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Translation & Insights

**PIRKEI AVOT**

Excerpt from the Weiss Edition Siddur

# פִּרְקֵי אָבוֹת

## PIRKEI AVOT

- It is customary is to say a chapter of Pirkei Avot on each Shabbat between Pesach and Shavuot. This serves as a reminder for us to keep the Torah and its commandments properly in preparation for the festival of the giving of the Torah.
- In many communities it is customary to continue saying Pirkei Avot until Rosh Hashanah. In order to complete four cycles of Pirkei Avot by that time, we say two chapters on each of the last two or three weeks before Rosh Hashanah.

### CHAPTER ONE

**כָּל** All the Children of Israel have a portion in the World to Come. As it says in Isaiah regarding the Redemption of the Jewish Nation: Your people are all righteous, and they will all inherit the Land of Israel forever—they will never be exiled from it again. Everyone will recognize that they are the branch of My planting and the work of My hands, in which I, God, take pride.

**1** Moses received the entire Torah—both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah—from God at Mount Sinai.<sup>1</sup> He passed it on by teaching it to Joshua, who became the leader of the Jewish Nation after Moses passed away. Joshua passed it on to the elder leaders of his generation. The last of the elders passed it on to the first of the prophets, Samuel, who passed it on to future prophets. The prophets passed it on to the Men of the Great Assembly—a group of sages who led the Jewish Nation after the prophets. The Men of the Great Assembly said the following three things: 1. Be patient and think carefully when making a judgment. 2. Teach and establish many students.<sup>2</sup> 3. Make a protective fence around the Torah, by establishing extra rules to prevent you from sinning.

**כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנֵאָמַר: וְעַמּוּךָ כָּלָם צְדִיקִים, לְעוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּ אֶרֶץ, נִצָּר מִטְעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי הַתַּפָּאָר.**

**א מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי וּמִסֵּרָהּ לַיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים לְמַסְרֵיהֶם לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים: הָיוּ מְתוּנִים בַּדִּין, וְהִעֲמִידּוּ תַלְמִידִים הֶרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה.**

<sup>א</sup> Pirkei Avot is said after Minchah on Shabbat, because that is the time when Moses passed away. Pirkei Avot begins by describing how Moses received the Torah and gave it to Joshua before his passing.

**1** The mishnah says that Moses received the Torah “from Sinai,” not “at Sinai.” This alludes to the fact that Moses learned two lessons from Mount Sinai itself: 1. To receive the Torah, you must be humble

like Mount Sinai, which was the lowest mountain in the desert. 2. At the same time, you must still be a mountain—you must be proud enough to fight for what’s right.

*The Rebbe*

**2** Shimon the Righteous was one of the last members of the Men of the Great Assembly. He would often say: The world stands on three things and was created in order to fulfill them: Learning Torah, serving God, and doing acts of kindness.

**3** Antigonus of Socho received and learned Torah from Shimon the Righteous. He would often say: Do not serve God as servants who work for their master in order to receive a reward. Rather, be as servants who work for their master out of love, and not in order to receive a reward. And let the awe of Heaven be upon you.

**4** Yosei ben Yoezer of Tzredah and Yosei ben Yochanan of Jerusalem received and learned Torah from Antigonus and his court of law. Yosei ben Yoezer of Tzredah says: Let your house be a meeting place for Torah scholars. Sit in the dust of their feet wherever they go,<sup>3</sup> and drink their words of Torah with thirst,<sup>4</sup> listening closely to every word they say.

**ב** שְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מִשִּׁירֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד: עַל הַתּוֹרָה, עַל הָעֲבוּדָה, וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים.

**ג** אֲנְטִיגֶנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכּוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אַל תְּהִי כְּעַבְדִּים הַמְּשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב עַל מִנַּת לְקַבֵּל פָּרֶס, אֲלָא הֵווּ כְּעַבְדִּים הַמְּשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֵב שְׁלֹא עַל מִנַּת לְקַבֵּל פָּרֶס, וְיֵהי מוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם עֲלֵיכֶם.

**ד** יוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹעֶזֶר אִישׁ צֶרֶדָה וְיוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹחָנָן אִישׁ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יוֹסֵי בֶן יוֹעֶזֶר אִישׁ צֶרֶדָה אוֹמֵר: יְהִי בֵיתְךָ בֵּית וַעַד לַחֲכָמִים, וְהָיָה מִתְּאֵבֶק בַּעֲפֹר רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְהָיָה שׁוֹתָה בַּצֶּמָא אֶת דְּבָרֵיהֶם.

**2** Literally, “much.” Not only is it important to have many students, but it is also important to make sure that they spend much of their time learning. *The Rebbe*

**3** One who wishes to learn from Torah scholars must be as humble as dust before them. *The Rebbe*

**4** Learning from Torah scholars is referred to as “drinking.” Just as

drinking helps distribute nutrients throughout the body, learning Torah from Torah scholars will help distribute the lessons that you learn and apply them to all parts of your life. *The Rebbe*

**5** Yosei ben Yochanan of Jerusalem says: Let your house be wide open for guests. Poor people should be treated like members of your own household. Do not engage in too much idle chatter with a woman. Yosei ben Yochanan said this even regarding one's own wife; how much more so does it apply to another person's wife. Based on this, the Sages said: Whoever engages in too much idle chatter with a woman, causes evil to himself, neglects the study of Torah, and will eventually receive punishment in Gehinom.

**6** Yehoshua ben Perachyah and Nittai of Arbel received and learned Torah from Yosei ben Yoezer and Yosei ben Yochanan. Yehoshua ben Perachyah says: Make for yourself a teacher from whom you can regularly learn,<sup>1</sup> acquire for yourself a close and trusted friend, and judge every person favorably, even if he appears to have done something wrong.

**7** Nittai of Arbel says: Keep away from a neighbor who might be a bad influence on you,<sup>2</sup> do not attach yourself to a wicked person, and do not despair when punishment is given for wrongdoings.

**8** Yehudah ben Tabbari and Shimon ben Shatach received and learned Torah from Yehoshua ben Perachyah and Nittai of Arbel. Yehudah ben Tabbari says: When you are

**ה** יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים  
אומר: יהי ביתך פתוח לרוחה,  
ויהיו עניים בני ביתך, ואל  
תרבה שיחה עם האשה,  
באשתו אמרו, קל וחמר באשת  
חברו. מכאן אמרו חכמים: כל  
המרבה שיחה עם האשה, גורם  
רעה לעצמו, ובוטל מדברי  
תורה, וסופו יורש גיהנום.

**ו** יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי  
הארכלי קבלו מהם. יהושע  
בן פרחיה אומר: עשה לך רב,  
וקנה לך חבר, והוי דן את כל  
האדם לךף זכות.

**ז** נתאי הארכלי אומר: הרחק  
משכן רע, ואל תתחבר לרשע,  
ואל תתיאש מן הפורענות.

**ח** יהודה בן טבאי ושמעון בן  
שטח קבלו מהם. יהודה בן

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word used here, וקנה, is related to the word קנה, meaning "pen." Accordingly, the mishnah says, "A pen is a friend for you." When we use a pen to write something down, our thoughts become more organized, and we understand things more clearly.

In this sense, the pen is a helpful friend to mankind. *The Rebbe*

Appointing a teacher is mentioned before removing doubt. Appoint a teacher even before you have any doubts, and he will then guide you when they arise. *The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> Literally, "dweller." It is important to keep close to God, whose presence "dwells" in this world. At the same time, we must distance ourselves from the "bad dwellers"—the negative influences that surround us. *Ba'al Shem Tov*

sitting as a judge on a case, do not act as a lawyer by giving advice to those being judged. When the people being judged are standing before you in court, consider both of them guilty and do not help either side. After the case, when they leave you and have accepted the verdict, you should look for ways to consider them both as righteous.

**9** Shimon ben Shatach says: As a judge, you should investigate and question the witnesses thoroughly.<sup>3</sup> When questioning them, be careful with the words you use, because perhaps they will learn from your words what to say in order to win the case, and they will lie.

**10** Shemayah and Avtalyon received and learned Torah from Yehudah ben Tabai and Shimon ben Shatach. Shemayah says: You should love work,<sup>4</sup> and not consider yourself too important to be involved in it. Hate positions of power, and do not choose to be in power unless the responsibility is placed upon you. Do not become too friendly with those in power.

**11** Avtalyon says: Torah scholars, watch your words, for they can make you liable to be exiled. You may then be sent to a place of “bitter, unhealthy waters”—ideas that can damage the mind. The students who follow you to this place will drink from these “bitter waters,” misinterpreting the Torah, and they will die spiritually, causing God’s Name to be desecrated.

טבאי אומר: אל תעש עצמך  
כעורכי הדין, וכשיהיו בעלי  
הדין עומדים לפניך, יהיו  
בעיניך כרשעים, וכשנפטרים  
מלפניך יהיו בעיניך כזכאין,  
כשקבלו עליהם את הדין.

ט שמעון בן שטח אומר: הוי  
מרבה לחקור את העדים,  
והוי זהיר בדבריה, שמא  
מתוכם ילמדו לשקר.

י שמעיה ואבטליון קבלו  
מהם. שמעיה אומר: אהוב  
את המלאכה ושנא את  
הרבנות, ואל תתודע לרשות.

יא אבטליון אומר: חכמים,  
הזהרו בדבריכם, שמא תחובו  
חובת גלות ותגלו למקום מים  
הרעים, וישתו התלמידים  
הבאים אחריכם וימותו,  
ונמצא שם שמים מתחלל.

**3** If you are having a hard time keeping the Torah and its commandments, question your eyes and ears that witnessed Mattan Torah. They will remind

you of their experience, and it will motivate you to do what’s right.

*The Rebbe*

**4** This can be referring to the “work” Hillel (Shemaya’s student) speaks

about in the following mishnah. Even though peace can sometimes be hard work, do it with love and joy.

*The Rebbe*

**12** Hillel and Shammai received and learned Torah from Shemayah and Avtalyon. Hillel says: You should be students of and learn from Aaron; be someone who loves peace, who chases after peace by helping others to make peace, and who loves all fellow creatures and brings them close to the Torah.<sup>1</sup>

**13** Hillel would often say: Someone who tries to become famous will end up losing any good reputation he already has. Someone who does not work to continually increase his Torah knowledge, will cause it to decrease. Someone who is able to teach Torah and does not teach deserves death, because Torah is a source of life and he has withheld it from others. Someone who uses the crown of Torah for personal gain will be destroyed.

**14** Hillel would often say: If I do not try to help myself, who will do so for me? But if I am selfish and only help myself, what am I worth? And if I do not do what I should now, when will I do it? I may not have the opportunity later.

**15** Shammai says: Make your Torah learning a permanent thing that cannot be pushed off by anything. Say little and do a lot. Also greet every person<sup>2</sup> with a cheerful face.

**16** Rabban Gamliel would often say: Appoint for yourself a teacher, in order to remove yourself from any uncertainty regarding the Torah and its commandments. Do not tithe by guessing how much you must give, even if it is more than the correct amount. Rather, make an exact calculation.

**17** Shimon, Rabban Gamliel's son, says: I grew up among the Sages my entire life, and I have not found anything better for a person than silence.

**יב** הֵלֵל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. הֵלֵל אוֹמֵר: הָיִי מַתְלַמֵּידִי שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וּמְקַרְבֵּן לַתּוֹרָה.

**יג** הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: נֶגֶד שְׂמָא אֶבֶד שְׂמָה, וְדָלָא מוֹסִיף יֶסֶף, וְדָלָא יִלֵּיף קֶטְלָא חֵיב, וְדָאשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּתַנָּא חֵלֵף.

**יד** הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אִם אֵין אֲנִי לִי, מִי לִי, וְכִשְׁאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אֲנִי, וְאִם לֹא עֲכָשׁוּ, אֵימָתִי.

**טו** שַׁמַּי אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה תוֹרָתְךָ קָבֵעַ, אֲמוֹר מְעַט וַעֲשֵׂה הֶרְבֵּה, וְהָיִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּסִבֵּר פָּנִים יְפוֹת.

**טז** רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל הָיָה אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב, וְהִסְתַּלַּק מִן הַסֵּפֶק, וְאֵל תִּרְבֶּה לְעֵשֶׂר אֲמָדוֹת.

**יז** שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּנוֹ אוֹמֵר: כָּל יָמַי גִּדְּלָתִי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי לְגוֹף טוֹב מִשְׁתִּיקָה,

Studying is not the most important thing; rather, action is the most important. Whoever talks too much brings sin upon himself.<sup>3</sup>

**18** Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: The world continues to exist and function civilly because of three things: because of justice, because of truth, and because of peace.<sup>4</sup> As it says in Zechariah: Judge with truth and try to negotiate a compromise—which leads to a peaceful judgment—within your gates.

**רבי** Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: The Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make the Children of Israel have many merits. He therefore gave them an abundance of Torah and commandments, so that they would have many opportunities to connect to God. As it says in Isaiah: The Lord wanted, for the sake of increasing the Jewish Nation's righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious.

וְלֹא הַמְדָּרֶשׁ עֵקֶר אֶלָּא  
הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, וְכָל הַמְרַבֶּה דְּבָרִים  
מְבִיא חַטָּא.

**יח** רַבֵּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר,  
עַל שְׁלֹשֶׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם קַיָּם:  
עַל הַדִּין, וְעַל הָאֱמֶת, וְעַל  
הַשְּׁלוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט  
שְׁלוֹם שִׁפְטוּ בִּשְׁעָרֵיכֶם.

**רבי** חַנְנִיָּא בֶּן עֲקָשְׁיָא אוֹמֵר: רְצָה הַקְדוֹשׁ  
בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְזַכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָךְ הִרְבֵּה  
לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: יִי חֶפֶץ לְמַעַן  
צַדִּיקוֹ, יַגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה וַיֹּאדִיר.

## CHAPTER TWO

**כָּל** All the Children of Israel have a portion in the World to Come. As it says in Isaiah regarding the Redemption of the Jewish Nation: Your people are all righteous, and they will all inherit the Land of Israel forever—they will never be exiled from it again. Everyone will recognize that they are the branch of My planting and the work of My hands, in which I, God, take pride.

**1** Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi says: Which is the proper path in life that a person should choose

**כָּל** יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֶלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַעֲמֵךְ כָּל־צַדִּיקִים, לְעוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּ  
אֶרֶץ, נִצֵּר מִטְעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי לְהַתְּפָאֵר.

**א** רַבִּי אוֹמֵר: אֵיזוֹ הִיא דֶּרֶךְ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁיבוֹר לוֹ הָאָדָם,  
כָּל שֶׁהִיא תְּפֹאֶרֶת לַעֲשִׂיָּהּ

**1** The word “creatures” teaches us that we must love all people, no matter how ordinary they may seem to us, and bring them close to Torah. Even if a person’s only positive quality is that he is a creation of God, we have an obligation to reach out to him.  
*The Alter Rebbe*

**2** It is human nature to greet those from whom we stand to gain. The mishnah therefore emphasizes that we must treat “everyone” warmly and kindly, even if we do not anticipate any benefit from the relationship. *The Rebbe*

**3** Silence indicates humility. Talking excessively indicates arrogance. It is

arrogance that leads a person to sin.  
*The Rebbe*

**4** Justice, truth, and peace correspond to thought, speech, and action. “Justice” corresponds to action—treating everyone fairly. “Truth” is mostly relevant to speech. “Peace” is in the mind, even if no one else hears about it.

for himself?<sup>1</sup> Any path that is honorable and beneficial for himself and is also honorable and beneficial to other people. Be as careful with a commandment that you think is not so important as you are with a commandment that you think is very important, because you do not know how much reward is given for different commandments or how important they are to God. Compare any expenses or loss of money that might be caused when you do a commandment with the reward that you will receive for doing it, and compare the temporary physical gain from a sin with the loss that it will cause. Consider the three things listed below and you will not come to commit a sin; know what is happening above you in heaven:

1. There is an eye that sees everything;
2. there is an ear that hears everything;
3. all your deeds are written and recorded in a book.

**2** Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi says: Torah learning goes well with having a job, because working hard at both of them will keep you away from sin. And any Torah learning that is not accompanied by work<sup>2</sup> will eventually end, and that will cause a person to sin. Whoever works with the

וּתְפַאֲרַת לּוֹ מִן הָאָדָם, וְהוּא זֹהִיר בְּמַצְוָה קְלָה כְּבַחְמוּרָה, שָׂאִין אֶתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מִתֵּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל מִצְוֹת, וְהוּא מַחֲשֵׁב הַפֶּסֶד מִצְוָה כְּנֹגֵד שְׂכָרָהּ, וְשִׂכָּר עֲבֵרָה כְּנֹגֵד הַפֶּסֶדָּה. הִסְתַּכַּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים, וְאִין אֶתָּה בָּא לְיַדִּי עֲבֵרָה, דַּע מָה לְמַעַלָּה מִמֶּךָ, עֵין רוֹאָה וְאֶזֶן שׁוֹמֵעַת, וְכָל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ בְּסֵפֶר נִכְתָּבִים.

**ב** רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר: יָפָה תִּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֲרָץ, שִׁיְגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁכַּח עוֹן, וְכָל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה סוֹפָה בְּטִלָּה וְגוֹרֶרֶת עוֹן, וְכָל הָעוֹסְקִים עִם הַצְּבוּר יֵהְיוּ עוֹסְקִים עִמָּהֶם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם,

**1** The mishnah asks, “What is the proper path?” What is the ideal approach to Divine service that a person should take? The answer is, “A person should choose for himself.” We must ensure that every commandment is done by choice—i.e. by making a conscious decision to do it, and not merely doing it out of thoughtless habit.

*The Rebbe*

**2** This is a reference to the commandment to “Love your

fellow as yourself.” While it is a challenging commandment to keep, requiring much effort and work, it is also a necessary prerequisite to Torah study.

*The Rebbe*

**3** “Those in power” is an allusion to a person’s thoughts and feelings that control him. One must be wary of them, because sometimes they lead a person to evil, convincing him that they are actually good. Remember that they only wish

to pursue pleasures, not God.

*The Rebbe*

**4** The boor isn’t necessarily ignorant, but rather unaffected by what he learns. In other words, his Torah knowledge does not refine him and make him better person. The mishnah teaches us that we must apply everything that we learn so that our sensitivity and conduct will be improved as a result.

