that guides our lives. Of Hashem's own essence we know only that He exists, but we are forbidden to delve too deeply on the matter.

Of this it is written, "If your heart runs forward, return to its place" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 10:1,8). In other words, if your heart yearns to ponder this mystery, take care that it not enter the hidden chamber that is beyond space. "Let it return to its place." Limit yourself to the contemplation of Hashem's providence of the world contained by time and space. Of this Chabakuk the Navi said, "***Hashem is in His holy chamber. Let the entire world be silent before Him***" (*Chabakuk* 2:20). We must be silent and refrain from speaking of Hashem's hidden chamber.

The Suffering of the Righteous

Moshe Rabbeinu was shown a prophetic vision of Rebbe Akiva's death at the hands of the Romans. "Is this the reward for Torah?" he asked. Hashem answered, "Silence! This is what arose in My thought" (*Menachos* 29b). This too refers to the unfathomable thoughts of Hashem. It is part of the age-old, unanswered mystery of, "Why do the righteous suffer?" (*Berachos* 7a).

Rebbe Akiva died while reciting Shema, and a Heavenly voice proclaimed, "Fortunate are you, Rebbe Akiva, that your soul departed with One" (*Berachos* 61b). Literally, it means that he died while saying the last word of Shema. However, it also means that he was attached to a higher world of perfect Oneness, that cannot be perceived by any mortal sense. We can only understand His will in the sense of what He expects from us, but we cannot understand His will in the sense of His true desire for creation, since this is One with Hashem's unknowable essence. Of this the Arizal wrote that "desire" (רצון) and "His Name" (שמו) are equal in gematria.

Sefer Chabakuk begins with Chabakuk's complaints about the suffering that the righteous endure, while the wicked enjoy peace and prosperity. ***"Until when, Hashem, will I cry out and You do not answer? Until when will I shout 'Crime!' and You do not rescue?"*** (*Chabakuk* 1:2).

Then, Hashem answered him: ***"Write your vision on a tablet, and explain it well"*** (*Chabakuk* 2:2). Chazal explain that Hashem told him, "Write the letters *aleph* and *beis*, and then say, 'Let me know the end'"" (*Midrash Tehillim* 7:17).

Chabakuk understood Hashem's message, and asked forgiveness for his mistake in protesting against Hashem's providence: ***"A prayer of Chabakuk the Navi on his mistakes"*** (*Chabakuk* 3:1).

We can explain this dialogue as follows. Hashem explained to Chabakuk, as He explained to Moshe Rabbeinu, that mankind is simply incapable of understanding Hashem's ways. When Moshe asked, "Why do the righteous suffer?", Hashem answered, ***"You may see My back but You cannot see My face"*** (*Shemos* 33:20; *Berachos* 7a).

This means that no creation can possibly understand the true will of Hashem, which the verse calls "His face," since it is One with Him. We can only understand the aspect of His will that is evident through His interactions with us, which the verse calls, "His back."

Chabakuk realized that he had sought to understand things that were beyond his ken, attempting to enter the "hidden chamber of the King," so to speak. Therefore, he begged forgiveness and said ***"A prayer of Chabakuk the Navi on his mistakes."***

Hashem told him, "Write the letters *aleph* and *beis*, and then say, 'Let me know the end.'" Hashem showed Chabakuk that he could not possibly hope to understand the *aleph*, which is the true will of Hashem that is One with His essence. This is hidden in the "holy chamber of the King," which is the invisible center of all things. He could only hope to understand the *beis*, representing how the world was created with the letter *beis* with which the Torah begins. This is the "back of Hashem," so to speak, which is the most that any mortal man can see since the physical world was created. That which is above and beyond creation is unfathomable.

Let Me Know the End

Hashem's challenge to Chabakuk, "Write the letters *aleph* and *beis*, and then say, 'Let me know the end,'" has tremendous depth to it, which we can better understand by means of the following introduction.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 75a) presents the following enigmatic debate:

> וְשַׂמְתִּי כַדְכֹד שִׁמְשֹׁתַיִךְ– ***"I shall place jewels (kadkod) as your windows"*** (*Yeshayahu* 54:12). Two angels in Heaven, Michael and Gavriel, argued over this verse. Some say two Sages on the earth, R' Yehuda and R' Chezkiyah, argued over it. One said that this jewel is *shoham* (onyx). The other said it is *yashpeh* (jasper).
>
> HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, "Let it be as this one says and as that one says" (*kadin v'kadin* in Aramaic, which sounds like the Hebrew word *kadkod*). "Their windows will be made of both."

How can we understand this Gemara? Clearly there was a jewel which in Hebrew is called *kadkod*. They debated the meaning of this word even before Hashem granted that both opinions be accepted. How then can the Gemara interpret the word *kadkod* based on the Aramaic *kadin v'kadin*, which Hashem granted only after they had their debate?

Furthermore, what is the significance of their debate? Why was it so important to determine exactly which jewel will be used to make the windows, such that even the angels debated this point? Nowhere else do we find a debate among the hosts of Heaven regarding the interpretation of a word from Tanach. There must be some deep meaning to this.

In truth, there is great depth to this, as there is to all the teachings of our Sages. The Gemara (*Sotah* 36a) states that there were jewels on each of the shoulder-straps of the Kohen Gadol, on which the names of the twelve tribes were engraved. Six tribes were engraved on each stone, with twenty-five letters each. The Gemara then stresses that the sons of Rachel, Yosef and Binyamin, were divided between the two stones.

After explaining how the names of the tribes were divided, the Gemara notes that there were twenty-five letters on one stone but only twenty-four on the other. To this the Gemara first answers that Yosef was spelled with an additional letter *heh* (יהוסף), as it is spelled in the verse, ***" מ ָ יה סָ ף . ת . ד ֶ –They placed jewelry on Yosef"*** (*Tehillim* 81:6). The Gemara then rejects this and answers instead that an extra letter *yud* was added to Binyamin (בנימין), which was how his name was spelled when his father first named him: ***" וְאָבִיו קָרָא ל בִנְיָמִין- His father called him Binyamin"*** (*Bereishis* 35:18).[13]

This Gemara also begs explanation. What did the jewels on the Kohen Gadol's shoulders represent? Why did there have to be exactly fifty letters in total, with twenty-five on each stone? Why did it come out that one letter was missing and had to be somehow added? And why did it have to be added in either Yosef or Binyamin's name?

There is awesome depth behind these questions, which we will examine here at length, in order to awaken the hearts of our brethren Bnei Yisrael towards the love and fear of Hashem and of His holy Torah, so that we may see how great is the wisdom of the Sages and how deep are their words. These things must be revealed in our times,

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[13] As opposed to the rest of the Torah, in which Binyamin is spelled בנימן, with just one *yud*.

to counter the slander of those who mock the words of Chazal. They are too far from the wisdom of the Torah to understand even the smallest hint of its depth.

As we said above, Shema is a proclamation of Hashem's Oneness, which is the foundation of the entire Torah. ***"Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad,"*** has six words, as does the following line, ***"Baruch Sheim Kavod Malchuso l'olam va'ed."*** They have six words each, just as the stones on the Kohen Gadol's shoulders had six names each. Shema has twenty-five letters. Baruch Shem has twenty-four. The names of the tribes had twenty-five letters on one and twenty-four on the other, until an extra letter was added to one name. The depth of this parallel we will see below.

The words, "*Baruch Sheim Kavod Malchuso l'olam va'ed*," do not actually appear in the Torah in the parsha of Shema. Why did Chazal see fit to interrupt this parsha with a verse that does not appear in the Torah? The Zohar (I, 18b) states that, "Shema is the upper unification, and Baruch Shem is the lower unification." Although there are great secrets behind this teaching, which are known to those who are gifted with such wisdom, we can still explain it to those who never saw the light of this knowledge, by cloaking the idea in a way it can be understood..

The Light of the Soul

The Midrash comments that the verse, ***"The beginning of Your words shine, giving wisdom to fools"*** (*Tehillim* 119:130) refers to the Menorah. The Vilna Gaon explains this baffling reference as follows. The Menorah was decorated with 22 cups, 9 flowers and 11 bulbs. Together with its 7 branches, this equals 49. This represents the 49 Gates of Wisdom that were revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu. Then there was the body of the Menorah which represents the 50th Gate of Wisdom, which was hidden even from Moshe (*Rosh Hashanah* 21b). Therefore, Chazal tell us that Moshe could not understand Hashem's instructions of how to build the Menorah (Rashi, *Shemos* 25:31).

In addition, there were 7 candles on the Menorah, and 5 pincers and 5 scoops used to clean it, for a total of 67, which is the *gematria* of "wisdom" (בינה).

With this we can understand the verse, "I shall make all of My goodness pass before your face" (*Shemos* 33:19). The Menorah shined with the "beginning of Your words." If we count the words in the first verse of each of the Five Books of the Torah, we find seven in Bereishis, eleven in Shemos, nine in Vayikra, seventeen in Bamidbar and twenty-two in Devarim, for a total of 66.[14] This was the light of the Torah that shined from the Menorah, as the verse states, ***"For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light"*** (*Mishlei* 6:23).

If not for the precious gift of Torah that HaKadosh Baruch Hu granted us, we would stumble through the darkness of this world, with nothing to guide us on the straight path. We would remain ignorant of all celestial wisdom, and have no means of illuminating the path for our souls and grasping the light of eternal life.

The Antechamber (before the Holy of Holies) of the Beis Hamikdash contained the Menorah, the Table and the Golden Mizbei'ach. The Menorah was next to the southern

[14] The principles of gematria allow for adding an additional one to the total number, which is called the "kolel". Therefore, in our context 66 and 67 are equivalent.

wall, the Table next to the northern wall, and the Mizbei'ach was in the middle. The Menorah stood opposite the Table, shining its light upon it. There was deep meaning behind this.

The Menorah and the Table represented the two facets of creation, the higher world and the lower world, Heaven and Earth, which were created with Hashem's two "hands," so to speak, as is written, ***"My hand founded the Earth and My right hand measured the Heavens. I called to them and they stood together"*** (*Yeshayahu* 48:13). As we explained elsewhere, the Heavens are the abode of the holy angels, who are all perfectly obedient to Hashem's will. These are, ***"The mighty ones who fulfill His word and heed His command"*** (*Tehillim* 103:20). There is no *yetzer hara* in Heaven, no Satan and no harm. They are all holy and eternal. Therefore, it is said by way of expression that they were made with "Hashem's right hand," since Hashem's strength is more revealed there.

This lower part of creation, this world, is a place of lesser holiness, since Hashem's might and His holiness are hidden here. Therefore, the *yetzer hara* and the forces of evil are given the opportunity to rise in power and cause people to deny Hashem's providence, His power or even His very existence. In this sense it is said that the Earth was made with "Hashem's left hand," signifying the weaker of the two (see *Menachos* 37a), since Hashem's might is hidden on the Earth.

The Torah begins with the letter *beis*, signifying that creation is divided into two realms, Heaven and Earth, which parallel the right hand and the left, light and darkness. In the darkness of this lower Earth, we cannot see His strength and holiness to do His will. Therefore, those who dwell here are finite. Their inherent limitations make them dependent on physical nourishment to replenish the energies that are constantly being lost to them.

Just as the physical body must be replenished with food, so too must the *nefesh* and *ruach* be replenished with the Torah and mitzvos that a person performs each day (*Yahel Ohr* III, 35c). As we use our physical body to serve Hashem, we connect the Heavenly *neshamah* to the physical body and to the *nefesh* that animates our body. Lifeforce and celestial light are drawn down from above, connecting our bodies to our souls, and connecting Earth to Heaven.

The terms *neshamah, ruach* and *nefesh* describe different aspects of man's soul. The *neshamah* is from Heaven. The *nefesh* is from the Earth. The *ruach* connects them.

The *nefesh* is what desires all the lowly things of this world. The holy *neshama* from Heaven shines upon the *ruach* of man that dwells in his heart. Therein lies his free will to choose to fulfill Hashem's will and serve Him through the physical objects that exist in this world, such as tefillin, tzitzis, sukkah and the like. By doing so, the *nefesh* connects to the *neshamah*. All this is hinted to in the verse, ***"נֵר ה' נִ ְמַת אָדָם – The soul of man is the candle of Hashem"*** (*Mishlei* 20:27). *"Ner"* (candle) is an acronym for *nefesh* and *ruach.*

The metaphor of the candle is used here in the same sense as Chazal's teaching that a candle shines over the head of the fetus in the mother's womb, when it is taught the entire Torah and can see by its light from one end of the world to the other (*Niddah* 30b,

see above page __). That too refers to the Heavenly *neshamah* that hovers over it and illuminates it.

In the verse, ***"For a mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light"*** (*Mishlei* 6:23), we learn that the physical mitzvos connect the *neshamah* to the physical *nefesh*, casting upon it the light of the holy Torah that illuminates our path and saves us from darkness and destruction.

The Menorah was on the right-hand side of the Antechamber, signifying the holy light that descends from Heaven (which was created by Hashem's "right hand," as we explained above). ***"From the Heavens He let you hear His voice, and on the land He showed you His great fire"*** (*Devarim* 4:36). The Heavenly *neshamah* is like the fire of which it is written, "***Hashem your God is a consuming fire***" (*Devarim* 4:24). The wick upon which it is lit is the *nefesh* of man. (To keep the wick from burning out), new oil must constantly be added, as the Vilna Gaon explained the verse, "***Let your head never lack oil***" (*Koheles* 9:8). The *nefesh* must be nourished with Torah and mitzvos, just as the body must be nourished with food.

To represent this parallel, the Table which held the *lechem hapanim* bread stood opposite the Menorah, which shined upon it, showing that just as we must nourish our bodies with physical food, we must also nourish our souls through the holy light represented by the Menorah.

The Bread of Angels

This can help us understand the verses (*Devarim* 8:1-3):

> All the mitzvos that I command you today you must guard to fulfill, so that you may live and grow and come to inherit the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers. Remember the path on which Hashem your God guided you through the desert for these forty years to afflict you and test you, to make known what is in your hearts, if you will guard His mitzvos or not.
>
> He afflicted you, made you hunger and fed you the *manna* that you did not know, and your fathers did not know, to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that Hashem speaks from His mouth does man live.

With these words, Moshe Rabbeinu hinted that they could not merit eternal life in any way other than through the practical mitzvos that Hashem gave them. The mitzvos are a combination of supernal holiness from an eternal, spiritual world, together with physical matter from the Earth. Therefore, they serve to connect the Heavenly *neshamah*, the "fire" so to speak, together with the physical body, which is the wick. Unless the oil of Torah and mitzvos are constantly added to the wick, it will burn out and the fire will rise to Heaven, as Shlomo Hamelech said, ***"Who knows that the spirit of man ascends above, while the spirit of the animal descends below to the earth"*** (*Koheles* 3:21).

The *manna* fell in the Desert to feed the generation that stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah from Heaven. It purified the physicality of their bodies and showed

them that the main nourishment of a Jew is the light of the *neshamah* that descends upon the *nefesh* through the Torah and mitzvos that Hashem granted us. This is what binds our bodies to our souls, not just the food that we eat.

The *manna*, in the original form was purely spiritual. The Gemara calls it "the bread of angels" (*Yoma* 75b). The angels have no sustenance other than the radiance of the Shechinah (*Berachos* 17a), which is the light that descends upon them from above. This same sustenance took a physical form when it descended below and was transformed into *manna*, which is a combination of the physical and the spiritual. For this reason, it was absorbed directly into the limbs of the body. There was no waste to it, and therefore it did not have to pass through the digestive system. This perfectly pure food served to purify the *nefesh* of the Jewish people, so that they would be able to comprehend the Torah and mitzvos without being hindered by the physicality of their bodies.

This was specifically necessary for that generation, in order to engrain in their souls the ability to receive the Torah in all its details, and to attach them to the heights of holiness, to their holy source in Heaven. This is the rope that attaches us to Hashem, the proverbial chain that the King attaches to something so that it will not be lost (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Taanis* 2:6. See above __). Of this it is written, ***"Yaakov is the cord of His inheritance"*** (*Devarim* 32:9). Through this our souls are united with the Heavenly Throne and to the unity of Hashem, as is written, "You made Me one entity in the world, so too I will make you one entity in the world."

Therefore, the generation that received the Torah had to be sustained for forty years from this holy, spiritual nourishment, so that they could reach the greatest possible understanding of the Torah. At the end of these forty years, Moshe told them, "***Hashem did not give you a heart to know, eyes to see or ears to hear until this day***" (*Devarim* 29:3). From here Chazal learn that a person cannot understand the depth of his rav's wisdom until after forty years (*Avodah Zarah* 5b).

Three aspects of understanding are mentioned here: a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear. This represents three aspects of the Torah. The Written Torah depends on sight. The Oral Torah depends on hearing. The deep secrets of the Torah depend on the wisdom of the heart, as the Vilna Gaon commented on the verse, "The nation has made its heart foolish, its ears heavy, and its eyes dimmed lest it see with its eyes, hear with its ears, and consider with its heart, and repent and be healed (forgiven)" (*Yeshayahu* 6:10).

This is also the meaning of the verse, "Behold, I will make bread rain for you from the Heavens… in order to test them whether they walk in My Torah or not" (*Shemos* 16:4). After having eaten from the *manna* for forty years, they were purified in body and *nefesh* and thus became fitting vessels to hold the Torah and become connected to the holiness of His Torah, which was given from Heaven. This is the bond that was granted between Bnei Yisrael and the Torah for all future generations. Although we do not continue to eat *manna* as they did, we are their biological descendants, formed from the holy bodies that were nourished by the *manna*.