*The Alter Rebbe*

community should work with them for the sake of Heaven and not to receive honor, because if they do so, the merit of their ancestors helps them succeed in their communal work, and their righteousness will last forever. Although the person was helped by the merit of the ancestors, God says: I will give you great reward as if you had accomplished it all by yourself.

**3** Beware of those in power<sup>3</sup> because they befriend a person only for their own needs. They seem to be a friend when they are benefiting from a person, but they will not stand by a person and help him in his time of need.

**4** Rabban Gamliel would often say: Treat God's will as though it were your own will, so that He will treat your will as though it were His will. Set aside your will in favor of God's will, so that He will set aside the will of others in favor of your will. Hillel says: Do not separate yourself from the community and ignore their needs. Stay on guard and do not be sure of your ability to withstand temptation until the day you die. Do not judge your friend until you are in his place and can fully understand what he is going through. Do not say something that is not easily understood, relying on the fact that it will be understood after more thought, because it might be misinterpreted. Do not say, "I will learn Torah when I have free time," because you may never have free time.

**5** Hillel would often say: A boor (an ignorant,<sup>4</sup> rough, and uncivilized person) cannot be afraid of sin. An unlearned person cannot be a chassid—someone who is extra careful with the Torah and its commandments. A person who is embarrassed to ask questions cannot learn. An impatient person who gets angry easily

שְׁזָכוֹת אֲבוֹתָם מְסִיעֵתָם,  
וְצִדְקָתָם עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד, וְאַתָּם,  
מַעֲלָה אֲנִי עֲלֵיכֶם שְׂכָר הַרְבֵּה  
כָּאֵלוּ עֲשִׂיתֶם.

**ג** הָיוּ זֹהִירִין בְּרִשּׁוֹת, שְׂאִין  
מִקְרָבִין לוֹ לְאָדָם אֶלָּא לְצָרָךְ  
עֲצָמָן, נִרְאִין כְּאוֹהֲבִין בְּשַׁעַת  
הַנֶּאֱתָן, וְאִין עוֹמְדִין לוֹ לְאָדָם  
בְּשַׁעַת דְּחִקּוֹ.

**ד** הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ  
כְּרְצוֹנְךָ, כְּדִי שְׂיַעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנְךָ  
כְּרְצוֹנוֹ, בְּטֵל רְצוֹנְךָ מִפְּנֵי רְצוֹנוֹ  
כְּדִי שְׂיִבְטֵל רְצוֹן אֲחֵרִים מִפְּנֵי  
רְצוֹנְךָ. הִלֵּל אוֹמֵר: אַל תִּפְרוֹשׁ  
מִן הַצְּבוּר, וְאַל תֵּאֱמִין בְּעֲצָמְךָ  
עַד יוֹם מוֹתֶךָ, וְאַל תִּדִּין אֶת  
חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ לְמִקְוָמוֹ,  
וְאַל תֵּאֱמַר דְּבַר שְׂאִי אֶפְשָׁר  
לְשִׁמּוֹעַ שְׁסוּפּוֹ לְהִשְׁמַע, וְאַל  
תֵּאֱמַר לְכֹשֶׁאֶפְנָה אֲשַׁנָּה, שְׂמָא  
לֹא תִפְנָה.

**ה** הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: אִין בּוֹר יֵרָא  
חֲטָא, וְלֹא עִם הָאֲרָץ חֲסִיד,  
וְלֹא הַבֵּיִשָּׁן לָמַד, וְלֹא הַקִּפְדָּן  
לְמַלְמֵד, וְלֹא כָּל הַמְרַבֵּה בְּסַחֲוָרָה

cannot teach. A person who spends too much time in business cannot become wise with Torah knowledge. In a place where there are no leaders, try hard to become a leader.

**6** Hillel also once saw a skull that was floating on the water. He said to the skull: God always causes justice in the end—because you drowned others, you were drowned. And those who drowned you will eventually be drowned as well, in retribution for drowning you.

**7** Hillel would often say: Do not indulge in too much eating, because **the more flesh** a person's body has, **the more** there will be for the **worms** to eat in the grave. **The more possessions** someone has, **the more worry** he has. **The more wives** someone has, **the more jealousy** he creates amongst them, and they might even practice **witchcraft** in order to gain the husband's attention. **The more maids** someone has, **the more immorality** there is in the house. **The more servants** someone has, **the more stealing** there is in the house. However, **the more Torah** someone learns, **the more life** he has. **The more** someone sits and learns, **the more wisdom** he has. **The more advice** someone receives from Torah scholars, **the more** he understands things on his own. **The more charity** someone gives, **the more blessings of peace** he causes. Someone who has acquired a good reputation has acquired something good for himself only in this world. However, someone who has acquired for himself Torah knowledge has acquired for himself everlasting life in the World to Come.

**8** Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai received and learned Torah from Hillel and Shammai. He would often say: If you have learned a lot of Torah, do not take credit for yourself, because you have only done that which you were created to do.

מַחֲכִים, וּבְמָקוֹם שְׂאִין  
אֲנָשִׁים, הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ.

**ו** אִף הוּא רָאָה גִלְגֻּלַת אַחַת  
שֶׁצָּפָה עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם, אָמַר  
לָהּ: עַל דָּאֲטַפְתְּ אֲטָפוּנָהּ,  
וְסוּף מְטִיפֶיךָ יְטוּפוּן.

**ז** הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: מְרֻבָּה  
בָּשָׂר מְרֻבָּה רִמָּה, מְרֻבָּה  
נִכְסִים מְרֻבָּה דָּאָגָה, מְרֻבָּה  
נָשִׁים מְרֻבָּה כְּשָׁפִים, מְרֻבָּה  
שְׂפָחוֹת מְרֻבָּה זִמָּה, מְרֻבָּה  
עֲבָדִים מְרֻבָּה גִּזְלָה. מְרֻבָּה  
תּוֹרָה מְרֻבָּה חַיִּים, מְרֻבָּה  
יְשִׁיבָה מְרֻבָּה חֲכָמָה, מְרֻבָּה  
עֲצָה מְרֻבָּה תְּבוּנָה, מְרֻבָּה  
צְדָקָה מְרֻבָּה שְׁלוֹם. קָנָה  
שֵׁם טוֹב קָנָה לְעֶצְמוֹ, קָנָה  
לוֹ דְּבָרֵי תּוֹרָה קָנָה לוֹ חַיֵּי  
הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

**ח** רַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי קָבַל  
מֵהֵלֵל וּמִשְׁמַאי. הוּא הָיָה  
אוֹמֵר: אִם לָמַדְתָּ תּוֹרָה  
הֲרֻבָּה, אַל תַּחֲזִיק טוֹבָה  
לְעֶצְמְךָ, כִּי לְכֹךָ נּוֹצְרָתָהּ.

9 Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five special students. They were: Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, Rabbi Yosei the Kohen, Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach. He used to list their praiseworthy qualities as follows: Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus is like a cemented tank that does not lose a drop of water, because he does not forget anything. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya—his mother is fortunate that she gave birth to such a son.<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Yosei the Kohen is a chassid—he does more than the law requires. Rabbi Shimon ben Netanel is a person who fears sin. Rabbi Elazar ben Arach is like a fountain that flows with ever-increasing strength, because he always adds to his wisdom. Rabban Yochanan would often say: If all the wisdom of the Sages of the Jewish Nation would be on one side of a scale, and the knowledge of Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus would be on the other side, his knowledge would outweigh all of theirs.<sup>2</sup> Abba Shaul says a different version of this statement in Rabban Yochanan's name: If all the wisdom of the Sages of the Jewish Nation would be on one side of a scale, including the wisdom of Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus, and the wisdom of Rabbi Elazar ben Arach would be on the other side, his wisdom would outweigh all of theirs.

ט חֲמִשָּׁה תַלְמִידִים הָיוּ לוֹ  
לְרַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּאי, וְאֵלּוּ הֵם:  
רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקֵנוֹס, וְרַבִּי  
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָא, וְרַבִּי יוֹסִי  
הַכֹּהֵן, וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן נְתַנְאֵל,  
וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ. הוּא הָיָה  
מוֹנֶה שְׂבָחָם: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן  
הוֹרְקֵנוֹס בּוֹר סוּד שְׁאִינוּ מֵאֲבֵד  
טֶפֶה, רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָא  
אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹלְדָתוֹ, רַבִּי יוֹסִי הַכֹּהֵן  
חָסִיד, רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן נְתַנְאֵל  
רָא חֲטָא, וְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ  
כִּמְעִין הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר:  
אִם יִהְיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף  
מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְאֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן הוֹרְקֵנוֹס  
בְּכַף שְׁנִיָּה, מִכְרִיעַ אֶת כָּלָם.  
אָבָא שְׂאוּל אוֹמֵר מִשְׁמוֹ: אִם  
יִהְיוּ כָּל חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַף  
מֵאֲזֵנִים, וְאֶלְעָזָר בֶּן הוֹרְקֵנוֹס  
אֶף עִמָּהֶם, וְאֶלְעָזָר בֶּן עֲרָךְ בְּכַף  
שְׁנִיָּה, מִכְרִיעַ אֶת כָּלָם.

<sup>1</sup> Everyone is born with great potential, but it requires hard work to actualize it. Rabbi Yehoshua didn't let anything remain in potential; he used all of his potential from birth to the fullest extent. *The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> Even though Abba Shaul was blessed with a great memory, he says that Rabbi Elazar—who was always expanding his knowledge (not just remembering it)—was greater. This teaches us not to be

satisfied with only doing what we are naturally good at. We must strive to develop qualities that are not yet part of our nature. *The Rebbe*

**10** Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to his students: Go out and see which is the good way to which a person should adhere—what is the best thing that a person should strive to have in his life? The students came back with various answers. Rabbi Eliezer says: Looking at everything with a good eye—being generous and happy for others. Rabbi Yehoshua says: Being a good friend to help and advise people. Rabbi Yosei says: Being a good neighbor to positively influence your surroundings. Rabbi Shimon says: Seeing and anticipating the results of events and actions before they occur.<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Elazar says: Having a good heart—having kind and positive feelings toward others. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai then said to them: I prefer what Elazar ben Arach said to what the rest of you said, because what he said—having kind and positive feelings toward others—includes all the other good qualities that you mentioned, because it leads to them. He also said to them: Go out and see which path is the bad path from which a person should keep far away. Rabbi Eliezer says: Looking at everything with a bad eye—being stingy and jealous of others. Rabbi Yehoshua says: Being a bad friend. Rabbi Yosei says: Being a bad neighbor. Rabbi Shimon says: Being a person who does not realize that he will be unable to repay a loan, and so he borrows and does not pay back. Someone who borrows from a person and does not pay it back is

אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וְרֹאוּ אֵיזוֹ  
הִיא דֶּרֶךְ טוֹבָה שִׁידָבֵק בָּהּ  
הָאָדָם. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר:  
עֵין טוֹבָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר:  
חֵבֶר טוֹב. רַבִּי יוֹסִי אוֹמֵר:  
שֶׁכֶן טוֹב. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אוֹמֵר:  
הַרוֹאֶה אֶת הַנוֹלָד. רַבִּי  
אֱלִיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר: לֵב טוֹב. אָמַר  
לָהֶם: רוֹאֶה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי  
אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן עֵרָךְ מִדְּבָרֵיכֶם,  
שֶׁבְּכָלֹל דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרֵיכֶם.  
אָמַר לָהֶם: צֵאוּ וְרֹאוּ אֵיזוֹ  
הִיא דֶּרֶךְ רָעָה שִׁיתַּרְחֵק  
מִמֶּנָּה הָאָדָם. רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר  
אוֹמֵר: עֵין רָעָה. רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ  
אוֹמֵר: חֵבֶר רָע. רַבִּי יוֹסִי  
אוֹמֵר: שֶׁכֶן רָע. רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן  
אוֹמֵר: הַלּוֹה וְאֵינוֹ מְשַׁלֵּם,  
אֶחָד הַלּוֹה מִן הָאָדָם כְּלוֹה  
מִן הַמָּקוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: לֹוֹה

**1** The mishnah says “sees” instead of “understands,” because even when you understand negative consequences, you can always justify them. Seeing, however, affects you to the very core. Nothing will convince you otherwise.

*The Rebbe*

Alternatively, “One who sees that which is born.” This means that we

must look at all of creation and see how came to be—see how it was “born.” We must keep in mind that God is the source of everything, and that He constantly recreates the entire universe. Remembering this will certainly keep us away from sin.

*The Rebbe*

**2** The mishnah is expounding upon the commandment to “Love

your fellow as yourself.” You love yourself because you consider yourself important and not merely because you were commanded to. The same should apply to your love for others. It should be dear and genuine to you, and not something that feels imposed upon you.

*The Rebbe*

like someone borrowing from God. As it says in Psalms: **A wicked person borrows and does not pay back, but God, Who is righteous, acts graciously and gives the lender back his money.** Now the borrower owes it to God. **Rabbi Elazar says:** Having a **bad heart**—negative feelings toward others. **Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai then said to them:** I prefer what Elazar ben Arach said to what the rest of you said, because what he said—having negative feelings toward others—includes all the other bad qualities that **you mentioned**, because it leads to them. Each of these five Sages **said three things.** **Rabbi Eliezer says:** Your friend’s honor should be as dear to you as your own honor, so do not become **angry easily** when he does something wrong, just as you would be patient with yourself. **Repent one day before you die.** Since you do not know which day will be your last, repent every day. **Warm yourself next to the fire of Torah scholars**—keep in close contact with them—but **be careful not to become too casual and friendly with them**, because you might act disrespectfully and be “burned by their coals”—be punished; because their bite is like the bite of a fox, their sting is like the sting of a scorpion, their hiss is like the hiss of a snake, and all their words are like burning coals.

**11 Rabbi Yehoshua says:** Having a bad—stingy and jealous—eye, fulfilling the temptations of the evil inclination, and hating people for no reason, can destroy a person’s life and drive him from the world.

**12 Rabbi Yosei says:** Your friend’s money should be as dear to you as your own money.<sup>2</sup> Prepare yourself to work very hard for Torah learning, because it does not come to you easily and automatically, like an inheritance. All your actions, including your mundane activities such as eating and sleeping, should be done for the sake of being able to serve God.

רָשָׁע וְלֹא יִשְׁלֹם, וְצָדִיק  
חוֹנֵן וְנוֹתֵן. רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר  
אוֹמֵר: לֵב רָע. אָמַר לָהֶם:  
רוֹאֶה אֲנִי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶלְעָזָר  
בֶּן עֵרָךְ מְדַבְּרִיכֶם, שֶׁבְּכָל  
דְּבָרָיו דְּבָרִיכֶם. הֵם אָמְרוּ  
שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים. רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר  
אוֹמֵר: יְהִי כְבוֹד חֲבֶרְךָ  
חָבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּשִׁלְךָ, וְאַל תְּהִי  
נוֹחַ לְכַעֹס. וְשׁוּב יוֹם אֶחָד  
לִפְנֵי מִיתָתְךָ. וְהָיָה מִתְחַמֵּם  
כְּנֶגֶד אוֹרֵן שֶׁל חֲכָמִים, וְהָיָה  
זֹהִיר בְּגַחְלָתָן שֶׁלֹּא תִכְוֶה,  
שֶׁנִּשְׁיכָתָן נִשְׁיכָת שׁוֹעֵל,  
וְעִקְצָתָן עִקְצַת עֶקְרֵב,  
וְלַחִישָׁתָן לַחִישַׁת שָׂרָף, וְכָל  
דְּבָרֵיהֶם כְּגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ.

**יא רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אוֹמֵר: עֵין  
הָרָע, וְיִצְרַר הָרָע, וְשִׁנְאוֹת  
הַבְּרִיּוֹת, מוֹצִיאִין אֶת  
הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם.**

**יב רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אוֹמֵר: יְהִי מָמוֹן  
חֲבֶרְךָ חָבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּשִׁלְךָ.  
וְהִתְקֵן עֲצֻמָּךְ לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה,  
שְׂאִינָה יִרְשָׁה לָּךְ. וְכָל  
מַעֲשֶׂיךָ יִהְיוּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם.**

**13** Rabbi Shimon says: Be very careful about reading the Shema and praying at the proper time. When you pray, do not make your prayer something you do out of habit; rather, make it a heartfelt plea and a request for mercy before God,<sup>1</sup> Who is merciful and kind. As it says in the book of Joel: God is gracious and merciful; He is slow to anger and has a lot of kindness, and He is lenient with punishments. Do not consider yourself to be wicked, because that can cause you to stop caring about sins, or make you depressed.

**14** Rabbi Elazar says: Work hard to learn Torah. Know what to answer someone who mocks or does not believe in the Jewish beliefs. Know before Whom you are working and know Who your Boss is, Who will pay you the reward for your work.

**15** Rabbi Tarfon says: The day is short, and time is very limited; there is a lot of work to be done in Torah learning and serving God. The workers are lazy and could really achieve more if they put in extra effort.<sup>2</sup> The reward for this work is great, and God, the Master, is pushing the workers, eager for them to achieve more.

**16** Rabbi Tarfon would often say: Although there is so much to be done, do not be discouraged because it is not required of you to complete all the work. You are required, however, to do as much as you possibly can, and you are not free to stop trying. If you have learned a lot of Torah, God will give you a lot of reward; your Boss is trusted to pay you the reward for your work, but know that the righteous receive their reward in the World to Come.

**יג** רבי שמעון אומר: הוי זהיר בקריאת שמע ובתפלה. וכשאתה מתפלל, אל תעש תפלתך קבע, אלא רחמים ותחנונים לפני המקום, שנאמר: כי חנון ורחום הוא, ארך אפים ורב חסד, ונחם על הרעה. ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך.

**יד** רבי אלעזר אומר: הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה. ודע מה שתשיב לאפיקורוס. ודע לפני מי אתה עמל, ומי הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעלתך.

**טו** רבי טרפון אומר: היום קצר, והמלאכה מרבה, והפועלים עצלים, והשכר הרבה, ובעל הבית דוחק.

**טז** הוא היה אומר: לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין להבטל ממנה, אם למדת תורה הרבה, נותנין לך שכר הרבה, ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעלתך, ודע שמתן שכרן של צדיקים לעתיד לבא.

**רבי** Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make the Children of Israel have many merits. He therefore gave them an abundance of Torah and commandments, so that they would have many opportunities to connect to God. As it says in Isaiah: The Lord wanted, for the sake of increasing the Jewish Nation's righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious.

**רבי חנניא בן עקשיא** אומר: רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות, שנאמר: "י חפץ למען צדקו, יגדיל תורה ויאדיר."

## CHAPTER THREE

**כל** All the Children of Israel have a portion in the World to Come. As it says in Isaiah regarding the Redemption of the Jewish Nation: Your people are all righteous, and they will all inherit the Land of Israel forever—they will never be exiled from it again. Everyone will recognize that they are the branch of My planting and the work of My hands, in which I, God, take pride.

**כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: ועמך כלם צדיקים, לעולם יירשו ארץ, נצר מטעי מעשה ידי להתפאר.**

**1** Akavya ben Mahalalel says: Look at and consider these three things at all times,<sup>3</sup> and you will not come to commit a sin: Know where you came from, where you are going, and before Whom you will eventually have to give justification and a detailed report of everything you did during your lifetime. The mishnah explains: Where did you come from? The body begins growing from a spoiled drop of fluid in the mother's womb. Where are you going? You will eventually die and go to a grave, a place that is full of dust, worms, and maggots. Before Whom will you give a detailed report? Before the supreme King of all kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

**א עקביא בן מהללאל אומר:**  
**הסתכל בשלשה דברים, ואין אתה בא לידי עברה. דע מאין באת, ולאן אתה הולך, ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון. מאין באת: מטפה סרוחה. ולאן אתה הולך: למקום עפר רמה ותולעה. ולפני מי אתה עתיד לתן דין וחשבון: לפני מלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא.**

**1** Alternatively, "Don't make your own prayer primary." Whenever a Jew suffers, the Divine Presence also suffers. Rather than focusing primarily on your own concerns, pray for mercy on behalf of the Divine Presence, which is suffering with you.

*Ba'al Shem Tov*

**2** This mishnah even provides a lesson for someone who is fully utilizing his time, doing his work, and is not lazy. The only thing such a person is missing is not forcing himself to go beyond his natural limits. To stretch one's limit is called "much work," and the "workers are lazy" in this regard.

*The Rebbe*

**3** By looking at "three things" you will not do a sin. In addition to the two obvious components of your life—God and yourself—there is a third component: a world that must be elevated. Your soul came down to this world for a purpose—to reveal God's holiness in it. If you keep this in mind, you will not come to sin. *The Rebbe*

**2** Rabbi Chanina, the head assistant of the High Priest, says: Pray for the well-being and success of the government, because if not for fear of government, people would swallow each other alive. Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon says: If two people sit together and no words of Torah are discussed **between them**,<sup>1</sup> it is considered to be a gathering of jokers, and God does not dwell there. As it says in Psalms: A righteous person does not sit among a gathering of jokers. But if two people sit together and words of Torah are discussed **between them**, the Divine Presence rests amongst them, as it says in Malachi: Then the people who fear the Lord spoke words of Torah one to another, and God paid attention and heard, and their words were written in a book of remembrance before Him, in order to reward those who fear the Lord and think about His Name—His Torah. From this verse we know only that the Divine Presence rests among two people who discuss Torah. From where do we know that if **even one person sits** by himself and occupies himself with Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, sets a reward for him? From a verse in Lamentations, where it says: Let him sit alone and study Torah quietly, because for doing so he can take a reward for himself.

**3** Rabbi Shimon says: If three people ate together at the same table<sup>2</sup> and did not speak words of Torah upon it, it is as if they ate from sacrifices offered to idols that are made of dead, physical material. As it says in Isaiah: If a meal

**ב רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים**  
אומר: הוי מתפלל בשלומה  
של מלכות, שאלמלא מוראה,  
איש את רעהו חיים בלעו. רבי  
חנינא בן תרדיון אומר: שנים  
שיושבין ואין ביניהם דברי  
תורה, הרי זה מושב לצים,  
שנאמר: ובמושב לצים לא  
ישב. אבל שנים שיושבין ויש  
ביניהם דברי תורה, שכינה  
שרויה ביניהם, שנאמר: אז  
נדברו יראי יי איש אל רעהו,  
ויקשב יי וישמע, ויכתב ספר  
זכרון לפניו ליראי יי ולחשבי  
שמו. אין לי אלא שנים, מנין  
אפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק  
בתורה שהקדוש ברוך הוא  
קובע לו שכר, שנאמר: ישב  
בדד וידם כי נטל עליו.

**ג רבי שמעון אומר: שלשה**  
שאכלו על שלחן אחד, ולא  
אמרו עליו דברי תורה, כאלו

<sup>1</sup> Words of Torah must be discussed “between them,” and not just kept to yourself. The Divine Presence does not rest among people who lack the humility to learn with others. *The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> The mishnah specifies “one” table to hint to us that discussing Torah at a meal elevates something that is seemingly separate from God (the food) and makes it “one” with him. *The Rebbe*

<sup>3</sup> Torah study should be an enjoyable experience, but there are times when a person feels that he is too busy for it. At these times one must remember that Torah study is also an obligation. *The Rebbe*

consists only of physical pleasure, and there is no mention of God, then all the tables are filled with vomit and waste. But if three people ate at the same table and spoke words of Torah upon it, it is as if they ate from God's table, as it says in Ezekiel regarding the Golden Table in the Holy Temple, "And he said to me, 'This is the table that is before the Lord.' " Any table upon which words of God's Torah are spoken is considered God's table.

**4** Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai says: One who stays awake at night or one who travels alone on a road, and turns his heart to worthless things instead of thinking about Torah, is responsible for anything bad that happens to him, because studying Torah would have helped protect him from danger.

**5** Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah says: Whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of learning and supporting Torah,<sup>3</sup> God removes the yoke and oppression of government and the yoke and worry of worldly affairs from him. Whoever removes the yoke of Torah from himself, God places the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly affairs upon him.

**6** Rabbi Chalafta ben Dosa from Kfar Chananya says: If ten people sit and are involved in Torah learning, the Divine Presence rests among them. As it says in Psalms: God stands in the congregation of God. The Divine Presence rests among ten people—a congregation—when they learn Torah. From where do we know that the Divine Presence rests even among five people who learn Torah together? From a verse in Amot, where it says: God established His bundle on the earth and He rests upon it. A bundle, carried with the five fingers of the hand, corresponds to

אֲכָלוּ מִזִּבְחֵי מֵתִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
כִּי כָּל שְׁלַחֲנוֹת מְלָאוּ קִיא  
צוּאָה בְּלִי מָקוֹם. אָבֵל שְׁלֹשָׁה  
שָׂאֲכָלוּ עַל שְׁלַחַן אֶחָד וְאָמְרוּ  
עָלֵינוּ דְּבַרֵּי תוֹרָה, כָּאֵלוּ אֲכָלוּ  
מִשְׁלַחֲנוֹ שֶׁל מָקוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלַי, זֶה הַשְּׁלַחַן אֲשֶׁר  
לִפְנֵי יי'.

**ד** רַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא בֶּן חַכִּינָאִי אוֹמֵר:  
הַנֶּעוֹר בַּלֵּילָה, וְהַמְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ  
יַחֲדִיד, וּמִפְנֵה לְבוֹ לְבַטָּלָה,  
הָרִי זֶה מִתְחַיֵּב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.

**ה** רַבִּי נְחוֹנְיָא בֶּן הַקָּנָה אוֹמֵר:  
כָּל הַמִּקְבֵּל עָלָיו עוֹל תּוֹרָה,  
מַעֲבִירִין מִמֶּנּוּ עוֹל מַלְכוּת  
וְעוֹל דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, וְכָל הַפּוֹרֵק  
מִמֶּנּוּ עוֹל תּוֹרָה, נוֹתֵנִין עָלָיו  
עוֹל מַלְכוּת וְעוֹל דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ.

**ו** רַבִּי חֲלַפְתָּא בֶּן דּוּסָא אִישׁ  
כֹּפֵר חֲנִנְיָא אוֹמֵר: עֲשֶׂרָה  
שִׁיּוּשֵׁבִין וְעוֹסְקִין בַּתּוֹרָה,  
שְׁכִינָה שְׂרוּיָה בֵּינֵיהֶם,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בַּעֲדַת  
אֵל. וּמִנֵּין אֶפִּילוּ חֻמְשָׁה,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַאֲגַדְתּוּ עַל אֶרֶץ

five people who learn Torah together. From where do we know that the Divine Presence rests **even** among **three** people who learn Torah together? From a verse in Psalms, where it says: God sits **among** the three judges of a court and **makes** His own judgment. From where do we know that the Divine Presence rests **even** upon **two** people who learn Torah together? From a verse in Malachi, where it says: Then the people who fear the Lord spoke to each other, and the Lord paid attention and heard. From where do we know that the Divine Presence rests upon **even one** person who learns Torah? From the Torah, where it says: In any place where I have given you permission to mention My name—if you mention it, I will come to you and bless you.

**7** Rabbi Elazar of Bartota says: When you serve God, give Him from what comes from Him—for example, serve Him by spending money on commandments or giving generously to charity, because you, and everything that you own, really belong to Him.<sup>1</sup> That is what King David says: Everything comes from You, God, and everything that we give You is originally from Your hand. Rabbi Yaakov says: Someone who walks in the street and studies Torah by heart and interrupts his study—even to admire God’s beautiful world and say, “How beautiful is this tree! How beautiful is this plowed field!”<sup>2</sup>—is considered by the Torah as if he has committed a sin for which he would deserve to lose his life.<sup>3</sup>

יְסֻדָּהּ. וּמִנֵּין אֶפִּילוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים  
יִשְׁפֹּט. וּמִנֵּין אֶפִּילוֹ שְׁנַיִם,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: אִזְּ נִדְּבָרוּ יְרָאִי יי  
אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ, וַיִּקְשֹׁב יי  
וַיִּשְׁמַע. וּמִנֵּין אֶפִּילוֹ אֶחָד,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: בְּכָל הַמָּקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֵּיר אֶת שְׁמִי, אָבָא  
אֵלַיִךְ וּבִרְכָתֶיךָ.

ז רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אִישׁ בִּרְתוּתָא  
אוֹמֵר: תֵּן לוֹ מִשְׁלוֹ, שְׂאֵתָהּ  
וְשִׁלָּךְ שְׁלוֹ. וְכֵן בְּדוֹד הוּא  
אוֹמֵר: כִּי מִמֶּךָ הִכָּל וּמִיָּדְךָ  
נִתְּנוּ לָךְ. רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב אוֹמֵר:  
הַמֶּהֱלֵךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְשׁוֹנֶה,  
וּמִפְסִיק מִמִּשְׁנֵתוֹ וְאוֹמֵר:  
מָה נָּאֵה אֵילָן זֶה, מָה נָּאֵה  
נִיר זֶה, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב  
כָּאֵלוֹ מִתְחִיב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ.

**1** Give charity with humility, because even your ability to choose whether or not to give (“you”) is a gift from God. *The Rebbe*

**2** Alternatively, “One who interrupts because of his learning.” Part of serving God is eliminating

the ego. One who interrupts his learning because of his learning—in order to look back and admire his academic accomplishments—is considered to have transgressed a capital sin, because by undermining the true purpose of Torah study,

he is disconnecting himself from God, the source of life. *The Maggid of Mezritch*

**3** Torah is the source of life for a Jew. When one forgets his learning, it’s like losing a life. *The Rebbe*

8 Rabbi Dostai bar Yannai said in the name of Rabbi Meir: Whoever forgets even one thing of his Torah learning because he did not review it is considered by the Torah as if he has committed a sin for which he would lose his life, as it says in the Torah: But be careful and guard your life very much in case you forget what your eyes saw at Mount Sinai—the giving of the Torah. You could think that this applies even if he forgot what he learned because it was too difficult for him to remember it, therefore the Torah says, “In case the words of Torah are removed from your heart throughout all the days of your life” to teach us—that he is not considered to have committed a sin for which he would lose his life unless he knowingly removes what he learned from his mind by sitting around and not reviewing.

9 Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa says: Anyone whose fear of sin<sup>4</sup> takes priority over his wisdom, his wisdom will last. But anyone whose wisdom takes priority over his fear of sin, his wisdom will not last.

10 Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa would often say: Anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom,<sup>5</sup> his wisdom will last. But anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not last. Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa would often say: Anyone who people find to be pleasant, God also finds to be pleasant, because, by being pleasant, he

ח רבי דוסתאי ברבי ינאי משום רבי מאיר אומר: כל השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו, שנאמר: רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך. יכול אפילו תקפה עליו משנתו, תלמוד לומר: ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך, הא אינו מתחייב בנפשו עד שישוב ויסירם מלבו.

ט רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר: כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו קודמת ליראת חטאו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת.

י הוא היה אומר: כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, חכמתו מתקיימת. וכל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, אין חכמתו מתקיימת. הוא היה אומר: כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, רוח המקום נוחה הימנו. וכל שאין רוח הבריות נוחה

4 Fear of sin also refers to prayer, which instills the humility and fear of God that is necessary to make one's studies endure.  
*The Rebbe*

5 Wisdom refers to serving God based on understanding. Deeds refer to obediently serving God whether understood or not. Deeds are the “roots,” since they

come from a much deeper level of the soul, namely, its source. Understanding only comes from the lower levels of the soul.  
*The Previous Rebbe*

sanctifies God's Name. But anyone who people do not find to be pleasant, God does not find to be pleasant either, because he desecrates God's Name. Rabbi Dosa ben Harkinas says: Sleeping in the late morning, drinking wine in the middle of the day, childish conversations, and sitting in places where ignorant people gather—remove a person from having a fulfilled life in the world.

**11** Rabbi Elazar of Modi'in says: Someone who disgraces holy things, someone who disrespects the festivals, someone who embarrasses his friend in public, someone who nullifies the covenant of Abraham our forefather by not having a circumcision, and someone who explains Torah not according to its correct meaning—even if one of these people has learned much Torah and performed many good deeds,<sup>1</sup> he has no part in the World to Come unless he repents for his actions.

**12** Rabbi Yishmael says: Give in easily to an important person, be pleasant to a younger person, and greet every person cheerfully.<sup>2</sup>

הַיָּמֵנוּ, אֵין רוּחַ הַמָּקוֹם נוֹחֶה הַיָּמֵנוּ. רַבִּי דוּסָא בֶּן הֶרְפִּינָס אוֹמֵר: שָׁנָה שֶׁל שַׁחְרִית, וַיֵּין שֶׁל צֹהָרִים, וְשִׁיחַת הַיְלָדִים, וְיִשִּׁיבַת בְּתֵי כְנֻסִּיּוֹת שֶׁל עַמִּי הָאָרֶץ, מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם.

**יא** רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַמוֹדְעִי אוֹמֵר: הַמְּחַלֵּל אֶת הַקֳּדָשִׁים, וְהַמְבַּזֶּה אֶת הַמוֹעֲדוֹת, וְהַמְלַבֵּין פָּנֵי חֲבֵרוֹ בְּרַבִּים, וְהַמְפִּיר בְּרִיתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ, וְהַמְגַלֶּה פָּנִים בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁלֹּא כְּהִלָּכָה, אֵף עַל פִּי שֵׁישׁ בִּידוֹ תּוֹרָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, אֵין לוֹ חֶלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

**יב** רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל אוֹמֵר: הָיִי קָל לְרֹאשׁ, וְנוֹחַ לְתַשְׁחֹרֵת, וְהָיִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם בְּשִׂמְחָה.

**1** The mishnah speaks of a person whose Torah and good deeds are merely “in his hand”—they have not become one with him. Had they truly permeated him, he would never have been capable of committing such sins. *The Rebbe*

**2** The mishnah stresses that you must greet every person cheerfully, whether old and wise or young and ignorant. This must be done with

sincere joy, not just politeness. *The Rebbe*

**3** The fact that God has told us how special we are is itself a great gift for us. Just as one must know his faults in order to rectify them, so must we be aware of our special qualities so that we may live up to our great potential. *The Rebbe*

**4** The world was created so that the Jewish Nation could make a

dwelling place for God. The Torah is the “tool” that enables us to create that dwelling place. *The Rebbe*

**5** When we fulfill a commandment, we draw down God's holiness into the world. Therefore, the more commandment-acts performed, the better. For example, it is better to give small amounts of tzedakah multiple times than to give a large amount all at once. *The Rebbe*

**13** Rabbi Akiva says: Laughter and silliness accustom a person to immorality. Our tradition—the Oral Torah—is a fence around the Written Torah, protecting it from misinterpretation. The various types of tithes that we are commanded to give are a fence for riches because they increase and protect a person's wealth. Vows to refrain from certain permitted things can be a fence to separate ourselves from forbidden things. The fence for wisdom is silence because being silent allows us to listen and gain wisdom from others.

**14** Rabbi Akiva would often say: Man is loved by God because he was created in His image, and the fact that it was made known to man that he was created in the image of God shows an even greater love. It was made known to man as it says in the Torah: Because in the image of God He (God) created man. The Children of Israel are loved by God because they are called children of God, and the fact that it was made known to them that they are called children of God shows an even greater love.<sup>3</sup> It was made known to them, as it says in the Torah: You are children of the Lord, your God. The Children of Israel are loved by God because a precious item was given to them,<sup>4</sup> and the fact that it was made known to them that a precious item was given to them shows an even greater love. It was made known to them as it says in Proverbs: I have given you a good teaching; do not turn away from My Torah.

**15** Rabbi Akiva said: Everything that happens in the world is seen beforehand by God, yet the choice to do good or bad is given to people. The world is judged by God in a good and kind way, but everything depends on the amount of good deeds—the more good deeds one does, the more kindly he will be judged by God.<sup>5</sup>

יג רבי עקיבא אומר: שחוק וקלות ראש, מרגילין את האדם לערוה. מסרת סיג לתורה, מעשרות סיג לעשר, נדרים סיג לפרישות, סיג לחכמה שתיקה.

יד הוא היה אומר: חביב אדם שנברא בצלם, חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם, שנאמר: כי בצלם אלהים עשה את האדם. חביבין ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום, חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנקראו בנים למקום, שנאמר: בנים אתם ליי אלהיכם. חביבין ישראל שנתן להם כלי חמדה, חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנתן להם כלי חמדה, שנאמר: כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, תורתִי אל תעזבו.