The purity of intent that our forefathers achieved through the *manna* also purified their unions, helping them produce holy offspring. Chazal tell us that the Snake

polluted mankind with spiritual impurities, but when Klal Yisrael stood at Har Sinai we were cleansed from it (*Shabbos* 146a). This refers to the spiritual venom of the *yetzer hara* that became part of the human body ever since Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge. It polluted his body, causing it to be drawn after lowly desires (see page __).

To cure this, they were fed *manna* from Heaven, which was free of all impurities. This cleansed their bodies and sanctified them with supernal holiness. Just as their bodies were purified and sanctified by the physical nourishment of the *manna*, so too were their souls purified and sanctified by the spiritual nourishment of the Torah. Its holy radiance was clad in physical form through the practical mitzvos, which served to attach their *nefesh* to their *neshamah*, which is the light that shines from Hashem. Chazal tell us that the *neshamah* is carved from beneath the Throne of Glory and is one with Hashem. In other words, Hashem's light that shines upon His holy nation is one with Him, just as the rays that shine from the sun are part of the sun itself.

With this we can understand the verses (*Devarim* 32:9-10):

> Hashem's nation is part of Him. Yaakov is the cord of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in desolation and howling wilderness. He surrounded him and granted him wisdom. He guarded him like the pupil of His eye.

The greatest of all possible gifts was granted to Bnei Yisrael in the desert. Hashem deliberately made them travel there for forty years, in order to isolate them from mankind and distance them from all the insubstantial desires of this world, so that their thoughts would be free to soar to the highest wisdom of the Torah. They were like the pious ascetics who walk alone in the deserts far from society, so that they could be free from the distraction of shallow desires and strive for heights of holiness.

The cloud of Hashem surrounded them and the Shechinah rested upon them, such that they became walking embodiments of the Mishkan, dwelling places for the Divine Presence, as is written, "The cloud of Hashem was on the Mishkan by day" (*Shemos* 40:38).

"He surrounded him and granted him wisdom." Hashem granted Bnei Yisrael the wisdom of the Torah, revealing to them the wisdom from on High. ***"He guarded him like the pupil of His eye."*** Like a person who carefully guards his eye from dust or other harmful substances that might damage his vision, so too Hashem protects Klal Yisrael from idiocy and impurity . He casts away the darkness from our eyes, so that we may see the rays of glory and the holiness of His Torah.

This is what Moshe Rabbeinu meant when he said, ***"All the mitzvos that I command you today you must guard to fulfill."*** It is not enough for a person just to learn Torah and engage his mind in higher wisdom, without also fulfilling the physical mitzvos in practice. The main purpose for which man was created was for the sake of his deeds in the fulfillment of mitzvos. Studying Torah and contemplating its depths are the province of the soul and the higher neshama, for which no physical body is necessary. Why then did the soul have to descend into this dark world of physicality, if not to fulfill the physical mitzvos? It would have been better for the soul to remain above in

the abode of Hashem's glory, where it would have been easier to attain the greatest heights of wisdom.

Learning Torah L'Shma

With this we can understand Chazal's teaching, "If a person studies Torah *shelo l'shma* (with incorrect motives), it would have been better had he died as a fetus and never been born into this world." (*Kallah*, Ch. 8). Learning Torah *l'shma* (with correct motives) means learning in order to know how to fulfill all the details of the mitzvah, as Moshe Rabbeinu received them on Har Sinai as part of the oral Torah. The word "Torah" literally means "instruction." It instructs a person how to behave, how to walk in the ways of Hashem, and how to fulfill the mitzvos as Hashem desires.

Learning Torah *shelo l'shma* means learning without intention of practicing what one learned, but simply to gain its knowledge and unravel its secrets. For such a person, it would truly have been better had he never been born. In the womb he learned Torah with no barriers and no bodily disturbance,[15] and would have been able to achieve much greater knowledge. He would not have had to deal with the coarse physical body, which clouds the perception of the soul.

Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu stressed the importance of learning the Torah in order to fulfill the practical mitzvos: ***"All the mitzvos that I command you today you must guard to fulfill."*** Hashem's intention in taking the spiritual mitzvos and dressing them in physical form was in order to grant eternal life in the World to Come not only to the *neshama,* but even to the body, composed of physical elements, and the *nefesh* that animates it. By doing so, the Heavens and Earth are connected.

The verse thus continues, ***"So that you may live … and come to inherit the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers."*** This does not refer to Eretz Yisrael, which the forefathers never really merited to inherit. Rather it refers to the land of eternal life, the Heavenly worlds that they merited to enjoy. ***"Remember the path on which Hashem your God guided you through the desert for these forty years … He afflicted you, made you hunger and fed you the manna that you did not know."*** We went through the desert, where we were isolated from mankind and shielded from foreign influences. There we were nourished by the *manna*, which was a combination of the physical and spiritual worlds. ***"To teach you that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that Hashem speaks from His mouth does man live."*** The *manna* showed that the purpose of man's creation and the main sustenance of his life, through which he will receive the light of eternal life, are the mitzvos that Hashem commanded through His servant Moshe.. Through these mitzvos, man will live forever. Like the *manna*, the mitzvos are also combinations of spiritual and physical, drawing Heaven and Earth together.

"In order to teach you that man does not live by bread alone." Bread keeps man's physical body alive by replenishing the energies that are constantly being lost to him as part of his mortal condition. However, this is not real life. Real life is the eternal life of the soul. That real life is sustained, "***by everything that Hashem speaks from His mouth"***

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[15] Chazal tell us that before a baby is born, it learns Torah with an angel in its mother's womb (see *Nidah* 30).

– His Torah and mitzvos. Through them, a person earns eternal life, the real life, of which Chazal say that the righteous even in their death are called alive (*Berachos* 18a).

This is why the Menorah was on the right side, opposite the Table on the left. The Menorah represented the light of the Torah, which is sustenance for man's soul and body for eternal life, but only through the physical mitzvos he performs, which attach the spiritual and physical worlds together. This binding of worlds is represented by the Golden Mizbei'ach, which stood between the Menorah and the Table.

The Golden Mizbei'ach

With this we can understand the teaching of Chazal (*Chagigah* 27a):

> The fires of Gehinnom have no power over the sinners of Klal Yisrael. We learn this as a *kal v'chomer* from the Golden Mizbei'ach. The Golden Mizbei'ach had only a thin layer of gold, yet a fire burned on it for many years and did not damage it. The sinners of Israel are filled with mitzvos as a pomegranate is filled with seeds. *Kal v'chomer* that the fires of Gehinnom will not damage them.

The punishment that the wicked endure in Gehinnom is not meant as vengeance against them, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, it is mean to purify their souls from the filth of the Snake (the *yetzer hara*) and the sins that stuck to their souls. The Gemara explains this with a metaphor of a king who gave royal garments to his servants. The wise servants kept the garments clean and returned them in good shape. The foolish servants soiled their garments, which then had to be laundered when the servants returned them (*Shabbos* 152b).

Our mitzvos and good deeds are the garments of our souls, with which they ascend to the chamber of the King, of which it is written, ***"All the honor of the king's daughter is inside, greater than gold settings in her garments. In embroidered clothing she will be brought to the king, with her maiden friends she will be brought to You. She will be led with joy and gladness and brought to the chamber of the King"*** (*Tehillim* 45:14).

The soul is the daughter of the King, Hashem. Her mitzvos and good deeds are her golden and embroidered clothes, scented with fragrant odors, which ascend as a pleasant fragrance before Hashem, of which it is written, ***"(Yitzchak) smelled (Yaakov's) clothes, blessed him and said, 'Behold, the smell of my son is like the smell of the field that Hashem blessed'"*** (*Bereishis* 27:27). Chazal explain that the fragrance of Gan Eden entered the room with him (*Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 4:24). This refers to the holy garments of the soul, that are created through its good deeds. With these, Yaakov entered his father's room to receive his blessing. The fragrance of Gan Eden accompanied him, which is the reward of the righteous in the higher and lower levels of Gan Eden, as Chazal say, "Fragrance is something that the soul takes pleasure from, but not the body" (*Berachos* 43b). With these fragrant garments, the souls of the righteous ascend above, bringing joy to Hashem and to the entire world. ***"In embroidered clothing she will be brought to the king… She will be brought with joy and gladness."***

In contrast, a person's sins soil his garments, as is written, ***"Yehoshua was wearing filthy clothes"*** (*Zechariah* 3:3). This was the filth (of his guilt), for not protesting his sons' marriage to gentile women (Rashi). Yehoshua was called a ***"brand saved from the fire"***

(*Zechariah* 3:2), since he was thrown into the furnace. Although he was miraculously rescued, his clothes were burned (*Sanhedrin* 93a).

This represents the fire of Gehinnom and the river of Dinor in which the tzaddikim must immerse to purify their souls, as is written (regarding the laws of kashering utensils), "Everything that passes through fire (when cooking non-kosher food), must be passed through fire (to kasher it)" (*Bamidbar* 31:23). According to the severity of his sins, such is the length of time he must remain in Gehinnom in order to cleanse them. All this is Hashem's way of ensuring that no soul will ever be lost.

But after receiving this punishment, the soul is purified and ascends to the mount of Hashem. The fires of Gehinnom burn only the soul's clothes, but they do not burn the soul itself. The soul itself is immune to fire, since even the wicked are filled with mitzvos.

All this is learned from the Golden Mizbei'ach, on which the *ketores* (incense sacrifice) was burned. This represents the physical mitzvos we perform, which create holy spiritual garments for our souls, exuding the sweet fragrance that is the reward and sustenance the soul enjoys. For this reason, foul smelling galbanum was added to the *ketores*, representing the sinners of Klal Yisrael (*Krisos* 6b). They too are destined to receive the fragrant odors of reward in the World to Come, except for those sinners who have no portion in the World to Come (see *Sanhedrin* 90a). These are the ones who have cut off their own nefesh from its source, severing its connection with their neshamah above. This is the meaning of the punishment of *kareis* mentioned in the Torah, in which a person is cut off from his root on high, as David Hamelech said of Doeg, who is listed among those who have no place in the World to Come ***"Hashem will destroy you forever. He will cut you off and uproot you from your home, and dig up all your roots from the land of the living"*** (*Tehillim* 52:7).

The Kiss of Torah

"With her maiden friends she will be brought to You" (*Tehillim* 45:15). This is a deep metaphor. As we explained above, the main reason the *neshama* was sent down was to unite with the more physical levels of the soul, the *ruach* and *nefesh*, for man's own benefit. The 613 sinews and organs of the body parallel the 613 spiritual characteristics of the soul on each of its levels, and these all parallel the 613 mitzvos. By performing the mitzvos in this physical world, the physical body and all the levels of the soul are bound together, and they are all sanctified with holiness from on high. When the *neshama* rises, it brings together its "maiden friends," (the body and the lower aspects of the soul) which it connected to with love and holiness, to rise to the house of Hashem, Lord of Hosts.

"Planted in the house of Hashem, in the courtyards of our G-d they will sprout" (*Tehillim* 92:14). The *neshama* and its 613 qualities are firmly planted above in the Throne of Glory, which is the house of Hashem. They stretch their branches out into this world, which is like the courtyard that leads into the palace (see *Avos* 4:16), to sprout flowers and branches, through which they draw upon themselves the 613 qualities of the physical *nefesh*.

Of this Shlomo Hamelech said in his wisdom and *ruach hakodesh* (*Shir Hashirim* 1:2-4):

> Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better than wine, and the fragrance of Your oils are good. Your Name is like poured oil, therefore the maidens love You. Draw me after You and I will run. The King has brought me into His chambers.

Shlomo Hamelech thanked Hashem for granting us as an inheritance the hidden treasure of His Holy Torah, which is like a kiss from His mouth, in the sense that it attaches Klal Yisrael, His holy people, to His oneness.

"His mouth (יה),***"*** refers to the Five Books of the Written Torah and the Six Orders of the Mishna. (יה is composed of the word פי, which means "mouth," and the letters *heh* and *vav,* corresponding to the numbers five and six.) ***"For Your love is better than wine,"*** refers to the seventy ways in which the Torah is interpreted. (יָיִן equals 70 in gematria.) ***"The fragrance of Your oils are good,"*** refers to the holy fragrance created by the practical mitzvos. They add oil that keeps the fire of the Shechinah, a fire which consumes fire, attached to the wick.

This spirit (*ruach*) is the pleasure of the neshama in the World to Come., It represents the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash, which had 67 parts, paralleling the words of the first verse in each of the Five Books of the Torah, and equals the gematria of the word good (טֹ בִים) from the verse, ***"The fragrance of Your oils are good."*** This refers to the oil of the Menorah.

The mitzvos give fragrance not only to the *neshamah* from Heaven, but also to the physical (*yesodi*) aspect of the *nefesh* and all the forces of the body. Of this the verse states, ***"With her maiden friends she will be brought to You."*** The physical aspects of man are elevated together with the soul, ascending to the chamber of the King to share in the spiritual joy and holiness of Hashem's company in Gan Eden.

All this is represented by the position of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash. It stood on the southern (right-hand) side of the Heichal, opposite the Table which stood on the northern side (the left). The perfection of man is reached when his Torah and mitzvos, represented by the light of the Menorah (the right), shine upon the physical aspects of his being, represented by the Table (the left) that held the bread. Thereby, the physical aspects of his being are bound together with the spiritual aspects of the *neshama*.

The light of the higher neshamah is compared to the Menorah. This can be understood with a parable to the sunlight, which enters a house through an open window, illuminating the air in the house until the particles of air within the house shine on their own. They join together with the sunrays that enter the house through the windows and doors. The "windows" of the soul are formed when a person purifies the darkened forces of his nefesh, which are naturally drawn towards coarse desires and lowly traits, as is written, "Their deeds are in darkness," (Yeshayahu 29:15), and, "In darkness they walk" (*Tehillim* 82:5). The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:6) comments that the verse, "He called the darkness 'night'" refers to the deeds of the wicked, since the Godly light and the perfection of the holiness of the neshamah did not enlighten them. They are like a dark house, with no windows and doors, which the sunlight cannot enter.

The righteous, however, open the chambers of the heart, to be drawn after the love of Hashem and His will. They open both entrances into the chambers of the heart (see *Berachos* 61a), converting even the left chamber (where the yetzer hara is seated), to sanctify it for mitzvos and for choosing good. In the verse from Shema, "You shall love Hashem with all your heart," the word your heart is spelled in the plural form, לבבך, implying two hearts, the yetzer hatov and the yetzer hara, to teach us that we must train even our yetzer hara to love Hashem (*Berachos* 54a). Thereby, the light of the neshamah, which is seated in the mind, shines upon the ruach in the heart, and even upon the nefesh.

Physicality and lowly desires are compared the walls of the house, which block the sunlight from entering. Hashem looks upon us, and He wants His holiness, which is the light of the *neshama*, to shine in. We need only open the windows of our hearts to allow the light to enter. ***"The voice of my Beloved knocks. 'Open for Me!'"*** (*Shir HaShirim* 5:2). Chazal say that Hashem asks us only to make an opening like the point of a needle, and He will open for us as wide as the gates of the Beis Hamikdash (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 5:3). Of this, Shlomo HaMelech said, "My beloved … stands behind our walls, observing from the windows, watching from between the cracks" (*Shir HaShirim* 2:9).

As soon as a person opens the windows of his heart to allow himself to be drawn after Hashem's will, the light of the *neshama* immediately flows in to illuminate his heart and help him serve Hashem. "He who comes to purify himself is assisted" (Yoma 38b).

The light of the Menorah is called "a testimony for Yisrael that the Shechinah rests upon them" (*Menachos* 86b). The Shechinah that rests upon us is the sparks of Hashem's light, which shines upon us through our *neshama* when we fulfill His will. This is the symbolism of the Menorah that shines upon the Table. ***"Toward the face of the Menorah, the seven candles will shine"*** (*Bamidbar* 8:2). It shines on the Table that stands across from the Menorah.

The Seven Lamps of the Menorah

The seven lamps of the Menorah have tremendous symbolism. They offer us an opportunity to investigate the depths of the holy Torah and examine its wisdom, which has no comparison among any other field of human study. Let us rejoice in the portion that Hashem granted us, in His great kindness, with this treasure of a gift, through which we can bask in the radiance of the holy Torah, which is our life and our wisdom in the eyes of the nations.

The letter *aleph* represents the oneness of Hashem, He is one and His Name is one. It is the first letter in the *aleph-beis*, just as Hashem is the first and last and the cause of everything that exists. Whereas other languages have no depth of meaning, and are simply a convention agreed upon to facilitate communication, *lashon hakodesh* has great depth of meaning both in the names given for all things, and in the very shapes of the letters.

The letter *aleph* is composed of a *yud* pointing upwards, a *yud* pointing down, and a vav between them. In fact, the *vav* between them is a double-*vav*,)

(. The two *vav's* are so closely and deeply attached. There is deep meaning to this.

The world was created in six days, which are the six roots of creation, because everything that exists in the physical world is limited to the six directions of the three dimensions: length, width and height. Just as there are physical dimensions and directions on Earth, there are spiritual dimensions and boundaries of time and space to the hosts of Heaven, but in an ethereal sense that is relevant to their plane of existence. The hosts of Heaven that live within those six spiritual directions are the roots of the Earthly beings that live within the six physical directions. The Oneness of Hashem sustains them all, through the light of His holiness, which is the unifying point, the single indivisible *yud*, that connects all six directions as they face towards His Oneness.

Although the various creations seem separate and distinct, each pointing in its own direction, they were all created for the same purpose, and any difference in them is not is their root but in their own being. In essence, they are all one with Hashem, as the Zohar states, "You are the One within them" (*Tikkunei Zohar* 19a).