טו הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה, ובטוב העולם נדון, והכל לפי רוב המעשה.

**16** Rabbi Akiva would often say: Everything that a person owns in the world is given to him by God on condition that it will be used for its correct purpose. A net is spread over all living things—they are unable to escape God’s judgment. The world is like a shop that is open for anyone to take what he wants. The Shopkeeper—God—offers credit and is willing to wait for people to repay Him with repentance. The record book is open to record everyone’s actions, and the hand writes everything that happens. Whoever wants to borrow from God and “owe” Him repentance is free to borrow, but every “debt” must eventually be repaid through repentance. The collectors go around often each day; God collects payment from each person for his “debts” in many ways, whether the person realizes it or not.<sup>1</sup> The collectors have something to rely on—the record book that records everyone’s actions. The judgment is a judgment of truth. God judges people fairly. Everything is prepared for the feast of the World to Come, when all people will receive what they deserve.

**17** Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaryah says: If a person does not learn Torah, he cannot have proper social conduct, because social conduct is learned from the Torah. If a person has no social conduct, the Torah he learns cannot be properly absorbed. If a person has no wisdom, he cannot properly fear God. If a person does not fear God, his wisdom will not last. If a person has no knowledge, he cannot

טז הוא הִיה אומר: הכל נתון בעֶרְבוֹן, וּמִצּוֹדָה פְּרוֹסָה עַל כָּל הַחַיִּים, הַחֲנוּת פְּתוּחָה, וְהַחֲנוּנִי מִקִּי, וְהַפֶּנֶקס פְּתוּחַ, וְהַיָּד כּוֹתֶבֶת, וְכָל הַרוֹצֶה לְלוֹוֹת יָבֵא וְיִלְוֶה, וְהַגָּבַאִין מַחֲזִירִין תְּדִיר בְּכָל יוֹם, וְנִפְרָעִין מִן הָאָדָם מִדַּעְתּוֹ וְשֵׁלָא מִדַּעְתּוֹ, וְיֵשׁ לָהֶם עַל מָה שֵׁיִסְמוּכוֹ, וְהֵדִין דִּין אֱמֶת, וְהַכֹּל מִתְקַן לְסַעֲוָדָה.

יז רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר: אם אין תורה אין דרך ארץ, אם אין דרך ארץ אין תורה, אם אין חכמה אין יראה, אם אין יראה אין חכמה, אם אין דעת אין בינה, אם אין בינה אין דעת, אם אין קמה אין תורה, אם

<sup>1</sup> You decide your own judgment. You are presented with a scenario of another Jew, who did exactly what you did, and your judgment of that person is applied to you. You judged yourself knowingly by judging the act, yet unknowingly, because you weren’t aware that

the judgment was meant for you! *Ba’al Shem Tov*

<sup>2</sup> The letters of the word קמה stand for מוסר חכמים, which means, “Take the rebuke (lessons) of sages.” By paying attention to Torah scholars, we come to fear God, which enables us to learn

Torah properly. *The Previous Rebbe*

<sup>3</sup> The laws of bird offerings and niddah that are mentioned here are uncommon cases involving doubtful circumstances. Even these laws should be learned with the same enthusiasm as practical, daily-occurring matters. *The Rebbe*

have deep understanding. If a person has no deep understanding, he cannot gain a lot of knowledge. If a person has no food to eat, he cannot study Torah.<sup>2</sup> If a person does not study Torah, there is no point in having food. Rabbi Elazar Ben Azaryah would often say: Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, to what is he compared? To a tree that has many branches but only a few roots; a wind comes and uproots it, and turns it upside down. As it says in Jeremiah: He will be like a lone tree on dry, windy land, and will not survive to see when the good rain will come; it will dwell dried out in the desert, on a salty land where nobody lives. But anyone whose good deeds exceed his wisdom, to what is he compared? To a tree that has only a few branches but many roots—even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, they do not move it from its place. As it says in Jeremiah: He will be like a tree planted next to water, which will spread its roots toward the stream; it will not notice when the heat comes, and its leaves will always be fresh. In a year of drought it will not worry, and it will not stop producing fruits.

**18** Rabbi Eliezer (ben) Chisma says: The mathematical calculations to determine what to do when bird offerings become mixed up and unidentifiable, and mathematical calculations to determine when the laws of niddah begin, are actually part of the Torah.<sup>3</sup> They are laws of the Torah, but the mathematical calculations of astronomy and numerical values only add flavor to a person's wisdom and should only be studied after one is filled with Torah knowledge.

**רבי** Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make the Children of Israel have many merits. He therefore gave them an abundance of Torah and commandments, so that they would have

אין תורה אין קמת. הוא היה אומר: כל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו, למה הוא דומה: לאילן שענפיו מרבין ושרשיו מועטין, והרוח באה ועוקרתו והופכתו על פניו, שנאמר: והיה כערער בערבה, ולא יראה כי יבא טוב, ושכן חררים במדבר, ארץ מלחה ולא תשב. אבל, כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, למה הוא דומה: לאילן שענפיו מועטין ושרשיו מרבין, שאפילו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו, אין מזיזין אותו ממקומו, שנאמר: והיה כעץ שתול על מים, ועל יובל ישלח שרשיו, ולא יראה כי יבא חם, והיה עלהו רענן, ובשנת בצרת לא ידאג, ולא ימיש מעשות פרי.

**יהי רבי אליעזר (בן) חסמא אומר:** קנין ופתחי נדה, הן הן גופי הלכות. תקופות וגמטריאות, פרפראות לחכמה.

**רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר:** רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה

many opportunities to connect to God. **As it says** in Isaiah: **The Lord wanted, for the sake of** increasing the Jewish Nation's righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious.

לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: יִי חֲפֹץ  
לִמְעַן צִדְקוֹ, יַגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה וַיֹּאדִיר.

## CHAPTER FOUR

**כָּל** All the Children of Israel have a portion in the World to Come. **As it says** in Isaiah regarding the Redemption of the Jewish Nation: **Your people are all righteous, and they will all inherit the Land of Israel forever**—they will never be exiled from it again. Everyone will recognize that they are **the branch of My planting and the work of My hands**, in which I, God, take pride.

**כָּל** יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְעַמְּךָ כֻּלָּם צְדִיקִים, לְעוֹלָם  
יִירָשׁוּ אֶרֶץ, נֶצֶדַר מִטְעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי  
לְהַתְפָּאֵר.

**1** Ben Zoma says: Who is truly wise? Someone who learns from every person. **As it says** in Psalms: I have gained wisdom from all my teachers, because God's testimonies, the Torah, is my only concern and conversation—so I will learn from anyone who can teach me something.<sup>1</sup> Who is truly strong? Someone who conquers his inclination.<sup>2</sup> **As it says** in Proverbs: Someone who can control himself and is slow to get angry is better than someone who is physically strong, and someone who controls his feelings is better than someone who conquers a city. Who is truly rich? Someone who is happy with his portion. **As it says** in Psalms: When you are satisfied to eat food bought with money earned by the work of your hands, and don't seek more than you have, you are fortunate and it will be good for you. The words "you are fortunate" refer to good fortune in this world, and the words "it will be good for you" refer to goodness in the World to Come. Who is truly honored? Someone who honors other people. **As God says:** To those who honor Me by honoring My creations, I will cause honor. And those who ridicule Me by disrespecting My creations, will be shamed.

**א** בֶּן זֹמָא אוֹמֵר: אִיזְהוּ  
חָכָם, הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: מִכָּל מְלַמְדִּי  
הִשְׁכַּלְתִּי, כִּי עֲדוּתִיךָ שִׂיחָה  
לִי. אִיזְהוּ גִבּוֹר, הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת  
יָצְרוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: טוֹב אֶרֶךְ  
אֶפֶסִּים מִגִּבּוֹר, וּמוֹשֵׁל בְּרוּחוֹ  
מִלֵּכָד עִיר. אִיזְהוּ עָשִׂיר,  
הַשֹּׂמֵחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
יִגִּיעַ כַּפִּיךָ כִּי תֹאכֵל, אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ  
וְטוֹב לָךְ, אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ בְּעוֹלָם  
הַזֶּה, וְטוֹב לָךְ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.  
אִיזְהוּ מְכַבֵּד, הַמְכַבֵּד אֶת  
הַבְּרִיּוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: כִּי מְכַבְּדִי  
אֶכְבֵּד וּבֹזֵי יִקְלּוּ.

<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, "Your witnesses speak to me." Every Jewish soul is a "witness" who can testify that God created the universe. When

we consider our fellow Jews in this light, we will learn valuable lessons from them. All Jews, regardless of their apparent spiritual standing or

level of knowledge, will "speak to us." *The Rebbe*

**2** Ben Azzai says: Run<sup>3</sup> to do even an easy, small commandment and run away from any sin, because one commandment, no matter how small, brings about another commandment, and one sin brings about another sin. For the reward for a commandment is the opportunity to do another commandment,<sup>4</sup> and the result of a sin is the possibility of doing another sin.

**3** Ben Azzai would often say: Do not treat anyone with disrespect, and do not reject anything as valueless, because there is no man who does not have his hour when he is needed, and there is nothing that does not have its valuable place and purpose in the world.

**4** Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh says: Be very, very humble, because although a person's soul lives forever, the expected end for his body—that which causes arrogance—is in the grave, with worms. Rabbi Yochanan ben Berokah says: Whoever desecrates and brings dishonor to God's Name, even in a private, small group, will be punished for it in public. In regards to desecrating God's Name, it makes no difference whether it was done by mistake or on purpose, because either way, God's Name was dishonored.

**5** Rabbi Yishmael bar Rabbi Yosei says: Someone who learns Torah in order to teach it to others is given the opportunity to both learn it and teach

**ב** בן עזאי אומר: הוי רץ למצוה קלה, ובורח מן העברה, שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה, ושכר מצוה מצוה, ושכר עברה עברה.

**ג** הוא היה אומר: אל תהי בז לכל אדם ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר, שאין לך אדם שאין לו שעה, ואין לך דבר שאין לו מקום.

**ד** רבי לויטס איש יבנה אומר: מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח, שתקות אנוש רמה. רבי יוחנן בן ברוקה אומר: כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר, נפרעין ממנו בגלוי, אחד שויגג ואחד מזיד בחלול השם.

**ה** רבי ישמעאל בר רבי יוסי אומר: הלומד תורה על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו

**2** The "inclination" mentioned here is not just the evil inclination but also the natural inclination. A truly strong person is able to overcome his nature. For example, a father who loves his child can still punish him when necessary. In doing so he is overcoming his natural, kind inclination, in order to educate his

child properly. *The Rebbe*

**3** In addition to physically running to perform a commandment, the mishnah is also describing the feeling you should have toward every commandment. You run toward things that you are excited about. Every commandment, even a seemingly small one, should be

fulfilled with joy and enthusiasm, because it is God's will. *The Rebbe*

**4** The word מצוה is related to the phrase צוּנְתָא וחיבור, which means "connection." The result and reward for doing a commandment is that we become connected to God. *The Rebbe*

it. Someone who learns Torah in order to fulfill what he has learned is given the opportunity to learn Torah, teach it, guard himself from sin, and do what the Torah says. Rabbi Tzadok says: Do not separate yourself from the community.<sup>1</sup> If you are judging a case, do not act as a lawyer by giving advice to those being judged. Do not make the Torah like a crown—do not use it to make yourself great, and do not use it to earn money as a woodchopper uses an axe to earn a living by chopping wood. This is what Hillel would often say: Someone who uses the crown of Torah for his own benefit will be destroyed. You have learned from these words of Hillel that whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of Torah removes his life of reward from the World to Come.

**6** Rabbi Yosei says: Whoever brings honor to the Torah is himself honored by other people. Whoever brings disgrace to the Torah is himself disgraced by other people.

**7** Rabbi Yishmael, the son of Rabbi Yosei, says: A judge who holds himself back from making a judgment and instead works out a compromise, removes hatred from himself—because both sides involved in the case are satisfied, he avoids accidentally causing theft through an incorrect ruling, and avoids causing an unnecessary or false promise that might have been made had it proceeded to court. Someone who is too self-confident when issuing a ruling, is a fool and a wicked, arrogant person.

לְלִמּוּד וּלְלִמְדָּה, וְהַלּוּמָד  
עַל מְנַת לַעֲשׂוֹת, מִסְפִּיקִין  
בִּידּוֹ לְלִמּוּד וּלְלִמְדָּה לְשִׁמּוֹר  
וְלַעֲשׂוֹת. רַבִּי צְדוֹק אוֹמֵר: אַל  
תִּפְרוֹשׁ מִן הַצִּבּוֹר, וְאַל תַּעַשׂ  
עֲצָמְךָ כְּעוֹרֵכֵי הַדִּינִין, וְאַל  
תַּעֲשֶׂה עֲטָרָה לְהַתְגַּדֵּל בָּהּ,  
וְלֹא קֶרְדּוֹם לְחַתֵּךְ בָּהּ, וְכךָ  
הִיא הַלֵּל אוֹמֵר: וְדֹאשְׁתִּמֶּשׁ  
בְּתַנָּא חֶלֶף, הֵא לְמַדָּת, כָּל  
הַנִּהְנֶה מִדְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה, נוֹטֵל  
חַיּוֹ מִן הָעוֹלָם.

וְרַבִּי יוֹסִי אוֹמֵר: כָּל הַמְּכַבֵּד אֶת  
הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוֹ מְכַבֵּד עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת,  
וְכָל הַמְּחַלֵּל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה, גּוֹפּוֹ  
מְחַלֵּל עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

זְרַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל בֶּנוֹ אוֹמֵר:  
הַחֹשֶׁךְ עֲצָמוֹ מִן הַדִּין, פּוֹרֵק  
מִמֶּנּוּ אֵיבָה וְגִזְל וּשְׁבוּעַת  
שָׁוְא, וְהִגֵּס לְבוֹ בְּהוֹרָאָה,  
שׁוֹטֵה רָשָׁע וְגַם רוּחַ.

<sup>1</sup> This is a general rule, not exclusive to Torah and Jewish life. All community customs should be kept by everyone.  
*The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> When we judge ourselves and our Divine service, we should not do so alone, because our self-love might prevent us from making an honest judgment. We should allow a friend to advise us and guide us. *The Rebbe*

<sup>3</sup> One who learns Torah while considering himself “poor” in knowledge will ultimately learn Torah out of “wealth”—his humility will lead him to succeed in his studies. *The Rebbe*

8 Rabbi Yishmael would often say: Do not judge alone,<sup>2</sup> because there are none who can judge alone besides the one God. Even if you consider yourself greater than the other judges, do not say to them, “Accept my opinion.” They are the majority, so they are allowed to say that to you, but you may not say that to them.

9 Rabbi Yonatan says: Whoever fulfills the Torah even when he is poor<sup>3</sup> will end up fulfilling the Torah when he is rich. But whoever neglects Torah learning when he is rich will end up neglecting it when he is poor.

10 Rabbi Meir says: Minimize your business activities and occupy yourself with Torah learning. Be humble before every person.<sup>4</sup> If you neglect Torah learning due to business matters, you will find many other excuses to neglect Torah learning. Whereas if you work very hard to learn Torah despite any difficulties, there is much reward to be given to you.

11 Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: Someone who does one commandment gets one supporting angel for himself, who will speak good about him to God, and someone who transgresses one sin gets one accusing angel for himself, who will tell God about the sin. Repentance and good deeds<sup>5</sup> protect against punishments. Rabbi Yochanan the

ח הוא היה אומר: אל תהי דן יחידי, שאין דן יחידי אלא אחד, ואל תאמר קבלו דעתי, שהן רשאים ולא אתה.

ט רבי יונתן אומר: כל המקיים את התורה מעני, סופו לקיימה מעשר, וכל המבטל את התורה מעשר, סופו לבטלה מעני.

י רבי מאיר אומר: הוי ממעט בעסק ועסוק בתורה, והוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם, ואם בטלת מן התורה, יש לך בטלים הרבה כנגדך, ואם עמלת בתורה הרבה, יש שכר הרבה לתן לך.

יא רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: העושה מצוה אחת, קונה לו פרקליט אחד, והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטגור אחד, תשובה ומעשים טובים כתרס בפני הפורענות. רבי יוחנן

4 Some people occupy themselves only with Torah, and others engage in business. Each type has its advantages in serving God. A businessman who learns a lot might feel greater than both types, because he has both advantages.

Such a person must be especially careful to feel humble before everyone—Torah scholars and business people alike. *The Rebbe*

5 A commandment that was performed correctly but without

any intention is like a gem covered in dust—the gem is perfect, but it does not shine. Through repentance, a person can transform a previously “dull” deed into מעשים טובים—a “good” and bright deed. *The Alter Rebbe*

Sandlar says: Any gathering that is held for the sake of Heaven will have a lasting effect, but any gathering that is not held for the sake of Heaven will not have a lasting effect.

**12** Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua says: Your student's honor should be as dear to you as your own honor, your friend's honor should be treated with the same importance as the awe and respect you have for your teacher, and the awe and respect you have for your teacher should be as great as the awe and respect you have for God in heaven.

**13** Rabbi Yehudah says: Be careful to learn and teach Torah correctly, because if your incorrect learning<sup>1</sup> causes the unintentional transgression of a sin, it will be considered intentional. Rabbi Shimon says: Respect those who possess any of these three crowns: the crown of Torah,<sup>2</sup> possessed by Torah scholars, the crown of priesthood, possessed by Kohanim, and the crown of kingship, possessed by kings. However, there is another crown of respect—the crown of having a good name and reputation—which is higher and greater than the other three.

**14** Rabbi Nehorai says: If there are no other Torah learners where you live, exile yourself to a place of Torah learning. Do not say that you will remain and wait for other Torah learners to follow you, because it is vital to have fellow Torah learners nearby with whom to discuss your studies, as only they will establish Torah within you. Do not rely on your own understanding.<sup>3</sup>

הַסִּנְדֵּלָר אוֹמֵר: כָּל כְּנִסְיָה שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם סוֹפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם, וְשֶׁאִינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם אֵין סוֹפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם.

**יב** רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן שְׁמוּעַ אוֹמֵר: יְהִי כְבוֹד תַּלְמִידְךָ חָבִיב עֲלֶיךָ כְּשִׁלְךָ, וְכְבוֹד חֲבֶרְךָ כְּמוֹרָא רַבָּךְ, וּמוֹרָא רַבָּךְ כְּמוֹרָא שָׁמַיִם.

**יג** רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: הָיִי זֶהִיר בְּתַלְמוּד, שֶׁשִּׁגְגַת תַּלְמוּד עוֹלָה זָדוֹן. רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר, שְׁלֹשָׁה כְּתָרִים הֵן: כְּתָר תּוֹרָה, וְכְתָר כְּהֵנָּה, וְכְתָר מַלְכוּת, וְכְתָר שֵׁם טוֹב עוֹלָה עַל גִּבְיָהֶן.

**יד** רַבִּי נְהוֹרָאִי אוֹמֵר: הָיִי גּוֹלָה לְמָקוֹם תּוֹרָה, וְאַל תֹּאמַר שֶׁהִיא תְּבוֹא אַחֲרַיָּךְ, שֶׁחֲבֶרְךָ יִקְיְמוּהָ בְיָדְךָ, וְאַל בִּינְתָךְ אֶל תִּשְׁעֵן.

<sup>1</sup> The term *שִׁגְגַת תַּלְמוּד* is specifically referring to the study of the Talmud, i.e. Gemara. Since Gemara demands independent thinking and comparing etc. (in contrast to the study of Chumash or even

Mishnah), which is where you are most likely to make an error. *The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> The mishnah doesn't count the "crown of a good name" as a

"fourth" crown because it is not in addition to the other three, but rather an integral part of them. As long as one lacks a good name, his other three crowns will remain incomplete. *The Rebbe*

**15** Rabbi Yannai says: We are unable to understand neither the reason why wicked people have peace nor the reason for the suffering of righteous people. Rabbi Matya ben Charash says: Be the first to greet everyone, and do not wait for them to greet you. Better be a tail—a humble follower—of lions—great people, and do not be a leader of foxes—low people.

**16** Rabbi Yaakov says: This world is like an entrance lobby before the World to Come. Prepare yourself in the entrance lobby by keeping God's commandments, so that you may enter the banquet hall—the World to Come.

**17** Rabbi Yaakov would often say: One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come, because in the World to Come one is no longer able to repent and good deeds. However, one hour of pleasure in the World to Come is better than all the life of this world,<sup>4</sup> because one cannot enjoy God's presence in this world as much as in the World to Come.

**18** Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Do not try to calm your friend as soon as he becomes angry, because you might only make him angrier. Do not comfort him while his dead relative is still lying before him, because he cannot be

**טו** רבי ינאי אומר: אין בידינו לא משלות הרשעים, ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים. רבי מתיא בן חרש אומר: הוי מקדים בשלום כל אדם, והוי זנב לאריות, ואל תהי ראש לשעלים.

**טז** רבי יעקב אומר: העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא, התקן עצמך בפרוזדור כדי שתכנס לטרקלין.

**יז** הוא היה אומר: יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה, מכל חיי העולם הבא, ויפה שעה אחת של קורת רוח בעולם הבא, מכל חיי העולם הזה.

**יח** רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אל תרצה את חברך בשעת כעסו, ואל תנחמהו בשעה

<sup>3</sup> The mishnah can also be referring to someone who is already learned in Torah and only needs Torah scholars to "lean" on, not for constant support. Even such a person should be careful to lean on the advice of Torah scholars, and not rely on his own understanding. *The Rebbe*

<sup>4</sup> Both this world and the World to Come have advantages over each other. This world has the advantage of the opportunity to perform God's commandments, thereby connecting to His Essence. The disadvantage is that you can't feel the connection in this physical

world. The World to Come has the advantage of feeling and enjoying (קורת רוח) God's radiance. The disadvantage is that it's a lower level, not God's essence.

*The Alter Rebbe*

comforted at that time. Do not ask him, as soon as he makes a promise, if he will fulfill it without any conditions, because if he says yes, he will have to keep to his word and may later regret the decision. Do not try to see him when he is disgraced, because he is too embarrassed to see anyone.

19 Shmuel Hakatan says: Do not be happy when your enemy falls,<sup>1</sup> and do not let your heart rejoice when he stumbles, in case the Lord sees your happiness, and it is bad in His eyes, and He will then turn His anger away from your enemy and toward you.

20 Elisha ben Avuyah says: Someone who learns Torah as a child—to what is he compared? To ink written on fresh paper, which will not fade. Similarly, one does not forget the Torah he learned as a child. Whereas someone who only studies Torah as an old person—to what is he compared? To ink written on worn out paper, which fades easily. Similarly, one more easily forgets what he studies in old age. Rabbi Yosei bar Yehudah of Kfar Habavli says: Someone who learns Torah from young people—to what is he compared? To someone who eats unripe grapes and drinks wine from its container before it is ready, since he learns from a young person, whose mind is not fully developed. Someone who learns Torah from old people—to what is he compared? To someone who eats ripe grapes and drinks aged wine. Rabbi Meir, however, says: Do not judge a wine (teacher) by looking at its container (physical age). Rather, judge it by what (knowledge) is inside it; there can be a new vessel (young teacher) filled with good, aged wine (knowledge),<sup>2</sup> and there can be an old (teacher) that contains nothing, not even new wine (knowledge).

שְׁמִתוֹ מָטֵל לְפָנָיו, וְאֵל תִּשְׁאַל  
לוֹ בְּשַׁעַת נְדָרוֹ, וְאֵל תִּשְׁתַּדֵּל  
לְרֹאוֹתוֹ בְּשַׁעַת קִלְקָלָתוֹ.

יט שְׁמוּאֵל הַקָּטָן אוֹמֵר: בְּנֶפֶל  
אִיְבֶךָ אַל תִּשְׂמַח, וּבִכְשָׁלוֹ  
אַל יִגַּל לְבָבְךָ, כִּן יֵרָאֶה יְיָ וְרַע  
בְּעֵינָיו, וְהִשִּׁיב מַעַלְיוֹ אָפוֹ.

כ אֶלִישָׁע בֶּן אֲבוּיָה אוֹמֵר,  
הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה יֶלֶד לְמָה  
הוּא דוֹמָה: לְדָיו כְּתוּבָה עַל  
נִיר חֲדָשׁ, וְהַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה  
זָקֵן לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה: לְדָיו  
כְּתוּבָה עַל נִיר מָחוּק. רַבִּי  
יוֹסִי בֶר יְהוּדָה אִישׁ כֶּפֶר  
הַבְּבִלִי אוֹמֵר, הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה  
מִן הַקָּטָנִים, לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה:  
לְאוֹכֵל עֲנָבִים קֵהוֹת וְשׁוֹתָה  
יֵין מִגָּתוֹ, וְהַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה מִן  
הַזָּקֵנִים, לְמָה הוּא דוֹמָה:  
לְאוֹכֵל עֲנָבִים בְּשׁוֹלוֹת  
וְשׁוֹתָה יֵין יָשָׁן. רַבִּי מֵאִיר  
אוֹמֵר: אַל תִּסְתַּכֵּל בְּקִנְקָן,  
אַל תִּשְׁתֶּה בְּמֵה שֵׁישׁ בּוֹ, יֵשׁ קִנְקָן  
חֲדָשׁ מֵלֵא יָשָׁן, וְיָשָׁן שֶׁאִפִּילוֹ  
חֲדָשׁ אֵין בּוֹ.

**21** Rabbi Elazar Hakapar says: Jealousy, desire for pleasure, and the pursuit of honor lead to evil and will therefore remove a person from the World to Come, and also prevent him from enjoying his life in the world, because he will never feel satisfied.

**22** Rabbi Elazar Hakapar would often say: Those who are born will eventually die, those who are dead will be eventually brought back to life, and even those who are brought back to life will be judged by God on the Day of Judgment. This happens in order for people to know, to let others know, and to make it known throughout the world that God is God, He is the Maker of the universe, He is the Creator of the universe, He is the One Who understands everything, He is the Judge Who decides what happens in this world, He is the Witness to every action, He is the Plaintiff Who was wronged and demands the trial, and He will judge in the future, in the World to Come. He is blessed, because there is no injustice before Him, there is no forgetfulness, no favoritism, and no bribery,<sup>3</sup> so every verdict is correct and fair. Know that all of God's rewards and punishments are given according to the account that He has kept. Do not let your evil inclination assure you that once you die, your grave will be a place of safety for you to avoid judgment, because just as you were forced to be formed—without your agreement, and you

**כא** רבי אלעזר הקפר אומר:  
הקנאה והתאוה והכבוד,  
מוציאין את האדם מן  
העולם.

**כב** הוא היה אומר: הילודים  
למות, והמתים לחיות,  
והחיים לדון, לידע  
ולהודיע ולהודע שהוא  
אל, הוא היוצר, הוא  
הבורא, הוא המבין, הוא  
הדין, הוא העד, הוא בעל  
דין, הוא עתיד לדון. ברוך  
הוא, שאין לפניו לא עולה,  
ולא שכחה, ולא משוא  
פנים, ולא מקח שחד, ודע  
שהכל לפי החשבון. ואל  
יבטיחך יצרך שהשואל  
בית מנוס לך, שעל כרחך  
אתה נוצר, ועל כרחך אתה

**1** This does not merely refer to a personal enemy, but even to an enemy of Judaism itself—one who fights against the Torah and its commandments. Even at the downfall of such a person, we are not to rejoice. Perhaps we could have done more to bring him closer to the right path, which

would have prevented his downfall.  
*The Rebbe*

**2** Even one who is relatively “new” to the Torah and its commandments has the ability to teach others what he has learned, even if they are already wise and “old.” Conversely, one who is “old” and experienced in the ways of Torah and its wisdom

must teach “new,” inexperienced people to bring them closer to God.

*The Rebbe*

**3** Sins sever a person's connection to God and can be fixed only through repentance. Doing more good deeds is great, but doesn't “bribe” God to forgive sins.

*The Rebbe*

were forced to be born, and you are forced to live, and you will be forced to die whenever God decides, so too,<sup>1</sup> will you be forced to give justification and a detailed report of everything you did during your life to the supreme King of all kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

**רבי** Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make the Children of Israel have many merits. He therefore gave them an abundance of Torah and commandments, so that they would have many opportunities to connect to God. As it says in Isaiah: The Lord wanted, for the sake of increasing the Jewish Nation's righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious.

נוֹלָד, וְעַל כְּרַחֲךָ אֶתָּה חַי, וְעַל כְּרַחֲךָ אֶתָּה מֵת, וְעַל כְּרַחֲךָ אֶתָּה עֲתִיד לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

**רבי** חנניא בן עקשיא אומר: רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות, שנאמר: ייחפץ למען צדקו, יגדיל תורה ויאדיר.

## CHAPTER FIVE

**כל** All the Children of Israel have a portion in the World to Come. As it says in Isaiah regarding the Redemption of the Jewish Nation: Your people are all righteous, and they will all inherit the Land of Israel forever—they will never be exiled from it again. Everyone will recognize that they are the branch of My planting and the work of My hands, in which I, God, take pride.

**1** The world was created by God uttering ten statements, instructing everything to exist. What does this come to teach us?<sup>2</sup> Couldn't the world have been created with just one statement? The reason He created it with ten statements was to take maximum payment from the wicked,<sup>3</sup> who destroy the valuable world that was created by not one, but ten statements, and to give the maximum good reward to the righteous, who keep the valuable world—that was created by not one, but ten statements—in existence through their righteousness.

**כל** ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: ועמך כלם צדיקים, לעולם יירשו ארץ, נצר מטעי מעשה ידי להתפאר.

**א** בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם, ומה תלמוד לומר, והלא במאמר אחד יכול להבראות, אלא להפריע מן הרשעים שמאבדין את העולם שנברא בעשרה מאמרות, ולתן שכר טוב לצדיקים שמקימין את העולם שנברא בעשרה מאמרות.

<sup>1</sup> While in heaven, the soul doesn't want to descend into this spiritually barren world. it is therefore "forced to be born." However, after it

realizes the great connection to God that can only be accomplished by fulfilling His commandments in this world, it doesn't want to leave.

God must therefore "force" it to leave once its mission has been completed. *The Rebbe Rashab*

**2** There were ten generations from Adam to Noah. This shows us how great God's patience is: each of the generations made Him increasingly angry, until He eventually after ten generations brought the waters of the flood upon them. There were ten generations from Noah to Abraham. This also shows how great God's patience is: each of the generations made Him increasingly angry, until Abraham our forefather came and received the rewards that they would have received had they not angered God.

**3** Our forefather Abraham was tested with ten trials to see if he would remain faithful to God, and he passed them all. This shows how great the love of our forefather Abraham for God was.<sup>4</sup>

**4** Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in Egypt to save them from each of the ten plagues,<sup>5</sup> and ten miracles at the Sea of Reeds to save them from each of the ten plagues that affected the Egyptians. The Holy One, blessed be He, brought ten plagues upon the Egyptians in Egypt and

**ב** עֲשָׂרָה דורות מאדם ועד נח, להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו, שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין ובאין, עד שהביא עליהם את מי המבול. עֲשָׂרָה דורות מנח ועד אברהם, להודיע כמה ארך אפים לפניו, שכל הדורות היו מכעיסין ובאין, עד שבא אברהם אבינו וקבל שכר כלם.

**ג** עֲשָׂרָה נסיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו, ועמד בכלם, להודיע כמה חבתו של אברהם אבינו.

**ד** עֲשָׂרָה נסים נעשו לאבותינו במצרים, ועֲשָׂרָה על הים. עֲשָׂר מכות הביא הקדוש ברוך הוא על המצריים במצרים, ועֲשָׂר על הים. עֲשָׂרָה נסיונות נסו

**2** You should always be looking to learn lessons from everything you see and hear. When you learn something about the creation of the entire world, your first question should be: What lesson can I learn from this? *The Rebbe*

**3** The word להפריע means to collect payment. God isn't mean, and He didn't create the world to punish "bad" people. God created the world to be made a holy place through the Torah

and its commandments. When a person chooses the wrong path and doesn't fulfill that mission, he owes God. The debt can be repaid by repenting. *The Rebbe*

**4** Abraham passed ten extremely difficult tests. Since he is our father, we inherit this ability to pass tests. When you feel that you are being tested, keep in mind that you are a descendant of Abraham and he empowers you to succeed! *The Rebbe*

**5** The Hebrew word for "miracle," נס, can also be translated as "raised." Under normal circumstances, the Jewish Nation would have been punished in Egypt because they engaged in idolatry. Nevertheless, when God brought each of the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, He "raised" the Jewish Nation above the natural order of justice so that they remained unaffected. *The Rebbe*

ten at the Sea of Reeds. Our ancestors tested the patience of God, the Holy One, blessed be He, in the desert with ten tests, as God says in the Torah: They have tested Me these ten times and they have not listened to My voice.

**5** Ten miracles were done for our ancestors in the Holy Temple: 1. No woman miscarried because of cravings caused by the smell of the roasting meat of the offerings. 2. The meat of the offerings never became rotten. 3. No fly was seen in the place where the offerings were cut up. 4. Never did the High Priest become impure on Yom Kippur. 5. The rains did not extinguish the fire of the wood-pile on the altar. 6. The wind did not succeed in disrupting the neat column of smoke rising from the fire on the altar. 7. No disqualifying issues were ever found with the Omer offering on the second day of Pesach, with the two loaves offered on Shavuot, or with the Showbread baked each week. 8. When the people in the Holy Temple stood, they were packed together; yet when they bowed, they had plenty of space.<sup>1</sup> 9. No snake or scorpion caused harm in Jerusalem. 10. No one said to his friend, “The space is too crowded for me to stay overnight in Jerusalem.”

**6** Ten miraculous things were created on Friday, at twilight—at the end of the sixth day of creation. They are: 1. The opening of the earth that swallowed Korach and his followers; 2. the opening of the well that provided water for the Jewish Nation in the desert; 3. the mouth of Bilaam’s talking donkey; 4. the rainbow that appeared after the Flood; 5. the Manna that the Jewish Nation ate in the desert; 6. the stick that Moses used to perform miracles; 7. the Shamir worm that cut the stones used to build the Holy Temple; 8. the written shape of the letters of the

אבותינו את הקדוש ברוך  
הוא במדבר, שנאמר: וינסו  
אתי זה עשר פעמים, ולא  
שמעו בקולי.

**ה** עשרה נסים נעשו  
לאבותינו בבית המקדש:  
לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר  
הקדש, ולא הסריח בשר  
הקדש מעולם, ולא נראה  
זבוב בבית המטבחים, ולא  
אירע קרי לכהן גדול ביום  
הכפורים, ולא כבו הגשמים  
אש של עצי המערכה, ולא  
נצחה הרוח את עמוד העשן,  
ולא נמצא פסול בעומר  
ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים,  
עומדים צפופים ומשתחווים  
רוחים, ולא הזיק נחש  
ועקרב בירושלים, ולא אמר  
אדם לחברו: צר לי המקום  
שאלין בירושלים.

**ו** עשרה דברים נבראו בערב  
שבת בין השמשות, ואלו  
הן: פי הארץ, פי הבאר, פי  
האתון, הקשת, והמן, והמטה,  
והשמיר, הכתב, והמכתב,

Hebrew alphabet; 9. the engraved writing of the Tablets; 10. the first Tablets. Some say that the grave of Moses and the ram that our forefather Abraham offered at the Binding of Isaac instead of Isaac were also created then, and some say that the destructive spirits were also created then, and even the first tongs. Because tongs are needed to make other tongs,<sup>2</sup> God created the first pair, enabling man to create more.

**7** There are seven things a foolish person does, and seven things a wise person does. A wise person 1. does not speak in front of someone who is greater than him in wisdom or in years of age; 2. does not interrupt his friend while he is speaking; 3. does not rush to answer a question—he thinks carefully first; 4. asks questions that are relevant to the subject, and replies to the point; 5. speaks in an orderly and systematic manner, dealing with matters of first priority first, and the least important matters last; 6. says, “I have not heard” when people ask him about things he has not heard;<sup>3</sup> 7. and acknowledges the truth when he is wrong, and does not continue to justify his previous opinion. A foolish person does the opposite of all these things.

**8** Seven types of punishment come to the world because of seven types of sins: 1. If some people tithe and some do not tithe, a famine comes

וְהִלְחֹת. וַיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים: אֶף קָבְרוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ, וַאִילוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ. וַיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים: אֶף הַמְזִיקִין, וְאֶף צֶבֶת בְּצֶבֶת עֲשׂוּיָהּ.