So too in the physical world, there are six directions each pointing towards their center and origin, which is the Oneness of Hashem, since everything that exists was created only to reveal His glory, as is written, "***Hashem made everything for His sake***" (*Mishlei* 16:4).

The unity of all six "directions" of the hosts of Heaven as they combine to reveal Hashem's glory is represented by the *vav* and *yud* pointing upwards in the letter aleph. The unity of the six directions of Earth for the same purpose is represented by the *vav* and *yud* pointing down. Together, they are combined into one letter, since they are united in one purpose, parallel in their function, serving as "giver and recipient." They are like the right and left hands, which are deeply attached in one purpose to unify Hashem. ***"My hand founded the Earth and My right hand measured the Heavens. I called to them and they stood together"*** (*Yeshayahu* 48:13). For this reason, the two *vav's* in the letter aleph are combined into one double-*vav*.

This is also represented by the Two Tablets, which parallel the entire work of Creation. Just as Heaven and Earth were created with Hashem's two "hands" (so to speak), the letters on the Tablets were etched with Hashem's finger (*Devarim* 9:10). The five Commandments on one represent the five fingers of His right hand, and the five Commandments on the other represent the five fingers of His left. They also parallel the chambers of man's heart, which is a mirror image of all creation. The right and left sides of the heart are the abodes of the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara*, paralleling Heaven and Earth. The *yetzer tov* rules in Heaven, but dominion has been granted on Earth to the *yetzer hara*. To represent this, the Tablets were six *tefachim* long (*Nedarim* 38a), paralleling the six directions of Heaven and Earth.

From the beginning of Creation until the Torah was given, there was a vast difference between Heaven and Earth. Hashem's holiness had not yet been revealed on Earth, except to a few unique individuals in each generation who recognized His greatness. For this reason, the Torah begins with the letter *beis*, representing the two divisions of Creation, Heaven on one side and Earth on the other.

When Hashem lowered the Torah down from Heaven to Earth for His beloved nation, it shone throughout the darkness of the world, illuminating everything and revealing Hashem's glory. Therefore, the Ten Commandments begin with the letter *aleph* of *Anochi*, through which the upwards *yud-vav* of Heaven unites with the downwards *yud-vav* of Earth. The *yud* on the top of the aleph, together with the *yud* on the bottom, show that through Klal Yisrael and the Torah, the six dimensions of existence in Heaven and Earth, which were created in six days, are united into an awesome oneness, revealing Hashem's Unity here on Earth just as it is revealed in Heaven.

This too is represented by the seven lamps of the Menorah. The central lamp represents the "The holy chamber at the center of the six directions" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 4:4, see page 73). The three branches and lamps to the right and three branches and lamps to the left represent the three dimensions, with two directions each. These are the six borders of existence for the Heavenly beings, created with Hashem's "right hand," paralleling the six borders for Earthly beings, created with Hashem's left. They all face the middle lamp, representing Hashem's Oneness which unites everything.

The Menorah shines upon the Earth and all that dwell upon it, as we say in the blessings of Shema, “Who shines on the Earth and on all who dwell upon it,” which are figuratively called "The Table," as we explained above (see page __). Through these candles, the *yud-vav* above shines upon the *yud-vav* below. As long as we were loyal to Hashem's will, the western lamp would never burn out, showing that the revelation of Hashem's oneness is always upon.

This is like the metaphor of sunlight entering a dark room, as we discussed above (see page 84). Even when the windows and doors are opened, and the sunlight can shine in, a person's sins and lowly passions can still hinder the light from illuminating the room. They are like a smoldering stove that fills the room with dark smoke. The animalism of the physical body can also be compared to the fumes that rise from rotten foods.

To counter these fumes, the Mizbei'ach upon which the *ketores* (incense offering) was burned stood between the Menorah and the Table. Just like when there is a bad stench in the home, fragrant spices are burned there to alleviate it, so too does the fragrance of mitzvos, good deeds, *teshuvah* and sincere remorse alleviate the evil produced by our sins. Once the air is cleared, the light can shine freely into the home, illuminating the *nefesh* and *ruach* of man with the holy light of the *neshama*.

Torah Purifies the Air

In truth, the only way that a person can cleanse his soul from the filth and stench of the *yetzer hara* and the sordid passions it produces, is through the fragrant odor of the holy Torah, "the pleasure of the soul" (*Berachos* 43b) of which Hashem said, "I created the *yetzer hara* and I created the Torah as its antidote" (*Kiddushin* 30b).

> Who is this that ascends from the desert, like a pillar of smoke, burning myrrh, frankincense and all merchant spices? Behold the bed of Shlomo, with sixty mighty warriors surrounding it, from the mighty warriors of Yisrael. Each

one holds a sword and is learned in warfare, each with his sword strapped to his thigh to defend against the fear of the night (*Shir HaShirim* 3:6-8).

This is a wonderful metaphor for Bnei Yisrael, who are called Hashem's bride. We were wed to him at Har Sinai, where we accepted His Torah and the yoke of His service, as is written, "As grapes in the desert, I found Yisrael" (*Hosheia* 9:10). There, we merited to ascend from the darkness of this lowly world up to the brilliant light of Heaven, rising higher than the level of angels. ***"I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me"*** (*Shemos* 19:4). This refers to the ministering angels, of whom it is written, "Each one had six wings" (*Yeshayahu* 6:2). Hashem carried us above the level of the winged angels and brought us to Him.

However, it is impossible to maintain such a high level of holiness at all times. The *yetzer hara* challenges us with new assaults each day. A pillar of smoke rises from the sins that we commit, darkens the air and prevents the light of holiness from shining through. The remedy for this is to counter the foul, dark smoke with the sweet fragrance of Torah and mitzvos. "If you have done many sins, do many mitzvos to counter them" (*Vayikra Rabbah* 21:5). These are the, "***Myrrh, frankincense and all merchant spices."*** Such spices were once used as medicines to heal the body. Here they refer to the Torah, *teshuvah* and good deeds that heal the soul from the illness of sin.

The main remedy against the *yetzer hara* is toiling in the study of the Torah She'Baal Peh. This is the ***"bed of Shlomo."*** The sixty warriors that surrounded it refer to the sixty tractates of the Torah She'Baal Peh (*Tikkunei Zohar* 15b). A Jew must be mighty in the wars of Torah. Thereby, he subjugates the *yetzer hara* within him. "***Each with his sword strapped to his thigh to defend against the fear of the night."*** This refers to the fear of Gehinnom (*Yevamos* 109b).

Kiddush Hashem in the Lowest World

The main dwelling for Hashem's glory is in this lower world, which is the place where Hashem is lauded. In this world, which is the source of all impurity, the yetzer hara wages a constant battle against us. Here in the darkness, we are far from the light of Hashem's holiness, yet we draw great light down from above, thus bringing greater praise to Hashem in this world than the angels bring Him in Heaven.

The verse from Shir Hashirim thus continues, ***"King Shlomo made for himself a palace from the cedars of Lebanon"*** (*Shir HaShirim* 3:9). "King Shlomo" refers to Hashem, the King of peace. The cedars of Lebanon do not bear fruit. Therefore, they represent this lower world, which by its nature should not be capable of creating anything that would benefit the Shechinah.[16]

The verse continues, ***"He made its pillars out of silver and its floor out of gold, his chariot out of argaman, inside paved with love from the daughters of Yerushalayim"*** (3:10). A person who builds a palace would normally build the pillars out of something more precious than the floor, which people trod upon. Hashem did just the opposite. He made the pillars out of silver and the floor out of gold. "***So***

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[16] Still, Klal Yisrael makes a palace for Hashem out of this lower world, bringing Him greater joy and *nachas* than could ever be produced by the angels in Heaven.

says Hashem, the Heavens are My Throne and the Earth is My footstool" (*Yeshayahu* 66:1). The footstool of the Earth is more precious to Him than all the hosts of Heaven, as Chazal tell us, "From the day that HaKadosh Baruch Hu created His world, He desired a dwelling place below" (*Midrash Tanchuma, Nasso* 16). The praise to Hashem arises from the Earth, where evil is transformed into good and darkness into light.

The pillars of silver refer to Hashem's Throne in Heaven, and the floor of gold refers to His footstool on Earth. This is what is most precious to Him.

The verse continues, "***His chariot is argaman*** (אַרְגָּמָן)." an acronym for the leading angels of the Divine Chariot: Uriel, Refael, Gavriel, Michael and Nuriel. Yet His greatest love is for the daughters of Yerushalayim, a reference to Klal Yisrael who received His Torah and made for Him a dwelling-place on Earth, as He commanded us, "***Make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell among them***" (*Shemos* 25:8).

The verse from Shir Hashirim thus continues, ***"Go out and behold, O daughters of Tzion, King Shlomo in the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, on the day of his heart's rejoicing"*** (3:11). His wedding day refers to the day of Kabbalas HaTorah, when Hashem was united with Bnei Yisrael like a *chasan* with his *kallah* (*Taanis* 26b). On that day, Hashem descended upon Har Sinai with all the hosts of Heaven to give the Torah to Klal Yisrael. When we accepted His Kingship upon ourselves, we crowned Him on His wedding day.

The Forty-Nine Points of Creation

We can now return to investigate in further depth the teaching of the Vilna Gaon, who explained that the 49 details of the Menorah parallel the 49 Gates of Wisdom (see page 76). This also parallels the 49 points of creation in Heaven and Earth, all of which are sustained through the Torah and mitzvos, which are the light of the holy Menorah.

As we explained above, the letter *aleph* is divided into a *vav* facing upwards and a *vav* facing down, representing the six spiritual borders of Heaven and the six physical borders of Earth. These are the rays that extend in each direction of the three dimensions of Heaven and Earth. At the center of these rays is a point, represented by the letter *yud*, one on the top of the *aleph* and one on the bottom. Therefore, the letter *aleph*, the first letter of existence, is composed of a *yud-vav* pointing up and a *yud-vav* pointing down.

In the units of measurement used by the Torah, an *amah* (cubit) equals six *tefachim* (handbreadths) and 24 *godalim* (thumbs). Creation is divided into six directions, which are in turn divided into four primal elements, fire, air, water and earth, for a total of 24. Everything that exists in the physical world, be it inanimate object, plant, animal or man, is composed of some combination of these four elements.

In the Heavenly worlds as well, these directions and elements exist in a spiritual sense, such that every Heavenly being is composed of a combination of the spiritual elements that are the source of their physical counterparts here on Earth. According to the loftiness of the world in which these Heavenly beings exist, so is the ethereal nature of the elements of which they are composed.

Therefore, although the angels have no physical body, we still find terms of physical elements used to describe them, such as, ***"He makes the winds His messengers, and burning fire His servants"*** (*Tehillim* 104:4), ***"Above their heads was like***

ice" (Yechezkel 1:22), and, ***"One wheel upon the land"*** (ibid, 15), referring to the element of earth. In each case, the terms of wind, fire, ice and earth refer to these spiritual forces above, for each angel on the level that it exists. So too, there are four angels in the Divine Chariot (see above __).

The ultimate source of all creation is the four letters of Hashem's Name, as is written, ***"You give life to them all"*** (*Nechemia* 9:6). These four letters are rearranged in 24 basic combinations and endless permutations and variations of nekudos such that everything that exists is really just an expression of Hashem's Name. At the center of them all is the Oneness of Hashem, Who carries everything that exists, sustains everything that exists, and wills everything into being. The center point that unites all Creation with the Oneness of Hashem is represented by the number 25. This is the point where the four elements of the six directions meet.

On the Earth below, there are also four elements of six directions. The dwellers of the Earth are also expressions of the 24 combinations of the four letters of Hashem's Name. However, the difference between Heaven and Earth is that the central point of 25 is hidden here on Earth.

In Heaven, Hashem's holiness is revealed with no change between one time and another. There are no sins there and no dark clouds to separate the angels from Hashem. Hashem's glory is equally revealed at all times, with no rise or fall. Therefore, the angels are called "the standing ones" (*Nefesh HaChaim* 1:10). Nothing changes for them.

This is not so on Earth, where the forces of darkness are empowered to cloud the hearts of men and convince them that the world has no Ruler, and everything is subject to the whims of chance. The might of the Creator is not clearly evident here. It can be seen only in the hearts of Bnei Yisrael, who were betrothed to Hashem with *emunah* at Kabbalas HaTorah, when we saw a public display of His Honor on Har Sinai. The generations that followed passed down in multitudes from one generation to the next, as is written, ***"I betrothed you to Me with emunah, and you will know Hashem"*** (*Hoshea* 2:21). This can seem to change from generation to generation. For example, in the days of the wicked Kings of Yisrael, Bnei Yisrael faced the seductive pull of idolatry. Since then, other challenges have risen. Sometimes they deny the truth of the Torah She'Baal Peh as the expression of Hashem's will. Sometimes they deny Hashem's providence, or the concept of reward and punishment. These are the wicked who walk in darkness and spread darkness throughout the world.

Therefore, in this lowly, physical world only the 24 facets of creation can be seen, but the one center point is often hidden. This represents the 50th Gate of Wisdom, the comprehension of Hashem's Oneness, since Hashem's Unity is not so constantly revealed here.

Thus, when we take a comprehensive look at all of Creation, Heaven and Earth together, we find that there are 24 facets above in Heaven, 24 below on Earth, and one center point of Hashem's glory that is visible for now only in Heaven. The angels say, ***"Blessed is Hashem's glory from His place"*** (*Yechezkel* 3:12), referring to the center point of glory that is visible in Heaven, which is in fact the "location" of all existence (see Bereishis Rabbah 68:9). In this regard, Chazal often call Hashem "HaMakom" (the Place).

The angels are aware of Hashem's "Place," and can bless His glory from there. They can see how all the Hosts of Heaven, down to the finest detail of existence, all draw their existence only from Hashem's Providence, which is the source of life.

The light of His glory constantly shines upon them. On Earth below, sometimes Hashem's glory is revealed, such that all 25 facets can be seen. Sometimes it is hidden, and only 24 facets are visible.

Nefesh and Neshama

This same dichotomy between Heaven and Earth also exists within the soul of every individual. The *neshama* is born of Heaven but the *nefesh* is born of Earth. The *neshama* is always attached to Hashem's glory in the bond of life, with a revelation of light that shines upon it at all times. The *neshama* is always aware of the Creator.

The *nefesh* is born of Earth, but when it is attached to the *neshama* through Torah and mitzvos, it too recognizes the Creator. Of this it is written, ***"Draw me after you and we will run. The king has brought me into his chambers"*** (Shir Hashirim 1:4). The *neshama* draws the *nefesh* into the chambers of Hashem.

However, when the *nefesh* is drawn after the *yetzer hara* instead, and sinks into the worthless pastimes of this fleeting world, it strays from the paths of life onto the paths of death. Its bond with the *neshama* is broken and it loses the awareness of the Creator that the *neshama* bestows upon it.

This is the concept of *kareis* (being cut off), which is the punishment for certain sins. Note that the Torah only uses this term in reference to the *nefesh,* as we find in the verse, ***"That nefesh will be cut off"*** (*Bereishis* 17:14). The sin makes an impenetrable wall of darkness, which blocks the light of the *neshama* from descending to the *nefesh*. The *neshama* itself, however, can never be cut off from Hashem.

All this is represented by the 49 decorations of the Menorah, which were shaped together with the Menorah from a single block of pure gold, rather than welding different pieces together. This teaches us that a person must ensure that through his good deeds the 24 aspects of his *nefesh* unite with the 24 aspects of his *neshama* in perfect unity, in a powerful bond that can never be broken, and together unite themselves with the central branch of the Menorah, which is the center-point of creation – the recognition of Hashem. All 49 rays of Heaven and Earth meet together at this central point. They extend from it and return to it, completing the 50 Gates of Wisdom from which every detail of existence was created.

Unity Above and Below

A hint for all of this can be found in the mitzvah of Shema, which we recite twice each day to accept upon ourselves the Kingdom of Heaven. With the words "*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*" and "*Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuso l'olam va'ed*," we proclaim Hashem's unity. Each of these verses has six words. Shema Yisrael has 25 letters. Baruch Shem has 24.

The Zohar states that together, these two verses are "the unification above and the unification below" (*Zohar* I 18b). Clearly, there are awesome depths in the Zohar that can be fathomed only by those proficient in its wisdom. However, even on a simple level there is great depth to this insight.

The unifications above and below refer to the flip sides of creation that we discussed above, Heaven and Earth. Each of them has six borders, represented by

the six days of creation. Each of those six is composed of four elements (fire, earth air water). The four letters of Hashem's Name give life to them all. All these 24 rays of Heaven and of Earth are drawn from the same central point, the "The holy chamber at the center of the six directions" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 4:4), which is the Oneness of Hashem that completes the number to 25.

Hashem's Oneness is simple, perfect and indivisible. It underlies all aspects of creation in exactly the same way. The fact that Hashem's presence is more apparent in some places and less apparent in others, is only due to the limitations inherent in the various aspects of Creation. The Oneness that sustains them all is exactly the same.

In Heaven, the angels have greater awareness of Hashem since there is no *yetzer hara* to conceal His presence. His light shines freely for all to see. On Earth, the *yetzer hara* forms a cloud of darkness that prevents Hashem's light from being seen. In this sense, it is said that this world was created with Hashem's left hand, the "weaker" of the two. This does not suggest any weakness on Hashem's part, but simply a weakness in our ability to see Hashem's presence in this world.

"*Shema Yisrael*" represents the unification above in Heaven. It has 25 letters, since in addition to the 24 aspects of creation, the center point of Hashem's Oneness is also visible there. "*Baruch Shem*" represents our efforts to bring his unification down to Earth by revealing His Kingship in this world. It has only 24 letters, since the center point of Hashem's Oneness is hidden here. It depends on our own efforts to serve Hashem and accept His Kingship upon ourselves, thus attaching the *nefesh* to the *neshama* and allowing its light to flow freely down into this world.

Dawn of a New World

We pursue this end to the best of our abilities, but the perfect connection of *nefesh* and *neshama* can be achieved only with the revelation of Hashem's Oneness and His Kingship in this world below, precisely as it is revealed in Heaven above. This will occur after the completion of the purification process that the world is currently undergoing. Heaven and Earth will then be united as one with the coming of Moshiach and the dawn of a new World to Come.

This will be in the seventh millennium of the world's existence, corresponding to Shabbos, the seventh day of creation, the center from which the six directions radiate. Even after everything was created during the six days of creation, the world was still not complete until Shabbos came and brought sanctity to them all.

So too, the perfection of this lower world and the removal of the impurity that pollutes it cannot be achieved until the seventh millennium and the arrival of the World to Come. Only then will Hashem's oneness and unity be perfectly revealed on Earth. Of this the prophet foretold, ***"Hashem will be King over the entire Earth. On that day, Hashem will be One and His Name will be One"*** (*Zechariah* 14:9).

Yeshayah the Navi described the consolation that will come upon Klal Yisrael after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. ***"Be consoled, be consoled, My nation … A voice calls in the wilderness, 'Clear a path for Hashem, smooth a road in the wilderness, a track for our God'"*** (*Yeshayahu* 40:1,3). He meant to say that even in the spiritual wasteland of this world, which is like a barren desert where the forces of evil dwell, and is so far from perfection, even here a path will be cleared. All the thorns and stumbling blocks of evil will be cleared aside, and the holiness of

Hashem will be revealed for all to see. Nothing will remain to hinder the *nefesh* from being drawn after the *neshama* into the Chambers of the King. The Earth will reach eternal, spiritual perfection, just like Heaven.

In a sense, this renewal of the world requires a destruction of the world that preceded it. Therefore, Chazal tell us that the world will exist for six thousand years and be destroyed for one thousand (*Sanhedrin* 97a). This is because whenever something ascends to a higher level it must first leave the level that preceded it. One shape must be abandoned before another shape can be assumed. For the same reason, a seed cannot grow into a tree and produce fruit until it first decomposes in the earth.

This is also the reason why death was decreed upon Adam and his descendants. His sin polluted his *nefesh* with an attraction to sordid desires to such an extent that there could never thereafter be anyone perfectly righteous who never sins (Koheles 7:20). The decree of death was a benefit to him, since it allowed him the opportunity to "undress himself" from the soiled garment of his physical body, and redress himself in a perfectly clean and pure new body in the World to Come.

In the same way, the world must undergo destruction before it can be renewed. This allows the world an opportunity to divest itself of is flawed condition, and be recreated in a holier and more sublime state, akin to the Heavens above.

Experiencing Hashem's Goodness

This perfect state of existence which we aspire to see with the dawn of the seventh millennium, depends on our daily efforts to unify Hashem's Name in the world. Chazal (*Berachos* 6a) tell us:

> HaKadosh Baruch Hu said to Bnei Yisrael: You have made Me one in the world, and I will make you one in the world. You have made Me one, as is written, ***"Hear O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One."*** I will make you one in the world, as is written, ***"Who is like Your nation Yisrael, one unique nation upon the land."***

The depth of this teaching is the that the unique greatness and perfection of Klal Yisrael depend on the revelation of Hashem's unity in the world. We can explain this by first discussing what it means to "reveal Hashem's unity" or "make Hashem one in the world."

A fundamental tenet of the Torah is that Hashem watches over all of His creations, down to the tiniest detail of everything that occurs in this lowest of all worlds. Nothing happens if not by Hashem's decree. This contradicts the false view of philosophers throughout the generations, who deny Hashem's providence. They claim that Hashem's will cannot be changed; nothing we do can influence His decrees for help or for harm, for kindness or for severity; and everything follows its course according to its position, its deeds and the changes of time.

They promote this philosophy out of utter ignorance of the ways of Hashem. They stumble in darkness, making baseless conjectures, since they have no access

to the Torah which opens for us a window to understand the supernal wisdom that descends from above.

Our ability to influence the world through our good deeds can be understood by examining the constriction (*tzimtzum*) that left room for the world to be created (see page --). The various levels of all the worlds from the highest realms of the Heaven to the lowest on Earth all depend on the degree to which Hashem concealed His presence from that world.

This is a deep point, known to those versed in the secrets of kabbalah, but we will present it here in the simplest fashion. Just as Hashem is limitless, so too is His will. Nevertheless, in His kindness and benevolence towards His creation, He contracted His will to place limits upon it. Thereby, He left room for creations to exist. As such, distinctions between the planes of creation came into being. According to the level of each plane, and the degree to which Hashem's light is evident there, they experience a state of goodness in correspondence with Hashem's will. The higher the level of any particular creation, the greater is his ability to receive that goodness. The perfect good is the will of Hashem revealed with no constriction.

This can be compared to a dark house. When a window is opened, the sunlight shines in. According to the size and number of the windows, so is the house illuminated. No difference has been made in the sunlight itself. The only difference is the house's capacity to receive it.

The evil that exists in the world, and the hardships that occur here, are only because the light of Hashem's goodness is concealed. As the planes of creation descend one after another, they finally reach a world of utter impurity and evil, the place of the *yetzer hara*, the "Bad Side," where Hashem's holiness is hidden to the greatest possible extent.

As we have seen, Hashem's providence, in terms of His ability and His will, knows no change or distinction. His light is infinite. However, it is concealed from His creations, each one according to his level. Everything depends on the holy Torah, which is the ultimate expression of His will. To the degree that a person veers away from Hashem's will by failing to observe His mitzvos, he distances himself from the goodness that Hashem wishes to bestow upon us. This is the real meaning of "reward and punishment."

The Spirit of Life Unites

We can understand this better by examining a teaching from the Gemara (Berachos 10a), which compares Hashem's relationship with the world, and the very existence of creation, to the *neshama*'s relationship with the body:

> David Hamelech used the expression, "***Barchi nafshi - Let my soul bless***," five times, to express the five ways in which the *neshama* is compared to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu fills the entire world, so too does the *neshama* fill the entire body. Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu sees but cannot be seen, so too the *neshama* sees but cannot be seen. Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu sustains the entire world, so too the *neshama* sustains the entire body. Just as HaKadosh Baruch Hu is pure, so too the *neshama* is pure. Just as HaKadosh

Baruch Hu sits in hidden chambers, so too does the *neshama* sit in hidden chambers.

Let the *neshama* that has these five things come and praise He who has these five things.

There is awesome depth to this teaching. Hashem is to His creations as the *neshama* is to the body. He brings them all into existence, keeps them existing and gives life to them all.

The *neshama* fills all the parts of the body, but there is no distinction between one "part" of the *neshama* or another. The entire *neshama* is one perfectly indivisible entity. Still, since the body is divided into different parts, each part receives its lifeforce from the *neshama* in a different way. The eye receives the power to see. The ear receives the power to hear. The nose receives the power to smell. The hands receive the power to feel, and so on with all the faculties of the body. It is all one single force of the *neshama* that runs through them all, but each one is capable of receiving that force in a different way.

The same is true of the differences found in creation, depending on their place, their condition, their purpose and their distinctions, and the way in which the sparks of Hashem's holy light are dressed within them and shine through them. There is no difference in Hashem's single, enlivening force that runs through all creations, but each creation is capable of receiving that force in a different way.

The same is also true in the life of each individual, the changes he goes through and the reward and punishment he receives. It all depends on the degree to which his *nefesh* is connected to his *neshama* and capable of receiving the blessing that descends from above. This is what grants him eternal existence and perfection in the World to Come.

As long as the *nefesh* is instead drawn after the sordid desires of this world, and the things against which Hashem warned us in His Torah, its connection to the *neshama* unravels. It is instead bound with the evil that exists on the nethermost end of the spectrum of creation, a place that is empty of blessing and devoid of holiness.

Without the *neshama* to rally the faculties of the body towards one holy purpose, each faculty goes its own way to fulfill its own desires. As a person strays from holiness, he suffers disunity within himself, as is written, ***"God made mankind to be straight, but they sought many intrigues"*** (*Koheles* 7:29).

When a person is sick in any part of his body, it is because the spirit of life that runs through him is blocked from reaching that area. If this occurs in a severe enough way to any of his vital organs, such as his heart, the spirit of life will depart from him and he will die. His limbs fall apart from one another, since the *neshama* is no longer there to bind them all together. As long as he lives, the spirit of life in his heart flows through his arteries to all the parts of the body, binding them all together. Life is in essence the unity and cooperation of the body parts, while death is their division.

The same is true on a spiritual level of the punishment endured by the *nefesh*. Its life and death depend on the degree of its unity with the *neshama*, through which it receives a flow of holiness from above. The *neshama* enlivens the *nefesh*, just as the spirit of life animates the body. When the sins of the *nefesh* are so great

that it is cut off from the *neshama*, it falls apart and decomposes, just as the body does when it is bereft of the *neshama*'s vivifying spirit.

The same is true of creation as a whole. When a spirit of holiness flows through all the parts of creation, they are enlivened and harnessed together towards a common goal. This unifying force depends on the deeds of man. As the *neshama* is aligned with the body through man's good deeds, so too is the enlivening force from above aligned with all the parts of creation. Man is the mirror image of all creation. Everything that happens in the world depends on his deeds. As he changes himself for better, the entire world is improved, and so too the opposite.

Therefore, when a Jew accepts upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, sincerely committing himself to sacrifice his desires for the sake of Hashem's holy Torah and His blessed service, he unifies Hashem's Name among all that exists. Thereby, he also attaches his *nefesh* to his *neshama*, causing it to live forever. Of this Hashem tell us, "You have made Me one in the world, and I will make you one in the world" (*Berachos* 6a, see above).

The Good Light

From all of this we are led to understand that the main revelation of Hashem's unity in the world, the riddance of evil, and the perfection of everything in creation – all depend on the degree to which we perfect ourselves.

There are two paths towards this perfection. One is through Torah study. This is symbolized by the Menorah, which shines out to illuminate the world, as we discussed above in the metaphor of the sunlight that shines into a house when its windows are opened.

The verse tells us of Moshe's birth, ***"She gave birth to a son and saw that he was good"*** (*Shemos* 2:2). Chazal compare this to the "goodness" found in the verse, ***"God saw that the light was good"*** (*Bereishis* 1:4), and learn from this that when Moshe was born, the entire house was filled with light.

Moshe was chosen from when he was first formed to be the one through whom the Torah would be given. He was the one who would bring it down from Heaven to Earth, and illuminate the entire universe, which is the "house" in which our world exists, and is destined to be a dwelling place for Hashem's glory. Through him, the world would be uplifted to perfection, and the evil and darkness that covers the land in this lower world would be transformed into perfect goodness and light.

Therefore, Hashem said to Moshe, ***"I will let all of My goodness*** (כָּל טוּבִי) ***pass before you"*** (*Shemos* 33:19). This refers to the light of the Torah that shines through the Menorah. As we quoted above from the Vilna Gaon, there were 50 parts of the Menorah itself, plus 17 extra parts including the candles, pincers and scoops. These 67 aspects of the Menorah parallel the number of words in the first verses of each of the Five Books of Chumash, which illuminate the world. This is the *gematria* of "all goodness" (67 = כל טוב).

For this reason it was said of Moshe, "She saw that he was good" (*Shemos* 2:2) paralleling the verse, "God saw that the light was good" (*Bereishis* 1:4).

The *gematria* of "good" (17 = טוב) is found in the first letters of the verse, "The Heavens and the Earth" (אֵת הַשמים וְאת הָארץ). This teaches us that the goodness of the Torah's light brings Heaven and Earth together. They were first created with the letter *beis* from *Bereishis*, signifying the dichotomy between them. The

Heavens were originally made as a place of light, and the Earth as a place of darkness. However, the Torah was given beginning with the letter *aleph* from *Anochi*, signifying that the Torah brings them together as one, by illuminating the Earth with the light of Heaven. This is also seen by the very shape of the letter *aleph*, as we explained above (see page 85).

The Kohen Gadol's Jewels

With this we can explain the significance of the jewels that the Kohen Gadol wore on his shoulders, on which the names of the twelve tribes were carved (as we discussed above on page 75). The Kohen Gadol was the greatest among the entire Jewish people in holiness and Torah wisdom. He served as an emissary between Bnei Yisrael and our Father in Heaven. He alone was able to enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, to stand in the Chamber of the King to advocate on behalf of Bnei Yisrael. He led the Kohanim in their sacred trust to disseminate Torah in Klal Yisrael, as is written, ***"The lips of the Kohen preserve wisdom, and you shall seek Torah from his mouth"*** (Malachi 2:7).

Therefore, he was chosen to carry the names of Bnei Yisrael on his shoulders, to recall them before Hashem at all times. His two shoulders paralleled the two hands through which Heaven and Earth were created, the right hand for Heaven and the left hand for Earth. He brought them both together in unity by teaching Torah to Bnei Yisrael, as is written, "You shall come to the Kohen who will be in those days" (Devarim 26:3).

The six tribes that were engraved on each stone represented the six spiritual "directions" of Heaven and the six directions of earth (see above __). This is the *double-vav,* divided in half, that runs through the *aleph*. The 49 letters in the names of the twelve tribes paralleled the 49 letters in Shema Yisrael and Baruch Shem, each of which has six words, paralleling the six names on each shoulder.

As we explained above (???), Shema has 25 letters, representing the revelation of Hashem's unity in Heaven, whereas Baruch Shem has only 24, since this unity is hidden on Earth. This number can be completed to 50, bringing Heaven and Earth together, in one of two ways: either through Torah study or by accepting upon ourselves the Oneness and Kingdom of Heaven. These are represented by the letters *yud* and *heh*.

Yud represents the unity of Hashem's Kingship. It is a perfectly simple and undividable letter, showing that dominion belongs to Hashem alone and cannot possibly be divided. It is the center point of everything, "The holy chamber at the center of the six directions", as we explained above (see page 73). *Heh* represents the Torah, the Five Books of Chumash.

This is hinted to by adding another *yud* to the name of Binyamin. The other is by adding a *heh* to Yosef. These were the two sons of Rachel, who were divided between the two shoulders, with Binyamin on the right and Yosef on the left.

This follows what we explained above, that the Heavens were created by Hashem's right hand and the Earth by His left. ***"My (left) hand founded the Earth and My right hand measured the Heavens"*** (*Yeshayahu* 48:13). The revelation of the Oneness of Hashem is mostly in Heaven, which is a world of peace, where there is no yetzer hara or impurity, and no clouds or darkness, which cause division and detachment from Hashem. Of this it is written, ***"He makes peace in His heights"*** (*Iyov* 25:2). The division found on Earth is only because of the *yetzer hara*'s

machinations. The Torah was given for the Earth, in order to draw the Heavenly oneness down from above.

Thus, Chazal tell us that the World to Come (Heaven) was created with the letter *yud* and this world (Earth) was created with the letter *heh* (*Menachos* 29b). The *yud* brings perfection through the recognition of Hashem's Kingship, while the *heh* brings perfection through Torah.

Yosef's name was inscribed on the left jewel, representing the Earth. The letter *heh* was added to his name, symbolizing the Five Books of Torah, since he inherited the tradition of Torah, more than any of his brothers. ***"He was a son of Yaakov's old age"*** (*Bereishis* 37:3). Yaakov taught him the "elderly" wisdom that he had learned in the yeshivos of Shem and Eiver (*Bereishis Rabbah* 84:8).

Binyamin's name was inscribed on the right jewel, representing Heaven. The letter *yud* was added to his name, symbolizing the Oneness of the Kingdom of Heaven and the peace that this brings. Binyamin alone was not involved in any of the strife between the brothers.

All the harm that befell Bnei Yisrael over the course of our many years of Exile was caused by the strife between the brothers. Yosef was guilty of speaking *lashon hara* about them to their father, and they were guilty of selling him into slavery. Binyamin, however, was not involved in this strife at all. He did not participate in the sale of Yosef. Therefore, he merited to have the Beis Hamikdash built in his portion of Eretz Yisrael (*Yalkut Shimoni, Shemos* 284), since the Beis Hamikdash depends on the unity among us, of which it is written, ***"Who is like Your nation, Yisrael, one unique nation upon the land"*** (*Shmuel II* 7:23).

The Beis Hamikdash brought peace and unity between Heaven and Earth. Of this Chazal tell us that the Beis Hamikdash was built with both of Hashem's hands (representing the union of Heaven and Earth), as is written, ***"The Mikdash that Your hands established"*** (*Shemos* 15:7; *Berachos* 33a).

The Shechinah dwelled upon Klal Yisrael in the Beis Hamikdash only in the merit of the unity between us, which brought unity between Heaven and Earth. For this reason, it was destroyed by the *lashon hara* and senseless hatred between us (Gittin 55b; Yoma 9b). This is also the reason for the length of our exile.

"Of Binyamin he said: the beloved of Hashem shall dwell securely with Him. He hovers over him the entire day, and rests between his shoulders" (Devarim 33:12). Binyamin brought together the two shoulders of the Kohen Gadol, with the two jewels that were upon them, thus unifying Heaven and Earth. The term for "beloved" used in this verse is יְדִיד, which signifies the two hands (יד יד) through which Heaven and Earth were created, and were united as one through the unity of Bnei Yisrael. For this reason, the Shechinah dwelled in his portion of Eretz Yisrael. *Yud* was added to his name to signify the unity of Hashem's Name in the world.