**ז** שִׁבְעָה דְּבָרִים בְּגוֹלָם וְשִׁבְעָה בְּחָכְם, חָכָם: אֵינוֹ מְדַבֵּר לִפְנֵי מִי שֶׁגָּדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ בְּחָכְמָה וּבְמִנִּין, וְאֵינוֹ נִכְנָס לְתוֹךְ דְּבָרֵי חֲבֵרוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ נִבְהֵל לְהַשִּׁיב, שׂוֹאֵל כְּעֵנִין וּמַשִּׁיב כְּהִלָּכָה, וְאוֹמֵר עַל רִאשׁוֹן רִאשׁוֹן וְעַל אַחֲרוֹן אַחֲרוֹן, וְעַל מֶה שֶׁלֹּא שָׁמַע אוֹמֵר לֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי, וּמוֹדָה עַל הָאֻמָּת, וְחִלּוּפֶיהֶן בְּגוֹלָם.

**ח** שִׁבְעָה מִיָּנִי פּוֹרְעָנוּת בָּאִין לְעוֹלָם, עַל שִׁבְעָה גּוֹפֵי עֲבֵרָה: מִקְצָתָן מַעֲשִׂרִין

**1** When people stand firm in their positions and don't listen to other people's point of view, there is no room—each person feels squashed. If people “bow,” however, and are willing to bend and accommodate others, there is plenty of room for everyone. *The Rebbe*

**2** The first tongs were not created to

be used as tongs; they were created to make other tongs. Even though they were only a preparation for something else, they were created along with the other important items to stress that the preparations for a commandment should be as important as the commandment itself. *The Rebbe*

**3** A person can gain a new or deeper understanding of something every time he hears it. Therefore, even if you have already heard an idea, you may say that you haven't heard it yet in order to gain a new insight or perspective. *The Rebbe Maharash*

caused by people not planting or harvesting due to disrupting events, in which **some people go hungry and some are satisfied**. 2. If they all decided not to tithe, a **famine of drought comes**, and there will not be enough rain. 3. If they also decided **not to separate challah** when baking bread, a **famine of destruction comes**, in which there is no rain, and even rivers and lakes dry up. 4. **Deadly plagues come to the world** when people commit sins that according to Torah law require the **death penalty** from God, and the Jewish **court of law is not given** the responsibility to carry it out—God causes a plague to do so instead. **Plagues also come to the world when** the laws regarding **produce grown during the seventh** (Sabbatical) year are neglected. 5. The **sword of war comes to the world because of the agony** that judges cause when they delay announcing a **verdict**; because of judges **corrupting a verdict**; and because of people **who interpret and teach Torah matters not in accordance with the Jewish law**.<sup>1</sup>

9 6. Wild beasts come to the world because of unnecessary oaths that people make and because of people desecrating God's Name. 7. Exile comes to the world because of idol-worship,<sup>2</sup> immorality, murder, and for not letting the earth rest during the Sabbatical year. **At four periods** during every seven-year Sabbatical cycle, **deadly plagues increase: in the fourth year, in the seventh year, in the year after the seventh year, and every year after the end of the Festival of Sukkot**. The plagues increase at those specific periods for the following reasons: **in the fourth year** they increase because of people not giving the **tithe** to the **poor** as required in the preceding third year; **in the seventh year**, they increase because of people not giving the **tithe** to the **poor** as required in the preceding sixth year; **in the year after the seventh** (Sabbatical) year,

וּמִקְצָתָן אֵין מַעֲשִׂין, רָעַב  
שֶׁל מְהוּמָה בָּא, מִקְצָתָן  
רָעִיִּים וּמִקְצָתָן שְׂבִיעִים.  
גָּמְרוּ שְׁלֹא לַעֲשׂוֹת, רָעַב  
שֶׁל בְּצֻרַת בָּא. וְשְׁלֹא לְטוֹל  
אֶת הַחֻלָּה, רָעַב שֶׁל כָּלִיָּה  
בָּא. דְּבַר בָּא לְעוֹלָם עַל  
מִיתוֹת הָאֲמֻרוֹת בְּתוֹרָה  
שְׁלֹא נִמְסְרוּ לְבֵית דִּין, וְעַל  
פְּרוֹת שְׂבִיעִית. חָרַב בָּאָה  
לְעוֹלָם, עַל עֲנוּי הַדִּין, וְעַל  
עוֹוֹת הַדִּין, וְעַל הַמּוֹרִים  
בְּתוֹרָה שְׁלֹא כְּהִלְכָּה.

ט חִיָּה רָעָה בָּאָה לְעוֹלָם  
עַל שְׂבוּעַת שְׁוֹא וְעַל חִלּוּל  
הַשֵּׁם. גְּלוּת בָּא לְעוֹלָם עַל  
עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, וְעַל גְּלוּי עֲרִיּוֹת,  
וְעַל שְׂפִיכוֹת דָּמִים, וְעַל  
שְׁמִטַּת הָאָרֶץ. בְּאַרְבַּעַה  
פְּרָקִים הַדִּבֵּר מִתְּרַבָּה,  
בְּרִבִּיעִית, וּבְשִׁבְעִית,  
וּבְמוֹצָאֵי שְׂבִיעִית, וּבְמוֹצָאֵי  
הַחַג שֶׁבְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה.  
בְּרִבִּיעִית, מִפְּנֵי מַעֲשֵׂר עֲנִי  
שְׂבִשְׁלִישִׁית. בְּשִׁבְעִית,  
מִפְּנֵי מַעֲשֵׂר עֲנִי שְׂבִשְׁשִׁית.

they increase **because of** people not keeping the laws concerning **produce** of the preceding **seventh** year; and **every year**, after the end of the Festival of Sukkot, when the harvesting season has ended, they increase **because of** people **stealing** from the **poor** by withholding the harvest **gifts** that should have been given to them.

**10** There are four types among people: 1. Someone who says, “There should not be any private ownership; my property is yours, and your property is mine” is an ignorant person. 2. Someone who says, “My property is mine and your property is yours”—this is a normal character. Some say that it is the character of the city of Sedom, where it was a crime to share things or give charity. 3. Someone who says, “My property is yours and your property is also yours” is a chassid,<sup>3</sup> (devoted person), because he goes beyond what the law requires by giving and not expecting anything in return. 4. Someone who says, “Your property is mine and my property is mine” is wicked because he wants everything for himself without giving anything in return.

**11** There are four types of temperaments:<sup>4</sup> 1. Someone who is easily angered and easily calmed—his gain outweighs his loss because his anger

בְּמוֹצָאֵי שְׁבִיעִית, מִפְּנֵי  
פְּרוֹת שְׁבִיעִית. בְּמוֹצָאֵי  
הַחַג שֶׁבְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה,  
מִפְּנֵי גֹזַל מִתְּנוּת עֲנִיִּים.

• אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּאָדָם:  
הַאֹמֵר שְׁלִי שְׁלֶךְ וְשְׁלֶךְ  
שְׁלִי, עִם הָאָרֶץ. שְׁלִי  
שְׁלִי וְשְׁלֶךְ שְׁלֶךְ, זֶה מִדָּה  
בִּינוּנִית, וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים זֶה  
מִדַּת סְדוֹם. שְׁלִי שְׁלֶךְ  
וְשְׁלֶךְ שְׁלֶךְ, חֲסִיד. שְׁלֶךְ  
שְׁלִי וְשְׁלִי שְׁלִי, רָשָׁע.

א' אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּדַעוֹת: נוֹחַ  
לְכַעוֹס וְנוֹחַ לְרַצוֹת, יֵצֵא  
הַפֶּסֶדוֹ בְּשִׁכְרוֹ. קָשָׁה לְכַעוֹס  
וְקָשָׁה לְרַצוֹת, יֵצֵא שִׁכְרוֹ  
בְּהַפְסָדוֹ. קָשָׁה לְכַעוֹס וְנוֹחַ

**1** The Torah contains certain guidelines under which the sages may deduce laws from it. A person who abuses this privilege by explaining the Torah in a way that does not fit with these guidelines has no portion in the World to Come.  
*The Rebbe*

**2** Literally, “foreign service.” Everything a Jew does must be for the purpose of serving God. We must avoid doing something that is not for the service of God,

even if it is not a sin, because it is considered “foreign” to our true service and mission.  
*The Rebbe*

**3** Speech is as important as action when it comes to giving charity. Even a person who has nothing to give to the poor but comforts them with words, by saying, “What’s mine is yours,” is considered a chassid (devoted person). On the other hand, one who gives charity but embarrasses

the recipient by saying, “What’s yours is mine” is considered wicked.  
*The Rebbe*

**4** The mishnah discusses four types of “temperaments,” not four types of conduct. While we are certainly responsible to control our actions, this mishnah is adding that we must also work on improving our natural tendencies and habits.  
*The Rebbe*

passes quickly. 2. Someone who is **hard to anger and hard to calm**—his loss outweighs his gain because he will remain angry. 3. Someone who is **hard to anger and easily calmed** is a chassid (devoted person). 4. Someone who is **easily angered and hard to calm** is a wicked person.

**12** There are four types of students: 1. Someone who is **quick to understand and quick to forget**—his loss outweighs his gain because he will remain with nothing. 2. Someone who is **slow to understand and slow to forget**—his gain outweighs his loss because he will eventually have much knowledge. 3. Someone who is **quick to understand and slow to forget**—this person received a good portion from God. 4. Someone who is **slow to understand and quick to forget**—this person received a bad portion.<sup>1</sup>

**13** There are four types of people who give charity: 1. Someone who **wants to give charity but does not want others to give**—such a person wishes bad for others, because he does not want them to fulfill the commandment of giving charity. 2. Someone who **wants others to give charity, but he himself does not want to give**—such a person wishes bad for himself, because he will not fulfill the commandment of giving charity. 3. Someone who **wants to give charity and wants others to give** is a chassid (devoted person). 4. Someone who **does not want to give charity and does not want others to give** is a wicked person.

לְרָצוֹת, חֲסִיד. נוֹחַ לְכַעֵס  
וְקָשָׁה לְרָצוֹת, רָשָׁע.

יב אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּתַלְמִידִים:  
מֵהָר לְשִׁמוּעַ וּמֵהָר לְאַבֵּד,  
יֵצֵא שְׂכָרוֹ בְּהֶפְסָדוֹ. קָשָׁה  
לְשִׁמוּעַ וְקָשָׁה לְאַבֵּד,  
יֵצֵא הֶפְסָדוֹ בְּשְׂכָרוֹ. מֵהָר  
לְשִׁמוּעַ וְקָשָׁה לְאַבֵּד, זֶה  
חֵלֶק טוֹב. קָשָׁה לְשִׁמוּעַ  
וּמֵהָר לְאַבֵּד, זֶה חֵלֶק רָע.

יג אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּנוֹתָנִי  
צְדָקָה: הַרוּצָה שְׂתִיתָ וְלֹא  
יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם, עֵינֵינוּ רָעָה  
בְּשָׁל אַחֲרָיִם. יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם  
וְהוּא לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינֵינוּ רָעָה  
בְּשָׁלוֹ. יִתֵּן וְיִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם,  
חֲסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ  
אַחֲרָיִם, רָשָׁע.

<sup>1</sup> The term “portion” implies something that is given, not taken. Someone who learns quickly and remembers well may feel haughty. The mishnah therefore warns, “It’s a good portion”—it’s not something you achieved on your own; rather,

it was given to you as a gift from God. Similarly, one who has a hard time understanding what he learns and forgets quickly may feel guilty. The mishnah therefore tells him that God gave him this portion, and if he keeps

trying, God will grant him success.

*The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> The “funnel” does have the following positive aspect, however: he passes everything learns on to others.

*The Rebbe*

**14** There are four types of people who go to the House of Study: 1. Someone who goes to the House of Study but does not learn—he still gets a reward for going. 2. Someone who does learn Torah at home but does not go to the House of Study—he gets a reward for the learning he did. 3. Someone who goes to the House of Study and does learn is a chassid (devoted person). 4. Someone who does not go to the House of Study and does not learn at home is a wicked person.

**15** There are four types of students who sit in front of Torah scholars—a sponge, a funnel,<sup>2</sup> a strainer, and a sifter: 1. A sponge represents a student who absorbs everything. 2. A funnel takes in something from one end and spills it out from the other end. This represents a student who listens to his teacher but quickly forgets what he said. 3. A strainer lets the wine flow through and traps the sediment. This represents a student who forgets important lessons but remembers less-important lessons. 4. A sifter lets the flour-dust pass through and keeps the fine flour. This represents a student who only remembers important lessons.

**16** Any love that depends on a specific thing will cease when that thing ceases, and any love that does not depend on any specific thing will never cease. What is an example of a love that depended on a specific thing? The love between Amnon and Tamar. Amnon loved Tamar for her beauty. What is an example of a love that did not depend on any specific thing? The love between King David and his close friend Jonathan. Jonathan encouraged David to be king—even though that prevented Jonathan from being king—because he loved David.

יָד אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּהוֹלְכֵי בֵּית  
הַמִּדְרָשׁ: הוֹלֵךְ וְאִינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה,  
שָׂכָר הִלִּיכָה בִּידּוֹ. עוֹשֶׂה  
וְאִינוֹ הוֹלֵךְ, שָׂכָר מַעֲשֵׂה  
בִּידּוֹ. הוֹלֵךְ וְעוֹשֶׂה, חֲסִיד.  
לֹא הוֹלֵךְ וְלֹא עוֹשֶׂה, רָשָׁע.

טו אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּיוֹשְׁבִים  
לִפְנֵי חֲכָמִים: סְפוּגָה, וּמִשְׁפָּךְ,  
מִשְׁמֶרֶת, וְנֶפֶךָ. סְפוּגָה, שֶׁהוּא  
סוֹפֵג אֶת הַכֹּל. וּמִשְׁפָּךְ,  
שֶׁמִּכְנִיס בְּזוֹ וּמוֹצִיא בְּזוֹ.  
מִשְׁמֶרֶת, שֶׁמוֹצִיָּא אֶת  
הַיַּיִן וְקוֹלֶטֶת אֶת הַשְּׂמֶרִים.  
וְנֶפֶךָ, שֶׁמוֹצִיָּא אֶת הַקֶּמַח  
וְקוֹלֶטֶת אֶת הַסּוּלָת:

טז כָּל אֲהָבָה שֶׁהִיא תְלוּיָה  
בְּדָבָר, בָּטֵל דָּבָר בְּטִלָּהָ  
אֲהָבָה, וְשֶׁאִינָהּ תְלוּיָה  
בְּדָבָר, אִינָהּ בְּטִלָּהָ לְעוֹלָם.  
אִיזוֹ הִיא אֲהָבָה שֶׁהִיא תְלוּיָה  
בְּדָבָר, זֶה אֲהָבַת אֲמִנוֹן  
וְתָמָר, וְשֶׁאִינָהּ תְלוּיָה בְּדָבָר,  
זֶה אֲהָבַת דָּוִד וְיֹהָנָן.

**17** Any argument that is for the sake of God in heaven—will have a lasting and meaningful outcome.<sup>1</sup> But any argument that is for personal reasons, and not for the sake of God in heaven, will not have a lasting and meaningful outcome. What is an example of an argument that was for the sake of God in heaven? The argument between Hillel and Shammai, who argued regarding laws, yet their arguments were not personal; they cared only to uncover the true Jewish Law. What is an example of an argument that was not for the sake of God in heaven? The argument of Korach and his entire group with Moses, whose argument was based on a desire to rebel against authority.

**18** Anyone who tries to cause many people to gain merit,<sup>2</sup> God will ensure that no sin will come through him. But anyone who tries to cause many people to sin will not be given an opportunity to repent easily.<sup>3</sup> Moses is an example of the first type; he had many merits himself, and he caused many other people to have merits by teaching them Torah and guiding them. In addition, because he caused their merits, the merit of the many people is credited to him, as it says in the Torah: Moses fulfilled the righteous commandments of God, and fulfilled His laws with the Children of Israel. Yeravam ben Nevat is an example of the second type; he sinned himself and caused many people

יז כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים, ושאִינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאִינה לשם שמים, זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו.

יח כל המזכה את הרבים, אין חטא בא על ידו, וכל המחטיא את הרבים, אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה. משה זכה וזכה את הרבים, זכות הרבים תלוי בו, שנאמר: צדקת יי עשה, ומשפטיו עם ישראל. ירבעם בן נבט חטא והחטיא את הרבים,

<sup>1</sup> How is it possible for both sides of a Torah argument to stand, if the Jewish law only follows one opinion? The answer is that if both sides are arguing for the sake of Torah—to understand the Divine will, and not to merely prove themselves right—then one side will eventually be accepted by a clear majority and become the

accepted opinion. The minority opinion-holders will then review their understanding of the matter and learn to accept the majority opinion. When this occurs, it is proof that the argument was “for the sake of heaven.” *The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> The gates of repentance are always open. The mishnah does

not say that someone who causes others to sin cannot repent; rather, it says that he is not given an opportunity to do so. Usually, God helps people repent. For someone who causes others to sin, however, God does not provide such help. Yet even such a person, if he tries hard enough, can repent.

*The Alter Rebbe*

to sin by convincing them to worship idols. Because he caused their sins, the sins of the many people are credited to him, as it says in Kings: Yeravam was punished for the sins that he did and for the sins that he caused the Children of Israel to do.