Therefore, the Gemara explains that either the letter *yud* added to Binyamin or *heh* added to Yosef served to complete the letters of the names of Bnei Yisrael to 50, thus revealing Hashem's presence here on Earth just as it is revealed on Heaven.

The Consolation of Tzion

With this we can return to examine the enigmatic Gemara (Bava Basra 75a) that we quoted above:

וְ֖שַׂמְתִּי כַדְכֹּד שִׁמֵּיִךְ – ***"I shall place jewels (kadkod) as your windows"*** (*Yeshayahu* 54:12). Two angels in Heaven, Michael and Gavriel, argued over this verse. Some say two Sages on the earth, R' Yehuda and R' Chezkiyah, argued over it. One said that this jewel is *shoham*. The other said it is *yashpeh*.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, "Let it be as this one says and as that one says" (*kadin v'kadin* in Aramaic, which sounds like the Hebrew word *kadkod*). Therefore, He decreed that the windows will be made of both.

This verse from *Sefer Yeshayahu* comes after the prophet's warning of the harsh exile that loomed on the horizon. The prophet was then sent to console them with tidings of the good years that would follow when they would finally return to Eretz Yisrael. ***"Be consoled, be consoled, My nation, says your God"*** (Yeshayahu 40:1). Klal Yisrael was unable to accept this consolation. ***"Tzion said, 'Hashem has abandoned me'"*** (*Yeshayahu* 49:14). In the following haftarah (from the seven of consolation), the prophet reported to Hashem that they were not consoled, ***"Trembling and poor, she is not consoled"*** (*Yeshayahu* 54:11).

Klal Yisrael could not be consoled, since they saw that even after they returned from the Babylonian exile and the Beis Hamikdash was rebuilt, it was again destroyed by their sins and they were again sent into exile. Chazal tell us that the second destruction was harder than the first, since it lasted for so much longer, and since we were not told when it would end (Yoma 9b). Furthermore, they feared that even after it would be rebuilt for a third time, perhaps their sins would cause it to be destroyed yet again. They knew that they were prone to sin, since ***"the nature of man's heart is wicked from his youth"*** (*Bereishis* 8:21). What hope could they have of ever finding peace?

Therefore, Hashem came to them with an assurance that there would be an end to their sins and their suffering. "***Your sins have been atoned for, daughter of Tzion. They shall be no more"*** (*Eichah* 4:22). ***"I shall remove the heart of stone from your flesh"*** (*Yechezkel* 11:19). Hashem promised that there will come a time when the spirit of impurity will be swept from the Earth forever.

When an end comes to the six thousand years of this world's existence, and the thousand years of Shabbos arrives, Hashem's Oneness and holiness will be revealed throughout the house (see above ??). After all the years of purifying and uplifting the world, it will finally reach perfection and all the forces of impurity will be destroyed.

Of this time it is written, ***"Rise and shine, for your light has arrived and the glory of Hashem shines upon you"*** (*Yeshayahu* 60:1). The light that shines in Heaven, making Hashem's presence perfectly revealed there, will descend to shine in the same way upon on Earth. ***"Although the darkness covers the Earth … Hashem will shine upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you***" (ibid, 2). Even in this world of darkness, Hashem's light will shine upon us and the darkness will be gone forever. ***"The nations will walk by your light"*** (ibid, 3). Hashem's glory will be revealed throughout the world, and even the nations will see His light shine upon us. ***"The sun will no longer be your light by day, nor shall the light of the moon shine for you. Hashem will be your light forever"*** (ibid, 19). There will be no more sins to conceal Hashem's light from us, and darkness will never again descend upon the Earth.

This too is the meaning of the verse, ***"I shall place jewels (kadkod) as your windows"*** (*Yeshayahu* 54:12). The jewels are called *kadkod*, which is spelled in Hebrew כַּד-כֹּד, referring to the 24 points in Heaven and the 24 on Earth. Just as the 24 in Heaven are completed by the revelation of Hashem's unity, which bring them to 25, so too will the 24 on Earth.

These two completions will come about through the two methods described above: through the recognition of Hashem's Kingship, which brings unity and peace, represented by the letter *yud* in Heaven, and through the Torah study represented by the letter *heh* here on Earth.

These are represented by the two jewels, shoham (onyx) and yashpeh (jasper). These were among the twelve jewels on the Kohen Gadol's breastplate, each representing one of the twelve tribes. Shoham was for Yosef, who merited Torah and had the letter *heh* added to his name. Yashpeh was for Binyamin, who merited peace and had the letter *yud* added to his name. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, "Let it be as this one says and as that one says."

Therefore, the verse continues, "***I shall place jewels*** (כַּדְכֹּד) ***as your windows … All your sons shall be knowing of Hashem and there will be much peace for your sons."*** Together, the knowledge of Hashem (by studying Torah) and the peace for your sons (united in the recognition of Hashem's Kingship) will open the windows to allow the light of holiness to enter and bring the world to perfection. Peace is the only vessel capable of containing blessing (*Uktzin* 3:12).

These are "the unification above and the unification below" brought about by "*Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad.*" For this reason, R' Yehuda HaNassi began the first Mishna with the laws of reciting Shema at night. Even now, in the dark night of exile, we bring light into the world through our acceptance of Hashem's Kingship in Shema. Thereby, we bring peace and blessing upon Klal Yisrael.

Returning Home

The last Mishna in Shas[17] (*Uktzin* 3:12) states:

> R' Yehoshua ben Levi said that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is destined to grant each and every tzaddik 310 worlds of reward, as is written, ***"I have*** (יש) ***reward to bestow upon those who love Me and all their storehouses I will fill"*** (*Mishlei* 8:21). (יש equals 310 in gematria.)

This also hints to a very deep concept. The system of providence with which Hashem runs the world is compared to a set of scales, with a *kaf zechus* (the side of merit), a *kaf chova* (the side of guilt), and the cross bar that attaches the two sides and preserves the balance between them (*Sefer Yetzirah* 2:1). These are the

[17] In speeches delivered in honor of a siyum, it is common to suggest novel explanations of how the beginning and end connect. Hence the author's explanation of the first and last Mishnayos of Shas.

attributes of Kindness, Justice and Mercy. Corresponding to them are our three forefathers.[18]

The forefathers were called the Divine Chariot.[19] They included their descendants, through whom creation would be brought to perfection through our Torah and mitzvos. These include the 248 positive commandments and the 365 prohibitions, which we must avoid in order to rid ourselves and the world of that which is filthy and destructive.

We can understand this by comparison to a person whose stomach became sick through food poisoning. To recover, he needs to cleanse his stomach of the poison that caused his illness. If he does not purge himself of the destructive poisons within him, no medicine will help.

So too, when a person wants to return to Hashem, he must first cleanse himself of the pollutants he ingested through his sins. With this he "purifies the sanctuary," so to speak, correcting all the evils that his sins brought to the world and sweeping away the clouds of darkness that blocked the light of holiness from descending. Then, he must improve himself with Torah and mitzvos, which brings a new light of holiness upon himself and upon the entire world. These are the medicines that improve his state, after he has been cleansed of the poisons within him.

Of this the prophet said:

> Yisrael, if you return, says Hashem, you will return to Me. If you remove your abominations from before Me, you will no longer have to wander in exile… For so says Hashem to the men of Yehuda and Yerushalayim: Plow for yourselves a furrow (to kill the weeds), and do not cast your seeds upon the thorns (*Yermiyahu* 4:1).

This call to *teshuvah* comes on the heels of the previous parsha, which describes the results of the terrible sins they committed, ***"We lie upon our shame and are covered with our disgrace, for we have sinned against Hashem our God"*** (*Yermiyahu* 3:25). This refers to the spirit of impurity and the forces of evil that were brought into the world and empowered through their sins. They are referred to as "shame and disgrace," since a person who betrays a dear friend is ashamed to look him in the face. So too, the evil of our sins forms a barrier that separates us from Hashem and prevents us from looking towards Him, as is written, ***"Your sins separate you from Me"*** (*Yeshayahu* 59:2).

The resolution of this of state of shame is provided in the following verse, ***"If you return from your sins, says Hashem, you will return to Me."*** The distance between us and Hashem can be bridged.

Teshuvah means return. It is the return of the fallen *neshama* to its source on high, to his father's home. This is made possible only after we rid ourselves of the abominations. These barriers of sin must be removed, so that we can be reunited with Him. Our sins distance us from Hashem, forcing the soul to wander like a

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[18] Avraham served Hashem by spreading kindness in the world. Yitzchak demanded justice. Yaakov preserved the balance between the two.

[19] They spread the revelation of Hashem throughout the world. In this sense, they were like the chariot with which a king travels throughout his kingdom.

homeless vagrant, finding its company among the lowest elements, the forces of impurity, since they cannot rest in one place. ***"Hashem said to the Satan, 'From where do you come?' And the Satan answered, 'From wandering the earth'"*** (*Iyov* 1:7).

This sense of homelessness and perpetual wandering is the punishment of the wicked, which is called the *kaf hakelah* (slingshot).[20] The souls of the wicked are forced to wander the earth, in the company of the Satan and the forces of evil, with a sense of homelessness that is the opposite of the reward for the righteous, ***"Let them come in peace and rest upon their beds"*** (*Yeshayahu* 57:2). So too was the punishment of Kayin, ***"I shall have to hide myself from Your face and wander in exile across the earth"*** (*Bereishis* 4:14).

Therefore, the first step in *teshuvah* is to cleanse our souls from the sins that estrange us from Hashem, and cleanse the world from the damage done by our sins. This is like a farmer who must first uproot the weeds before he can plant. ***"Plow for yourselves a furrow, and do not cast your seeds upon the thorns."***

Greater than Angels

Chazal tell us that Hashem has nothing in His treasure-house but a store of y*iras Shamayim*, as is written, "What does Hashem your God ask of you but to fear Hashem" (*Devarim* 10:12) and, ***"Fear of Him is His treasure"*** (*Yeshayahu* 33:6, *Berachos* 33b). The Vilna Gaon explains that true y*iras Shamayim* is not fear of punishment. It is an awe of Hashem's greatness that makes a person scared to rebel against His will.

After Bnei Yisrael received the Ten Commandments on Har Sinai, Moshe told them, ***"Do not fear, since Hashem has come to uplift you, so that the fear of Him shall be upon your faces so that you will not sin"*** (*Shemos* 20:17). Hashem raised them to a high spiritual level to show them His glory and greatness, and thereby awaken within them an awe of Him and love for Him, which would distance them from sin. They would become like a trusted confidant of a king, who stands in his palace and beholds his grandeur. Such a person fears to do anything against the king's will, since he so much treasures the special love and honor that the king shows him, and fears to do anything that might displease the king or harm their relationship.

So too, Moshe told them, ***"Do not fear."*** Do not suffice with a simple fear of punishment. ***"Hashem has come to uplift you, so that the fear of Him shall be upon your faces so that you will not sin."*** Instead, recognize His greatness and fear doing anything that might estrange us from Him. In this sense, love and fear of Hashem are intertwined as one.

In the four letters of Hashem's Name, the first two letters *yud-heh* represent love and fear of Him, while the second two letters *vav-heh* represent Torah and mitzvos. The first two letters represent the Heavens, which is the abode of the angels. They have no need for Torah and mitzvos, since they have no physical body or lowly desire. They are holy creatures, who have a clear recognition of Hashem's greatness.

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[20] Of this it is written, ***"Let the soul of my master be bound in the bond of life with Hashem your God, and let the soul of your enemies be cast from a slingshot"*** (*Shmuel* I 25:29). Chazal comment on this that the punishment of the wicked is to have their souls wander in the world not knowing where they will find rest, just as a stone shot from a sling does not know where it will fall (*Avos D'Rebbe Nosson* 1:12)

Love and awe of Hashem are an integral part of their nature. "They have height and awe, and their height is covered with eyes" (Yechezkel 10:12), meaning to say that their greatness lies in their perception of the glory of Hashem's holiness. They are said to be "surrounded with eyes" (*Yechezkel* 10:12), in contrast with mankind. We only have eyes on the front of our face. We can see Hashem before us, through the vision of the *neshama* that guides us forward, but we cannot see Him behind us, since our physical bodies block our perception of Him.

The ministering angels are covered with eyes all around them, on all four sides (see *Yechezkel* 1:18). They have no back side to block their vision from recognizing the greatness of the Creator. Therefore, their love and awe of Hashem are constant. On the other hand, the angels have no Torah in their speech, nor mitzvos in their deeds. Therefore, they make use only of the first letters of Hashem's Name.

A hint for all this can be found in the verse, ***"Let the Heavens rejoice and the Earth be glad"*** (*Tehillim* 96:11). ***"יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם - Let the Heavens rejoice,"*** begins with the letters *yud-heh*. ***"וְתָגֵל הָאָרֶץ - And the Earth be glad,"*** begins with *vav-heh.* Mankind on Earth have Torah and mitzvos, but we do not naturally have the love and fear of the angels. We are not born with these traits but we can achieve them through good deeds and by distancing ourselves from sin. Thereby, we purify the faculties of our *nefesh* and *ruach,* until the power of the intellect and the light of the *neshama* overpower the coarseness of the body. Through Torah study, we can achieve supernal knowledge and wisdom, allowing us to recognize Hashem's greatness and develop an awe and love of Him.

For this reason, the angels in Heaven will never have more than the *yud-heh* of Hashem's Name. The complete Name of Hashem, the *yud-heh* of love and fear and the *vav-heh* of Torah and mitzvos, can only be reached by Bnei Yisrael.

Chazal teach us as follows:

> The works of the righteous are greater than the works of Heaven and Earth. Regarding the creation of Heaven and Earth, it is written, ***"My (left) hand founded the Earth and My right hand measured the Heavens"*** (*Yeshayahu* 48:13) – referring to one hand for each. Regarding the works of the righteous … it is written, ***"The firmament declares the work of His hands"*** (*Tehillim* 19:2) – referring to both hands. This refers to the work of the righteous, which the firmament declares when Hashem makes it rain in response to their prayers (*Kesubos* 5a).

There is great depth to this, which we can explain as follows. When the four letters of Hashem's Name are fully spelled out, they are made up of 28 letters, 14 in *yud-heh* and 14 in *vav-heh*:

Yud	***Heh***	***Vav***	***Heh***
yud-vav-dalet	*heh-aleph*	*vav-aleph-vav*	*heh-aleph*
יו"ד וא"ו דל"ת	ה"א אל"ף	וא"ו אל"ף וא"ו	ה"א אל"ף
9 letters	5 letters	9 letters	5 letters
9+5=14		9+5=14	

Fourteen is the *gematria* of the word hand (יד). These are the fourteen letters of the right "hand" with which Hashem created Heaven (*yud-heh*), and the fourteen letters of the left "hand" with which He created Earth (*vav-heh*).

Love and fear are the basis of Heaven, and Torah and mitzvos are the basis of Earth. The righteous perfect themselves both in the Heavenly aspects of love and fear, and in the Earthly aspects of Torah and mitzvos. Therefore, they are said to work with both hands.

Their handiwork is compared to agriculture, since it involves the work of man to plow, seed and uproot weeds, after which Hashem sends rain from Heaven to make the plants grow. So too, through their good deeds (compared to seeds), their distancing themselves from sin and bad traits (compared to uprooting weeds), and their plowing the fields of their hearts in order to recognize Hashem's glory and plant therein love and fear of Hashem, they become fertile ground to produce the choicest fruits as their love and fear unite with Torah and mitzvos, and the rain of Heavenly blessing descends upon them.

Therefore, Chazal tell us that the Beis Hamikdash built by the righteous is greater than the works of Heaven and Earth. Whereas the Heavens and Earth were made with one "hand" each, the Beis Hamikdash was made with two hands together (Kesubos 5a). This is because the Beis Hamikdash was the meeting-point where Heaven and Earth joined together. It was a place where the love and fear of Heaven joined with Torah and mitzvos of Earth.

There, they served Hashem with the mitzvos of offering sacrifices, which could not be offered anywhere else. From there, Torah was disseminated throughout Klal Yisrael, since the Sanhedrin was seated there in the Chamber of Hewn Stone. There was the place most uniquely attuned to experiencing a love and fear of Hashem, which could not be felt anywhere else on Earth. For this reason, the *maaser sheini* (tithes) and *bikurim* (first fruit) were brought to be eaten in Yerushalayim, so that people would have a chance to experience these feelings, as is written, ***"You shall eat them before Hashem your God, so that you will learn to fear Hashem your God for all your days"*** (*Devarim* 14:23; *Sifri* cited in Tosefos, *Bava Basra* 21a).

Nowhere else was there such a revelation of Hashem's holiness. There, ten miracles were constantly seen (*Avos* 5:5). When they ascended for the *Shalosh Regalim* (the pilgrimage festivals), they achieved *ruach hakodesh*, a spirit of Divine inspiration. For this reason, it was called Gey Chizayon - the Valley of Visions (*Yeshayahu* 22:1; *Eichah Rabbah*, Introduction 24).

Since this was the only place where all four letters of Hashem's Name were evident, it was the only place where He permitted His Name to be spoken as it is spelled. ***"In the place where I allow My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you,"*** (*Shemos* 20:21).

So too, throughout the Torah's description of creation, we do not find this Name mentioned anywhere until the world was completed and man was created and placed upon the Earth to serve Hashem. Only then could all four letters be seen in unison, as man serves Hashem with love and fear, Torah and mitzvos.

The Treasure-House of Yiras Shamayim

Reaching this level of perfection, and experiencing a love of Hashem and fear for Him intertwined as one, is possible only though dutiful application to Torah study, observing the practical mitzvos and avoiding sin. Thereby, a person

sanctifies his *nefesh* and *ruach*, and attaches them to the light and lifeforce of the *neshama*. The four levels of the soul also parallel the four letters of Hashem's Name. The neshama is attached to the Source of Life, which is the Godly light that brings all life into being. The ruach is the faculty of speech, used for Torah. The nefesh is the part of the soul that works in the world of nature, animating the limbs of the body.