**19** Whoever has the following three traits<sup>4</sup> behaves as a student of Abraham our forefather, and whoever has three other traits behaves as a student of the wicked Bilaam. The students of Abraham our forefather have: a good and generous eye—they are not jealous and are happy for another's success, a humble spirit, and a modest soul—they avoid unnecessary luxuries. The students of the wicked Bilaam have: a bad and unsatisfied eye—they are jealous of others and are not satisfied with what they have, an arrogant spirit, and a greedy soul. What is the difference between the students of Abraham our forefather and the students of the wicked Bilaam? The students of Abraham our forefather will eat and enjoy the benefits of their good traits in this world, and they will inherit the greatest part of their reward in the World to Come. As it says in Proverbs: God said: I will cause those who love Me to inherit the World to Come, and I will also fill up their storage places in this world. But the wicked Bilaam's students will inherit Gehinom and go down into a pit of destruction, as it says

חָטָא הָרַבִּים תְּלוּי בּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
עַל חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעַם אֲשֶׁר חָטָא,  
וְאֲשֶׁר הֶחֱטִיא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

יֵט כָּל מִי שֵׁישׁ בּוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים  
הֵלָלוּ, הוּא מַתְלִמִּידוֹ שֶׁל  
אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ, וְשְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים  
אַחֲרִים, הוּא מַתְלִמִּידוֹ שֶׁל  
בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע. תְּלִמִּידוֹ שֶׁל  
אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ: עֵין טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ  
נְמוּכָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ שְׂפֵלָה. תְּלִמִּידוֹ  
שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע: עֵין רָעָה,  
וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ רַחְבָּה. מֶה  
בֵּין תְּלִמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ  
לְתִלְמִידוֹ שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע,  
תְּלִמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ  
אוֹכְלִין בַּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, וְנוֹחֲלִין  
הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: לְהַנְחִיל  
אֶהְיֵ יֵשׁ, וְאוֹצְרוֹתֵיהֶם אֲמַלֵּא.  
אֲבָל תְּלִמִּידוֹ שֶׁל בְּלָעָם הָרָשָׁע  
יֹרְשִׁין גִּיהֵנִם וְיֹרְדִין לְבֵּאֵר  
שַׁחַת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים

**3** The mishnah uses the present tense of מְזַכֶּה rather than past tense זָכָה because even someone who has not yet succeeded in influencing people to do good

deeds, since he is trying, God promises that he won't come to sin.  
*The Rebbe*

**4** The mishnah says that someone

who possesses bad character traits and feelings, even if he does not act on them, is a student of Bilaam until he works to improve them.  
*The Rebbe*

in Psalms: And You, God, will bring them down to a pit of destruction. Men who are bloodthirsty and liars do not live for even half the days of their life. But I will trust in You.<sup>1</sup>

**20** Yehudah ben Teima says: Be as bold as a leopard,<sup>2</sup> and don't be intimidated by people who make fun of doing the right thing; be as light as an eagle, and don't let laziness win over you; run like a deer, showing your great enthusiasm; and be as strong as a lion to overcome any obstacles—to fulfill the will of your Father in Heaven. Yehudah ben Teima would often say: A brazen, arrogant person will go to Gehinom, whereas a bashful, humble person will go to the Garden of Eden. May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the God of our fathers, that the Holy Temple should be built quickly in our days and that You should give us our portion in Your Torah.<sup>3</sup>

**21** Ben Bag-Bag says: Delve into the Torah and delve into it again—always try to uncover more and understand deeper, because everything is in it. With Torah you will see the truth. Learn Torah forever, even as you grow old and worn out. Never move away from it, because it connects you to God, and you can have nothing better than that. Ben Hei-Hei says: The reward for a commandment is increased in proportion to the amount of strain and hard work you experience when fulfilling it.<sup>4</sup>

**22** Yehudah ben Teima would often say: A five-year-old is of the age to learn Chumash. A ten-year-old is of the age to learn Mishnah.<sup>5</sup> A thirteen-year-old is obligated to fulfill commandments. A fifteen-year-old is of the age

תורידם לבאר שחת, אנשי דמים ומרמה לא יחצו ימיהם, ואני אבטח בך.

כ יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר, וקל כנשר, רץ כצבי, וגבור כארי, לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים. הוא היה אומר: עז פנים לגיהנם, ובושת פנים לגן עדן. יהי רצון מלפניך, יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו, ותן חלקנו בתורתך.

כא בן בג בג אומר: הפך בה והפך בה, דכלא בה, ובה תחזי, וסיב ובלה בה, ומנה לא תזוע, שאין לך מדה טובה הימנה. בן הא הא אומר: לפום צערא אגרא.

כב הוא היה אומר: בן חמש שנים למקרא, בן עשר שנים למשנה, בן שלש עשרה למצות, בן חמש

to learn Gemara. An eighteen-year-old is of the age for marriage. A twenty-year-old is of the age to pursue a livelihood. A thirty-year-old is of the age of full strength. A forty-year-old is of the age for understanding. A fifty-year-old is of the age to offer advice. A sixty-year-old is of the age of maturity and wisdom. A seventy-year-old is of a ripe old age. An eighty-year-old is of the age that shows that he has a strong and healthy body to survive to this age. A ninety-year-old is of the age of becoming bent-over. A hundred-year-old has lost the use of most of his natural abilities and is therefore considered dead; he is also removed and ceases to care about the physical pursuits of this world, and recognizes God's presence in the world.

**רבי** Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make the Children of Israel have many merits. He therefore gave them an abundance of Torah and commandments, so that they would have many opportunities to connect to God. As it says in Isaiah: The Lord wanted, for the sake of increasing the Jewish Nation's righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious.

עשרה לגמרא, בן שמונה  
עשרה לחפה, בן עשרים  
לרדוף, בן שלשים לכח,  
בן ארבעים לבינה,  
בן חמשים לעצה, בן  
ששים לזקנה, בן שבעים  
לשיבה, בן שמונים  
לגבורה, בן תשעים  
לשוח, בן מאה כאלו מת  
ועבר ובטל מן העולם.

**רבי** חנניא בן עקשיא אומר: רצה  
הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל,  
לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות,  
שנאמר: יי חפץ למען צדקו, יגדיל  
תורה ויגדיר.

**1** The end of the verse is quoted in the mishnah even though it's not directly connected to its teachings. The verse alludes to the fact that even if there are "students of Bilaam" in the world who try to harm us, we must declare that we trust in God.  
*The Rebbe*

**2** The mishnah connects each positive trait to an animal. This teaches that everything a person sees or hears should be used as a lesson in the service of God.

You can even learn positive character traits from an animal!  
*The Rebbe*

**3** The connection between the two parts of this prayer is that when the Redemption arrives and the Temple is rebuilt, our only "portion" and occupation will be learning Torah.  
*The Rebbe*

**4** God does not only value the deed itself, but also the effort and time that is put into it. Even if one feels that he didn't

achieve anything noteworthy, he is rewarded for his efforts.  
*The Rebbe*

**5** The mishnah is not only indicating the age one should begin each of these pursuits. At these ages one's entire essence and focus should be on that pursuit. When a child reaches the age of ten, what is his essence? That he should be learning mishnah! All his energy and time should be focused on this.  
*The Rebbe*

## CHAPTER SIX

**כָּל** All the Children of Israel have a portion in the World to Come. As it says in Isaiah regarding the Redemption of the Jewish Nation: Your people are all righteous, and they will all inherit the Land of Israel forever—they will never be exiled from it again. Everyone will recognize that they are the branch of My planting and the work of My hands, in which I, God, take pride.

**1** The Sages taught the following statements in Hebrew, the language of the Mishnah. Blessed is God, Who chose the Sages and their teachings. Rabbi Meir says: Whoever involves himself in Torah<sup>1</sup> learning for its own sake—because it is a commandment—will merit many good things. Not only that, but even the creation of the entire world is worthwhile just for him. Some of the many things he merits are: He is called a “friend” and “beloved” of God. He loves God and he loves God’s creations. He makes God happy and he makes people happy.<sup>2</sup> The Torah clothes and surrounds him with humility and awe of God. It prepares him to be righteous, dedicated to God, upright, and trusted. It also distances him from sin and brings him close to merit. People enjoy his good advice, wisdom, understanding, and strength. As it says in Proverbs: Good advice and wisdom are mine, says the Torah.

**כָּל** יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנֵאֲמַר: וְעַמּוֹ כֻּלָּם צְדִיקִים, לְעוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּ אָרֶץ, נֶצֶר מְטַעֵי מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי לְהִתְפָּאֵר.

**א** שָׁנוּ חֲכָמִים בְּלִשׁוֹן הַמִּשְׁנָה, בְּרוּךְ שֶׁבָּחַר בָּהֶם וּבְמִשְׁנָתָם. רַבִּי מֵאִיר אוֹמֵר: כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה לְשִׂמְחָה זֹכֶה לְדַבְרֵים הָרַבִּה, וְלֹא עוֹד, אֲלֵא שְׁכָל הָעוֹלָם כָּלוּ כְּדָאֵי הוּא לוֹ. נִקְרָא רַע, אֶהוּב, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַמָּקוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, מְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת הַמָּקוֹם, מְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, וּמַלְבִּשְׁתּוֹ עֲנוּה וִירְאָה, וּמְכַשְׂרֵתוֹ לִהְיוֹת צְדִיק, חָסִיד, יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנֶאֱמַן, וּמְרַחֲקֵתוֹ מִן הַחֲטָא, וּמְקַרְבֵּתוֹ לִידֵי זְכוּת, וְנִהְיֵן מִמֶּנּוּ עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָּה, בִּינָה וְגִבּוֹרָה, שְׁנֵאֲמַר: לִי עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָּה, אֲנִי בִינָה, לִי גִבּוֹרָה, וְנוֹתַנָּת לּוֹ מַלְכוּת

<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, “conduct business in Torah.” This means that we should use business ethics to enhance the honor of the Torah. Just as confident business-people spend much time and energy finding customers, we must similarly find “customers” with whom to learn

Torah. This will bring honor to the Torah, because it will show that we recognize its great value and the need to share it with others.

*The Rebbe*

<sup>2</sup> When we love another person, they do not necessarily feel it

or gain anything from it. For this reason, we are taught that loving people is not enough; we must also make them “happy.” This means that our love must make people happy—we must make sure that it has a positive effect on them.

*The Rebbe*

I am understanding; strength is mine. The Torah gives these good qualities to those who learn it. The Torah also gives him royalty and authority, and the ability to judge properly. The secrets of the Torah are revealed to him. He becomes like a fountain that flows with ever-increasing strength, and like a river that never stops flowing. He becomes modest, patient, and forgiving when he is insulted. The Torah makes him great and it raises him above all things.

**2** Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Every single day, a heavenly voice that is heard by the soul comes out from Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai). It announces and says, “Woe is to people who insult the Torah by not learning excitedly.” They are to be pitied because anyone who does not excitedly occupy himself with Torah is called “shamed.” As it says in Proverbs: A beautiful woman (the Torah) without flavor (without excitement and pleasure) is like a golden ring on a pig’s nose. Torah must be “flavorful” and exciting. There is another advantage of being occupied with Torah, as it says in the Torah: The Tablets are God’s work, and the writing is God’s writing, engraved on the Tablets. Do not read the word as “charut” (engraved) but rather as “cherut” (freedom), because there is no person who is free from social pressures and able to reach his full potential except for someone who involves himself in Torah learning. Whoever involves himself in Torah learning becomes elevated and great. As it says in the Torah: In listing the places the Jewish Nation traveled through in the desert, the Torah says: The Jewish Nation traveled from Mattanah to Nachaliel, and from Nachaliel to Bamot. The Sages explain the deeper meaning of this verse as follows: When a person uses the Mattanah (gift) of Torah, God becomes his Nachaliel (inheritance), which causes him to become Bamot (elevated).

וּמִמֶּשְׁלָה, וְחִקּוֹר דִּין, וּמִגִּלְגִּין  
לֹא רִזִּי תוֹרָה, וְנַעֲשֶׂה כְּמַעֲנִן  
הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר וְכִנְהָר שְׂאִינוּ  
פּוֹסֵק, וְהוּא צָנוּעַ, וְאַרְךְ  
רוּחַ, וּמוֹחֵל עַל עַלְבוֹנוֹ,  
וּמְגַדֵּלְתוֹ וּמְרוֹמְמָתוֹ עַל  
כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים.

**ב** אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן לֹוִי,  
בְּכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם בַּת קוֹל  
יוֹצֵאת מִהַר חוֹרֵב וּמִכְרֹזַת  
וְאוֹמֶרֶת: אוֹי לָהֶם לְבָרִיּוֹת  
מֵעַלְבוֹנָה שֶׁל תוֹרָה, שֶׁכָּל  
מִי שְׂאִינוּ עוֹסֵק בַּתוֹרָה  
נִקְרָא נָזוּף, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: נָזַם  
זָהָב בְּאַף חֲזִיר, אִשָּׁה יָפָה  
וְסֶרֶת טַעַם. וְאוֹמֶר: וְהִלַּחַת  
מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה,  
וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתָּב אֱלֹהִים  
הוּא, חֲרוּת עַל הַלַּחַת, אֶל  
תִּקְרִי חֲרוּת אֶלָּא חֲרוּת,  
שְׂאִין לָךְ בֶּן חוֹרִין, אֶלָּא מִי  
שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תוֹרָה,  
וְכָל מִי שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד  
תוֹרָה, הִרִי זֶה מִתְעַלָּה,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וּמִמִּתְנָה נַחֲלִיאֵל,  
וּמִנַּחֲלִיאֵל בָּמוֹת.

**3** Someone who learns a single chapter, a single law, a single verse, a single statement, or even a single letter of Torah from his friend must treat him with honor.<sup>1</sup> For we find this by David, the king of Israel—that he learned only two things from Achitofel<sup>2</sup>—to learn together with other people rather than alone, and to walk with others and with excitement when going to learn—and he called him his rabbi, his leader, and his teacher. As King David says to Achitofel in Psalms: You are a man equal to me; you are my leader and my teacher. Surely this leads us to an obvious conclusion: If David, the king of Israel, learned only two things from Achitofel, and still called him his rabbi, his leader, and his teacher, then if an ordinary person learns a single chapter, a single law, a single verse, a single statement, or even a single letter of Torah from his friend, how much more so must he treat him with honor. Honor is deserved only for Torah. As it says in Proverbs: The Sages will inherit honor; the perfect ones will inherit good. And only Torah is truly good. As it says in Proverbs: I, God, have given you a good teaching; do not forsake My Torah.

**ג** הַלּוֹמֵד מֵחֵבֵר פָּרַק אֶחָד, אוּ הֶלְכָּה אַחַת, אוּ פְּסוּק אֶחָד, אוּ דְבוּר אֶחָד, אוּ אֶפִּילוּ אוֹת אַחַת, צָרִיךְ לְנַהֵג בּוֹ כְּבוֹד, שְׁכֵן מְצִינוּ בְּדוֹד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁלֹּא לָמַד מֵאַחִיתֶּפֶל אֶלֶּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלִבָּד, קָרָאוּ רַבּוֹ אֱלוֹפּוֹ וּמִידְעוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְאַתָּה אָנוּשׁ כְּעַרְכִּי, אֱלוֹפִי וּמִידְעִי. וְהֵלֵךְ דְּבָרִים קָל וְחוֹמֶר, וּמֵה דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁלֹּא לָמַד מֵאַחִיתֶּפֶל אֶלֶּא שְׁנֵי דְבָרִים בְּלִבָּד, קָרָאוּ רַבּוֹ אֱלוֹפּוֹ וּמִידְעוֹ, הַלּוֹמֵד מֵחֵבֵר פָּרַק אֶחָד, אוּ הֶלְכָּה אַחַת, אוּ פְּסוּק אֶחָד, אוּ דְבוּר אֶחָד, אוּ אֶפִּילוּ אוֹת אַחַת, עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה שְׁצָרִיךְ לְנַהֵג בּוֹ כְּבוֹד. וְאִין כְּבוֹד אֶלֶּא תוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנָּחֵלוּ, וְתַמִּימִים יִנָּחֵלוּ טוֹב. וְאִין טוֹב אֶלֶּא תוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: כִּי לֶקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם, תוֹרַתִּי אֵל תַּעֲזֹבוּ.

**1** Literally, “accustom.” We must not only treat people with respect, but also be accustomed to doing so. It should be part of our very nature.  
*The Rebbe*

**2** Why does the Braita use the word “only” in reference to learning from Achitofel, and not later in reference to learning from anyone?

Something learned “מֵחֵבֵר”—from a fellow Jew—grows and develops with you. Things learned from a wicked person (such as Achitofel) do not grow and develop; you are only left with the exact thing that you learned. *The Rebbe*

**3** An alternative interpretation: If a person finds himself in a challenging

situation—even lacking all but bare physical necessities—he should not despair. Instead he should resolve to work hard in Torah and remind himself that: 1) Torah is greater than all worldly pleasures, and 2) He will be compensated in the World to Come. *The Rebbe*

**4** This is the way to master Torah:<sup>3</sup> Eat bread with salt, drink small amounts of water, sleep on the ground, live a life of hardship without indulging in physical pleasures, and work hard in Torah. In Psalms it says that if you do this, “You will be fortunate, and it will be good for you.” “You will be fortunate” in this world, and “it will be good for you” in the World to Come.

**5** Do not look for greatness for yourself and do not desire honor. The good deeds you do should be greater than your Torah learning. Do not desire the table of kings and their riches, because your table—your greatness through serving God—is greater than their fancy tables and physical riches, and your crown of honor is greater than their physical crown. God, Your Boss, is trusted to pay you the reward for your work of serving Him.

**6** Torah is greater than being a Kohen or king, because being a king comes with thirty special privileges and responsibilities, such as the restriction of anyone else sitting in his place or riding on his horse; being a Kohen comes with twenty-four gifts that must be given to Kohanim, such as the first fruits, challah, and the terumah contribution. Whereas acquiring and mastering the Torah requires forty-eight qualities. They are: constant learning, careful listening, verbally pronouncing what is being learned,<sup>1</sup> an understanding heart, awe, fear, humility, happiness, purity, serving Torah scholars, having close friends, discussing and debating Torah with fellow students, calmly and carefully analyzing what you

**ד** כִּךְ הִיא דְרָכָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה: פֶּת  
בְּמִלַּח תֹּאכַל, וּמִיַּם בְּמִשׁוּרָה  
תִּשְׁתֶּה, וְעַל הָאָרֶץ תִּישָׁן, וְחַיִּי  
צָעַר תַּחֲיָה, וּבִתּוֹרָה אֶתָּה עֹמֵל,  
אִם אֶתָּה עוֹשֶׂה כֵן, אֲשֶׁרִיךְ וְטוֹב  
לָךְ, אֲשֶׁרִיךְ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, וְטוֹב לָךְ  
לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

**ה** אַל תִּבְקֶשׁ גְּדֻלָּה לְעַצְמְךָ, וְאַל  
תַּחְמוֹד כְּבוֹד, יוֹתֵר מִלְמוּדְךָ  
עֲשֵׂה, וְאַל תִּתְאוּוֹה לְשִׁלְחָנָם שֶׁל  
מְלָכִים, שֶׁשִּׁלְחָנְךָ גָּדוֹל מִשִּׁלְחָנָם,  
וְכִתְרְךָ גָּדוֹל מִכְתָּרָם, וְנֶאֱמַן הוּא  
בְּעַל מְלֹאכְתְּךָ שִׁישְׁלֵם לָךְ שְׂכָר  
פְּעֻלָּתְךָ.