A person's Torah and mitzvos are the vessels through which he can grasp awe and love for Hashem. The main thing is awe, since at its highest level, awe includes a burning love for the Creator. ***"For love is as fierce as death. Its coals are coals of fire, a flame of God*** (לְהֶבֶתְ-יָהּ) ***"*** (*Shir HaShirim* 8:6). As we explained above, the letters *yud-heh* refer to the love and awe of Hashem.

When a person reaches a level that the two sides of his heart are both filled with love and awe of his Creator, he has no room left within him to feel any attraction towards the fleeting physical pleasures of this world. Of this the verse continues, ***"Great waters cannot extinguish the love and rivers cannot sweep it away"*** (8:7). The pleasures of this world are compared to "great waters," which try to extinguish our fiery love for Hashem. The hardships and trials of this world are like rivers that try to sweep it away, as David Hamelech said in the verse, "I have come unto the depths, and the rivers swept me away" (*Tehillim* 69:3). However, if a person's love is great enough, no water in the world can extinguish it. The fire burns within him and consumes all the faculties of his body and soul with a mighty sense of joy, love and awe.

When a person's Torah study and good deeds nurture him to this highest level of *yiras Shamayim*, which is love and fear intertwined, he becomes a treasure-house the likes of which cannot be found in Heaven. In Heaven, love and fear are natural. They are not considered a rare and hard-won treasure. Only in this lowly world where a person must work hard to develop these gifts, is it considered Hashem's greatest treasure. Of this Chazal said that Hashem has nothing in His world accept a treasure-house of y*iras Shamayim*. Only in this lowly world can this treasure be found, that a person must overcome his nature to produce such a treasure for Hashem. "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, accept for fear of Heaven" (*Berachos* 33b). This is not considered "in the hands of Heaven" since Hashem did not create man with a natural sense of yiras Shamayim. Rather, he must gather this treasure for himself, through his Torah and mitzvos.

The Foundation of Emunah

We must give thanks to Hashem and praise His Name, for the great treasure of the Torah. We merited this great level by having been brought to Har Sinai, where He descended upon us with an awesome display of His glory.

Those who stood at Har Sinai were the collective souls of our nation, who included within them the souls of their descendants until the end of time. Thus, the soul of every Jew who would every live was present at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, as is written, "Not with you alone do I make this covenant … but with (all) those who stand here today before Hashem your God, and with those who those who are not here today" (*Devarim* 29:13-14).

Through Kabbalas HaTorah, the *emunah* we discussed above became embedded in our nation forever. Thereby, we will merit the greatest treasure through our effort, as the Prophet said, "I betrothed you to Me with *emunah*" (*Hosheia* 2:21). The entire gamut of Torah and avodah is included in *emunah*. Through our *emunah* that the Torah and mitzvos were given to us by Hashem, and to the degree that we awaken within ourselves this *emunah* that was planted in our hearts when we first stood at Har Sinai, we will merit all of this good and the reward of the World to Come.

Hashem chose us from among all the nations, and brought us to Har Sinai to receive His Torah, in the merit of the great Forefather or our nation, Avraham Avinu. He was the founder of our faith. All the deeds of his life served to prepare the course for the nation that he would sire, and lead us on the path of *emunah* forever.

Akeidas Yitzchak

To understand this better, we must examine Akeidas Yitzchak, Avraham's tenth test, which Hashem praised more than any other. Normally, tests are given in order to determine a person's knowledge or character. In this case, such a test was unnecessary. Hashem sees into the depths of each person's heart. He knew perfectly well that Avraham would rise to the challenge. What then is the meaning of Hashem's conclusion after Avraham succeeded in this test, "Now I know that you fear God" (*Bereishis* 22:12)? Now He knew, but not before? And even after this, there is still free choice.[21]

The truth is that there was great depth to this test. We can understand this better by examining the following verse. The Prophet said, "***Let us return to Hashem, for He has wounded and He shall heal us. He has struck and He shall bandage us. He will enliven us for two days, and on the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him***" (*Hosheia* 6:1). What are the two days in which Hashem will enliven us? How are they distinguished from the third day in which "He will raise us up and we will live"? And why on the third day does it state that we will live "before Him," which seems to imply that on the first two days we were not before Him?

This can be understood as a reference to the three days in which Avraham and Yitzchak travelled towards the mountain on which the Akeidah would take place. "On the third day, he saw the place from afar" (*Bereishis* 22:4). Why did Hashem make him travel so long in order to fulfill this mitzvah? When Yaakov Avinu returned to Har HaMoriah to daven Maariv, the earth "leaped beneath him" so that he could arrive in just a few moments (Rashi, *Bereishis* 28:11). Hashem could have made the earth do the same for Avraham, and spared him the difficulty of the trip.

This too contains deep meaning. As we explained above, Avraham Avinu was the root from which our entire nation grew. Everything he did was in order to clear the path for his descendants to travel. At the Bris bein Habesarim, Avraham was given a

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[21] Unlike the false claims of the philosophers to the contrary, Hashem's perfect knowledge of how a person will respond to a challenge does not limit that person's free-choice to respond as he pleases.

vision of the long and terrible exile that his descendants would have to endure, as is written, "A fear and great darkness fell upon him" (*Bereishis* 15:12).

He foresaw that they would be scattered to the four corners of the world, immersed among countless other nations, each with their own false beliefs and modes of worship. Throughout the many ages of exile, and the terrible hardships they would endure therein, it would be natural for his descendants to succumb to the influence of their surroundings, abandoning Torah and mitzvos, assimilating among the nations and learning from them, until his descendants would lose their identity as a nation and never be able to return.

To prevent this eventuality, Hashem set in place the awesome merit of Akeidas Yitzchak, in which Hashem tested His beloved servant Avraham. Having been purified through his fulfillment of the totality of the Torah and mitzvos (even before they were given), and having the covenant of the bris sealed on his flesh, he was then called complete (as is written: "Walk before Me and be perfect. I shall grant My bris between Me and you," *Bereishis* 17:1-2). The Vilna Gaon explains that just as there are 613 parts of the body, there are 613 parts of the *nefesh* (the lowest level of the soul) and 613 parts of the *ruach* (the higher level of the soul). Only through the 613 mitzvos can the 613 parts of the lower *nefesh* become united with the 613 parts of the higher *ruach*, such that the light of the *ruach* shines upon the *nefesh*. Thereby, the *nefesh* becomes eternal just like the *ruach.*

Still, the only way the 613 parts of the ruach can illuminate the nefesh is through the mitzvah of bris milah. Each mitzvah causes additional light and holiness to emanate from the *neshamah,* which is attached to the Throne of Glory, down to the *ruach*. However, that light cannot descend further down to the *nefesh* without the mitzvah of bris milah, which is situated at the end of the torso. So too, there is a final aspect to the ruach, which includes within it all the 613 mitzvos. It parallels the part of the body that includes within it all others. Since all the powers of the body are gathered there, it has the power to give life to a new and similar body. So too, the final aspect of the ruach includes within it all the other parts of the ruach.

However, there is a barrier that prevents this holy light from passing from the *ruach* to the *nefesh* below it. This is the sitra achra, the force of evil, which is like a brick wall that prevents the sunlight from flowing into a dark house. As soon as the wall is torn down, daylight floods into the house and illuminates all its rooms. So too, when the *orlah* is removed from the body, the barrier of impurity is torn down and the light of holiness shines in from the *ruach* to illuminate the *nefesh*.

This is the perfection of which Hashem spoke when He told Avraham Avinu, "Walk before Me and be perfect." Chazal tell us that until Avraham Avinu was circumcised, he would fall on his face in awe whenever Hashem appeared to him (*Tanchuma, Lech Lecha* 20). Only after he was circumcised was he able to stand before Hashem.

Even before the Bris Milah, he had reached such a high level of purity that his *neshamah* shined upon his *ruach* with a spirit of prophecy (of which it is written, "Who would grant that the entire nation of Hashem would be prophets, and that Hashem would place His *ruach* upon them," *Bamidbar* 11:29). Still, his *nefesh* was incapable of

receiving the tremendous light that shone from his mitzvos and good deeds. Therefore, while the light illuminated his *ruach*, his *nefesh* – the part of the soul that is attached to the body – collapsed together with the body, unable to stand before that great light.

Once he was circumcised, the light of all the mitzvos and good deeds that he had done in the past were able to shine all the way down to his *nefesh*. He was then able to receive a spirit of prophecy without trembling and without collapsing, since his *ruach* had become united with his *nefesh*, and the *ruach* became like one of his bones. The Midrash applies to this the verse, "From my flesh I shall see God" (*Iyov* 19:26). Because of the mitzvah that was carved into his flesh, he was able to withstand a revelation of Hashem without collapsing (*Bereishis Rabbah* 48:2).

After Avraham Avinu had reached this state of perfection, such that all the levels of his soul were united and attached to Hashem through the 613 mitzvos, he merited an even greater perception of Hashem's greatness and holiness, of which Chazal say, "The King of kings, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, revealed Himself to Avraham and called him His beloved" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 6:7). Avraham's love for Hashem became that much more profound, and through his love he reached ever higher levels of fear. It was at this apex of holiness that he fathered the Chosen Nation, instilled them with the holiness that he had discovered, and attached them to Hashem with an unbreakable chain.

The Eternal Covenant of Emunah

Thus, even when they would spend many years wandering among the nations, they would never be lost among them. Their love for Hashem and their *emunah* would remain forever fastened in their hearts. No power in the world could shake it loose.

Through this test in generations tortured and killed for refusing to convert, sacrificing their lives, fathers and sons together, to sanctify His holy Name. This foundation of *emunah* was established in their hearts would remain firm and strong until the ultimate Redemption. Of this it is written, "Even when they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not be disgusted with them, to renege on My covenant with them, for I am Hashem their God" (*Vayikra* 26:44). This is Hashem's vow that the Jewish people will always call themselves by His Name, and He will never exchange us for another nation.

Even if they would amass many sins throughout the length and hardship of exile, their love for Hashem and fear of Him will always remain deep within in their hearts, inspiring them to sacrifice their lives in sanctification of Hashem's Name, rather than forsake their religion. Of this Chazal say, "You have made Me one and unique in the world, and I will make you one and unique in the world too" (*Berachos* 6a).

The Shofar Blast of Redemption

This depth of attachment is an inheritance of our nation, which we received during Kabbalas HaTorah at Har Sinai. There, the souls of the Jewish people become attached to Hashem through the awesome revelation of Hashem's glory that we merited to perceive.

All this was in the merit of Avraham Avinu, the founder of our nation, who proved faithful to Hashem through the test of the Akeidah, in which both he and Yitzchak became sanctified to Hashem's Name. The Satan and the yetzer hara were then subjugated before Bnei Yisrael, such that they would never achieve full reign over us, and would never be able to break our connection to Hashem's holy Name. This is the meaning of the Midrash which states that at the moment Avraham Avinu tied Yitzchak to the Mizbei'ach here on earth, HaKadosh Baruch Hu tied the guardian angels of the nations to the Mizbei'ach in Heaven (*Bereishis Rabbah* 56:5).

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 56:9) there comments on the verse, "Avraham raised his eyes and saw another ram (אַיִל אַחַר) with its horns caught in the thorn bush" (*Bereishis* 22:13). Which was the first ram, such that this was called "another ram"? Rather, the Hebrew word for "other" (אַחַר) can also mean "after." After all the generations of exile, in which the Jewish people will become entangled in the thorn bushes of sin and suffering, they will be redeemed through the horn blown to herald Moshiach's arrival, as is written, "God will blow on the great shofar" (*Zechariah* 9:14). This is the shofar made from the horn of Avraham's ram.

Another opinion in the Midrash explains that Avraham saw the ram thrashing around, breaking free from one thorn bush and getting caught in another. This was a sign for his children, who would break free from the dominion of one empire, only to be caught under another. In the end, the blast of the shofar will herald their Redemption.

Chesed and Gevurah, Love and Fear

On a deeper level, we can explain that Avraham and Yitzchak represent the attributes of chesed and gevurah with which Hashem rules the world, which are allegorically called left and right. Avraham Avinu opened the gates through which Hashem's chesed descends, and therefore merited to be the symbol of kindness. Yitzchak opened the gates of gevurah, for which reason this trait is called, "The Fear of Yitzchak" (*Bereishis* 31:42).

Here below, these seem like two distinct attributes. Through Hashem's chesed, He bestows His goodness upon the world. Through Hashem's gevurah, the wicked are punished for their sins. However, in their source above in Heaven, they are one and the same. They are both rooted in Hashem's goodness, but each person experiences that goodness as befits his deeds.

Hashem does not punish the wicked to inflict vengeance upon them. Rather, their punishment heals them, like a medicine that cleanses the stomach from harmful toxins. Even for those who are so wicked that there is no hope for their improvement, and they must be swept from the world forever, this is also an expression of Hashem's goodness. Hashem clears His vineyard from these harmful thorns, lest they cause damage to others (*Bava Metzia* 83b).

Here we see the greatness of Hashem that even two traits which seem diametrically opposed to each other are united in their Heavenly source. They are the roots of love of Hashem, on the one hand, and awe of His greatness on the other. These two traits

are intertwined and essentially one and the same. On the one side, there is the aspect of Hashem's great kindness, the benevolence that He bestows upon others, and the revelation of His glory to His creations. All these things serve to attach to Him the recipients of His kindness, awakening in their hearts a great love for Him.

On the other side there is the aspect of Hashem's lofty greatness and holiness. These things cause us to fear Him, such that we fear doing anything against His will, that might jeopardize this closeness. Thus, from the Heavenly roots of love, Hashem's kindness descends towards His creation, and from the roots of fear punishment descends, which is essentially nothing other than being estranged from Hashem and far from His holy light.

Sacrifice of Love

In this way, Akeidas Yitzchak served to prepare his descendants, so that their souls would become attached to Hashem's light through the Heavenly roots of love and fear, intertwined together. They would eventually achieve this level at Har Sinai, but it was necessary to first plant the seeds for it from the very beginning of our nation.

These seeds were planted through the test of the Akeidah, in which Avraham Avinu – in his great love for his Creator – offered his only son, whom he loved with all his heart, as a sacrifice for Hashem. He set aside his love for his son in favor of his love for Hashem, which was so great that he did not even feel any pain or loss as he placed his son on the Mizbei'ach to be slaughtered. To him, it was just the same as any other mitzvah of Hashem. So great was his love for Hashem, that there was no place left in his heart to love anyone else.

Avraham Avinu had reached such a height of love for Hashem, that the Akeidah was not even a test for him. He was perfectly willing and inclined to do whatever Hashem commanded. Rather, the purpose of the Akeidah was to place Yitzchak on the Mizbei'ach, since his was the collective soul which included within it the souls of every Jew who would ever be born. By being tied to the Mizbei'ach, his soul was tied to Hashem in a celestial bond, in the place where love and fear meet.

Bound on the Mizbei'ach in Heaven

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 12b) tells us that there is a plane of Heaven called Zvul, where Michael the Angel offers the souls of the tzaddikim on a Heavenly Mizbei'ach. Michael is the Angel of Kindness. Just like Avraham Avinu, he draws from the wells of Heavenly kindness.

When Avraham placed Yitzchak on a Mizbei'ach on earth, out of love for Hashem, Michael placed the souls of the entire Jewish nation on a Mizbei'ach in Heaven, thereby attaching us all to the light of Hashem's holiness, and inspiring us forever with a tremendous love for Hashem, and a deep desire to do His will. In this sense, the very existence of our nation became like a pleasing sacrifice for Hashem.

The Mizbei'ach in Heaven stands above the Beis Hamikdash here on earth, Har HaMoriah, where the Akeidah took place. With this we can understand the verse, "*He*

came to the place" beneath the Mizbei'ach in Heaven, "*and placed him on the Mizbei'ach*" referring to the souls of Bnei Yisrael which were placed on the Mizbei'ach in Heaven, "*above the wood*" above the physical, wood-burning Mizbei'ach here on earth.

"*And he tied his son Yitzchak*," Yitzchak's soul was tied in Heaven to the attribute of kindness embodied by Avraham Avinu, and thus the Fear of Yitzchak and the Love of Avraham became intertwined.

The Names of Yerushalayim

All this was a necessary preparation for Avraham's descendants. It enabled us to build the first and second Beis Hamikdash, endure our lengthy wanderings in exile and the destruction of the temples, and ultimately return to build the third and final Beis Hamikdash for all of eternity.

We see this in the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 56:10), which explains that Shem (the son of Noach) called the place of the Beis Hamikdash Shalem, as we find in the verse, "*Malchitzedek* (who was Shem) *was the king of Shalem*." Avraham called it Yirah, as we find in the verse from the Akeidah, "*Avraham called the place Hashem-Will-See (Yireh)*." Not wanting to offend either of these tzaddikim, Hashem put both names together and called it Yerushalayim.

Another opinion in the Midrash explains that while it was still called Shalem (before the Beis Hamikdash was built), Hashem built there a sukkah, in which He prayed that the Beis Hamikdash would be built, as is written, "His sukkah was in Shalem, and His dwelling in Tzion" (*Tehillim* 76:3).

A third opinion explains that HaKadosh Baruch Hu showed Avraham Avinu the Beis Hamikdash built, destroyed and rebuilt, destroyed and rebuilt again, as is written:

Avraham called the place Hashem-Will-See (Yireh) – this refers to the Beis Hamikdash when it was built, of which it is written, "Three times each year, all of your men must be seen before Hashem" (*Shemos* 23:17).

On the mountain - this refers to the years when the Beis Hamikdash lies in ruins, of which it is written, "The mountain of Hashem lies desolate" (*Eichah* 5:18).

Hashem will be seen (*Yaira'eh*) – this refers to the Beis Hamikdash when it will be rebuilt, of which it is written, "Hashem has built Tzion, and we shall see His glory" (*Tehillim* 102:17).

This Midrash raises many questions. What does it mean that Hashem built a sukkah? And what does it mean that He prayed for the Beis Hamikdash to be built? He is the Master of all creation. Let Him built it if He wishes. And why was the first Beis Hamikdash called *Yireh* (which means "see"), while the future Beis Hamikdash will be called *Yaira'eh* (which means "be seen")?

The Foundations for the Beis Hamikdash

All this comes to teach us a deep point, which we touched upon previously. The Beis Hamikdash was chosen to be the place for the Shechinah to rest, since it is the

meeting point between Heaven and Earth. Chazal tell us that the Beis Hamikdash was built "with two hands," meaning that it combines both aspects of creation, the Heavenly (which is one hand, so to speak) and the earthly (which is the other hand). Whereas both Heaven and Earth are incomplete, in the sense that each one depends upon the other to fulfill its purpose, the Beis Hamikdash is completely perfect, since it includes within it all the elements of creation.

All the nations of the world were born from Noach and his sons, who were the sole survivors of the Great Flood. Noach's son Shem was chosen to be the source for Avraham Avinu, from whom the holy nation of Bnei Yisrael would be born, and through them the world would be brought to perfection. They would be the ones to connect Heaven and Earth, unifying all of creation in the place predestined for this perfection – the Beis Hamikdash.

Shem realized all this, so he settled and built his city in the place that would one day be known as Yerushalayim. He began laying the groundwork for it to become the place for the Shechinah's dwelling. At that point, since the Beis Hamikdash was not yet built on Earth, the main dwelling place for the Shechinah was in the parallel Beis Hamikdash in Heaven, situated above Yerushalayim in the spiritual plane.

From there, Hashem's radiance shined upon the place of Yerushalayim here below, but not in a permanent way, as it would be when the Beis Hamikdash would be built. Rather, the radiance shined there from time to time, as it did in the time of the Avos, when they established the three daily prayers by davening in that spot. In this sense, the Midrash calls it Hashem's sukkah. Like a sukkah, it was a temporary dwelling for the Shechinah.

"An Eternal Place for Your Dwelling"

When Shlomo HaMelech built the Beis Hamikdash, he said, "I have built a Beis Zvul for You, an eternal place for Your dwelling" (*Melachim I* 8:13). Before the Beis Hamikdash was built, the main dwelling for the Shechinah was in the plane of heaven called Zvul, where Michael the Angel offers sacrifices on the Mizbei'ach in Heaven.[22] The Shechinah's dwelling in this world was only temporary, like a sukkah. Now that Shlomo had built a Beis Zvul on Earth, it became the new permanent dwelling for the Shechinah.

"Then Shlomo said, 'Hashem wished to dwell in the thickness of the clouds'" (*Melachim I* 8:12). Shlomo referred to this earthly world as a place of thick clouds and darkness, where holiness is hidden. It is a world of "astonishing emptiness, and darkness on the face of the depths" (*Bereishis* 1:2). Still, Hashem wanted a permanent place for His holiness to dwell in this physical world, which is farthest away from the revelation of His glory.

Shem laid the foundations for this in a temporary way. Then Avraham came. Through the Akeidah, he prepared that place to become a permanent dwelling. He

[22] See above???

called the place Hashem-Will-See, meaning that Hashem would see His plans brought to fruition there, with the construction of the Beis Hamikdash.

The Third Beis Hamikdash

There is a vast difference between the first two Batei Hamikdash, which were destroyed, and the third Beis Hamikdash which we await. In the time of the first Beis Hamikdash, Bnei Yisrael had not yet reached the perfection of purity necessary for the greatest possible *dveikus* with Hashem. They were still plagued by sin and evil, and were thus unable to gaze upon Hashem's countenance. Therefore the intensity of the Shechinah's presence in the Beis Hamikdash was limited. Hashem looked upon them there, so to speak, but they were unable to look upon Hashem.

Even in this limited degree of revelation, there was still great benefit. Hashem guided each and every person directly, without using any angelic intermediary. This is the meaning of the blessing said by the Kohanim in the Beis Hamikdash, "May Hashem shine His countenance upon you" (*Bamidbar* 6:25). This refers to Hashem's direct interest in us, as He looks straight towards us to care for our needs, as opposed to appointing some angelic intermediary to care for us, who then delegates the responsibility to one angelic underling after another. Rather, Hashem looked directly towards us. With this in mind, Avraham called the first Beis Hamikdash, "Hashem-Will-See."

This is the meaning of the verse cited by the Midrash in reference to the first Beis Hamikdash, "Three times each year, all of your men must be seen before Hashem." They were seen before Him, but they did not yet merit to see Him glory. This highest level of *dveikus* will not be reached until the third Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt, of which Chazal tell us that the tzaddikim will dance in a circle and point towards Hashem with their fingers and say, "This is Hashem, for Whom we have waited" (*Taanis* 31a).

Obviously, Hashem has no physical body towards which one can point. Rather, this is meant as a metaphor to express the level of Divine revelation the *tzaddikim* will attain, as they ascend past the level of the angels to reach the place where their souls are attached to Hashem in Heaven. All this will not come about until the World to Come in the seventh millennium, of which Avraham Avinu said, "*Hashem will be seen* (*Yaira'eh*)." Regarding this, the Midrash cites the verse, "Hashem has built Tzion, and we shall see its glory." The souls of the *tzaddikim* will become so purified that they will be able to see Hashem's glory.

Hashem's Prayer for Creation

We can thus understand the Midrash as a description of how the place of the Beis Hamikdash was developed from one generation to another, to allow for an increasingly greater revelation of Hashem's Presence.

First came Shem the son of Noach, who was chosen to have the holy nation arise from his descendants, upon whom Hashem's Name would be called. He was the first to prepare the place of the Beis Hamikdash, but only in a temporary manner. It was

like a sukkah built for HaKadosh Baruch Hu to visit when the Avos would daven there.

Later, there was an even greater revelation of Hashem's light when the Beis Hamikdash was built as a permanent structure. It was no longer a sukkah, a simple lodging for Hashem to visit from time to time. It was now Hashem's "House." His main dwelling was now not in Heaven but on Earth in the Beis Hamikdash. This was Hashem's intention from the very beginning of creation, and for this He prayed when He stood in the "sukkah" built by Shem, that the potential He foresaw for His creation would be brought into reality.

The fullness of this potential will be reached only upon the completion of the third Beis Hamikdash, of which it is written, "Hashem will be seen."

The Power of the Akeidah

All this became possible through the Akeidah, when Avraham bound his son and placed him on the Mizbei'ach in the place where the Beis Hamikdash would be built. Thereby, the souls of all of His descendants became bound to the celestial heights, to the Mizbei'ach in the Heavenly plane of Zvul, where the light of the future Beis Hamikdash already shines.

The Akeidah also served to prepare Bnei Yisrael for the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash and our subsequent wanderings in exile. Although the Shechinah would return back to Heaven and Bnei Yisrael would be scattered among the nations, we would still remain attached to Hashem. Our adversaries would never be able to estrange us entirely from the Torah and its mitzvos.

Even in our darkest hours, our emunah in Hashem will remain strong and steadfast in the deepest recesses of our hearts. By offering Yitzchak as a sacrifice on the Mizbei'ach, Avraham gave us the strength we would need to sacrifice ourselves in sanctification of Hashem's Name. Throughout our wanderings in the dark exile, we have had many such opportunities, of which it is written, "For Your sake, we have been killed throughout the day" (*Tehillim* 44:23).

Chained Like Dogs

With this we can better understand Chazal's teaching, that as Avraham tied his son to the Mizbei'ach, Hashem tied up the angelic representatives of the nations, to subdue them. Thereby, although the forces of evil would be able to submit us to persecution and harsh decrees, they would not be able to destroy our nation in body or in spirit. Like dogs, they were chained to limit the range of their harm.

After the angel stayed his hand from sacrificing Yitzchak, Avraham took instead a ram and sacrificed it in his place. This also had great significance. The ram represents the power of the nations and their angelic representatives, which are rooted in evil. As we explained above, although these things appear evil here below, in their highest source in Heaven they stem from the attribute of Divine justice, which is also good. They are Hashem's emissaries to punish us when necessary, for our own benefit. The

entire complex hierarchy of evil that exists in the world finds it source in this point of Heavenly goodness.

Even when harsh judgments befall us, they are not meant to extract vengeance. Rather, they are meant to cleanse us of our sins. This element of Divine justice, for our own benefit, was personified by Yitzchak. When Yitzchak was bound to the Mizbei'ach, a constraint was set to the severity of these harsh decrees, such that they would never have full power over us, as Hashem said to the Satan about Iyov, "I have placed him in your hands, but spare his soul" (*Iyov* 2:6).

After the Akeidah set in place these preparations for the future of the Jewish people in exile and redemption, the verse adds, "Avraham raised his eyes and saw another ram with its horns caught in the thorn bush." The Hebrew word for ram, *ayil*, also means power (as in *Melachim II* 24:15: "*Aylei ha'aretz* – the powerful nobles of the land"). In this context, it refers to the powerful, harsh judgments in Heaven, from which the guardian angels of the nations draw their power.

The verse tells us that the ram got caught in the thorn bush. Here too, there is deep inner meaning. The Hebrew word for thorn bush, סבך, is twice the gematria of ram, איל. It represents the two aspects of the harsh judgments that are decreed in Heaven. Firstly, as we explained, in their source in Heaven all these harsh judgments are expressions of Hashem's perfect kindness. Secondly, they purify our souls from the stains left by our sins. The problem is that when these judgments descend from Heaven, they go through one transformation after another until finally they arrive on Earth in evil form, as the brutal afflictions visited upon us by the emissaries of Heavenly judgment.

This appears as a discrepancy between Heavenly judgment in its source in Heaven, and how it is exhibited here on Earth. In Heaven, the harsh judgments are intertwined with kindness. On Earth, we see only the hardship and pain. When the ram was caught in the thorn bush, Hashem caught the shallow, single dimension of hardship that descends to this Earth and prevented it from breaking out of control. He ensured that it would remain attached to deeper meaning of hardship as it appears in Heaven, where it is an expression of kindness.

This is also the inner meaning of Chazal's teaching that Eisav's head was buried in Maaras HaMachpeilah alongside Yitzchak (*Targum Yonasan, Bereishis* 50:13). Eisav's head represents the source of his evil, which stems from the attribute of Heavenly judgment, personified by Yitzchak. In its source, this too is good.

The shofar horns of the ram represent its source in Heaven, where its strength and power lie. When these horns got caught in the thorn bush, the judgments that descend from Heaven became chained to their Heavenly source of kindness. Avraham then sacrificed this ram in place of Yitzchak, transforming all the manifestations of evil into goodness, which is the essence of Yitzchak's attribute of justice. All this was a necessary preparation for Bnei Yisrael in exile, allowing us to accept all the hardships we would have to endure, and sacrifice ourselves to Hashem with love.

The Limits of Evil

Kabbalas HaTorah was accompanied by a shofar blast, which was blown from the horn of the ram sacrificed in Yitzchak's place (Rashi, *Shemos* 19:13). Chazal tell us that this ram was prepared from the Six Days of Creation (*Avos* 5:6). That same shofar will be blown to herald Moshiach's arrival, as is written, "On that day, the great shofar will be blown" (*Yeshayahu* 27:13).

On a deeper level, this too expresses the concept we discussed above. Avraham Avinu sacrificed the ram in order to subjugate the powers of evil under the dominion of holiness, reattach them to their holy source of kindness in Heaven, and transform evil into good. The Akeidah also served to ensure the liberation of Bnei Yisrael from our subjugation under the nations, by conquering their guardian angels in Heaven. All this was part of the original plan for creation, in which the forces of evil must be defeated and transformed into good.

Hashem created the yetzer tov and the yetzer hara. He created the side of holiness and the opposing side of evil. All this was necessary in order to assure that man would have the free choice which is essential to Hashem's plan for creation. However, it was also necessary to put some limit on the power of evil, to ensure that evil would did not break all boundaries and destroy the world. This limit was set through the Akeidah, in which evil was subdued before good. The ram sacrificed in place of Yitzchak was prepared from the Six Days of Creation (*Tanchuma, Tzav* 13). It was an integral part of Hashem's plan for creation, that although free will is given, good must ultimately triumph over evil.

This was also a necessary preparation for Kabbalas HaTorah, in which a covenant was forged between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael, such that the Torah would never be forgotten from our nation. Throughout all our wanderings in exile, and throughout all the oppression we would have to suffer under the hands of our enemies, this covenant would never be broken. Nothing would be able to tear the Torah away from us.

All this was brought about when the power of evil was limited, as it was tied to its original source of Heavenly goodness, through the Akeidah, in which the horns of the ram were caught in the thorn bush. This is the symbolism of the shofar blast of Har Sinai, which was blown through the horn of that ram.

The chain that was tied to the forces of evil, which constrained the limits of their power, also constrained the scope of their duration. Therefore, there is a time known only to Heaven, as foretold in the visions of Daniel, by which the Redemption must arrive even if we are unworthy. This too is symbolized by the horns of the ram that were caught in the thorn bush, signifying the limits past which evil cannot go. For this reason, the coming of Moshiach will be heralded by the blowing of the shofar from the horn of this ram, as is written, "On that day, the great shofar will be blown."

The Horn of a Donkey

With this we can also understand the cryptic aggadatah in which Rebbe Yehoshua debated the Elders of Athens (*Bechoros* 8b). One of the questions that they asked him was how to harvest a garden of knives.

"With the horn of a donkey," he answered.

"Do donkeys have horns?" they asked.

"Do knives grow in a garden?" he replied.

This too can be understood as an obscure reference to the Akeidah, for which Avraham woke up early in the morning to saddle his donkey (*Bereishis* 22:3). Chazal tell us that this was the very same donkey that Moshe rode when he descended to Egypt to redeem Bnei Yisrael, and the same donkey that Moshiach will ride when he comes to redeem us, as is written, "Your king will come to you, righteous and redeeming, humble and riding on a donkey" (*Zechariah* 9:9; *Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer* 30).

Avraham's saddling his donkey in preparation for the Akeidah was the merit through which Moshe descended to Egypt, in order to lead Bnei Yisrael to receive the Torah (which was the entire purpose of the Exodus: "When you take this nation out of Egypt, they will serve G-d on this mountain," *Shemos* 3:12). It also set the stage for the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption.

When the verse refers to Moshiach as "righteous and redeeming," it means that the redemption which Moshiach will bring was already prepared long ago by Avraham Avinu, who prepared the path for him to come and rescue Bnei Yisrael.

The Vision of Daniel

This is also the symbolism behind the vision of Daniel (7:8), in which he saw a monstrous beast with ten horns, after which a small eleventh horn grew between them. These eleven horns represent the eleven kingdoms that will rise from the House of Eisav (see *Bereishis* 36:15). The last of them will be the final kingdom of evil that will be overthrown with the coming of Moshiach, of which it is written, "I shall cut off all the horns of the wicked, and the horns of the righteous will be uplifted" (*Tehillim* 75:11).

This is also a reference to the prophecy of Zechariah (2:2), who foresaw the four horns that will scatter Yehudah (representing the four empires of Babylon, Medes, Greece and Edom), which will be cut down by four carpenters. The Gemara tells us that these four carpenters will be Moshiach son of David, Moshiach son of Yosef, Eliyahu HaNavi and Shem (*Sukkah* 52b, Rashi). These are the four "horns of the righteous," which will be uplifted when the horns of the wicked are cut down. (As we explained above, Shem the son of Noach was the first to prepare Yerushalayim as a place for the Shechinah to dwell.)

The Garden of Knives

This was the depth of Rebbe Yehoshua's answer, when he said that the garden of knives will be cut down with the horn of a donkey. He referred to the horn of the shofar from the Akeidah, and the merit of the donkey that Avraham first saddled for the Akeidah and will ultimately be ridden by Moshiach. This merit will overcome the power of Eisav, which is a brutal, physical force symbolized by the verse, "The hands are the hands of Eisav" (*Bereishis* 27:22), and, "Lest I go out with a sword against you" (*Bamidbar* 20:18).

The Elders of Athens asked Rebbe Yehoshua, "Does a donkey have horns?"

They meant to disparage the powers of holiness, suggesting that the merit of the Akeidah (symbolized by the Avraham's donkey and the horn of the ram) can no longer help us. They claimed that since we have been lax in our service of Hashem, we have lost the merit by which Hashem would rescue us. "There is no hand to save or assist" (*Devarim* 32:26). "See how many years you have been in bitter exile, downtrodden and oppressed more than any nation upon the face of the earth. Clearly, you have no more power with which to rise from the ashes," so they claim.

To this Rebbe Yehoshua answered, "Do knives grow in a garden?"

There is great depth to this answer. When we say that through our sins we "weaken the Rock who gave birth to us" (*Devarim* 32:18), this does not really mean that Hashem's infinite power is in any way weakened, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, it means that He hides himself from us, leaving us to endure the hardships that are necessary in order to cleanse our sins. He is like a father who loves his son so much that he cannot bear to see him suffer. Still, when he sees that his son has become so wild that he must be punished (for his own benefit, to straighten his crooked path), he leaves this job to someone else and turns away so that he will not have to see his beloved son in pain.