**ו** גְּדוּלָּה תּוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַכֹּהֵנָּה  
וּמִן הַמְּלָכוֹת, שֶׁהַמְּלָכוֹת נִקְנִית  
בְּשָׁלָשִׁים מַעֲלוֹת, וְהַכֹּהֵנָּה  
בְּעֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבַּע, וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית  
בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְ�מוֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְאֵלוּ  
הֵן: בְּתִלְמוּד, בְּשִׁמְיעַת הָאָזֵן,  
בְּעִרְכַּת שְׁפָתַיִם, בְּבִינַת הַלֵּב,  
בְּאִמָּה, בִּירְאָה, בְּעִנּוּה, בְּשִׁמְחָה,  
בְּטְהָרָה, בְּשִׁמוּשׁ חֻכָּמִים, בְּדְבוּק  
חֲבֵרִים, בְּפִלְפּוּל הַתְּלָמִידִים,  
בִּישׁוּב, בְּמִקְרָא, בְּמִשְׁנָה, בְּמַעוֹט

learn, knowing Tanach, knowing Mishnah, limiting your business activity, limiting your worldly activity, limiting your worldly pleasure, limiting your sleep, limiting your conversation, limiting your laughter, being slow to anger, having a good heart, having faith in the Sages, accepting suffering, being someone who knows his place—recognizing his strengths and weaknesses—who is happy with what he has, who makes a protective fence around his words by choosing his words very carefully, who does not take credit for his achievements, who is beloved by others, who loves God and loves people, who loves righteousness, who loves justice, who loves criticism because it will help him improve his ways, who keeps far away from honor, who is not arrogant with his learning, who does not enjoy when he must give a ruling in Jewish law, who carries the burden with his friend, who judges his friend favorably by giving him the benefit of the doubt, who places his friend on the path of truth, who places him on the path of peace, who thinks carefully and deeply in his studies, who asks questions and answers other people's questions, listens to his teacher and adds to what his teacher says, who learns in order to teach, who learns in order to know what to do, who makes his teacher wiser by asking good questions, who properly understands what he hears, and who says something in the name of the person who said it. In fact, you have learned: Whoever says something in the name of the person who said it<sup>2</sup> brings redemption to the world, as it says in the Book of Esther, “And Esther told the king in Mordechai’s name” that Bigtan and Teresh were planning to kill King Achashverosh. This eventually lead to the miracle of Purim and the redemption of the Jewish Nation.

סְחֹרָה, בְּמַעוֹט דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ,  
בְּמַעוֹט תַּעֲנוּג, בְּמַעוֹט שְׁנָה,  
בְּמַעוֹט שִׂיחָה, בְּמַעוֹט שְׁחֹק,  
בְּאַרְךְ אַפִּים, בְּלֵב טוֹב, בְּאַמוּנַת  
חֲכָמִים, בְּקִבְלַת הַיְסוּרִין,  
הַמְּכִיר אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ, וְהַשְׂמַח  
בַּחֲלָקוֹ, וְהַעוֹשֶׂה סִיג לְדַבְּרִיו,  
וְאִינוֹ מַחֲזִיק טוֹבָה לְעַצְמוֹ,  
אוֹהֵב, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַמָּקוֹם,  
אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, אוֹהֵב אֶת  
הַצְּדָקוֹת, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַמִּישְׁרִים,  
אוֹהֵב אֶת הַתּוֹכָחוֹת, וּמִתְרַחֵק  
מִן הַכְּבוֹד, וְלֹא מִגִּיס לְבוֹ  
בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, וְאִינוֹ שֹׂמַח בַּהוֹרָאָה,  
נוֹשֵׂא בְּעוֹל עִם חֲבֵרוֹ, וּמִכְרִיעוֹ  
לְכַף זָכוֹת, וּמַעֲמִידוֹ עַל  
הָאֲמֶת, וּמַעֲמִידוֹ עַל הַשְּׁלוֹם,  
וּמִתְיָשֵׁב לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, שׂוֹאֵל  
וּמְשִׁיב, שׂוֹמֵעַ וּמוֹסִיף, הַלּוֹמֵד  
עַל מְנַת לִלְמַד, וְהַלּוֹמֵד עַל  
מְנַת לַעֲשׂוֹת, הַמַּחֲכִים אֶת  
רֵבּוֹ, וְהַמְּכֹנֵן אֶת שְׂמוּעָתוֹ,  
וְהַאֲמִיר דָּבָר בְּשֵׁם אוֹמְרוֹ, הָאֵל  
לְמַדָּתוֹ, כָּל הָאוֹמֵר דָּבָר בְּשֵׁם  
אוֹמְרוֹ, מְבִיא גְּאֻלָּה לְעוֹלָם,  
שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ  
בְּשֵׁם מַרְדֳּכָי.

**7** Torah is great because it gives life—in this world and in the World to Come—to those who learn it and do what it says. As it says in Proverbs: Because they—the words of the Torah—are life to the person who finds them, and they are a cure for his whole body. It also says there: The Torah will be a cure for your body and marrow for your bones, making them stronger. It also says there: The Torah is a tree of life for those who hold onto it, and those who support Torah learning are fortunate. It also says there: Words of Torah in your mind are like a graceful decoration for your head, and words of Torah spoken from your throat are a beautiful necklace for your neck. It also says there: Torah will give your head a graceful decoration and it will give you a crown of beauty. It also says there: Indeed, says the Torah, by learning me, your days will be increased, and years of life will be added to you. It also says there: Long life is at the Torah's right. If we learn Torah for the correct reason—because it is a commandment—it will give us long life in addition to wealth and honor. Wealth and honor are at its left. Even if we learn Torah for other reasons, and not only because it is a commandment, it will still give us wealth and honor. It also says there: The words of the Torah will add to your length of days, your years of life, and your peace.

גְּדוּלָהּ תוֹרָה, שֶׁהִיא נוֹתֶנֶת  
חַיִּים לְעַשְׂיָהּ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה  
וּבְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
כִּי חַיִּים הֵם לְמוֹצְאֵיהֶם,  
וּלְכָל בֶּשָׂרוֹ מְרַפָּא. וְאוֹמֵר:  
רַפְאוֹת תְּהִי לְשַׁרְךָ, וְשְׁקוּי  
לְעֲצָמוֹתֶיךָ. וְאוֹמֵר: עֵץ  
חַיִּים הִיא לְמַחְזִיקִים בָּהּ,  
וְתַמְכִּיהָ מֵאֲשֶׁר. וְאוֹמֵר:  
כִּי לוֹיֵת חֵן הֵם לְרֹאשְׁךָ,  
וְעֲנָקִים לְגִרְגְּרֹתֶיךָ. וְאוֹמֵר:  
תֵּתֵן לְרֹאשְׁךָ לוֹיֵת חֵן, עֲטֹרַת  
תְּפָאֶרֶת תִּמְגֶּנֶן. וְאוֹמֵר: כִּי  
בִּי יִרְבוּ יָמֶיךָ, וְיוֹסִיפוּ לָךְ  
שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים. וְאוֹמֵר: אַרְךָ  
יָמִים בִּימִינָהּ, בְּשִׂמְאלָהּ  
עֶשֶׂר וְכְבוֹד. וְאוֹמֵר: כִּי אַרְךָ  
יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת חַיִּים וְשָׁלוֹם  
יוֹסִיפוּ לָךְ.

**1** Besides helping you understand what you learn and remember it better, verbally pronouncing words of Torah is of great spiritual value, for by doing so one elevates a physical part of the body (the mouth) by using it for a Divine purpose.  
*The Alter Rebbe*

**2** When we learn words of Torah we must always remember who originally said them: God. By doing so we affirm the Divine holiness of the Torah and bring the Redemption closer. *The Rebbe*  
An alternative interpretation: Mentioning the authors and sages

of earlier generations reinforces the chain of tradition that is so vital to our understanding of the Torah. It reminds us that the Torah is not a recent innovation, but rather an ancient gift that Moses received from God and passed down to us.  
*The Rebbe*

**8** Rabbi Shimon ben Yehudah says in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: Beauty, strength, riches, honor, wisdom and maturity, old age, and children—it is good for the righteous to possess these traits so they can be more effective in teaching about God and sanctifying His Name, which in turn is good for the world.<sup>1</sup> As it says in Proverbs: Ripe old age is a crown of “beauty,” which also represents “riches;” it can be found on the path of righteousness. It also says there: The beauty of young men is their “strength,” and the beauty of old men is “ripe old age.” It also says there: Grandchildren are the crown of the elderly, and the glory of “children” are their fathers. And it says in Isaiah: Due to their painful embarrassment and shame, the wicked will see even the moon and sun to be dark when the Lord, God of all creations, rules on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and “honor” is given before His “mature” and wise elders. Rabbi Shimon ben Menatya says: These seven traits the Sages listed as being fitting for the righteous—all of them were fulfilled by Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi and his sons, who possessed all these traits.

**9** Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma says: I was once walking on the road while reviewing Torah, and a certain man met me. I didn’t notice him, and so He greeted me first. He said, “Shalom!” and I answered back to him, “Shalom!” He said to me, “Rabbi, from which place are you?” I told him, “I am from a great city of Torah scholars and sages, and my purpose in life is to be occupied with Torah.” He said to me, “Rabbi, if you would be willing to live with us in our place,<sup>2</sup> I would give you a million golden dinar coins, as well as

**ח** רבי שמעון בן יהודה משום רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: הנוי, והכח, והעשר, והכבוד, והחכמה, והזקנה, והשיבה, והבנים, נאה לצדיקים ונאה לעולם, שנאמר: עטרת תפארת שיבה, בדרך צדקה תמצא. ואומר: תפארת בחורים כחם, והדר זקנים שיבה. ואומר: עטרת זקנים בני בנים, ותפארת בנים אבותם. ואומר: וחפרה הלבנה ובושה החמה, כי מלך יצבאות בהר ציון ובירושלים, ונגד זקניו כבוד. רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר: אלו שבע מדות שמנו חכמים לצדיקים, כלם נתקמו ברבי ובבניו.

**ט** אמר רבי יוסי בן קסמא: פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך, ופגע בי אדם אחד, ונתן לי שלום, והחזרתי לו שלום, אמר לי: רבי, מאיזה מקום אתה, אמרתי לו: מעיר גדולה של חכמים ושל סופרים אני. אמר לי: רבי, רצונך שתדור עמנו במקומנו, ואני אתן לך אלף אלפים דנרי זהב ואבנים

precious stones and pearls so you can be free to learn, and also give a lot of charity.” I told him, “Even if you would give me all the silver and gold and all the precious stones and pearls in the world, I would only live in a place of Torah.” And that is what is written in the book of Psalms by David, king of Israel: God—the Torah of Your mouth is more precious to me than the thousands of gold and silver pieces that I own. Furthermore, when a person passes away, no silver, gold, precious stones, or pearls join him and go with him to the World to Come. Only his Torah learning and good deeds go with him to the World to Come, as King Solomon says in Proverbs: When you walk, the Torah will guide you; when you lie down, it will watch over you; when you wake up, it will speak for you. “When you walk, it will guide you”—in this world. “When you lie down, it will watch over you”—in the grave, after you pass away. “And when you wake up, it will speak for you”—in the World to Come. And it says in Haggai: The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,<sup>3</sup> says the Lord, God of all creations, so a person cannot really own gold and silver. Whereas Torah becomes part of a person, and therefore remains with him in the World to Come.

טובות ומרגליות. אמרתי לו: אם אתה נותן לי כל כסף וזהב ואבנים טובות ומרגליות שבעולם, אני דר אלא במקום תורה, וכן כתוב בספר תהלים על ידי דוד מלך ישראל: טוב לי תורת פיך, מאלפי זהב וכסף. ולא עוד, אלא שבשעת פטירתו של אדם, אין מלוין לו לאדם לא כסף ולא זהב ולא אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה ומעשים טובים בלבד, שנאמר: בהתהלךך תנחה אתך, בשכבך תשמור עליך, והקיצות היא תשיחה. בהתהלךך תנחה אתך, בעולם הזה. בשכבך תשמור עליך, בקבר. והקיצות היא תשיחה, לעולם הבא. ואומר: לי הכסף ולי הזהב, נאם יי צבאות.

1 A righteous person might not want the qualities mentioned here, because they may distract him from Torah study. For this reason they are referred to as “beauty”—something that has no benefit for the person himself, but is valuable to people who see him. The righteous person must accept these qualities because they are beneficial to the world at large. *The Rebbe*

2 R’ Yosei refused the man’s offer because he knew that his mission was only learning Torah, not leading a community. *The Rebbe*

3 Rabbi Yosei is hinting at the advantage of learning Torah over fulfilling its commandments. Many commandments require something

physical (symbolized here by “gold and silver”) with which to fulfill them. Since one is ultimately dependent on God for physical things, one may not always be able to fulfill certain commandments. The Torah, however, is given entirely to a person without any need for physicality. Nothing can prevent him from studying it. *The Rebbe*

**10** The Holy One, blessed be He, took ownership of five possessions in His world. They are: Torah—one possession;<sup>1</sup> heaven and earth—one possession; Abraham our forefather—one possession; the Children of Israel—one possession; the Holy Temple—one possession. From where do we know that God takes ownership of the Torah? Because it is written in Proverbs: The Lord took ownership of the Torah before the creation of the world, before His work, long ago. From where do we know that God takes ownership of the heaven and earth? Because it is written in Isaiah: The Lord says as follows: The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool, so what house can you build for Me? And where is My resting place? And as King David says in Psalms: Lord, how many are the works of Your hands! You made them all with great wisdom. The earth is full of Your possessions. From where do we know that God took ownership of Abraham our forefather? Because it is written in the Torah: And Malkizedek blessed him and said: Blessed is Abraham who belongs to God, the Highest, Owner of heaven and earth. From where do we know that God takes ownership of the Children of Israel? Because it is written in the Torah: Lord, scare away any enemies until Your nation crosses over; until this nation, which You took possession of, crosses over the Jordan River and safely enters the Land of Israel. And it says in Psalms: The holy people who are buried in the land—the mighty ones, the Jewish

חֲמִשָּׁה קִנְיָנִים קָנָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ  
בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, וְאֵלוּ הֵן:  
תּוֹרָה, קִנְיָן אֶחָד. שָׁמַיִם  
וָאָרֶץ, קִנְיָן אֶחָד. אַבְרָהָם,  
קִנְיָן אֶחָד. יִשְׂרָאֵל, קִנְיָן  
אֶחָד. בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, קִנְיָן  
אֶחָד. תּוֹרָה מִנִּין, דְּכָתִיב:  
”קִנְיֵי רֵאשִׁית דְּרֹכּוֹ, קָדָם  
מִפְעֻלָּיו מֵאָז. שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ  
מִנִּין, דְּכָתִיב: כֹּה אָמַר יי,  
הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאִי וְהָאָרֶץ הַדָּם  
רִגְלִי, אֵי זֶה בֵּית אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנוּ  
לִי וְאֵיזָה מְקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי,  
וְאוֹמַר: מָה רַבּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יי,  
כֻּלָּם בַּחֲכָמָה עָשִׂיתָ, מְלֹאָה  
הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנֶךָ. אַבְרָהָם מִנִּין,  
דְּכָתִיב: וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר:  
בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לֹאֵל עֲלִיוֹן, קָנָה  
שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ. יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנִּין,  
דְּכָתִיב: עַד יַעֲבֹר עִמָּךְ יי, עַד  
יַעֲבֹר עִם זֶה קִנְיָתִי, וְאוֹמַר:

Nation—all My delight is in them, says God. From where do we know that God took ownership of the Holy Temple? Because it is written in the Torah: You will bring Your people, the Jewish Nation, to the place that You, Lord, made as a dwelling place for Yourself—the Sanctuary that You, Lord, set up with Your hands. And it says in Psalms: And God brought the Jewish Nation to the place of His holiness, the mountain that His right hand acquired.

**11** Everything that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world He created only in order to reveal His glory, as it says in Isaiah: Everything that is called by My name, I have created, formed, and made for My glory.<sup>2</sup> And it says in the Torah: The Lord will rule as king forever and ever, and all of God's creations are for the purpose of revealing His glory.

**רבי** Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya says: the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make the Children of Israel have many merits. He therefore gave them an abundance of Torah and commandments, so that they would have many opportunities to connect to God. As it says in Isaiah: The Lord wanted, for the sake of increasing the Jewish Nation's righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious.

לְקָדוּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ הַמָּה,  
וְאֵדִירי כָּל חֶפְצֵי בָם. בֵּית  
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ מִנֵּין, דְּכָתִיב: מָכוֹן  
לְשִׁבְתָּךְ פָּעֵלֶת יְיָ, מִקְדָּשׁ  
אֲדֹנִי כוֹנֵנוּ יְדִיךָ, וְאוֹמֵר:  
וְלִבְיָאֵם אֶל גְּבוּל קִדְשׁוֹ, הֵר  
זֶה קִנְיָתָהּ יְמִינוֹ.

**יֵא** כָּל מֶה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ  
הוא בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, לֹא בָּרָאוּ אֱלֹא  
לְכָבוֹדוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: כָּל הַנִּקְרָא  
בְּשֵׁמִי וּלְכָבוֹדִי, בָּרָאתִיו  
יִצְרָתִיו אֶף עֲשִׂיתִיו. וְאוֹמֵר:  
יְיָ יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד.

**רבי** חַנְנִיָּא בֶן עֲקִישָׁי אָמַר: רָצָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ  
בְּרוּךְ הוא לְזִכּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכָךְ  
הִרְבֵּה לָהֶם תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: יְיָ חֶפֶץ  
לְמַעַן צִדְקוֹ, יַגְדִּיל תּוֹרָה וְיֵאֲדִיר.

<sup>1</sup> Following each listed item we repeat the phrase, "one possession." This is to teach us that each possession helps us reveal

the presence of the One God in this world. *Tzemach Tzedek*

<sup>2</sup> The verse can also mean that everything was created

for the sake of "Torah," which is called God's "glory."  
*The Alter Rebbe*