The "horns" of Klal Yisrael are still strong. We are still deeply enrooted in holiness. Like a tree whose trunk is cut down but it roots still live and will sprout again, so too Klal Yisrael is destined to regain our former glory when our sins will be purified and the powers of holiness will be renewed.

In contrast, the forces of evil have no real roots in existence. Of this it is written, "All the nations are like nothing before Him" (*Yeshayah* 40:17). Evil exists only in the vacuum that is left when good is absent. When the wrongs in the world are righted, and the forces of holiness returns to its place, all that is evil we be removed from the land (*Zechariah* 13:2).[23]In this sense, evil is compared to a garden of knives. A knife can be plunged into the earth, but when it is drawn out again nothing is left but a small hole. It has no grasp on the earth, and no roots from which to sprout again.

Klal Yisrael is like a tree, with roots that stretch deep into the earth. Even after the tree grows old, and above the ground it appears to have died, the roots beneath the ground live on and will sprout again. For this reason, the Torah compares us to Hashem's planting. "Bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance" (*Shemos* 15:17). "You brought a grapevine out of Egypt" (*Tehillim* 80:9).

Rebbe Yehoshua thus meant to answer them that they, the descendants of Eisav, are like a garden of knives, whose brute strength seems formidable in this world, but nothing will remain of it. In the end, "There will be no remnant to the House of Eisav" (*Ovadiah* 1:18). "The saviors will ascend Mount Tzion to judge the Mountain of Eisav, and the kingdom shall be Hashem's" (ibid 1:21).

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[23] "It will be on that day, says Hashem, Lord of Hosts, that I will destroy the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be recalled, and also the (false) prophets and the spirit of impurity I will remove from the land."

Avraham's Journey

With this we can understand why Hashem sent Avraham on a long journey until he reached the place of the Akeidah only on the third day, rather than making the earth leap beneath his feet as it did for Yaakov. Avraham's two days of travel were a preparation for the two thousand years of exile in which his descendants would wander the earth. Throughout the entire duration of Avraham's travel, he walked with love, joy and keen determination. Yitzchak fully shared his feelings. "The two walked together" (*Bereishis* 22:6) in perfect unity, to sacrifice Yitzchak's life in sanctification of Hashem's Name.

This was a preparation for the travels and travails of Klal Yisrael in exile, in which we have sacrificed our lives for Hashem throughout the generations. *Emunah* burns strong in the heart of the Jewish nation. Although some have become sullied with sin, this filth is external to their true selves. Deep within their souls, they have a strong sense of *emunah* in Hashem, which encompasses the entire Torah. This is the merit that has ensured our survival for all these years.

The Midrash explains that the knife Avraham prepared for the Akeidah was called a *ma'acheles* since all that Klal Yisrael eat (*ochel*) in this world, is only in its merit (*Yalkut Bereishis* 101). This does not refer to our physical food, but to our ability to fulfill the Torah, which preserves our life more than any food, and of which it is written, "Go and partake of My break" (*Mishlei* 9:5).

Torah scholars are compared to fish of the sea. Just as fish immediately die when they are separated from water, so too do Jews who leave Torah (*Yalkut Chabakuk*, 562). "He made you suffer and hunger so that you would know that man does not live on bread alone, but on all that comes from Hashem's mouth does man live" (*Devarim* 8:3). This to refers to the Torah, given from Hashem's mouth, which is our very life. "For it is your life and the length of your days" (*Devarim* 30:2).

On the Third Day

"On the third day, Avraham saw the place from afar," refers to the ultimate Redemption, after which we will reach the World to Come, in which the perfection of Klal Yisrael will at long last be achieved. Whereas the true World to Come will not arrive until the seventh millennium, the radiance of that world will start to shine into this world at the end of the sixth millennium, just as the radiance of Shabbos shines into late Friday afternoon for *tosefes Shabbos*.

Then the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt, when the Heavenly Mikdash in the plane of Zvul will descend into this physical world. "Avraham saw the place from afar" means that he saw it far up in Heaven, similar to the verse, "From afar, Hashem appeared to me" (*Yermiyahu* 31:2).

We will then see the fulfillment of the verse, "Hashem has built Tzion, and we shall see His glory" (*Tehillim* 102:17). We will all be able to perceive Hashem's glory, as Chazal tell us: the *tzaddikim* will dance in a circle and point towards Hashem with their fingers and say, "This is Hashem, for Whom we have waited" (*Taanis* 31a).

The third day, on which Avraham saw Har HaMoriah, corresponds to the third day on which the dead will be revived, as is written, "He will enliven us for two days, and on the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him" (*Hosheia* 6:1; *Bereishis Rabbah* 56:1).

The third day refers to the beginning of the third millennium (counting from the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash), when there will be the Resurrection of the dead. "He will enliven us for two days," refers to the strength that Hashem gave us to endure the years of exile. "On the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him," refers to the third millennium, when we will stand before the King in His palace, as sons of the royal chamber, to gaze upon the King in His blessed glory.

All this will be in the merit of the third day of Avraham's travels, on which the Akeidah took place. It also parallels the third day of preparation at Har Sinai, in which the Torah was given, as is written, "On the third day in the morning, there was thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud on the mountain. The sound of the shofar was powerful … and Moshe led the nation from the camp to greet G-d, and they stood beneath the mountain" (*Shemos* 19:16-17).[24]

A Test for His Descendants

With this we can understand the meaning of the *nisayon* with which Hashem "tested" Avraham Avinu. This was not meant to reveal the extent of Avraham's love of Hashem or his righteousness, since all this was perfectly known before Him. Furthermore, for Avraham it was not even a challenge, since his heart was so filled with love for Hashem that there was no room left for any other love.

Rather, the purpose of the *nisayon* was to give physical manifestation to the thoughts of Avraham's heart, in order to prepare the way for his descendants to follow. This great deed poured light into the soul of Yitzchak, who included within himself the souls of every Jew who would ever live. Thereby, the ability to overcome challenges and stand strong in the face of adversity would become deeply enrooted in the heart of every Jew.

For this reason, it was not necessary for Avraham to actually slaughter Yitzchak. He just needed to show his willingness to do so. The angel told him, "Do not stretch your hand out against the child … for now I know that you fear God, and you have not withheld from Me your only son" (*Bereishis* 22:12). Hashem knew all along that Avraham was God-fearing. The test was not necessary in order to verify that. Still, by not withholding his only son, Avraham made a physical representation of his commitment, which was necessary for the benefit of his descendants.

Furthermore, the Akeidah served to sanctify Har HaMoriah to an even higher level of holiness. Shem had prepared it as a place of verbal prayer, enabling the Avos to establish there the three daily *tefillos*. Avraham brought it to a higher level, as a place where the physical *korbanos* could be offered in the Beis Hamikdash.

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[24] See above _.

The Akeidah also served to raise Avraham Avinu to a higher level of holiness. The Zohar explains that after the Akeidah, he was called by his name twice, "Avraham, Avraham," since only then he reached perfection through the ten *nisyonos* that he endured (*Zohar* III, 138a). In fact, he had already reached perfection for himself, in all 613 aspects of his body and soul. However, the Akeidah granted him the ability to convey this perfection to his descendants who would follow him.

The Balance of Fear and Love

After the Akeidah, Hashem told Avraham, "Now I know that you fear God." Would it not have been more appropriate to say, "Now I know that you love God," since it was Avraham's love for Hashem, not his fear, that drove him to fulfill this *nisayon*?

Rather this is hinting to the concept that the highest form of *yirah* is that which is connected to love. *Yirei Elokim* here does not refer to fear of punishment. It refers to a higher level of fear, an awe of Hashem's greatness, which is an important accompaniment to love.

Without a sense of awe to restrain him, a person's love for Hashem can so overpower him with longing to draw close to the Creator and bask in the radiance of His glory, that he will break through the boundaries of safety, and rise to a level of closeness that no creation can withstand. Even angels have their limits of how close they can come before they fade into nothingness before the glory of Hashem's greatness (*Chagigah* 13b). Of this it was said, "If your heart races, return to the Place" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 1:8), we are forbidden to delve into what is above the source of our soul, and, "Do not seek that which is beyond you" (*Chagigah* 13a).

Yirah sets the boundaries for *ahavah*, which would otherwise drive a person to come closer than allowed. Such was the case with Moshe Rabbeinu, whose first prophetic revelation took the form of a burning bush. "Moshe hid his face, since he feared to look upon it" (*Shemos* 3:6).

Moshe had reached the level of the angels in Yechezkel's vision, of whom it is written, "They had height, and they had fear, and their height was covered with eyes" (*Yechezkel* 1:18). Although these angels possessed towering spiritual heights, and "eyes" through which they were permitted to see awesome depths beyond the ken of other creations, they also had the fear necessary to contain themselves and not look beyond their boundaries.

So too, Moshe Rabbeinu turned away from the burning bush, lest he see more than was meant for him at that time. Chazal tell us that as a reward for this, he eventually merited a revelation that was even greater than that, "He gazes on the glory of Hashem" (*Bamidbar* 12:8; *Berachos* 7a). Had he allowed his love to draw him beyond the boundaries of what was permitted to him, he would have fallen from his spiritual heights. As it was said of Bilam, "One who looks at what is not his, loses that which he has" (*Sotah* 9a).

Moshe Rabbeinu said, "What does Hashem your God ask of you other than to fear Him?" (*Devarim* 10:12), of which the Gemara asks, "Is fear of Heaven such a small thing?"

"Indeed, for Moshe it was a small thing," the Gemara answers (*Berachos* 33b). Moshe had reached a much higher level of *yirah*. He had reached an awe of Hashem's greatness, which goes hand in hand with love. Relative to that supreme level of *yirah*, fear of sin is indeed a small thing.

Avraham's Test of Yirah

Avraham Avinu also reached this lofty level of *yirah*, when he listened immediately to the order, "Do not stretch your hand out against the child" (*Bereishis* 22:12). For him, this was an even greater test than the first order to place his son on the altar for slaughter. His love for Hashem was so great, and he was so happy to be able to sacrifice all other loves for Hashem's sake, that when Hashem finally commanded him to contain that love and refrain from slaughtering Yitzchak, it was very difficult for him.

Nonetheless, just as he rejoiced to prepare Yitzchak for slaughter when he thought this was Hashem's will, so too he rejoiced to desist when Hashem told him to stay his hand. Such was the level of Avraham's *yirah*, in being able to keep his *ahavah* within the proper bounds. Of this Hashem said, "Now I know that you fear God" (*Bereishis* 22:12).

Bitter Medicine

We can now return to examine again the verse we cited above, "Let us return to Hashem, for He has wounded and He shall heal us. He has struck and He shall bandage us. He will enliven us for two days, and on the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him" (*Hosheia* 6:1).

This verse is meant to comfort the Jewish people, and encourage us to return in teshuvah in order to hasten the coming of the Redemption. Lest we despair of the Redemption after all these years of exile, and imagine that Hashem has abandoned us to our suffering, the verse comes to reassure us. The hardships we endure in exile, and the length of our wanderings, are not expressions of Heavenly vengeance. They should not be misinterpreted to mean that Hashem has cast us away from before Him.

Rather, they are like powerful medicines that hurt for the moment but are the only way to cure a dangerous illness, or like a lotion rubbed on a bandage, which stings at first but ultimately heals. The verse uses the double metaphor of a wound that Hashem heals, and a blow that Hashem bandages. For the first kind of wound, the verse uses the Hebrew word *taraf*, from the expression *treifah*, which refers to a deadly internal injury. For the second kind of wound, the verse uses the word *yach*, from the expression *makkah*, which is an external wound on the body that is painful but not life-threatening.

These expressions are meant as metaphors for the two kinds of hardship that we endure in exile. The first are hardships of soul, including the decrees against Torah study and mitzvah observance. These are deadly internal injuries, since the Torah is our very life. "For it is your life and the length of your days" (*Devarim* 30:2). The second are hardships of body and physical abuse.

The verse thus means to assure us that not only are the external, physical hardships meant for our own good, like medicinal bandages that sting but ultimately heal, but even the hardships of the soul are meant for our own good. They too heal us, by forcing us to stay true to Hashem in times of *nisayon*, thus purifying our souls. According to the hardship, so is the reward (*Avos* 5:22). The harder we must work in order to do the best we can to fulfill the mitzvos and learn Torah, the greater is the purity that is thereby instilled within our souls.

The Third Millennium

No matter what decrees the nations might pass against us, we are assured by Hashem, "The Torah shall never be forgotten from among his descendants" (*Devarim* 31:21). Nothing they can do will ever tear the Torah and mitzvos away from us. Our future was secured by Avraham Avinu, in the two days that he travelled towards the Akeidah. To this the verse he refers, "He will enliven us for two days."

Avraham paved the way for us to follow in these two thousand years of exile, giving us the inner strength to cling on tightly to Torah, mitzvos and ahavas Hashem, and to sacrifice ourselves in sanctification of His Name, just as Avraham prepared to sacrifice Yitzchak. We are thus assured to ultimately reach the "third day," the dawn of the third millennium, which corresponds to the third day of Avraham's travels.

That was when he reached Har HaMoriah, placed his son on the Mizbei'ach, and named the mountain "Hashem-Shall-Be-Seen," referring to the third Beis Hamikdash in which Hashem's Presence will be revealed to us.

Of this it is written, "On the third day He will raise us up and we will live before Him," referring to the revival of the dead, of which it is written, "Shake off the dust and rise" (*Yeshayahu* 52:2), and "Multitudes of those who sleep in the earth shall rise" (*Daniel* 12:2). We will then live before Him with the eternal life of the Torah, "For it is your life and the length of your days" (*Devarim* 32:47), in fulfillment of Hashem's promise, "So that you will live and inherit the land," referring to the spiritual lands of the World to Come (*Devarim* 8:1). We will then merit a revelation of Hashem's radiance, greater than that which is seen by the angels.

Hashem's Oath

The verse, "We will live before Him," is an assurance from the Torah that this eternal life indeed awaits us, and all the promises of the prophets will ultimately be fulfilled. We need not fear that our sins have rendered us unworthy (as the Elders of Athens suggested), or that these promises depend on our returning in teshuvah of our own accord, and since we have not yet done so, we have lost our chance, *chas v'shalom*. This is not true. The promises for Klal Yisrael's future were sealed with an oath from Hashem, as is written, "Hashem swears by His right hand, and by His mighty arm" (*Yeshayahu* 62:8), and "He raised his right hand and his left hand to the Heavens and swore by the Life of the world" (*Daniel* 12:7). These oaths do not depend on any conditions. If we do not teshuvah of our own accord, Hashem will bring us back in

teshuvah for His own sake even against our will, as is written, "Not for your sake, but for Mine" (*Yechezkel* 36:22).

This oath was sealed at the Akeidah, when Hashem told Avraham, "I swear by Myself, says Hashem, since you have done this thing" (*Bereishis* 22:16). The Akeidah assured the fulfillment of all the promises for the future of Klal Yisrael, including the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and our place in the World to Come. All this was an eternal oath from Hashem, which He will never renege upon.

310 Worlds of Reward

We now return to examine the meaning of the Mishna, which states that Hashem will grant each *tzaddik* 310 worlds of reward (*Uktzin* 3:12). These 310 worlds are the middos of *keser hachachma* and *bina*. The proverbial "crown" of a king represents his authority over the nation, and his responsibility to govern them fairly and justly towards the greatest possible public benefit. When the people benefit, the purpose of the kingship is fulfilled.

Chazal tell us that the Kingship of Heaven functions like the kingship of earth (*Zohar, Shemos* 6a). In this sense, the revelation of Hashem's "crown" is through the benefit that He bestows upon His subjects. This is Hashem's desire and aim, and those two are connected intrinsically, being that the depth of Hashem aim is revealing His desire to reveal His kingship.

The *gematria* of the Hebrew word for crown, *keser*, is 620, representing the 620 letters in the Ten Commandments, and the 613 mitzvos of the Torah plus the 7 Rabbinic mitzvos. These 620 mitzvos are 620 desires, like 620 lights, through which Hashem's kindness and goodness shine down to illuminate this dark world. Of this it is written, "There was darkness on the face of the depths" – referring to the deeds of the wicked, "and God said, 'Let there be light'" – referring to the deeds of the righteous (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:6).

When Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Sinai, the angels descended to place two crowns on the head of every Jew, one crown for "*na'aseh*" and another for "*nishmah*" (*Shabbos* 88a). In this sense, the "crowns of light" are divided into two categories: the light of mitzvos fulfilled in practice (*na'aseh*) and the light of Torah study, as a person learns how to fulfill the mitzvos properly (*nishmah*). The purpose of creation, which is the proverbial "crown" of Hashem's Kingship, rests on the heads of the Jewish people, as we study Torah and fulfill the mitzvos.

Just as we committed ourselves to the Torah on this dual level, in study and in practice, the Torah itself was given to us on a dual level: in speech, when Hashem announced the Ten Commandments on Har Sinai, and in deed, when He inscribed them on the Luchos.

Purpose rises first in thought. Since the purpose of Torah study (*nishmah*) is good deeds (*na'aseh*), *na'aseh* came before *nishmah*. Torah study and mitzvah fulfillment must go hand in hand. Without Torah study, one cannot fulfill the mitzvos properly, as Chazal say, "An ignoramus cannot be pious" (*Avos* 5:2). On the other hand, Torah

study without mitzvos is worthless. "If a person claims that he has only Torah (but no good deeds), he does not even have Torah" (*Yevamos* 109b).

Thus, Torah study and mitzvah fulfillment are two different sides of the 620 "lights" that Hashem sends down to illuminate the world, through the Jewish people. There are 310 on each side, for which the tzaddikim will be granted 310 worlds of reward in the World to Come.